

Religious Education Reference Group: Update

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To Know and to Love

Update on the work of the Religious Education Curriculum

Meeting #20 of the Religious Education Reference Group

Friday 24 July 2026

Shauna-Maree Sykes opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and led prayer centred on St Lawrence of Brindisi, Doctor of the Church. The reflection recalled his commitment to Scripture, theology, learning, and proclaiming the Gospel. Prayer was offered for curriculum writers, educational leaders, teachers, and students, that Religious Education would unite faith and reason, welcome important questions, and help young people grow in knowledge, wisdom, service, and relationship with Christ.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:San_Lorenzo_da_Brindisi.jpg

'Intercede for students as they explore the great questions of faith, meaning, purpose, and human dignity. Through the study of theology, philosophy, ethics, and Scripture, may they grow in both knowledge and wisdom, learning to unite faith and reason in the pursuit of truth.'

Prof Br David Hall fms opened the meeting with discussion on the previous two days of the Religious Education Symposium. As the first event of its kind since 2018, the Symposium combined inspiration, formation, and practical support for Catholic identity and Religious Education. Strong participation and positive feedback reflected growing momentum across the system. Members of the reference group echoed their enthusiasm and positive experience of the symposium and its effects.

Discussion also considered the emerging role of artificial intelligence in education, particularly within the Religious Education classroom. Members recognised the need for clear parameters that address both the opportunities presented by new technologies and the practical challenges facing teachers and students. Future curriculum guidance will seek to connect broader MACS principles with classroom practice and the distinctive purposes of Religious Education.

Advisory Groups

The Pedagogy Advisory Group shared emerging principles grounded in a holistic understanding of children and learning, particularly focused on early years learning. Current principles recognise that intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social, and physical development are interconnected and that learning responds to students' experiences, relationships, and capacity to create meaning. Further

development will translate these broad foundations into clear principles and practical guidance for teachers. The inclusion of a more explicit theology of the child was also recommended.

The Eastern Catholic Churches Advisory Group was able to contribute to the RE Symposium through the workshop *Who Are Our Learners? Voices from the Eastern Churches*. The well-attended session highlighted the richness of Eastern Catholic Churches and generated interest in further professional learning for school staff. The advisory group will continue contributing to sacramental units so that Eastern Catholic celebrations and practices are represented authentically throughout the curriculum.

Curriculum Writing

Year 5 – A Believing People

Prof Kath Engebretson presented a unit called *A Believing People*. This unit introduces students to the Creed as a shared expression of Christian faith. Across three learning sequences, students explore God as Maker of Heaven and Earth, Jesus Christ as true God and true man, and the Holy Spirit working through the Church. The unit explains key theological concepts in accessible language and helps students understand the four marks of the Church: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Members supported allowing teachers to use the Apostles' Creed where this is more familiar or developmentally appropriate for primary students. Members of the group suggested a connection with *Laudato Si'* can be included when exploring God as Creator and humanity's responsibility for creation. The unit provides students with rich opportunities to engage with Scripture, prayer, creation, the Trinity, and the shared beliefs of the Catholic community.

Year 2 – The Holy Spirit Inspires the Apostles to Teach About Jesus Christ

Adrian Mancini presented a Pentecost unit which explores how the Holy Spirit transformed the Apostles and empowered the mission of the early Church. Students distinguish between disciples and Apostles, learn how Peter and Paul proclaimed the Good News, and examine how the earliest Christians gathered for the Apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. The unit received positive feedback for its clear teacher preparation materials, accessible critical content, and strong connection to prior learning. Scripture, storytelling, hinge questions, creative activities, and reflection support students in recognising the Holy Spirit as God, the third Person of the Trinity. The unit also enables students to connect the community formed at Pentecost with the continuing life and mission of the Church today.

Year 9 – Personhood as a Call to Reverence

James O'Brien presented the final unit of Year 9 which explores human dignity, grace, divinisation, friendship, relationships, and responsible participation in the digital world. Students consider the belief that every person is made in the image and likeness of God and is called to flourish through union with Christ. Reverence provides a central theme, inviting students to honour God's presence in themselves, in others, and throughout creation. This unit's second review affirmed its overall direction and recommended strengthening links between Baptism, grace, divinisation, and eternal life. Further suggestions included incorporating specific reference to Psalms 8 and 139, expanding key vocabulary, providing additional teacher guidance for complex questions, and weaving the Christian virtue of love more consistently throughout the learning.