

Policy on Religious Education (RE)

Our mission as a church school is to be – loving, welcoming and succeeding with faith, family and friendship at the centre of all that we do. The key Christian values that are the core of our school life are forgiveness, creation, koinonia, reverence, service, wisdom, trust and endurance.

The Importance of Religious Education

At Little Waltham Religious Education (RE) provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human. It develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other principal religions, other religious traditions and other world views that offer answers to questions such as these. It offers opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development. It enhances pupils' awareness and understanding of religions and beliefs, teachings, practices and forms of expression, as well as of the influence of religion on individuals, families, communities and cultures.

Religious education encourages pupils to learn from different religions, beliefs, values and traditions while exploring their own beliefs and questions of meaning. It challenges pupils to reflect on, consider, analyse, interpret and evaluate issues of truth, belief, faith and ethics and to communicate their responses.

Religious education encourages pupils to develop their sense of identity and belonging. It enables them to flourish individually within their communities and as citizens in a pluralistic society and global community. Religious education has an important role in preparing pupils for adult life, employment and lifelong learning. It enables pupils to develop respect for and sensitivity to others, in particular those whose faiths and beliefs are different from their own. It promotes discernment and enables pupils to combat prejudice.

Aims and objectives

Religious education should enable pupils to:

- acquire and develop knowledge, understanding and respect for the beliefs and practices of Christianity and the other principal religions represented in Great Britain
- reflect on beliefs, values and traditions in order to understand their influence on individuals, communities, and culture
- make informed responses to religious and moral issues
- express curiosity about and learn to grapple with fundamental questions of life
- develop and deepen their own belief, values and sense of self worth
- make their own spiritual journey.

The legal position of religious education

Our school curriculum for R.E. meets the requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). The ERA stipulates that religious education is compulsory for all children, including those in the reception class who are less than five years old. The ERA allows parents and carers to withdraw their child from religious

education classes if they so wish, although only after they have given written notice to the school governors. The ERA also allows teachers to refuse to teach religious education, but only after they have given due notice of their intention to the school governors.

RE curriculum

In our school, the educational process is rooted in the living faith and Christian values of our community. This goes beyond the ethos of the school to affect the planning and teaching in every curriculum area. Religious education is not just an academic subject, but, lying at the very heart of the curriculum, has an important role in reflecting and conveying the distinctively Christian character of the school.

Each year a R.E curriculum map is produced by the subject leader in order to outline the units of study for the forthcoming academic year. We currently use a mixture of the Diocese's Agreed Syllabus and well as the Understanding Christianity units. We ensure that the topics studied in RE build on prior learning. We offer opportunities for children of all abilities to develop their skills and knowledge in each unit, and we ensure that the progression planned into the scheme of work offers the children an increasing challenge as they move through the school. Our RE curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn about religion and from religion.

The diocesan syllabus is based on the expectation that the following minimum times be given to religious education:

Key Stage 1: 36 hours per year

Key Stage 2: 45 hours per year

The time allocation can be blocked. At Little Waltham all pupils receive a weekly RE lesson and participate in an annual multi-faith week.

Learning about religion

We learn about:

- the God who reveals the truth about himself and humanity through creation, the giving of the law, God's action in history and through the prophets;
- the God who reveals himself ultimately in Jesus his Son, living among us and dying and rising for us;
- the God who reveals himself in his Spirit working in the living faith of the Church experienced through scripture, tradition and reason.

Learning from religion

We learn from:

- an empathetic response to the Christian faith and a critical engagement with it;
- responding personally to the transforming power of Jesus Christ;
- developing a vision for life that transcends a dull materialism and recognises the reality of the spiritual realm;
- understanding ourselves and others, celebrating our shared humanity and the breadth of human achievement;
- examples of Christian living which give priority to the claims of justice, mercy, holiness and love.

Religious education does not exist in a vacuum; it comes as a challenge to the learner's existing values and practices. It involves and confronts the individual in a way no other subject can. A vision of education inspired by Jesus Christ is a catalyst for a process of formation for the whole person and the whole human family.

Teaching and learning style

We base our teaching and learning style in R.E. on the key principle that good teaching in RE allows children both to learn about religious traditions and to reflect on what the religious ideas and concepts mean to them. Our teaching enables children to extend their own sense of values, and promotes their spiritual growth and development. We encourage children to think about their own views and values in relation to the themes and topics studied in the RE curriculum.

Our teaching and learning styles in RE enable children to build on their own experiences and to extend their knowledge and understanding of religious traditions. We use their experiences at religious festivals such as Easter, Diwali, Passover, etc. to develop their religious thinking. We organise visits to local places of worship, and invite representatives of local religious groups to come into school and talk to the children.

