

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School



Religious Education (RE) Policy

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Policy Statement

St Matthew's Church of England Primary school serves its local community and welcomes all children, whatever their family faith or non-faith. The school mission statement of 'Learning together in the love of God' is reflected in the way that its Christian distinctiveness impacts successfully on the needs of the pupils within the multi-faith community served by the school.

Religious Education (RE) is highly valued and vital to the purpose of St Matthew's Primary School because as a church school we see that our faith informs all aspects of our life together. The purpose of religious education at the school is to provide opportunities for children to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

Our theologically rooted Christian vision, 'Let not your light be hidden ... Let your light shine!' (Matthew 5 v 14-16) is exemplified in all that we provide in RE, in that all children will be able to live in the world with a greater understanding of God, themselves, others around them and the wider world. We seek to achieve this by providing an inspirational curriculum which inspires children to ask big questions about their journey through life and also by increasing their understanding of the school's Christian ethos, whilst promoting our school core values; respect, faith, choices and learning together. These core values, along with our theologically rooted Christian vision run as a 'golden thread' throughout school life and underpin the ethos of the school. The prominence that RE is given within St Matthew's reinforces the values, ethos and character of the school.

Legal requirements

St Matthew's is a Voluntary Aided Primary School. The Governors in consultation with the Head teacher, following advice from the diocese, have adopted the Sandwell Agreed Syllabus for RE (which is the legal basis for RE in Sandwell Schools) and supplement this with material from the Understanding Christianity resource.

Our school curriculum for religious education 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. RE is given at least 5% of curriculum time throughout the school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Learning about and from religious traditions helps pupils to appreciate which aspects of life have been significant for most of humanity throughout the ages. 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. It also helps to show them what shapes people's behaviour and motivations, and points pupils towards positive models for their own lives.

Personal development and well-being

RE 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.

Aims and objectives

The overall aims of RE within the school are to provide opportunities for children to acquire knowledge and to develop understanding and reasoning. The religious education provision will also enhance spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and develop positive attitudes. These aims will be achieved as school:

- Develop pupil's knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs and practices so that they understand the importance of the bible, the role of the church and recognise, that for Christians, their faith provides a way of interpreting life and its meaning.
- Develop substantive knowledge and understanding of four major world religions and those that are non-religious: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism and those who are non-religious (represented in the school and local community).
- Nurture the positive distinctive contribution RE makes to the school as reflected in the way attention is paid to the teaching faiths represented in the school and local community, and in the respect shown, and fostered, for the religious freedom of each.
- Explore and make sense of beliefs, examine and understand the impact for those with faith and non-faith and to consider possible implications and impact on individuals, communities, societies and cultures.
- Make reasoned and informed judgements about religious and moral issues with reference to the teachings of Jesus and to make comparisons with other faiths and faith leaders.
- Develop their own ideas, beliefs and values by reflecting positively on their own identity in the light of their study.
- Develop positive attitudes of respect towards other people who hold views and beliefs different from their own.
- Enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by developing attitudes of respect, sensitivity, open mindedness and self-esteem.
- Develop a sense of awe, wonder and mystery of God and His creation.
- Explore concepts of love, forgiveness and sacrifice.
- Develop skills of reflection, empathy, communication, analysis and evaluation by providing opportunities to respond to the fundamental questions of life (for example responding to questions with reference to religious teaching and reflecting on their own beliefs values and experiences).

Approach

High quality learning experiences in RE are designed and provided by careful planning using the Sandwell Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education and the Understanding Christianity Resource with its well-conceived and creative learning experiences. The RE curriculum reflects the Christian ethos of the school and the religious traditions in Great Britain which are in the main Christian. It focuses on Christianity predominantly within all year groups with an additional focus within each year group (i.e. Christianity and Islam (Year 2) Christianity and Hinduism (Year3).

Key Principles

The scheme of work for Religious Education:

The principal aim of Religious Education at St Matthew's is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living. The threefold aim of RE elaborates the principal aim.

The curriculum for RE aims to ensure that all pupils can:

1. Make sense of a range of religious and non-religious beliefs, so that they can:

- identify, describe, explain and analyse beliefs and concepts in the context of living religions, using appropriate vocabulary

- explain how and why these beliefs are understood in different ways, by individuals and within communities
 - recognise how and why sources of authority (e.g. texts, teachings, traditions, leaders) are used, expressed and interpreted in different ways, developing skills of interpretation
2. Understand the impact and significance of religious and non-religious beliefs, so that they can:
- examine and explain how and why people express their beliefs in diverse ways
 - recognise and account for ways in which people put their beliefs into action in diverse ways, in their everyday lives, within their communities and in the wider world
 - appreciate and appraise the significance of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.
3. Make connections between religious and non-religious beliefs, concepts, practices and ideas studied, so that they can:
- evaluate, reflect on and enquire into key concepts and questions studied, responding thoughtfully and creatively, giving good reasons for their responses
 - challenge the ideas studied, and allow the ideas studied to challenge their own thinking, articulating beliefs, values and commitments clearly in response
 - discern possible connections between the ideas studied and their own ways of understanding the world, expressing their critical responses and personal reflections with increasing clarity and understanding

