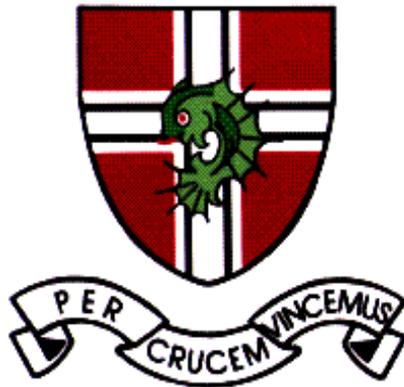


# **St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy**



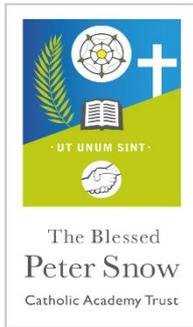
## **Spiritual Development Policy**

**2017 – 2019**

**Loving to learn whilst learning to love**

**November 2017**  
**Review date September 2018**

## The Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust



The Catholic Voluntary Academies which form the Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust are distinctive as we provide grounding in the Catholic Faith for all our children. The special character of our Catholic academies is the quality of the religious teaching, integrated into the overall education of our children. Our beliefs, which are Gospel centred, affect the way we live, making our academies living examples of Christ and His teachings.

*"Education is not and must never be considered as purely utilitarian. It is about forming the human person, equipping him or her to live life to the full – in short it is about imparting wisdom. And true wisdom is inseparable from knowledge of the Creator." (Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Teachers and Religious, Twickenham, September 2010).*

**Our Academies therefore operate and are informed by the following four key principles of Christian formation:**

- **Places of Discipleship**
- **Places where Communities are created**
- **Places of Learning**
- **Places where we treasure God's World**

**In light of the above principles, the Trust aims to:**

- ensure secure, welcoming and engaging environments in which all individuals learn to value and respect both themselves and others
- provide all individuals with the opportunities to achieve excellence, to develop their full potential as human beings and to encourage and challenge them to do so
- uphold the unshakable belief in the unique potential of each child, student and member of staff
- provide a curriculum that initiates students into the knowledge, values, attitudes and skills they need to become mature Christian adults in their personal, social, family and working lives.

## **Vision for Spiritual Development as part of the Curriculum**

Catholic schools are called by the Church to play their part in glorifying God and making Christ known. St Irenaeus taught that God is glorified by human beings who are fully alive, and this is recognised by the mission statement of our school, which speaks of “developing our full potential in the image of Christ”.

This is relevant to every aspect of the life of our school, but it has particular bearing on the curriculum - that is, the whole range of planned activities, within and without the classroom, which give pupils opportunities to learn. We believe that the spiritual development of our pupils, fundamental to the Catholic nature of our school, should infuse every aspect of our curriculum, and not just be constructed around it.

## **Desired Outcomes of Spiritual Development**

The Academy Council has clearly stated its aims for the school, and these indicate the outcomes that we desire for the pupils who come to learn at St John Fisher. The school Curriculum Policy clearly has spiritual development in mind when it says,

*'We aim to produce young men and women who know and love God, and appreciate the wonder and beauty of His creation. Through studying at our school, they will have grown in self-esteem and have the understanding they need to help them live the Catholic faith. Through the opportunities provided to develop their intellectual and physical potential, they will have discovered new things about themselves and be equipped to go on learning throughout their lives. They will be responsible adults, able both to serve others and to contribute to society in a thoughtful and reflective manner. In particular, they will be well prepared to take their place in a multi-cultural and technological world that is rapidly developing, yet work for the common good of all people using those virtues that never change.'*

## **Mission Context**

We take seriously our role as part of the mission of the Church in the Diocese of Leeds, and we recognise a particular responsibility to contribute to the mission of the Church in the Heavy Woollen District. This mission springs from that given to the apostles by the Risen Lord, and in a spirit of hope and joy looks for the glory of God in the world. But we recognise that the Church's mission is to a fallen world, and that gives an urgency and realism to our spiritual and moral purpose.

In the centre of Dewsbury, outside the Town Hall – the symbol of civic life – there is a statue of the Good Samaritan. This symbolism is central to our understanding. The Church stands, as the Good Samaritan once stood, looking at a wounded victim. Our society, despite its strengths, has become bruised and battered: human substance has been drained away in the triumph of presentation over reality; human roots have been severed, as the immediacy of modern technology has weakened geographical and historical links; and human bonds have been broken as the quest for personal fulfilment has led so often to selfishness and greed.