Children carry out research into religious topics. They study particular religious faiths and also compare the religious views of different faith groups on topics such as rites of passage or festivals. Children investigate religious and moral issues either individually or in groups. Sometimes, they prepare presentations on a computer and share these in assemblies.

We recognise the fact that all classes in our school have children of widely differing abilities, so we provide suitable learning opportunities for all children by matching the challenge of the task to the ability of the child. We achieve this in a variety of ways, such as:

- setting tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses;
- grouping the children by ability in the room, and setting different tasks for each ability group;
- providing tasks of different complexity, adapted to the ability of the child;
- providing resources of different complexity, adapted to the ability of the child;
- using learning support assistants to support the work of individuals or groups of children.

Promoting other aspects of the curriculum

Promoting spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through religious education

Religious education provides opportunities to promote **spiritual development**

through:

- discussing and reflecting on key questions of meaning and truth such as the origins of the universe, life after death, good and evil, beliefs about God and values such as justice, honesty and truth;
- learning about and reflecting on important concepts, experiences and beliefs that are at the heart of religious and other traditions and practices;
- considering how beliefs and concepts in religion may be expressed through the creative and expressive arts and related to the human and natural sciences, thereby contributing to personal and communal identity;
- considering how religions and other world views perceive the value of human beings, and their relationships with one another, with the natural world, and with God;
- valuing relationships and developing a sense of belonging;
- developing their own views and ideas on religious and spiritual issues.

Religious education provides opportunities to promote **moral development**

through:

- enhancing the values identified within the National Curriculum, particularly valuing diversity

and engaging in issues of truth, justice and trust;

- exploring the influence of family, friends and media on moral choices and how society is influenced by beliefs, teachings, sacred texts and guidance from religious leaders;
- considering what is of ultimate value to pupils and believers through studying the key beliefs and teachings from religion and philosophy about values and ethical codes of practice;
- studying a range of ethical issues, including those that focus on justice, to promote racial and religious respect and personal integrity;
- considering the importance of rights and responsibilities and developing a sense of conscience.

Religious education provides opportunities to promote **social development** through:

- considering how religions and other beliefs lead to particular actions and concerns;
- investigating social issues from religious perspectives, recognising the diversity of viewpoints within and between religions as well as the common ground between religions;
- articulating pupils' own and others' ideas on a range of contemporary social issues.

Religious education provides opportunities to promote **cultural development** through:

- encountering people, literature, the creative and expressive arts and resources from differing cultures;
- considering the relationship between religion and cultures and how religions and beliefs contribute to cultural identity and practices;
- promoting racial and interfaith harmony and respect for all, combating prejudice and discrimination, contributing positively to community cohesion and promoting awareness of how interfaith cooperation can support the pursuit of the common good.

Promoting citizenship through religious education

Religious education plays a significant part in promoting citizenship through:

- developing pupils' knowledge and understanding about the diversity of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding;
- enabling pupils to think about topical spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues including the importance of resolving conflict fairly;
- exploring the rights, responsibilities and duties of citizens locally, nationally and globally;
- enabling pupils to justify and defend orally, and in writing, personal opinions about issues, problems and events.

Promoting personal, social and health education through religious education

Religious education plays a significant part in promoting personal, social and health education through pupils:

- developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities by learning about what is fair and unfair, right and wrong and being encouraged to share their opinions;
- developing a healthy, safer lifestyle by learning about religious beliefs and teachings on drug use and misuse, food and drink, leisure, relationships and human sexuality, learning about the purpose and value of religious beliefs and sensitivities in relation to sex education and enabling pupils to consider and express their own views;
- developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people by learning about the diversity of different ethnic and religious groups and the destructive power of prejudice,

challenging racism, discrimination, offending behaviour and bullying, being able to talk about relationships and feelings, considering issues of marriage and family life and meeting and encountering people whose beliefs, views and lifestyles are different from their own.

Promoting key skills through religious education

Religious education provides opportunities for pupils to develop the key skills of:

- **communication** through developing a broad and accurate religious vocabulary, reading and responding to a range of written and spoken language (including sacred texts, stories and poetry, prayers, liturgy and worships), communicating ideas using the creative and expressive arts, talking and writing with understanding and insight about religious and other beliefs and values, reflecting critically on ultimate questions of life, using reasoned arguments.
- **application of number** through calendrical reckoning, collecting, recording, presenting and interpreting data involving graphs, charts and statistical analysis.
- **information technology** through using CD-ROMs and the internet selectively, researching information about religions and beliefs, teaching and practices, using email to communicate and analyse information with people of differing beliefs and cultures, using spreadsheets and databases to handle and present data relevant to the study of religious education.
- **working with others** through sharing ideas, discussing beliefs, values and practices, collaborating with each other and developing respect and sensitivity.
- **improving own learning and performance** through setting targets as part of religious education development, reviewing their achievements and identifying ways to improve their own work.
- **problem solving** through recognising key issues to do with religious belief, practice and expression, interpreting and explaining findings and making personal decisions on religious issues (for example, considering their own and religious ideas on good and evil), ethical dilemmas and priorities in life.

