



Religious Education Policy

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Religious Education (RE) Policy

1 Aims and objectives

Religious education enables children to investigate and reflect on some of the most fundamental questions asked by people. At Tewin Cowper CE School we develop the children's knowledge and understanding of the major world faiths, and we address fundamental questions concerning, for example, the meaning of life and the existence of a divine spirit.

We enable children to develop a sound knowledge not only of Christianity but also of other world religions, especially those that are the main faiths of children within our school. Children reflect on what it means to have a faith and to develop their own spiritual knowledge and understanding. We help the children learn *from* religions as well as *about* religions.

At Tewin Cowper school we celebrate our links with our Parish Church of St Peter's and seek always to strengthen them. We enjoy regular services which take place in the church, which celebrate some of the main events and festivals of the Christian calendar. As well as parents and governors, members of the congregation and our village community are invited to join us in these acts of worship. Services are led by the pupils themselves in order to enhance their sense of belonging.

A member of the church team leads worship once a week and will assist staff in planning and delivering workshops which take place at the church.

Staff and pupils benefit from good relations with our vicar from whom they can draw spiritual strength, and support and advice on Christian theology and doctrines.

The objectives of teaching religious education in our school are to help children:

- develop an awareness of Christian spiritual and moral issues arising in their lives;
- develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and encourage a sensitivity towards other major world religions and value systems found in Britain;
- develop an understanding of what it means to be committed to a religious tradition;
- be able to reflect on their own experiences and to develop a personal response to the fundamental questions of life;
- develop an understanding of religious traditions and to appreciate the cultural differences in Britain today;
- develop investigative and research skills, and make reasoned judgements about religious issues;
- have respect for other people's views, and celebrate the diversity in society.

2 The legal position of religious education

2.1 As Tewin Cowper School is a voluntary aided school, the governors must determine the curriculum in accordance with the Trust Deed. This trust deed states that RE shall be given in accordance with the doctrines, rites and practices of the Church of England.

2.2 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. The ERA allows parents 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. The religious education curriculum forms an important part of our school's spiritual, moral and social teaching. It also promotes education for citizenship. Our school RE curriculum is based on the LA's Agreed Syllabus, and it meets all the requirements set out in that document. The ERA states that the RE syllabus should reflect the fact that religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, and that it should, at the same time, take account of the teachings and practices of other major religions.

3 Teaching and learning style

We base our teaching and learning style in RE 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 endeavour organise visits to local places of worship, and invite representatives of local religious groups to come into school and talk to the children.

Workshops are arranged for each class at our parish church involving our vicar and often members of the congregation. These may cover such topics as Church history, artefacts, Baptism, Church music, communion etc.

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.

R.E. is a fundamental way of supporting the ethos of the school. All children have equal access to the curriculum, regardless of their gender, race or ability. Staff should promote equal opportunities and enable pupils to challenge discrimination and stereotyping.

4 Curriculum planning in religious education

We plan our religious education curriculum using 'Discovery R.E.' and 'Understanding Christianity' resources. We ensure that the topics studied in religious education 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.

We carry out the curriculum planning in religious education in three phases (long-term, medium-term and short-term). The long-term plan maps the religious education topics studied in each term during each key stage. The RE subject leader devises this plan in collaboration with teaching colleagues in each year group. We teach religious education topics in conjunction with other subjects, especially at Key Stage 1. Some of our medium-

term (termly) topics have a particular historical focus. In Key Stage 2 we place an increasing emphasis on the study of religious themes and topics in their own right.

Our medium-term plans give details of each unit of work for each term. The RE subject leader keeps and reviews these plans on a regular basis. As we have some mixed-age classes, we carry out the medium-term planning on a two-year rotation cycle. By so doing, we ensure that children have complete coverage of the Agreed Syllabus, but do not have to repeat topics.

The class teacher writes the plans for each lesson and lists the specific learning objectives and expected outcomes. S/he keeps these individual plans and often discusses them on an informal basis with the RE subject leader.

5 The Foundation Stage

We teach religious education to all children in the school, including those in the reception class.