As a Catholic school we are called, not least through the programme of spiritual development embedded in our curriculum, to restore substance, propagate roots, and re-forge links.

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## 1. Principles for Spiritual Development

Given the vision for Spiritual Development within the school, the outcomes desired by the Academy Council, and the mission context in which the school finds itself, the following principles will guide the practical outworking of the policy:

- A. *"A good school provides a rounded education for the whole person. And a good Catholic school, over and above this, should help all its students to become saints." (Pope Benedict XVI, The Big Assembly, 17 Sept 2010)*

The Academy Council, Headteacher and Senior Leadership will seek by all means at their disposal to implement the Holy Father's instruction, ensuring that *"all the work [our students] do is placed in the context of growing in friendship with God, and all that flows from that friendship."*

- B. The social duty of Christians, and therefore of a Catholic School, *"is to respect and awaken in each person the love of the true and the good, making known the worship of the one true religion which subsists in the Catholic and apostolic Church"*.  
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC ] §2105*)

Therefore the Academy Council, Headteacher and Senior Leadership will seek, in their direction of the school, not only to be faithful to the traditions and teaching of the Catholic Church, as summarised in the Catechism, but also actively to promote them, in keeping with the "New Evangelization" proposed by Blessed John Paul II. Students will be supported and encouraged as appropriate in sacramental preparation.

- C. *"Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and truth are found outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church" (CCC §870)*

Recognising that a number of pupils and staff are not Catholics, and also that the school is called to serve the 'common good' in a multicultural society, all due respect will be shown to members of other faiths, and those from other Christian communities, *"that they too will feel encouraged to practise virtue and to grow in knowledge and friendship with God alongside their Catholic classmates, reminding them of the bigger picture that exists outside the school. Indeed, it is only right that respect and friendship for members of other religious traditions should be among the virtues learned in a Catholic school."*  
(*Pope Benedict XVI, The Big Assembly, 17 Sept 2010*)

- D. *"Believing is a path..." (Youth Catechism ["YouCat"] §344)*

The journey of spiritual development in response to the grace of God is individual to each person. While making known the Gospel of Christ, and its implications for life in today's society, the school will respect the religious freedom in conscience of students and staff.

- E. *"At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, ..." ... Catechesis aims at putting "people in communion with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity." (CCC §426, quoting Blessed Pope John Paul II, Catechesi Tradendæ)*

The spiritual development that we seek for members of our community is not, ultimately, about religious knowledge or skills – though they undoubtedly play a part. Rather, our task is to make it possible for each person to meet Jesus, and to respond to him in their own way. For some students this may be the beginning of a vocation to priesthood or the religious life. The school would seek to promote and foster such vocations, while recognising that God calls each person to some particular service.

- F. Whilst seeking a school community where faith is vibrant and evident in everyday life, our Spiritual Development Policy must recognise the cultural and sociological factors involved in working with a large group of teenagers. Though many students find it easy to express their faith in school, for others it is a much more challenging environment. The Academy Council and Senior Leadership will actively seek out the "student voice" to help them put the policy into practice. They will also draw on specialist help from the Diocesan Youth Service, and from skilled workers within our deanery.

- G. *"The Eucharist is the 'source and summit' of the Christian life." (CCC §1324, quoting Lumen Gentium §11)*

The Academy Council, Headteacher and Senior Leadership recognise that all efforts to promote spiritual development within the school must spring from the Holy Eucharist. Therefore they will work with the priests of the deanery to ensure that the Eucharist is celebrated regularly and reverently within the school calendar.

While most of these Masses may be voluntary in nature, each year group will have at least one obligatory Mass each year, and a whole-school Mass will also be celebrated on our paternal feast.

There will also be opportunity for Eucharistic Adoration.

Students and staff will be well prepared for each Mass to ensure actual, spiritual participation as appropriate to each person.

- H. *Parents "are the first and best educators" in the faith of their children. (Rite of Baptism)*

We recognise that in all that we do to promote the spiritual development of our students, we are working in partnership not only with the local parishes, but primarily with our parents. Whilst also recognising that the secondary school years are a time when young people are exploring and developing their

own faith in distinction to that of their parents, we will seek every opportunity to inform and involve our parents.

