



Guidelines for Religious Education

(July 2023)

Diocesan Board of Education Rationale

The Diocesan Board of Education in Leicester has a commitment to enabling high quality, meaningful and transformative religious education (RE) in church schools across the diocese as RE is a core part of a school's Christian distinctiveness. It recognises that RE continues to have a unique legal position in the curriculum as an academic subject, but it is also clear that in a church school its significance goes well beyond these two reasons. The DBE recognises that relevant RE, which offers pupils opportunities to deepen their understanding of other people's faith and beliefs and provides opportunities for God and faith to be discussed openly and honestly, also has a vital part to play in offering children and young people from Christian backgrounds the opportunity to grow as disciples.

RE in a church school should provide opportunities for children to understand what it means to be a religious believer in the world today and help them to understand how Christian beliefs inspire and underpin the values of the school community that they are a part of. RE in the church school should support children, whether they come from a religious or non-religious worldview, to recognise and act on the insights, principles, beliefs, attitudes and values that could influence, inspire or guide them in life.

Church of England Education Office: a 'Statement of Entitlement'

The Church of England has set down the following aims for RE in a Church of England School:

- To know about and understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith through the exploration of core beliefs using an approach that critically engages with biblical text.
- To gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews appreciating diversity, continuity and change within the religions and worldviews being studied.
- To engage with challenging questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence and experience.
- To recognise the concept of religion and its continuing influence on Britain's cultural heritage and in the lives of individuals and societies in different times, cultures and places.
- To explore their own religious, spiritual and philosophical ways living, believing and thinking.

Opportunities in RE

In a Church of England school pupils should have opportunities to:

- Learn about and from the life, teaching and example of Jesus Christ through the gospels.
- Explore and discover Christianity locally, nationally, and globally and recognise and learn from diversity within Christianity.
- See the Christian faith in the context of religious diversity, learning about and from other major religions and beliefs in the UK and beyond.

- Understand the importance of freedom of religion and beliefs and face the challenges of diversity with respect.
- Engage with different religious and non-religious worldviews.
- Explore their own religious, spiritual and/or philosophical ways of seeing, living, thinking, believing, and belonging.
- Engage in meaningful and informed dialogue with those of all religions and worldviews.
- Develop a wide range of skills including enquiry, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and reflection.
- Explore sacred texts, beliefs, practices and/or places of worship of different religious and non-religious worldviews.

Religious Education in Different Types of Church Schools

The 1988 Education Act states that ‘Religious Education has equal standing in relation to core subjects of the National Curriculum and that it is compulsory for all registered pupils.’ Religious Education encompasses non-religious world views.

Religious Education in Voluntary Aided (VA) schools

For Voluntary Aided Schools with a religious character Religious Education is the responsibility of the governing body. Provision of RE must be in accordance with the Trust Deed of the School. The Diocesan Board of Education advises that governors, in consultation with the Head teacher, adopt the Locally Agreed Syllabus and supplement this with material from the Diocese to ensure that at least 50% of the curriculum is spent on Christianity.

Religious Education in Voluntary Controlled (VC) and Foundation schools

Voluntary Controlled or Foundation Schools with a religious designation must arrange for RE to be delivered in accordance with the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

Religious Education in an Academy

The requirements for Religious Education in an academy with a religious foundation are specified in the funding agreement for that academy. For a VA school which converts to academy status the model funding agreement specifies that an academy with a religious designation must provide RE in accordance with the tenets of the particular faith specified in the designation. Foundation or Voluntary Controlled schools with a religious designation that convert to academy status must teach RE that is similar in breadth and ambition that that in the locally agreed syllabus.

Withdrawal from RE

In the UK, parents still have the right to withdraw their children from RE on the grounds that they wish to provide their own RE. This provision will be the parents’ responsibility. This right of withdrawal exists for all pupils in all types of school, including schools with and without a religious designation. Students aged 18 or over have the right to withdraw themselves from RE. Parents also have the right to withdraw their child from part of RE and can do so without giving any explanation. Teachers also have the right to withdraw from the teaching of RE. However, this does not apply to teachers who have been specifically employed to teach or lead RE. If a teacher wishes to withdraw from the teaching of RE, a letter requesting this must be submitted to the head of the school and its chair of governors. If a teacher withdraws from the teaching of RE, the school must still make provisions for the pupils to receive their entitlement to RE.