In reception classes, religious education is an integral part of the topic work covered during the year. As the reception class is part of the Foundation Stage of the National Curriculum, we relate the religious education aspects of the children's work to the objectives set out in the Early Learning Goals which underpin the curriculum planning for children aged three to five.

6 Contribution of RE to the teaching in other curriculum areas

English

Religious education contributes significantly to the teaching of English in our school by actively promoting the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Some of the texts that we use in English have religious themes or content, which encourages discussion, and this is RE's way of promoting the skills of speaking and listening. We also encourage the children to write letters and record information, in order to develop their writing ability.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship

Through our religious education lessons we teach the children about the values and moral beliefs that underpin individual choices of behaviour. So, for example, we contribute to the discussion of topics such as smoking, drugs and health education. We also promote the values and attitudes required for citizenship in a democracy by teaching respect for others and the need for personal responsibility. In general, by promoting tolerance and understanding of other people, we enable children to appreciate what it means to be positive members of our pluralistic society.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Through religious education in our school we provide opportunities for spiritual development. Children consider and respond to questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life. We help them to recognise the difference between right and wrong, through the study of moral and ethical questions. We enhance their social development by helping them to build a sense of identity in a multicultural society. Children explore issues of religious faith and values and, in so doing, they develop their knowledge and understanding of the cultural context of their own lives.

7 RE and ICT

Information and communication technology enhances religious education, wherever appropriate, in all key stages. The children select and analyse information, using the Internet and CD-ROMs. They also use ICT to review, modify and evaluate their work, and to improve its presentation. Older children use *PowerPoint* to help them make presentations on various topics, such as sacred symbols in different world religions. Younger children can take photographs of the class acting out a Bible story. They can then make a class storybook of it, by adding in speech bubbles and a narrative text. Or, using desktop software, they can create a special book where each pupil has her or his own page; they also make a cover and binding for the book, and draw up a set of rules for its use. A digital video camera can record a visit to a place of worship, and pupils can also find the various artefacts in churches by doing virtual tours on church websites.

8 RE and Inclusion

At our school we teach religious education 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.

When progress falls significantly outside the expected range, the child may have special educational needs. Our assessment process looks at a range of factors – classroom organisation, teaching materials, teaching style, differentiation – so that we can take some additional or different action to enable the child to learn more effectively. This ensures that our teaching is matched to the child's needs.

Planned interventions in classes support children with special educational needs. These are identified on class provision maps which are updated on a half-termly basis.

We enable all pupils to have access to the full range of activities involved in religious education. Where children are to participate in activities outside the classroom (a visit to a Sikh temple, for example, that involves a journey) we carry out a risk assessment prior to the activity, to ensure that the activity is safe and appropriate for all pupils.

9 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 religious education 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. The teacher will record the attainment at the end of each unit. This information is used to assess the progress of each child, for setting new goals, and for passing information on to the next teacher at the end of the year.

The RE subject leader keeps samples of children's work in a portfolio. This demonstrates the expected level of achievement in RE in each year of the school.

10 Resources

We have sufficient resources in our school to be able to teach all our religious education teaching units. We endeavour to maintain and add to our resources sufficiently to teach all the religious education units required. We keep resources and artefacts for religious education 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. Bibles in the different languages spoken by some of our pupils from other countries have been collected and are available for use and a collection of religious artefacts which we use to enrich teaching in religious education. The school library has a good supply of RE topic books and computer software to support the children's individual research.

11 Monitoring and review

The RE subject leader is responsible for monitoring the standards of the children's work and the quality of the teaching in religious education. S/he 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. The subject leader presents the Headteacher with an annual report which evaluates strengths and weaknesses in the subject and indicates areas for further improvement. S/he has specially-allocated time for carrying out the vital task of reviewing samples of the children's work and visiting classes to observe teaching in the subject. S/he works in partnership with the allocated governor to carry out the subject review/monitoring once every two years. This can take a variety of forms, such as pupil voice or work and planning scrutiny.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years.