I. *Per crucem vincemus*

The life of faith is no easy option. Disciples are called “soldiers of Christ” for a good reason (Ephesians 6:12). But the message that our school has given throughout its existence is that “through the cross, we shall indeed conquer”.

**2. Liturgical formation and participation across the years**

The aim of the Church’s liturgy is to give glory and praise to God, and to “sanctify the time”. Through the unceasing rhythm of the Church’s prayer, time and space are made holy. The life of a school has its own rhythm, and through active participation in acts of worship, pupils are given an example of how the liturgical cycle can nourish and sustain the several cycles of life – how, in short, they can meet Jesus in the liturgy.

Though the lay chaplain will have the key responsibility for facilitating, and often leading, liturgical acts, it is important to emphasise that supporting this liturgical cycle is a responsibility of all staff. It is appropriate that the lay chaplain be line-managed by the Headteacher or his Deputy, and work closely with the Head of RE and a chaplaincy team. This Team will consist of members of staff, though older students will, as time goes by, contribute more to liturgical leadership.

**The daily and weekly rhythm**

Students will meet in their form groups at the beginning of each morning, unless it is their year assembly. Form tutors ensure that time is given to prayer and spiritual reflection, using the resources that are provided weekly by the lay chaplain. Form tutors will lead their forms in the preparation of morning worship, which the students will prepare for four days each week. Students will be encouraged, under the supervision of the lay chaplain, to produce resources for these daily acts of worship which will be in the format of; Gather, Word, Action and Mission.

The lay chaplain will ensure that there are daily and weekly liturgical acts in chapel. Subject to the observance of relevant liturgical norms, Eucharistic Adoration will take place once each week. On the first Friday in each month a visiting priest from the local deanery will lead a voluntary Mass in the morning. These liturgical actions will be promoted to staff and students. Students will, as the need arises, be given personal catechesis to help them to enter more fully into this liturgical rhythm. Wherever appropriate, the leadership of students in the daily and weekly actions in chapel will be encouraged.

**The monthly and seasonal rhythm**

The liturgical seasons, through which the year is sanctified, will be observed in school. On, or just prior to, the major liturgical festivals, special year group assemblies will

be held during the teaching day. These will serve to “mark the time”, and to encourage students and staff to reflect on the particular mysteries of the season.

As appropriate, the lay chaplain will work with the RE faculty to ensure that students have the opportunity to spend time in chapel during the seasons of Advent and Lent, to prepare spiritually for Christmas and the Paschal Season.

Christmas and Holy Week are marked, in particular, by the “Christmas Crib” and “Live Crucifixion” pageants performed by our sixth formers in the centre of Dewsbury.

Other times of the year that have particular significance will be marked, either by being highlighted in the regular weekly assemblies, or by particular provision being made in chapel. For example, Holocaust Memorial Day will be commemorated, to continue the strong links that the school has with this tradition. The Marian months of May and October will be observed with customary devotions.

Holy Days of Obligation will be marked by special year group assemblies, and a voluntary Mass.

Once again, students will be given personal catechesis to help them to enter more fully into this liturgical rhythm, and the leadership of students will be encouraged.

### **The annual rhythm**

There are several opportunities during the yearly cycle to promote the liturgical life of the school.

Each Year Group will have an annual Mass. At the moment, this is as follows:

- Year 7 “Rainbow Mass”, following their initial weeks of induction
- Year 8 and Year 9 each have a Mass at St Paulinus’ Church on a major feast day in the spring. If possible these are the feasts of St Patrick and St George
- Year 10 has a Mass in school during Advent
- Year 11 and Year 13 have “Leavers’ Masses”
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This provision may be adapted in future years subject to circumstances or need. These Masses are celebrated by priests of the Deanery, and the diocesan guidelines for celebrations of school Masses are followed.

The whole school gather to celebrate the Feast of St John Fisher on or around June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Because of the central importance of the Eucharist to the spiritual life of the school, opportunities to develop the celebration of “class masses” should be encouraged. The possibility of “House Masses” should also be explored.

The school will also promote and join with annual diocesan celebrations, such as the pilgrimages to Walsingham and Lourdes and World Youth events.

