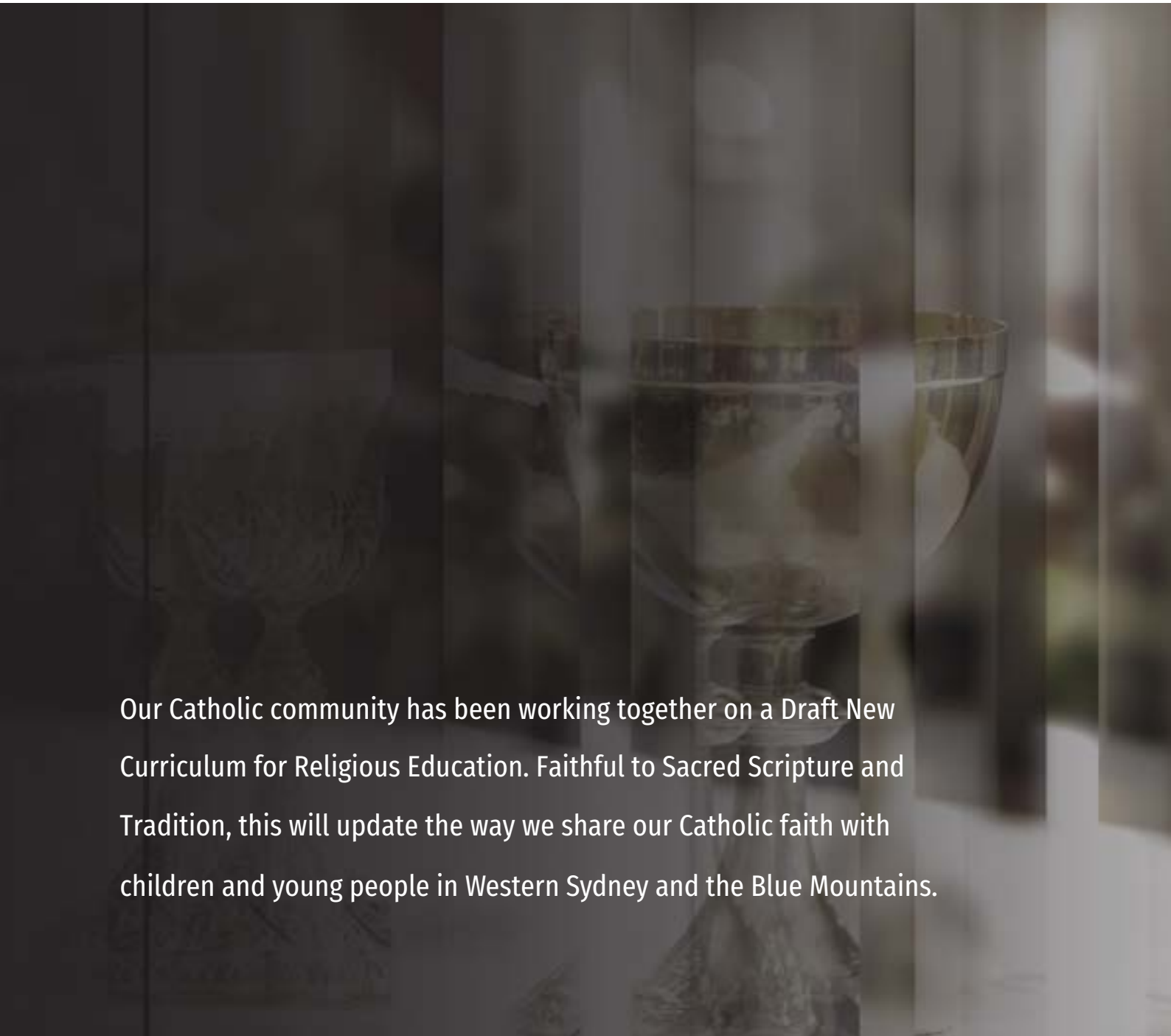


# Understanding the Draft New Curriculum for Religious Education in the Diocese of Parramatta





Our Catholic community has been working together on a Draft New Curriculum for Religious Education. Faithful to Sacred Scripture and Tradition, this will update the way we share our Catholic faith with children and young people in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

# What is the purpose of this guide?

We have created this guide to help community members learn more about the Draft New Curriculum for Religious Education in the Diocese of Parramatta. It provides a brief explanation of the structure of the curriculum document used to support teachers sharing our Catholic faith with students. We also thought it might be helpful to explain some of the terms used in the Draft New Curriculum, particularly for first-time readers.

# What is a Curriculum?

A curriculum is the content taught in a specific course or program. This Draft New Curriculum sets out the learning for students from Preschool to Year 12 in Religious Education in Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta schools and Catholic Early Learning Centres.

# Why does the Religious Education Curriculum need to change?

The current curriculum for Religious Education in the Diocese of Parramatta, *'Sharing Our Story'*, has been in place for more than 20 years. The Draft New Curriculum, which will replace *'Sharing our Story'* once it is finalised, remains faithful to Sacred Scripture and Tradition. It will also reflect up-to-date learning and teaching. This approach is about sharing our Catholic faith with the next generation.

## Why is this still a draft?

As a draft, this document remains open to ongoing review. The Draft New Curriculum has been developed and continues to be refined through input from clergy, parents, teachers, educational leaders and students. It's a work in progress and will take time.

## When is it expected that the final document will be ready?

The curriculum will be launched in late 2021. Between now and then, it will continue to be reviewed and refined, and that's why the feedback of our community is so important.

## How do we teach Religious Education?

The Draft New Curriculum is taught using 'Experiential Learning through Inquiry'. This up-to-date approach to learning and teaching is used throughout the Diocese of Parramatta. By using real-life experiences, it helps students to not only engage in their learning but also reflect on how they can apply it in their own lives. One of the major benefits is the involvement of so many of our young people in social outreach projects that support vulnerable members of our community.