When a request to withdraw is received by a school, the school should speak with the parent to try to understand the basis for the request. To avoid misunderstanding, the school should establish the religious issues about which the parent objects to their child being taught (all the while respecting the parent's right to withdraw their child without giving reasons). Once known, the school should discuss with the parent the practical implications of withdrawal and the circumstances in which it may be reasonable to accommodate their wishes. Practical examples of how a school may reassure a concerned parent who is considering withdrawing their child may include inviting the parent to observe a RE lesson, discussing curriculum documents and discussing the aims of RE in your school with them.

Further information on how to manage withdrawal from RE can be seen on the NATRE website here:

https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Free%20Resources/1815676_NAHT%20RE%20withdrawal%20document_final.pdf

The Contribution of RE to Other Curriculum Aims

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC)

SMSC prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. Enquiring into religion and worldviews, through the distinct knowledge, understanding and skills contained in RE is essential to achieving these aims. Exploring the concepts of religion and worldviews and their roles in the spiritual, moral and cultural lives of people in a diverse society helps individuals develop moral awareness and social understanding. Church schools are particularly concerned about the holistic development of children and young people and recognise that a good education is about forming people who have the moral strength and spiritual depth to live a fulfilled life in modern day Britain and the global environment.

The school's Christian values

RE along with all the other subjects in the curriculum, should contribute to the promotion of the school's distinctively Christian values. RE makes an important contribution to a school's responsibility to promote respect for all, responsible citizenship and global learning. It provides a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism, discrimination & extremism. It can also impact on the school's duty to promote community cohesion. By examining the beliefs and inspiration provided by key religious figures, RE should also play a part in encouraging pupils to contribute to the school and wider community and to develop attitudes of service to others.

The promotion of 'British Values'

RE provides opportunities to promote and discuss the 'British Values' of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty & mutual respect. These discussions may also play a part in helping schools with their new duties in terms of preventing individuals from being drawn into terrorism. Church of England Schools should see themselves as part of the solution to the threat of radicalism. This should involve not just trying to prevent the development of an extremist view but should be more about promoting a positive vision of the contribution of different religions. RE encourages contributions to various aspects of British Values but schools should consider where else in the curriculum that British Values are taught, as RE should not be the only place for this.

Approaches to teaching RE

For RE to play its full part within the broad, balanced, and coherent curriculum to which all pupils are entitled, schools should ensure that:

- high quality knowledge rich, learning experiences in RE are designed and provided by careful planning through the locally agreed syllabus and diocesan materials taking into account the need to offer breadth of content.
- RE is delivered in ways that make it a lively, active subject by employing a variety of teaching methods; including technology, art, music, discussion, the development of thinking skills, drama, the use of artefacts, pictures, stories and the use of periods of stillness and reflection.
- Pupils should have opportunities to encounter a range of local faith communities through visits to places of worship or visits from members of local faith communities. Whilst these are always best done face to face, there are also opportunities for these to be done digitally.

Assessment and Recording of RE

Assessment and recording of progress in RE should be conducted with the same rigour as it is for all other areas of the school curriculum and in line with the school policy. This should include a range of formative and summative assessments.

Monitoring and Evaluation of RE

Standards of teaching and learning in RE should be regularly monitored as part of the agreed monitoring cycle in school. Governors should be involved in determining the monitoring cycle and participate in it. This should include the usual methods of lesson observations, work scrutiny, learning walks, analysis of assessment data and pupil voice.

It is expected that the subject leader will play a lead role in monitoring RE within the school and that the subject leader will be responsible for providing evidence of how RE contributes to the life of the school as part of the (SIAMS) self-evaluation process. Monitoring and evaluation should be in reference to Inspection question 6 and 7 of the SIAMS 2023 framework which can be viewed here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/siams-framework-september-2023.pdf>

Support Provided by the Diocese

The diocese works with our associates from RE Today on a consultancy basis. Additionally, we have trained a number of Lead RE teachers who lead local networks around the diocese, as well as create resources that can be used by schools across the diocese. These resources can be viewed here:

<https://www.leicesterdbe.org/re/useful-documents/> Our annual training programme details an extensive offer of RE support and training which can be viewed here:

<https://www.leicesterdbe.org/training-and-events-2/>

Diocesan Links

The DBE has a variety of strong links including the St. Phillips Centre in Leicester and RE Today. These organisations offer excellent resources to schools and the St Philip's Centre offers a range of high quality interactive inter-faith experiences which help to deepen children's understanding of other religions. Other useful places to explore online are the Culham St Gabriel's foundation, RE hubs and the Leicester Hebrew Congregation.

