

Religious Education Policy for North Yorkshire Primary Schools Adapted for North Stainley CE Primary School.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN COMMUNITY, FOUNDATION AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT OUR SCHOOL

Religious Education (RE) is not a National Curriculum subject, but must be taught to all registered pupils. As RE is not nationally determined, the Local Education Authority must provide an Agreed Syllabus for us to follow. It is this North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education 2013-2018, which we have used as the basis of our planning and delivery of RE (note 1).

Families who send their children to this school are in the main 'nominally' Christian, some children are from practising Christian families, in addition, there are children who are from religions other than Christianity and some from non-religious backgrounds. RE is concerned with "learning about religions and beliefs" and "learning from religions and beliefs" and it is not the practice of this school to preach to or convert the children. The faith background of both the staff and child's family is respected at all times.

Parental rights to withdraw children from RE

Parents of a pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of the RE programme. Where parents have concerns about their children taking part in RE, they are asked to discuss their concerns first with the Headteacher. S/he will be able to discuss the RE programme and teaching methods in greater detail and give parents access to the RE unit materials and resources used. Agreement on alternative provision for the children would need to be reached should they be withdrawn from the RE programme.

Teachers may also withdraw from the teaching of RE (note 2).

A. VALUES AND AIMS

We believe at this school that RE both supports and strengthens what we aim to do in every aspect of school life. Our caring ethos and the value which we place on the development of the whole child; spiritually, morally, socially, culturally and intellectually is reflected in the RE curriculum.

Specifically, RE at our school aims to enable pupils of whatever ability and level of development to:

1. acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of principal world faiths practised in Great Britain. These include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, each of which is represented in North Yorkshire;
2. develop an understanding of the influence of beliefs, values and traditions on individuals, communities, societies and cultures, including the local community;
3. develop the ability to make reasoned and informed judgements about religious and moral issues with reference to the teachings of the principal religions;
4. enhance their own spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by:
 - a. developing awareness of the fundamental questions of life arising from human experiences, and how religious beliefs and practices can relate to them;
 - b. responding to the fundamental questions of life in the light of their experience and with reference to religious beliefs and practices;
 - c. reflecting on their own beliefs, values and experiences in the light of their study;
 - d. expressing their own personal viewpoints in a thoughtful, reasoned and considerate way;
5. recognise the right of people to hold different beliefs within an ethnically and socially diverse society.

B. OBJECTIVES

Learning

Religious Education 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 challenges pupils to reflect on, consider, analyse, interpret and evaluate issues of truth, belief, faith and ethics and to communicate their responses.

Religious Education should encourage all participants to reflect on their own beliefs and values and to acknowledge that others hold beliefs different from their own.

Religious Education has two closely related aspects:

Learning about religions and beliefs (AT 1) and Learning from religions and beliefs (AT 2)

These two attainment targets with their associated statements set out the broad objectives in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills for the RE curriculum. RE is at its most effective when these two attainment targets are closely related in the learning experience.

AT1 Learning about religions and beliefs

Building up knowledge and understanding of religions and beliefs:

This includes investigating, thinking about and interpreting religious beliefs, teachings, sources, practices, ways of life and ways of expressing meaning with reference to the specific beliefs and religions studied.

AT2 Learning from Religion

Building up investigative, reasoning and evaluation skills:

This includes engaging with, reflecting on and responding to questions of identity, belonging, diversity, meaning, purpose, truth, values and commitments, making increasingly insightful links to the specific beliefs and religions studied.

Teaching

Teaching the programmes of study should contribute to pupils' knowledge and understanding and provide opportunities for reflection on six key areas:

- Beliefs, teachings and sources - e.g. stories, religious leaders, books, God/gods, self-sacrifice, truth, life after death;
- Practices and lifestyles - e.g. people, festivals, pilgrimages, places, events, artefacts, lifestyle choices, actions, effects on individuals;
- Expressing meaning - e.g. sacred texts, art, music, literature, symbolism, poetry, dance, drama, prayer, forms of religious and spiritual expression, silence/stillness;
- Identity, diversity and belonging- e.g. belonging, preferences, relationships within family and community, influences on own lives, inspirational people;
- Meaning, purpose and truth - e.g. amazement, sadness, disappointment, joy, awe, in connection with the natural world and life's journey, making sense, ultimate questions of life raised by life experiences;

- Values and commitments - e.g. values, ethics, principles, rules, morality.

The teaching of RE seeks both to impart knowledge and develop understanding of religious experiences, feelings and attitudes through a variety of teaching and learning approaches. Providing a balance between the two key attainment targets underpins the teaching of RE at this school.

At Key Stage 1 pupils learn primarily about Christianity and Judaism but also study Islam and significant celebrations and festivals from other religions.

At Key Stage 2 pupils build on their understanding of Christianity and also study Judaism and Islam in greater depth. Festivals and celebrations from other faiths such as Buddhism and Hinduism are also studied.