Religious education provides opportunities to promote:

- **thinking skills** through helping pupils to research, select, interpret and analyse information from religious traditions, reflect and question their own views and ideas and those of others and communicate their ideas in a variety of ways.
- **financial capability** through considering the responsible use of money, the importance of giving and the ethics of wealth, debt, poverty, gambling, business and investment.
- **creativity and culture** through considering the scope of human nature, sources of inspiration and discovery, connections between beliefs, values and forms of artistic expression, appreciating the value of cultural distinctiveness and reflecting on beauty, goodness and truth in creative and expressive arts.
- **education for racial equality and community cohesion** through studying the damaging effects of xenophobia and racial stereotyping, the impact of conflict in religion and the promotion of respect, understanding and cooperation through dialogue between people of different faiths and beliefs.
- **effective contributions to scientific, medical and health issues** through exploring philosophical and ethical questions of the origin, purpose and destiny of the cosmos and life within it, exploring the nature of humanity and human interaction with the world, exploring developments in genetics and medicine and their application and use and exploring concepts of health and well-being and their promotion.
- **links to employment, vocations and work-related learning** through a focus on individual sense of purpose and aspiration in life, and through considering the appropriateness and relevance of religious education to a wide range of employment opportunities and the development of spiritual and ethical issues linked to the world of work.

- **education for sustainable development** through helping pupils consider the origins and value of life, the importance of looking after the environment and studying the ways in which religious beliefs and teachings have influenced attitudes to the environment and other species.

Religious Education and Inclusion

Religious education can make a significant contribution to inclusion, particularly in its focus on promoting respect for all. The Diocesan syllabus contains many references to the role of religious education in challenging stereotypical views and appreciating, positively, differences in others. The syllabus enables all pupils to consider the impact of people's beliefs on their own actions and lifestyle. It also highlights the importance of religions and beliefs and how religious education can develop pupils' self-esteem.

Effective inclusion involves teaching a lively, stimulating religious education curriculum that:

- builds on and is enriched by the differing experiences pupils bring to religious education;
- meets all pupils' learning needs including those with learning difficulties or who are gifted and talented, boys and girls, pupils for whom English is an additional language, pupils from all religious communities and pupils from a wide range of ethnic groups and diverse family backgrounds.

To overcome any potential barriers to learning in religious education, some pupils may require:

- support to access text particularly when working with significant quantities of written materials or at speed;
- help to communicate their ideas through methods other than extended writing, where this is a requirement. For example, pupils may demonstrate their understanding through speech or the use of Computing;
- a non-visual way of accessing sources of information when undertaking research in aspects of religious education, for example using audio materials.

Assessment for learning

Children demonstrate their ability in RE through a variety of different ways. Younger children might, for example, act out a famous story from the Bible, whilst older pupils might produce a PowerPoint presentation based on their investigation of sacred texts. Teachers will assess children's work in RE by making informal judgements as we observe them during lessons. On completion of a piece of work, the teacher assesses the work and gives the child written or verbal feedback to help guide progress. Older children are encouraged to make judgements about how they might improve their work in the future. Assessments are made at the end of each unit, outlining those who have exceeded, met or not achieved the expected level. This is recorded and information is passed to the RE subject leader. Formal assessments are made at the end of each Key Stage in Year 2 and Year 6.

Resources

We keep resources for RE in a central store, where there is a box of equipment for each unit of work. There is a set of Bibles for both Key Stages, and a collection of religious artefacts which we use to enrich teaching in RE. The school library has a good supply of RE topic books and computer software to support the children's individual research.

Monitoring and review

The monitoring and review of the RE curriculum is the responsibility of the subject leader, who also:

- supports colleagues in their teaching, by keeping informed about current developments in RE and providing a strategic lead and direction for this subject;
- gives the headteacher an annual summary report in which s/he evaluates the strengths and weaknesses in RE and indicates areas for further improvement;
- uses specially allocated regular management time to review evidence of the children's work, and to observe RE lessons across the school.

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is monitored and evaluated by the headteacher and subject leader as part of the school's agreed cycle of lesson observations.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years.

Signed:

Date ratified: September 2017

To be reviewed: September 2018