There are other important annual events in the life of the school which, while not strictly being liturgical, do manifest its Catholic nature. These would include the annual Advent Carol Service, celebrated in one of the churches of the Deanery, and the Prize Giving, celebrated in Dewsbury Town Hall.

### **The rhythm of the school career**

The way in which liturgy is used to support and sustain the progress of year groups through the school, and the manner in which different year groups are given specific liturgical formation, will be considered below in section 5.

### **The rhythms of life**

Members of the school community, both staff and students, will, from time to time, have events in their own life which cause them particular joy or sorrow. As well as the normal pastoral structures of the school which would be available to give support (including the lay chaplain), formal or informal liturgical acts can be arranged.

Should there be a major event which impinges on the whole, or part, of the school community, such as the death of a student or a staff member, the Headteacher shall make provision for such liturgical arrangements as are most appropriate.

The Academy Council and Senior Leadership will also make due provision for the school to mark and be involved in occasional significant events in the life of the Church, whether at deanery or diocesan level. Recent events have included the visit of the relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux in 2009 and the visit of Pope Benedict XVI in 2010, opening the 'Door of Mercy' in 2015.

## **3. Religious Education (RE) across the years**

Religious Education in a Catholic school fulfils a dual role. It is an academic subject in its own right, and as such takes its place with all other subjects in encouraging pupils to look at the full span of human experience. It will encourage thoughtfulness about the religious experience of humanity; the ability to question and assess religious and ethical teachings; and an understanding and appreciation of those who hold different views. RE, rightly taught, has a key role to play in "restoring substance, propagating roots, and re-forging links".

However, Religious Education in a Catholic school has also the responsibility to ensure that pupils of whatever age have a clear understanding of the teaching of the Catholic Church. At St John Fisher the RE Faculty will support the catechesis that takes place within parishes and within our own chaplaincy. It will use schemes of work and teaching materials that best facilitate this, and will make clear and regular reference to the catechesis contained within the Youth Catechism "YouCat".

By the learning that takes place within and outside the classroom, and by their own personal example, the members of the RE Faculty will support to the best of their ability the spiritual formation of pupils.

They will continue to maintain the high regard in which they are held by the diocese, and by Catholic higher education providers.

The leaders of our RE faculty are working with their colleagues from other Catholic schools in both the secondary and primary sectors to ensure that not only does our own Faculty maintain its traditionally high standards, and continue to conform to the requirements of our diocese, but that our own best practice can be shared with others

At Key Stage 4 all pupils are prepared for a GCSE in RE using those modules which best support a growth in understanding of the teaching of the Catholic Church.

At Key Stage 5 RE is a mandatory element in each course, and pupils study for awards accredited by the National Open College.

#### **4. The spiritual dimension in subject teaching**

*"Always remember that every subject you study is part of a bigger picture. Never allow yourselves to become narrow. The world needs good scientists, but a scientific outlook becomes dangerously narrow if it ignores the religious or ethical dimension of life, just as religion becomes narrow if it rejects the legitimate contribution of science to our understanding of the world. We need good historians and philosophers and economists, but if the account they give of human life within their particular field is too narrowly focused, they can lead us seriously astray." (Pope Benedict XVI, The Big Assembly, 17 September 2010)*

The school curriculum is most effectively delivered, and the passion and expertise of teaching staff best maintained, through the traditional promotion of individual subjects. But our Curriculum Policy encourages a permeability of borders between subjects, so that students grow in a rounded, holistic understanding of the various fields of human endeavour. By doing this, "substance is restored, roots propagated, and links re-forged."

Through our annual ethos day, faculties will be encouraged to promote the spiritual dimension of their subjects. This will be reflected in faculty action plans, and will be subject for evaluation in the Faculty Reviews. Care will be taken, through faculty line management (and ultimately through the Head and Deputy Head), that proposed actions are not superficial. Rather, they should touch on major ethical implications of topics being studied, or lead students to a thoughtful appreciation of what it means to be human. The use of specific examples of people whose faith has inspired their work is encouraged.

The Church has always taught that God makes himself known in Nature. As students grow in understanding of the world around them, our aim is that they are helped to perceive the mind and the hand of God.

