



St JOHN'S CHURCH of ENGLAND ACADEMY

Religious Education Policy

Reviewed	January 2018
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Religious Education Policy

St. John's Church of England Academy will provide a happy, caring environment based on strong relationships and a sense of family where children feel inspired. Our aim is to ensure that each and every child **achieves and flourishes within our committed church school community**. Belonging to a safe and nurturing community, founded on strong Christian values, we hope that children will develop an array of skills that will equip them to meet the challenges of our ever changing world and to make their own positive contribution to our global society.

The Legal Position

Religious Education is unique in the school curriculum in that it is neither a core subject nor a foundation subject but the 1988 Education Act states that 'Religious Education has equal standing in relation to core subjects of the National Curriculum in that it is compulsory for all registered pupils'

St. John's Church of England Academy is a Church of England School therefore the provision of RE must be in accordance with the Trust Deed of the School. The Governors adopt the Diocesan Syllabus and supplement this with material from 'Understanding Christianity'. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all teaching staff.

Rationale and Aims

At St. John's, we believe that Religious Education holds a central place in the education of all our children and is fundamental to achieving school aims, especially that of developing the 'whole' child. As such, we aim that Religious Education will:-

- **enable pupils to know about and understand Christianity as a living faith** that influences the lives of people worldwide and as the religion that has most shaped British culture and heritage.
- **provoke challenging questions** about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs, the self, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human. It develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other principal religions, and religious traditions that examine these questions, fostering personal reflection and spiritual development
- **encourage pupils to explore their own beliefs** (whether they are religious or non-religious), in the light of what they learn, as they examine issues of religious belief and faith and how these impact on personal, institutional and social ethics; and to express their responses. This also builds resilience to anti-democratic or extremist narratives.
- **enable pupils to build their sense of identity and belonging**, which helps them flourish within their communities and as citizens in a diverse society
- **teach pupils to develop respect for others**, including people with different faiths and beliefs, and helps to challenge prejudice
- **prompt pupils to consider their responsibilities** to themselves and to others, and to explore how they might contribute to their communities and to wider society.

- **encourage empathy, generosity and compassion and develop a sense of awe and wonder and mystery**

The contribution R.E. makes to other curriculum aims:

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Section 78 (1) of the 2002 Education Act states that all pupils should follow a balanced and broadly based curriculum which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and of society, and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life'. Learning about and from religions and beliefs, through the distinct knowledge, understanding and skills contained in RE within a broad-based curriculum, is essential to achieving these aims. Exploring the concepts of religion and belief and their roles in the spiritual, moral and cultural lives of people in a diverse society helps individuals develop moral awareness and social understanding.

RE contributes to pupil's spiritual development by:-

- Discussing and reflecting on questions of meaning and truth such as the origins of the universe, good and evil, life after death, beliefs about God and humanity and linked to our core Christian values.
- Learning about and reflecting on important concepts and experiences such as love, trust, forgiveness, obedience and sacrifice.
- Valuing relationships and developing a sense of belonging.
- Considering how religions and beliefs regard the value and purpose of human beings, the importance of the environment and the significance of emotions such as love, anger, joy, jealousy, happiness and pain.
- Developing their own ideas and views on religious and spiritual issues.

RE contributes to pupil's moral development by:-

- By enabling students to value themselves and others.
- Exploring the influence of family, friends and other sources on moral choices.
- Considering what is of ultimate value both to students and people within religious traditions.
- Developing an understanding in religion of the key values and moral choices.
- Considering ethical issues especially justice which promotes racial and religious respect.
- Exploring the influence of family, friends and media on moral choices and how society is influenced by teachings and guidance from religions and beliefs.
- Reflecting on the importance of rights and responsibilities and developing a sense of conscience.

RE contributes to pupil's social development by:-

- Considering how religious and other beliefs lead to particular actions and concerns.
- Reflecting on the importance of friendship and positive relationships.

- Investigating social issues from religious perspectives, recognising the diversity of viewpoints within and between religions.

RE contributes to pupil's cultural development by:-

- Encountering people, stories, artifacts and resources from differing cultures.
- Promoting respect for all, combating prejudice and discrimination.
- Challenging stereotypes of religion and beliefs.

Personal development and well-being

R.E. plays an important role in preparing pupils for adult life, employment and lifelong learning. It helps children and young people become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. It gives them the knowledge, skills and understanding to discern and value truth and goodness, strengthening their capacity for making moral judgements and for evaluating different types of commitment to make positive and healthy choices.

Effective teaching and learning about Religions and World Views

Church schools have a duty to provide accurate knowledge and understanding of religions and world views. They should provide:

- A challenging and robust curriculum based on an accurate theological framework.
- An assessment process which has rigour and demonstrates progression based on knowledge and understanding of core religious concepts.
- A curriculum that draws on the richness and diversity of religious experience worldwide.
- A pedagogy that instils respect for different views and interpretations; and, in which real dialogue and theological enquiry takes place.
- The opportunity for pupils to deepen their understanding of the religion and world views as lived by believers.
- RE that makes a positive contribution to SMSC development

The school's approach to teaching R.E.

R.E. has an important part to play as part of a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum to which all pupils are entitled. High quality learning experiences in RE are designed and provided by careful planning following the Diocesan syllabus and 'Understanding Christianity'.

In order to make religious education a lively, active subject we employ a variety of teaching methods including art, music, discussion, the development of thinking skills, drama, the use of artefacts, pictures, stories, and the use of periods of stillness and reflection. The content and nature of RE lends itself to an active and multi-sensory approach. Children will be given opportunities to actively engage with the material that is taught, eg handle artefacts, devise and make models, cook and eat foods, take part in role play and visits and reflect on their experiences.

Where possible we want our pupils to have opportunities to encounter local faith communities through visits to local places of worship or visits from members of local faith communities.

We use the Durham and Newcastle Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education as a basis for our planning, supplemented with, and supported by, 'Understanding Christianity'. We aim for full inclusion within RE lessons and strive to remove barriers to learning and to facilitate success through differentiated activities, a variety of teaching and learning styles, resources and support.

Curriculum coverage and balance

Christianity should be the majority study in RE in every school. In Church schools, that should be clearly adhered to and at least 2/3rds of RE teaching should be Christianity. At St John's, sufficient dedicated curriculum time, meeting explicitly RE objectives, however organised, are committed to the delivery of RE. We aim to be close to 10% and never less than 5%. R.E. is taught weekly as a specific subject – in accordance with diocesan plans. Every effort is made to link the areas covered by the Agreed Syllabus with other areas of school life including worship / PSHE.

The Foundation Stage - During the foundation stage, children begin to explore the world of religion in terms of special people, books, times, places and objects, visiting places of worship and through celebration. Predominantly, children listen to and talk about stories. They are introduced to specialist words and use their senses in exploring religious beliefs, practices and forms of expression. They reflect upon their own feelings and experiences. They use their imagination and curiosity to develop their appreciation and wonder of the world in which they live. The early learning goals set out what most children should achieve by the end of the foundation stage.

In KS1 - Enquiries take the form of a key question followed by a series of supplementary questions which provide the structure and direction of the individual enquiry. Together the enquiries are designed to engage pupils in both learning about and from religions and worldviews. Core learning is described in terms of 'Expected Outcomes' and 'Knowledge Building Blocks'. At key stage 1, pupils study Christianity and aspects of other faiths through the study of 'Birth Rites', 'Special Books' and 'Places of Worship' and include other worldviews. Wherever appropriate and possible, members of our school community and the local community are invited to share their faith experiences with us eg parents to describe name giving ceremonies or use of holy books.