Delivery of RE

Teaching and Approach in the Early Years (EYFS)

The EYFS framework is organised across seven areas of learning rather than subject areas. The RE curriculum sets out experiences, opportunities and appropriate topics for children in the Foundation Stage. RE sits very firmly within the areas of personal, social and emotional development and understanding the world. This framework enables children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others, and to learn how to form positive and respectful relationships. They will do this through a balance of guided, planned teaching and pursuing their own learning within an enabling environment. They will begin to understand and value the differences of individuals and groups within their own immediate community. Children will have the opportunity to develop their emerging moral and cultural awareness.

How Re links to the Foundation Curriculum:

Communication and Language

- Children listen with enjoyment to stories, songs and poems from different communities and traditions and respond with relevant comments, questions or actions
- They use talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events
- Children answer 'who', 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences in response to stories, experiences or events from different sources
- They talk about how they and others show feelings
- They develop their own narratives in relation to stories they hear from different communities.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Children understand that they can expect others to treat their needs, views, cultures and beliefs with respect

- They work as part of a group, taking turns and sharing fairly, understanding that groups of people need agreed values and codes of behaviour, including adults and children, to work together harmoniously
- They talk about their own and others' behaviour and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable
- Children think and talk about issues of right and wrong and why these questions matter
- They respond to significant experiences showing a range of feelings when appropriate
- They have a developing awareness of their own needs, views and feelings and be sensitive to those of others
- Children have a developing respect for their own cultures and beliefs, and those of other people
- They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships

Understanding the World

- Children talk about similarities and differences between themselves and others, among families, communities and traditions
- They begin to know about their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people
- They explore, observe and find out about places and objects that matter in different cultures and beliefs.

Expressive Arts and Design

- Children use their imagination in art, music, dance, imaginative play, role play and stories to represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings
- They respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and taste.

Literacy

- Children are given access to a wide range of books, poems and other written materials to ignite their interest.

Mathematics

- Children recognise, create and describe some patterns, sorting and ordering objects simply

Teaching and Learning Approach in KS1 and KS2

- Units of learning taken from the Sandwell Agreed Syllabus and Understanding Christianity ensure that there is no repetition of learning and that pupils build on their prior learning and deepen their knowledge over time of the four main school and local community faiths.
- Unit topics have been identified and extend over several lessons or half term.
- A range of teaching and learning opportunities will ensure that children learn effectively and with interest.
- Resources are identified to support teacher planning and delivery.
- Visits to places of worship will be made annually by each class. These visits will relate to the focus religion being taught (e.g. Year 4 will visit to the Gurdwara to complement the topic on Sikhism).
- A range of visitors will be planned to support the teaching of RE where applicable.
- Children will have the opportunity to share their reflections and the impact of what they have learnt in RE through acts of worship (e.g. Harvest, Christmas, Easter, Eid).
- Units and lessons are set to answer an enquiry question (e.g. What does the bible say that the Kingdom of God is like?)

By addressing key questions, pupils are encouraged to explore and make sense of beliefs, examine and understand the impact for those with faith and non-faith and to consider possible implications and impact.

Element 1: Making sense of beliefs

- Identifying and making sense of religious and non-religious beliefs and concepts; understanding what these beliefs mean within their traditions; recognising how and why sources of authority (such as texts) are used, expressed and interpreted in different ways, and developing skills of interpretation.

Element 2: Understanding the impact

- Examining how and why people put their beliefs into practice in diverse ways, within their everyday lives, within their communities and in the wider world.

Teaching and Learning Approach Element 3: Making connections

- Making connections Evaluating, reflecting on and connecting the beliefs and practices studied; allowing pupils to challenge ideas studied, and the ideas studied to challenge pupils' thinking; discerning possible connections between these and pupils' own lives and ways of understanding the world.

Assessment

Assessment for RE is in line with the school policy on assessment and recording assessment. Our theologically rooted Christian vision, 'Let not your light be hidden ... Let your light shine!' (Matthew 5 v -14-16) is exemplified through the ongoing formative and summative assessment in RE. A 'Sticky Knowledge Question,' is asked at the beginning of each lesson to support the retrieval of learning from the previous lesson, topic, or a previous unit of learning, to promote knowledge being cultivated into the long term memory. At the end of the unit of work pupils are set a 'Time to Shine' set of questions; there are four questions (which get progressively harder) to assess the knowledge gained and highlight any misconceptions. These questions check children's knowledge and understanding of key concepts and provide an opportunity for children to demonstrate what they have learnt linked to the enquiry questions. The final question is a 'conceptual' question which challenges children to apply their new learning in a more theological way. The 'Time to Shine' questions promote in children the love of learning, and confidence to shine and show off what they have learnt over the previous half term.

