

## **St Mary's Primary School Religious Education Policy**

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 Mary's is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled School and therefore it follows the Locally Agreed Syllabus for R.E. The Governors in consultation with the Head teacher have decided, following advice from the diocese, to adopt in general, the Locally Agreed Syllabus and RE:Search and supplement this with material from the Diocese and elsewhere.

In Religious Education at St Mary's Primary School we aim that pupils might:-

- Grow in their spiritual development
- 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
- Develop a sense of awe and wonder and mystery
- Develop skills and attitudes which will support their personal, moral, social and cultural development
- Explore some questions of meaning and consider how the world's religions have responded to them.
- 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.
- Be able to build their sense of identity and belonging, which helps them flourish within their communities and as citizens in a diverse society
- Develop respect for others, including people with different faiths and beliefs, and helps to challenge prejudice
- Consider their responsibilities to themselves and to others, and to explore how they might contribute to their communities and to wider society. It encourages empathy, generosity and compassion.

*See locally agreed syllabus for specific skills and attitudes developed in RE*

### **The contribution RE makes to other curriculum aims in particular to community cohesion**

#### **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, cultural, social, 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.

### **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.

### **Community cohesion**

RE makes an important contribution to a school's duty to promote community cohesion. It provides a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism and discrimination. Effective RE will promote community cohesion at Each of the four levels outlined in DCSF guidance.

**The school community** – RE provides a positive context within which the diversity of cultures, beliefs and values can be celebrated and explored.

**The community within which the school is located** – RE provides opportunities to investigate patterns of religious diversity and belief; forging links with different groups in the local area.

**The UK community** – a major focus of RE is the study of diversity of religion and belief in the UK and how this influences national life.

**The global community** – RE involves the study of matters of global significance recognising the diversity of religion and belief and its impact on world issues.

RE subject matter gives particular opportunities to promote an ethos of respect for others, challenge stereotypes and build understanding of other cultures and beliefs. This contributes to promoting a positive and inclusive school ethos that champions democratic values and human rights.

RE is an important subject in contribution to the schools development as a Rights Respecting School.

### **Approaches to the teaching of RE at St Mary's**

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.

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

Religious Education at St Mary's Primary school is delivered in the following way.

In general, we use as a basis for our planning the REsearch syllabus. As a source of ideas and teaching strategies we also make use of the Solihull Syllabus, RE Online and RE Today – Teaching Christianity.

At KS 1 pupils study Christianity and Judaism.

At KS 2 pupils study Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism.

RE is taught in one of two ways; either as a discrete subject or as part of topic work.

Resources are kept in each class in unit boxes with copies of outline planning which teachers can adapt and tailor to meet the needs of their class.

### **Assessment and monitoring of RE**

In line with the school policy on assessment and monitoring

It is expected that each teacher will be responsible for the regular assessment of his or her pupils through marking work set. Twice a year each pupil will complete an agreed key assessment task that will form part of his or her work done in RE. These occur at Christmas and Easter. The class teacher on a separate pro forma will record the level achieved by each pupil. The level achieved will be used by the co-ordinator to track pupil progress through the school and will be used by the class teacher to ensure that each pupil is set work that is appropriately challenging.

The co-ordinator will monitor RE within the school through analysis of this assessment data, planning scrutiny and lesson observations. The co-ordinator is responsible for contributing to the Church school self evaluation process.

### **Head teacher and Governor Responsibilities for RE within the school**

As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, the governing body 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
- those teaching RE are suitably qualified and trained in the subject and have regular and effective opportunities for CPD
- teachers are aware of RE's contribution in developing pupils' understanding of religion and belief and its impact as part of the duty to promote community cohesion
- where appropriate, pupils have opportunities to take courses leading to an accredited qualification in the subject
- teachers explore how new pedagogies and technology can be fully utilised to support RE learning objectives and promote community cohesion
- clear information is provided for parents on the RE curriculum and the right to withdraw
- teachers are aware that they do not have to teach RE unless specifically appointed to do so
- RE is resourced, staffed and timetabled so that the school can fulfil its legal obligations on RE and pupils can make good progress
- where there are insufficient teachers in a school who are prepared to teach RE, the head teacher ensures that pupils receive their entitlement to RE. In these circumstances, head teachers might wish to seek advice from their LA or SACRE.

## **The right of Withdrawal from RE**

At St Mary's school we wish to be an inclusive community but recognise that parents, of course, 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 in the school.

### **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 will 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. No reasons need be given.
- Parents have the right to choose whether or not to withdraw their child from RE without influence from the school, although a school should 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, this right will be respected, and where RE is integrated in the curriculum, the school will 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, the school accepts its duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost. Pupils will usually remain on school premises.
- Where a pupil has been withdrawn, the law provides for alternative arrangements to be made for RE of the kind the parent wants the pupil to receive. This RE could be provided at the school in question, or the pupil could be sent to another school where suitable RE is provided if this is reasonably convenient.
- If neither approach is practicable, outside arrangements can be made to provide the pupil with the kind of RE that the parent wants, and the pupil may be withdrawn from school for a reasonable period of time to allow them to attend this external RE.
- Outside arrangements for RE are allowed as long as the LA is satisfied that any interference with the pupil's attendance at school resulting from the withdrawal will affect only the start or end of a school session.

**This policy was adopted by the Governing Body in Autumn Term 2009. It will be reviewed bi-annually in Autumn Term. It was reviewed in Summer 2014 and agreed that further review needed in Autumn 2015. Person Responsible: Curriculum Leader**