# Is the learning age-appropriate?

Yes. It's important to understand that the Stages in the Draft New Curriculum document are not the same as Year Groups. For example, Stage 5 means Years 9 and 10 not students in Year 5. Here's how it works:

STAGE	YEAR GROUP
Pre school	
Early Stage One	Kindergarten
Stage 1	Year 1 & Year 2
Stage 2	Years 3 & 4
Stage 3	Year 5 & Year 6
Stage 4	Year 7 & Year 8
Stage 5	Year 9 & Year 10
Stage 6	Year 11 & Year 12

# What does the Draft New Curriculum teach secondary students about complex or sensitive issues?

The Draft New Curriculum for secondary students aims to teach them how to think deeply about complex issues in modern culture from a Catholic perspective. It is a strong endorsement of the faith and morals of the Catholic Church.

The Draft New Curriculum is all about giving students a Catholic way of thinking about their lives. When sensitive issues are discussed with secondary students, the focus will be on sharing Catholic Teaching and values. The Draft New Curriculum upholds the Teachings of the Catholic Church and has been specifically designed to be age-appropriate for children and young people.



# What is the purpose of the questions in the Draft New Curriculum?

The best learning begins when people ask questions. The questions that are included in the Draft New Curriculum are examples similar to ones that have come from students. Asking questions is their way of thinking about and trying to make sense of their world. This approach has been practised in Catholic education for centuries. Pope Francis recently advised leaders in the Church not to simply continue answering 'questions people are no longer asking.'

The questions are not topic areas to be taught in the curriculum and the Draft New Curriculum does not teach students anything that is contrary to the Catholic faith. The role of teachers is to respond to the questions their students ask and work towards the learning goals using Catholic Teaching.

# How should I read the New Draft Curriculum?

Some of the language that is used in the Draft New Curriculum may be new to you, so we thought an explanation of some of these terms might be helpful.



## Q What is a Learning Cycle?

A Learning Cycle is the content that will be taught to students each term. More information about the structure of each Learning Cycle is included below.

## Q What is the Essential Content?

The Essential Content provides the mandatory content drawn from Sacred Scripture and Tradition that is to be taught in the Learning Cycle.

## Q What are Learning Expectations?

Learning Expectations explain the components of the Learning Cycle that are to be demonstrated by the student.

Learning Expectations help the students to demonstrate their learning and assist teachers in the development of assessments.

## Q How will Sacred Scripture (the Bible) and Tradition be taught?

The suggested Sacred Scripture and Tradition in a Learning Cycle have been selected as age appropriate. They connect to the Essential Content and Learning Expectations.

Where possible, Sacred Scripture (Bible Passages) is drawn from the appropriate Liturgical Year so that teachers can make connections with Sunday Readings that the children hear at Mass over the year.

Teachers can also use different Bible passages to those suggested. This decision can be based on the Liturgical Season (eg: Easter and Christmas) as well as Parish events. For example, if students are receiving their Sacraments at a particular time, then specific passages may be selected for inclusion in the Learning Cycle.

Teachers make connections between the Old and New Testament so that children may develop a full understanding of the whole of the Sacred Scripture, including tenets of faith like the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.

Texts drawn from the Tradition of the Church are age appropriate. These may include the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Encyclicals, Exhortations, Papal Letters and Constitutions.



### Q What is an Overarching Question?

The Overarching Question is the main question that will be covered in each Learning Cycle. You will see this Overarching Question in the first box of each Learning Cycle. These questions encourage students to think deeply about their learning and their faith.

### Q What is a Statement of Inquiry?

The Statement of Inquiry names the reason for the student learning. It names the 'What' and the 'Why' of the Learning Cycle.

### Q What does the phrase Significance for Learning mean?

Significance for Learning names the main 'intentions' of the Learning Cycle. It summarises the kinds of student questions that the Learning Cycle is responding to.

## Q What do we mean by Transformative Learning?

The Draft New Curriculum draws on experiences that students have to strengthen their faith and 'transform' their lives in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta is dedicated to transforming the learning of each student within a Catholic learning community. In the Draft New Curriculum, transformative learning is about the difference the learning makes in strengthening their Catholic faith. It is not related to any particular topic in the curriculum.

## Q What is Enduring Understanding?

Enduring understanding is the deep learning that happens and the understanding that the learner will still have in years to come.

## Q Why are examples of Inquiry Questions provided?

Using students' questions to support learning is an important part of 'Experiential Learning through Inquiry' (asking questions).

The Inquiry Questions in the document are examples of the kinds of questions that students have asked us about life and faith. The Inquiry Question is not the content that is taught to students (which in the Curriculum is called the Essential Content).

The questions given in the document are like the questions that the students asked when they were surveyed when the curriculum was being developed.

Teachers will draw on the Essential Content in each Learning Cycle, and the knowledge that their students already have to develop, with their students, relevant Inquiry Questions. This helps teachers to personalise the learning for their students so that their learning needs can be met and the Essential Content covered. Students are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Inquiry Questions. The Inquiry Questions connect the Essential Content and the Learning Expectations.

## Q What are Insights?

Located in the latter section of the Draft New Curriculum, the Insights accompany the Essential Content and are for teachers to use as a resource and guide. They are to be used in preparation for teaching the Learning Cycle.



## How can I share my thoughts?

We've been surveying our schools about their experiences of trialling some Learning Cycles of the Draft New Curriculum. If you would like to share your thoughts, please contact [feedback@parra.catholic.edu.au](mailto:feedback@parra.catholic.edu.au).

Thank you for your interest in the faith and learning of children and young people in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.