

Religious Education Reference Group: Update

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To Know and to Love

Update on the work of the Religious Education Curriculum

Meeting #13 of the Religious Education Reference Group

Friday 12 December 2025

The last meeting of the year for the Religious Education Reference Group was held in December and opened with shared prayer and acknowledgement of country, prepared by **Prof Br David Hall**. Br David drew on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe and St Juan Diego for the reference group in highlighting the work of the group in making Jesus Christ known and loved.

'Loving God, on this feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we gather with grateful hearts to plan the work of forming young people in faith. Mary, Mother and Teacher, you revealed yourself as a gentle guide to St. Juan Diego. Be our guide today. Help us to see with clarity, to listen with compassion, and to discern what will truly lead learners toward Christ.'

Br David reflected on the theological and pedagogical foundations guiding the curriculum, drawing on Pope Leo's apostolic letter and the Global Compact on Education. He highlighted three central themes:

- Education as an act of hope and love, rooted in a Christian vision of human dignity.
- Integral formation of the whole person—spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social, and physical.
- Catholic pedagogy shaped by justice, service, and the common good.

He emphasised the importance of aligning curriculum development with teacher formation and assessment practices and called for a hermeneutic of continuity between Vatican II and current initiatives, ensuring fidelity to the Catholic tradition as the curriculum continues to evolve.

The main points of the meetings are described below.



The group reviewed significant progress across the entire F–10 curriculum:

Primary Progress

- Foundation: All units completed; full-year trial in 42 schools for 2026.
- Year 1: Five of eight units drafted; remaining units due in 2026.
- Year 2: Drafting begins early 2026.
- Years 3, 4, and 5: Full development planned for 2026.
- Year 6: Six of eight units drafted; final two units ready by February 2026.

Secondary Progress

- Year 7: All units completed
- Year 8: All units completed
- Year 9: Writing begins in 2026
- Year 10: Three of eight units completed; remaining units to follow next year.

Achievements in 2025

- Completion of the full F–10 curriculum overview.
- REL network presentations, two webinars, and extensive school consultations.
- Publication of curriculum foundation paper in *International Studies in Catholic Education*.
- Drafting of a prayer scope and sequence.
- Alignment with the Vision for Instruction.

Goals for 2026

- Complete units for Years 2–5; finalise Year 6.
- Revise Years 7–8 based on trial feedback; complete Years 9–10.
- Begin Years 11–12 development with an expert advisory group.
- Explore senior school based RE options and accreditation pathways.
- Develop assessment policy aligned with Catholic pedagogy.
- Publish prayer and liturgy guidance.
- Launch curriculum branding strategy.
- Deliver 10 formation webinars and showcase work at the RE Symposium.
- Publish a second academic paper on curriculum development.

Year 1

Marsha Van Cuylenburg presented a Year 1 unit called *Pentecost: God Sends the Holy Spirit to Help Us*. This unit introduces students to the Holy Trinity and the significance of Pentecost as the birth of the Church. It explores Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit and introduces selected fruits of the Spirit in an age-appropriate way.

Feedback included:

- considering a title that emphasises relationship (e.g., The Holy Spirit helps us follow Jesus)
- strengthening explanations of who the Holy Spirit is as the shared love of Father and Son
- ensuring theological accuracy when speaking about the Trinity
- using analogies to help children grasp the Holy Spirit's invisible presence
- affirming hinge questions and deeper learning activities

Clarity of language around Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was highlighted as essential for young learners.

Year 6

Prof Kath Engebretson presented two units in Year 6 preparing students for Confirmation: *We Know Jesus in the Catholic Church*, and *Anointed in the Holy Spirit*. The first Confirmation unit helps students understand that they are choosing to be confirmed within the Catholic Church. It presents Catholicism as the largest Christian tradition globally and in Australia and explains apostolic succession and the four marks of the Church. The second Confirmation unit explores Confirmation as sealing Baptism, tracing historical development and explaining the symbols of the Spirit. Students encounter the gifts of the Holy Spirit and their role in the Christian life.

Feedback emphasised:

- adding a richer personal dimension—entering a long tradition and story
- including Indigenous and multicultural expressions of Catholic identity
- refining terminology around ecumenism and interfaith understanding
- adding Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts for anointing
- emphasising that gifts of the Spirit are spiritual and grow through grace
- weaving Saints' lives into teaching—especially diverse examples

Year 10

Kyle Hoad presented unit in Year 10 called *Christ-Centredness in Today's World*. This unit positions Christ as the foundation for moral life and personal identity, exploring the Kingdom of God, Christian ethics, the Commandments, Beatitudes, and moral acts.

Feedback suggested:

- strengthening the central question: “If not Christ, then what?”
- using case studies from contemporary life—social media ethics, gender relations, peer dynamics
- avoiding superficial contrasts with other ethical systems
- emphasising happiness and human flourishing as outcomes of Christian ethics
- tying Commandments and Beatitudes together as “guardrails” and “pathways”
- ensuring intellectual challenge and deeper reflection throughout

Suggestions also included revisiting the Christ-centred theme at the end of the unit, adding nuanced discussion of nihilism, and ensuring ethics is always rooted in theology.