RE teaching specifically draws on the following:

1. visits and visitors; enabling children to see at first hand religious people, objects, symbols, places, events, stories and explore with people who have faith
2. role play and drama; encouraging children to learn through familiar or unfamiliar settings and ask questions from their own encounters
3. artefacts; being able to explore items which are precious and/or used in religious worship, encouraging respect and questioning whilst deepening knowledge
4. music and the arts; enabling children to experience elements of religions in a sensory way
5. parents; by valuing the family backgrounds of the children and making them part of the school community
6. food sampling, making and baking foods from different faiths to support children's understanding.

The teaching of RE will involve some direct teaching and whole class, group, paired or individual activities. A range of teaching styles will be used including enquiry, exploration, discussion, asking and answering questions, artefacts, visits and faith visitors, to ensure pupils are actively engaged in learning.

ASSESSMENT, RECORDING AND REPORTING (see school Assessment policy)

The Agreed Syllabus sets out a structure for recognising pupil achievements and each pupil can work progressively towards achieving the statements of attainment as outlined following the Eight Level Scale in the North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2013-2018, which is exemplified in detail in the North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus Guidance Document D. Assessment in RE is seen in its broadest sense and is not limited to measurement and testing. (note 3).

Through activities, for example discussion with pupils, group activities, marking and guiding their work, observing, displaying work, asking and answering questions, teachers are continually finding out about their pupils' achievements. This information is then recorded against the statements of attainment in line with other areas of the curriculum. At this school we appreciate that a vital aid to learning is for pupils to be actively involved in their own assessment.

As a staff we have undertaken moderation exercises to ensure that we are familiar with the statements and what they mean in the context of a pupil's work.

School reports are sent home in the summer term of each year and the RE report is written with reference to the records made or pieces of work retained.

TIME ALLOCATION

In line with the recommendations of the North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education 2013-2018, approximately 5% of curriculum time is given to RE. At Foundation Stage RE will be delivered flexibly according to the statutory requirements of the EYFS. At Key Stage 1 pupils spend 60 hours over 2 years (approximately 10 hours per term) and 156 hours over 4 years (approximately 13 hours per term) at Key Stage 2. The time allocation does include visits and RE curriculum days, but not school productions related to festivals or collective worship time. (See Collective Worship policy: note 4).

PLANNING

In order to ensure that our aims are met and the Programme of Study is covered at each key stage the school uses the North Yorkshire units of learning for RE which builds-in coverage of and progression in both the content and concepts outlined in the Agreed Syllabus. In addition we have developed our own units of learning around deepening the children's understanding of Jesus' life and teachings and the Bible. We also aim to develop our children's spirituality throughout the curriculum. We have used a combination of teaching RE through the creative curriculum, RE days and as a separate subject, depending on the material which has to be covered.

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.

Short term planning of individual lessons is a matter for the class teacher. The RE Subject Leader is available to help with this and keeps a range of teacher's resources as a guide. (When planning each unit of work the teacher will identify which parts of the programme of study are to be the focus, the learning objectives for the unit, the learning tasks planned to achieve them, time allocated and any resources, visits or visitors needed. The work planned must be relevant to the needs of the pupils).

CROSS CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

RE teaching and learning will be the means to many wider cross-curricular themes and dimensions.

There are clearly very special opportunities to explore multicultural and equal opportunities issues and for consideration of the environment. Moral questions will be raised and pupils will develop a sense of citizenship through many aspects of the explicit RE curriculum. Links will be made with people and communities within the locality.

Children's skills in oracy and literacy will be enhanced. Problem-solving, decision-making and interpersonal skills will be developed.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Provision for RE is in accordance with the schools equal opportunities policy. In accordance with the aims of the school the pupils will develop an appreciation of and respect for the beliefs and philosophies of others. Pupils will be encouraged to value the rich variety of cultural traditions and lifestyles represented in Great Britain. It is acknowledged and respected that deep beliefs are held in the area of Religious Education. It is therefore our aim to deal with any matters arising as sensitively as possible.

Provision for children with special educational needs, including more able children will follow the school's policies in these areas. Children's needs are carefully monitored and supported through teacher planning and assessment. This enables objectives, tasks, teaching methods, resources and teacher/adult input to be matched to pupil needs. It includes the use of more challenging objectives or extension materials and tasks for the more able

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The RE subject leader manages this area of the curriculum in line with our job description for subject leaders. He/she attends North Yorkshire network meetings to ensure they are up to date with current practice in RE.

There is a rolling programme of subject leadership focus throughout school. This policy is reviewed at staff meetings at least once per year and Governing Body meetings annually to ensure it still represents the values and practice of the school.

Complaints procedure

Complaints regarding Religious Education are dealt with in line with NYCC policy and the School's Complaint Procedure (see policy)

NOTES

1. Voluntary Controlled schools should follow this pattern. Voluntary Aided schools are not obliged to use the Agreed Syllabus. They must, however teach RE in accordance with their trust deed.
2. DFE Circular 1/94 paragraphs 44-49.
3. See North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus pages 30-31 and the pull-out. More detailed guidance can be found in North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus Guidance Document D: A SACRE tool for using the 8 level scale.
4. The school has a separate policy on Collective Worship.