Summative Assessment is undertaken to identify the impact of the teaching of RE and pupil's learning.

	End KS1, aged 7 Pupils can...	End lower KS2, aged 9 Pupils can...	End KS2, aged 11 Pupils can...
A. Make sense of a range of religious and non-religious beliefs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify the core beliefs and concepts studied and give a simple description of what they mean.Give examples of how stories show what people believe (e.g. the meaning behind a festival).Give clear, simple accounts of what stories and other texts mean to believers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify and describe the core beliefs and concepts studiedMake clear links between texts / sources of authority and the core concepts studiedOffer informed suggestions about what texts/sources of authority can mean and give examples of what these sources mean to believers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify and explain the core beliefs and concepts studied, using examples from texts / sources of authority in religionsDescribe examples of ways in which people use texts/sources of authority to make sense of core beliefs and conceptsGive meanings for texts / sources of authority studied, comparing these ideas with some ways in which believers interpret texts / sources of authority.

Element 2: Understanding the impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give examples of how people use stories, texts and teachings to guide their beliefs and actions • Give examples of ways in which believers put their beliefs into practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make simple links between stories, teachings and concepts studied and how people live, individually and in communities • Describe how people show their beliefs in how they worship and in the way they live • Identify some differences in how people put their beliefs into practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make clear connections between what people believe and how they live, individually and in communities • Using evidence and examples, show how and why people put their beliefs into practice in different ways, e.g. in different communities, denominations or cultures
Element 3: Making connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think, talk and ask questions about whether the ideas they have been studying, have something to say to them. • Give a good reason for the views they have and the connections they make. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise important questions and suggest answers about how far the beliefs and practices studied might make a difference to how pupils think and live. • Make links between some of the beliefs and practices studied and life in the world today, expressing some ideas of their own clearly • Give good reasons for the views they have and the connections they make 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make connections between the beliefs and practices studied, evaluating and explaining their importance to different people (e.g. believers and atheists) • Reflect on and articulate lessons people might gain from the beliefs/practices studied, including their own responses, recognising that others may think differently. • Consider and weigh up how ideas studied in this unit relate to their own experiences and experiences of the world today, developing insights of their own and giving good reasons for the views they have and the connections they make.

The role of the RE-coordinator

Monitoring

The RE-coordinator is responsible for monitoring the standards of children's' work and the quality of the teaching in religious education. She will monitor the planning and delivery of RE annually through book trawls, pupil conferencing and teacher observations.

The RE-coordinator will present an annual summary of progress and achievements to the governing body and will liaise with the governor holding responsibility for RE. An annual report which evaluates strengths and weaknesses in the subject and indicates areas for further improvement will be presented to the Head Teacher.

Staff Development

The RE coordinator is also responsible for supporting colleagues in their teaching, for being informed about current developments in the subject, and for providing a strategic lead and direction for RE in the school. This may include whole school or individual teacher training as required.

Resources

A range of resources linked to all topics will be available in the staff room in the allocated area for RE. Resources will be audited regularly and new resources purchased by the RE coordinator.

Inclusion

Religious education is taught to all children, whatever their ability and individual needs. Religious education forms part of the school's curriculum policy to provide a broad and balanced education to all children. Through our religious education teaching we provide learning opportunities that enable all pupils to make good progress. We strive hard to meet the needs of those pupils with special educational needs, those with disabilities, those with special gifts and talents, and those learning English as an additional language, and we take all reasonable steps to achieve this. For further

details, see separate policies: Special Educational Needs; Disability Non-Discrimination and Access; Gifted and Talented; English as an Additional Language (EAL).

Classes within the 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, for example:

- Additional class support will be provided for RE lessons to ensure that children with special needs will have support to gain success
- Differentiation of groups, tasks and resources
- Setting tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses

Responsibilities for RE within the school

The Head teacher, RE co-ordinator and the school Governing Body are responsible for RE within the school. As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, the governing board and head teacher should also make sure that:

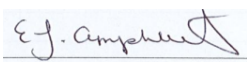
- all pupils make progress in achieving the learning objectives of the RE curriculum
- the subject is well led and effectively managed and that standards and achievement in RE and the quality of the provision are subject to regular and effective self-evaluation;
- all those teaching RE are suitably qualified and trained in the subject and have regular and effective opportunities for CPD;
- all teaching staff and governors understand the distinctive role and purpose of RE within church schools.
- the governing board monitors provision and achievement in RE effectively.

The right of withdrawal from RE

Parents have the legal right to withdraw their children religious education on 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 Matthew's CofE Primary School.

- In the case of a child being withdrawn from RE, the pupil will be taught within another classroom within the pupil's year group)

This policy will be reviewed by the end of July 2025.

Signed: 

Joan Amphlett (RE Coordinator)

Fiona Deakin (Head Teacher)