#### **5. The Spiritual Formation of Staff**

*As you know, the task of a teacher is not simply to impart information or to provide training in skills intended to deliver some economic benefit to society; education is not and must never be considered as purely utilitarian. It is about forming the human*

*person, equipping him or her to live life to the full – in short it is about imparting wisdom. And true wisdom is inseparable from knowledge of the Creator. (Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Catholic Educators, St Mary's University, Twickenham, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2010)*

The staff of the school have an indispensable role in nurturing the spiritual development of the students. Just as right training and the development of pedagogical skills are the basis of their support of the learning process in general, staff need to be equipped to facilitate its spiritual equivalent.

It is recognised that not all members of staff will be Catholics, and that even those who are may not currently be practising their faith in an active way. Some staff are members of other Christian groups, and often very committed ones. The school also welcomes members of other faiths onto the staff team, and benefits from the perspectives they share. Further, it is recognised that some staff, of whatever religious background, may currently profess no faith; indeed they may have significant doubts.

Nevertheless, the Academy Council representative explore with staff during the interview process how they will support the Catholic ethos of the school; and staff make a commitment to this by signing the Catholic Education Service contract of employment. They can therefore reasonably be expected to take part in the process of spiritual formation that lies at the heart of that ethos. Teaching and support staff alike contribute most effectively to this by their personal example.

The Academy Council and Senior Leadership of the school will therefore make such provision as is necessary for all staff to be nurtured in their own journey of faith (Principle D), and to understand the teaching of the Catholic Church on and for which the school was founded (Principle B).

A key element in this will be the "Ethos Day", to which one of the INSET days is devoted. So, also, are the short but regular spiritual reflections which begin the twice-weekly staff briefings. These are usually led by the lay chaplain or the Headteacher, but other members of staff should be encouraged and enabled to contribute.

It is part of the role of the lay chaplain to provide spiritual support and guidance to staff as well as students, and the chaplaincy action plan should make provision, as necessary and appropriate, for the ongoing formation of staff. For example, while some staff will be more than able to support students in their planning and delivery of high-quality acts of worship during form time, others will require guidance and resources.

The provision of an annual, voluntary, staff retreat should be explored. Teachers and other staff should be invited, encouraged and supported to do the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.

The induction of new staff members, particularly newly-qualified teachers, should pay significant attention to the Catholic ethos of the school, and the role of staff

members in leading the spiritual development of students. Again, the lay chaplain has a key role in this, but so too does the Teacher Tutor. This role of the latter should be a major factor in the job description whenever the post becomes vacant.

## **6. Spiritual Formation of students year by year:**

*Once you enter into friendship with God, everything in your life begins to change. As you come to know him better, you find you want to reflect something of his infinite goodness in your own life. You are attracted to the practice of virtue. You begin to see greed and selfishness and all the other sins for what they really are, destructive and dangerous tendencies that cause deep suffering and do great damage, and you want to avoid falling into that trap yourselves. You begin to feel compassion for people in difficulties and you are eager to do something to help them. You want to come to the aid of the poor and the hungry, you want to comfort the sorrowful, you want to be kind and generous. And once these things begin to matter to you, you are well on the way to becoming saints.*

*(Pope Benedict XVI, The Big Assembly, 17 Sept 2010)*

The "Programme of Formation" working party took the broadest possible view of provision, from that directly under the control of the lay chaplain or the RE faculty, to the taught curriculum, and ultimately to the curriculum outside the classroom which is particularly strong at St John Fisher.

In discussion, it was clear that spiritual development, while unique to each student, passed through distinct phases as students moved through the school. For this reason, "year themes" were proposed to, and accepted by, Directors of Study and the relevant committees of the Academy Council.

The provision outlined here has been broadened to include outreach before students join the school, and to raise the question of fostering spiritual bonds when students have left the school. Given that the provision outlined reflects current good practice, it should not be viewed as unchangeable. Within the broad themes set out, it lies to pastoral and curriculum leaders to respond to changing circumstances, and indeed to the spiritual journey of the school community as a whole.

### **a. Pre-admission**

The school currently takes great care to manage the transition process of pupils from primary school into Year 7. Their social and emotional needs are considered, and several forms of curriculum outreach take place. This induction should also form a bridge between the rich spiritual tradition that pupils at our Catholic feeder schools have enjoyed, and the one that they will find at St John Fisher. Such induction is particularly relevant for those pupils who have not attended a Catholic primary.

The leadership and example of older students should be a significant element in our work with pupils in Years 5 and 6, perhaps by conducting assemblies and celebrating Mass together in activities organised by 'Pyramid' schools.

Examples include the celebration of the feast of 'Our Lady of Lourdes' with St Paulinus primary school within the Deanery.

Meetings with parents of pupils in Years 5 and 6 will reflect and promote the school's vision for spiritual development.

b. Year 7 – **"Leap of Faith"**

The move from primary to secondary school will be one of the most significant life-events that our students experience. The structure of the year aims to guide and support them through this process. In the Gospels, we meet the Teacher who calls his disciples to "leave their comfort zones" and follow him. Away-days in the early weeks of September enhance the formation of "form communities", and emphasise the varied gifts that each student brings to that community. Social and inclusion skills are developed.

This process culminates with the whole-year "Rainbow Mass" in school. Towards the end of the first term, there is the opportunity for students to go on retreat to Myddleton Grange.

Year 7 also have an assembly during which students are presented with the 'New Testament', and this invitation to be "students of the scriptures" is a key part of the Leap of Faith. Special chapel services during RE time in Advent and Lent help to establish the rhythm of the liturgical year

Year 7 forms develop the dimension of service by working together on the "Christmas Shoe Box" charity.

Pupils are offered the opportunity to engage in physical challenges that can cement the "Leap of Faith" that has been made during this year.

A challenge for form tutors and the Director of Study during this year is to make sure that the learning and spiritual development of those who choose to go on the retreat, and who engage with opportunities in the wider curriculum, is shared and celebrated with the whole year group.

This year is a key year for "setting the tone" of what pupils might expect further up the school, and is thus the one in which future refinements of the programme of spiritual development should be made. The planning cycle should include, in its needs analysis, what additional elements should be included in the "Leap of Faith" year. Two elements which should be addressed as a matter of priority in Year 7 are the establishment of a "singing tradition" in the school, and a significant induction into the four "School Houses".

Year 7 are offered the opportunity to prepare receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

At present this is a Deanery responsibility, conducted by parish catechists. Though the school chapel is used as a highly appropriate venue, it has

traditionally been important to stress that this is not a “school activity”. Indeed, each year several *confirmandi* will be members of other schools.

The partnership of school and parish in the spiritual formation of students is exemplified by this event. A challenge for the lay chaplain, form tutors, and Director of Study is to raise the profile of this sacrament and its significance. While not wishing to encroach on the work of the deanery catechists, this highly significant event in the life of our students.

The preparation for the event should be discussed and celebrated, with pupils being encouraged to consider putting themselves forwards.

c. Year 8 – **“Who am I?”**

Year 8 has traditionally been identified by educational studies as a “dip year” in many aspects of school life. The Leap of Faith has been made, and the choices and increased maturity of Year 9 are still over the horizon. Form tutors report that many Year 8 pupils suffer from low self-esteem, and need “scaffolding” to support their growth in self-understanding.

The central spiritual theme of this year is the journey of self-discovery, which mirrors much of what is being taught in the classroom curriculum. As a symbol of this, the whole year group take part in a pilgrimage, which serves to strengthen both self-identity and the sense of belonging to a ‘School House’. In the saints, including the patrons of our school and houses, we meet men and women who have discovered that the true fulfilment of their lives came through knowing Jesus Christ, and serving him in others.

A wealth of optional trips and visits offer students the opportunity to further the process of self-discovery and also self-location in a historical and geographical world.

The motif of “journeying” is underscored by the formal procession to St Paulinus’ church on or around the feast of St George. This provides an opportunity for specific catechesis on the Mass.

Links are forged with the wider diocese in the course of the year charity, which supports the “Good Shepherd” fund. Once again the challenge for form tutors and the Director of Study during this year is to make sure that the learning and spiritual development of those who are involved in specific events is shared and celebrated with the whole year group.

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At present this is a Deanery responsibility, conducted by parish catechists. Though the school chapel is used as a highly appropriate venue, it has traditionally been important to stress that this is not a “school activity”. Indeed, each year several *confirmandi* will be members of other schools.

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The preparation for the event should be discussed and celebrated, with pupils being encouraged to consider putting themselves forwards.

d. Year 9 – **“Journey to Adulthood”**

We seek this year to encounter Jesus in sacraments and service.

By Year 9, students are sufficiently self-aware to begin to engage in a creative way with encounters that will challenge and stimulate their faith. Thus, for example they form the recruiting ground for the school CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) group; and they have been involved in trips to the National Holocaust Memorial Centre. In this year, students are eligible to join the diocesan “Revelations”, group which meets monthly.

CAFOD is the year charity, and students take a lead in promoting understanding of our responsibility for the welfare of others.

It is currently during Year 9 that students make choices about their options in Key Stage 4. This provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on the spiritual dimensions of “Journey into Adulthood”.

Again, the motif of “journey” is celebrated by a formal procession down to St Paulinus’ church, usually on or around the Feast of St Patrick.

e. Year 10 – **“Reaching Out”**

During Year 10, the “roots and links” which pupils have are broadened significantly. This takes place not only as their studies enter a more mature phase, but as they also respond to the two optional “pilgrimages” of this year. They are encouraged to empathise with others, and to see that they are not the “centre of the world”. As students “reach out” to make sense of new experiences, in a very real way Jesus is reaching out to them and asking, “What will *you* do with *your* life?”

The optional Battlefields trip, in October, has grown into a firm, and life-changing, element for many Year 10 students. Organised collaboratively by the Humanities and RE faculties, almost one half of the year group travel to the First World War battlefields of Ypres and the Somme. Students encounter the human cost of warfare in a very direct way, and are challenged both by the tour conductors and the liturgical opportunities created by our staff to think differently about their own lives.

Students bring these experiences back into school, and are encouraged to reflect further. This theme of “reaching out” is picked up in the Advent year Mass, which encourages the whole year group to think about “past, present and future”, and God’s plan and purpose for our lives.

During Year 10, the school welcomes the Diocesan Vocations Coordinator, who not only raises the possibility of priestly or religious vocation, but also issues a challenge to all to think about vocation in its widest sense of the calling of God on our lives.

At the very end of the year pupils are able to join the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. While much appreciated by those who go, numbers are small compared to other Catholic secondary schools in the diocese. Strategies to increase the prominence of this pilgrimage should be considered, not least with those who accepted the sacrament of confirmation in the previous year.

Once again the challenge for form tutors and the Director of Study during this year is to make sure that the learning and spiritual development of those who are involved in specific events is shared and celebrated with the whole year group.

f. **Year 11 – “Passport to the Future”**

In this year, as students become the most mature members of the main school, a natural focus is on the final examinations, and what will happen after them. It should therefore be during this year that the spiritual development of previous years reaches its culmination.

For some students, this will enable them to be confident to be Catholic, and opportunities for students in Year 11 to engage in debate, and for some to perhaps develop skills in explaining and defending their faith, should be sought.

The final event of Year 11 is to join together in a final celebration of the Mass, which in some ways is the mirror of the “Rainbow Mass” in Year 7. Students are being sent out into the next phase of their lives from within the school as Eucharistic Community, and the inclusion of parents in this event is a factor whose significance should not be ignored by those responsible for the liturgy.

At the end of St Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus promises that he will be with his disciples “until the end of time.” If the programme of formation during Years 7 – 11 has been successful, students will have made significant steps in moving from a child’s faith towards an adult faith. Just as we hope to equip students for lifelong learning, so too our wish is that spiritual development would continue. Whatever our students’ individual responses to the message and person of Jesus, we trust that their minds and hearts may continue to be open to the Jesus who says, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

g. Years 12 and 13 – **“Beyond the Horizon”**

To some extent the programme of formation for sixth form students’ needs to be considered in isolation, even though a significant proportion of our sixth form will have made the journey from Year 7 to Year 11 at St John Fisher.

The spiritual characteristic of both sixth form years is that of students being moved out of their “comfort zones”, encountering new academic and social challenges. There is a high level of “risk”, as students prepare for a future whose uncertainty can be clearly perceived.

As students keep one eye firmly on the horizon, they are also offered opportunities to take a leading role in the spiritual life of the school. They present the school to the outside world in their Christmas and Holy Week pageants. They are invited to travel with the lay chaplain to diocesan and national events, and are increasingly able to do so under their own steam.

They should also be encouraged to develop and display leadership skills amongst students in lower years, preparing and delivering liturgies and other activities.

RE continues as a mandatory curriculum subject. In the sixth form students are much more likely to encounter other students who do not come from Catholic backgrounds, and the fruitfulness of such encounters – along with our responsibility to welcome and nurture those from other faiths – should be given special attention by the leaders of the Sixth Form.

Because many Sixth Formers have weekend or evening jobs, organising a retreat has proved difficult in recent years. However year 12 pupils are given the opportunity of joining in the diocesan Lourdes pilgrimage, and at least one student is regularly supported to join in the World Youth Day.

The school responds to the particular spiritual needs of each cohort, and ensures that the student voice in these matters is heard and taken seriously.

h. Life after school

From the way that former students regularly call back to visit the school, and to speak to staff members, and the overwhelming response to such recent celebrations as the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school, and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sixth Form, it is clear that our “*alumni*” have a high regard for their time at St John Fisher. Apart from these big, occasional events, the concept of continuing spiritual support for those who have left has not been examined or developed.

It is possible that, as the school considers its role in “all-age Catholic education in the deanery”, and its need to secure a loyal recruitment base for the long-term future, that this might be an area worth exploring.

## **7. Spiritual development and social cohesion**

The Social Cohesion Plan for the school shows how the social teaching of the Church is to be advanced, and how students can be aware of, and engaged in, this at local, national and international levels.

This is seen as a key element of spiritual development (see Principles A-C)

## **8. The role of St John Fisher in all-age Catholic Formation within the Deanery**

Catholic secondary education creates some anomalies. Some students who are faithful and active in their own parishes are reluctant to be “known for their faith” in school. On the other hand, the liturgical life of the school draws to a deeper faith some students who have no family contact with a Catholic parish, sometimes even leading to requests for further sacramental initiation. While not a statement to be proud of, many Catholic schools would consider that “we are all the Church that many of our students will know”.

The school will continue to make every effort to root and link students, and indeed parents, into the Catholic life of the deanery and diocese.

As the deanery considers the shape of Catholic school education in the future, there is a sense that an opportunity is being given to examine “Catholic education” for all ages in its widest sense. There is already a tremendous amount of good practice in the spiritual formation of both young people and adults. The resources – material and human – within both the school and the parishes are significant, and have the potential to be harnessed in an even more creative and fruitful way in the future.

As the changes to the Diocesan Confirmation preparation programme changes the school will look to develop the Diocesan ‘Faith in Action Programme’ alongside the Diocesan Youth Team for years 7 to 10.

## **Equality Impact Assessment -**

<b>School</b>	<b>St John Fisher</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>November 2017</b>
<b>Lead member of staff</b>	<b>S Wilkinson- Deputy Headteacher</b>
<b>Other staff/role involved</b>	

### **Proposed Plan**

Background/ how this proposal has come about

Reason for proposal – to introduce new practice/provision

to change or reduce practice/provision

to remove practice/provision

Main stakeholders

Any legislation or guidance that informs the proposals

Review and update of current policy.

### **Is the proposal likely to have an adverse impact on compliance with the Equality Duty?**

Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation

**N**

Promoting equality of opportunity

**N**

Fostering good relations

**N**

Please explain

Policy has to ensure wide curriculum access for all groups welcomed into the school community.

### **Consultation Process**

With whom do you plan to consult?

How?

Where is the evidence of the consultation?

Full Governing Body - Staff as appropriate

## Potential Issues

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Impact of proposal (specify if impact is to pupil, parent/carer, staff, governor, other)</b>	<b>Positive Negative Neutral</b>	<b>Can barrier be removed? Y/N</b>
Disability	<b>Curriculum proposals are geared to supporting students in this category.</b>	<b>Positive</b>	
Race	<b>Avoiding disadvantage to children of different race was a consideration in writing this policy.</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	
Sex	<b>Avoiding disadvantage to children of different sex was a consideration in writing this policy.</b>	<b>Positive</b>	
Gender reassignment		<b>Neutral</b>	
Pregnancy, maternity		<b>Neutral</b>	
Religion/belief		<b>Neutral</b>	
Sexual orientation		<b>Neutral</b>	
Marriage, civil partnership		<b>Neutral</b>	
Age		<b>Neutral</b>	

Explain in more detail