In KS2 - Enquiries have been shaped to form a key question followed by a series of supplementary questions which provide the focus and structure for each enquiry. The emphasis is on developing the skills of investigation and enquiry and effectively engaging pupils in their learning in RE. Core learning is described in terms of 'Expected Outcomes' and 'Knowledge Building Blocks'. At key stage 2, children study in a more systematic way, Christianity, and through festivals (Diwali and Hanukkah), visits and themes (Loss, Death and Hope and Pilgrimage other world faiths (Hinduism, Judaism and Islam) and non-religious worldviews such as Humanism. Again, wherever appropriate and possible, children visit places of worship and engage with people of faith and none.

All lessons include time for children to reflect on their learning and consider how it might impact on their values and beliefs thus contributing to their personal spiritual journey.

Resources for R.E. are kept centrally.

Assessment and Recording of RE

We aim to maintain appropriate and manageable systems of record keeping, assessments and reporting which is accessible and meaningful to pupils, parents, staff and other related agencies. At the beginning of each unit of work, teachers will assess the children based on an initial mind-map where existing knowledge is recorded. Throughout each unit, further assessments are made using individual work and contributions during class activities referenced by the expected outcomes detailed on individual assessment sheets in each child's book. Where relevant, an assessment task will be given. Attainment of the children will be recorded on the year group R.E. Assessment Summary sheet and on an overall tracker where progress throughout each year can be monitored.

Responsibilities for RE within the school

The subject lead (who has specialist RE training) will monitor RE within the school through analysis of assessment data, through lesson observations, through work sampling and through pupil interviews. Monitoring activities are reported to the HT and Governing Body and inform the RE action plan which has been agreed by school leadership. This information will inform the Church School Self Evaluation process. (SIAMS).

The subject lead, in cooperation with the HT, is responsible for ensuring that all staff teaching RE have access to appropriate professional development and understand the distinctive role and purpose of RE within church schools. This demonstrates the subject's comparable status with other core curriculum areas in both staff and resources.

The Governing Body have an understanding of the distinctive role and purpose of RE within church schools and aim to effectively monitor standards in RE. We have an identified RE link governor who visits the school to talk with teachers and the subject lead. The link governor, wherever possible, accompanies the subject lead to observe RE lessons throughout the school annually.

Foundation governors, supported by the subject lead, sample children's work, conduct learning walks and engage in pupil discussions in order to monitor the impact of teaching and learning. Governors review school policy and adherence to it.

Capitation

RE is identified within the whole school development plan and capitation is allocated in response to this.

The right of Withdrawal from RE

At St. John's CE Academy we wish to be an inclusive community but recognise that parents, of course, have the legal right to withdraw their children religious education on

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the grounds of conscience. However, the right of withdrawal does not extend to other areas of the curriculum when, as may happen on occasion, spontaneous questions on religious matters are raised by pupils or there are issues related to religion that arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship.

We would ask any parent considering this to contact the head teacher to discuss any concerns or anxieties about the policy, provision and practice of religious education at St. John's.

Managing the right of withdrawal

- The school will ensure that parents who want to withdraw their children from RE are aware of the RE syllabus and that it is relevant to all pupils and respects their own personal beliefs.
- Parents should be made aware of its learning objectives and what is covered in the RE curriculum and should be given the opportunity to discuss this, if they wish.
- The school may also wish to review such a request each year, in discussion with the parents.
- The use of the right to withdraw should be at the instigation of parents and it should be made clear whether it is from the whole of the subject or specific parts of it.
- Parents have the right to choose whether or not to withdraw their child from RE without influence from the school, although a school should ensure that parents or carers are informed of this right and are aware of the educational objectives and content of the RE syllabus. In this way, parents can make an informed decision.
- Where parents have requested that their child is withdrawn, their right must be respected, and where RE is integrated in the curriculum, the school will need to discuss the arrangements with the parents or carers to explore how the child's withdrawal can be best accommodated.
- If pupils are withdrawn from RE, schools have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost. Pupils will usually remain on school premises.

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