APPENDIX

Outline of a model policy for Religious Education (RE) in church schools

Introduction

RE is central to the purpose of School because as a church school we see that the Christian faith informs all aspects of our life together and commits us to a search for truth. RE in School explores how individuals and communities make meaning and sense of their lives through the major religions of the world. It enables pupils to know about, understand and respond to the important and ultimate questions of life. RE is taught in such a way that it inspires pupils to explore, develop and affirm their own faith and values and have respect for the faith, beliefs and values of others. It is not the practice of this school to preach to or seek to convert children. Values education permeates the RE curriculum at School.

The Church of England Education Office publish a 'Statement of Entitlement' for RE which has been considered in the formation of this policy.¹

Aims

At this school, RE supports and strengthens the vision, ethos and values which are at the heart of what we aim to do in every aspect of school life. The importance placed on the development of the whole child spiritually, morally, socially, culturally and intellectually is reflected in the RE curriculum.

Specifically, RE aims to enable pupils of all abilities and stages of development to:

- Know about and understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith through the exploration of core beliefs using an approach that critically engages with biblical text.
- Gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews appreciating diversity, continuity and change within the religions and worldviews being studied.
- Engage with challenging questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence and experience.
- Recognise the concept of religion and its continuing influence on Britain's cultural heritage and in the lives of individuals and societies in different times, cultures and places.
- Explore their own religious, spiritual and philosophical ways of living, believing and thinking.

Legal Framework

In a Voluntary Aided (VA) school the governors determine the RE policy and syllabus in consultation with the headteacher, teaching staff and Diocesan Board of Education. In a Voluntary Controlled (VC) school, the Locally Agreed Syllabus is a statutory document for the teaching of RE. Academies, under the terms of their funding agreements with the Secretary of State, must provide RE for their pupils that is at least the same in breadth and ambition as the locally agreed syllabus.

Parents have a legal right to withdraw their children from religious education lessons, but as RE is central to the life and identity of School we would ask parents to discuss with the headteacher any reasons they might have for doing this.

¹ <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/re-statement-of-entitlement-for-church-schools.pdf>

Teaching and Learning

1. The scheme of work for RE will maintain a balance between Learning about Religions and worldviews and Learning from Religions and worldviews.
2. There will be clear learning outcomes for all units of work, based on the appropriate expectations as set out in the RE syllabus.
3. The scheme of work will ensure that there is continuity and progression for pupils and opportunities for assessment in both attainment targets.
4. A range of teaching and learning activities will ensure that pupils learn effectively and with interest.
5. Pupil progress and attainment in RE will be monitored.
6. Progress in RE will form part of the pupils’ annual report to parents.
7. RE is taught either as a discrete subject and is given good value and priority in the curriculum.
8. A range of visitors will be invited to support the teaching of RE, and where possible, there will be planned visits to places of worship.
9. RE will be prioritised within the organisation of the curriculum. This should aim to be close to 10% but must be no less than 5% in key stages 1-4.

Subject Leadership

1. The RE subject leader will support and monitor the subject and will receive an adequate budget to do this, with support of senior leadership.
2. The RE subject leader will ensure that their subject knowledge and expertise are kept up to date by means of regular training and network meetings.
3. The RE subject leader and senior leadership team will ensure that staff receive adequate training in the teaching and assessment of RE.
4. The RE subject leader will regularly monitor the quality of RE teaching across the school.
5. The RE subject leader will liaise with the governor who holds responsibility for RE and they will report regularly to the governing body on the RE curriculum.
6. The RE subject leader, headteacher, governors and/or MAT leaders will ensure that the principles set out the Church of England’s Statement of Entitlement for RE are implemented.

Syllabus

..... school follows thesyllabus. The aims of this syllabus are: