

West Tyne Church Schools
Policy on Religious Education (RE)

Our Vision..... *“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much”*

Helen Keller

Our Mission.....

Our mission is founded on Christian beliefs and values to serve our local communities and wider community through providing the best possible education in the West Tyne Federation.

Our schools are committed to the personal development of all involved and aim to provide life-long learning.

We aim to provide extended facilities in our four schools in order to support each child on their learning journey.

1 Aims and objectives

1.1 Religious education enables children to investigate and reflect on some of the most fundamental questions asked by people. Within our West Tyne Federation, we develop the children’s knowledge and understanding of the major world faiths, and 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 to learn from religions as well as about religions.

1.2 Our objectives in the teaching of RE are, for all of our children:

- that God who reveals the truth about himself and humanity through creation, the giving of the law, his action in history and through the prophets
- that God who reveals himself ultimately in Jesus his Son, living among us and dying and rising for us
- that God who reveals himself in his Spirit working in the living faith of the Church experienced through scripture, tradition and reason.
- to develop an awareness of spiritual and moral issues arising in their lives;
- to develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world religions or value systems adhered to in the UK;
- to develop an understanding of what it means to be committed to a religious tradition;

- to be capable of reflecting on their own experiences, and of developing a personal response to the fundamental questions of life;
- to develop an understanding of religious traditions, and an appreciation of cultural differences in the UK today;
- to develop their investigative and research skills, in order to hold reasoned opinions on religious issues;
- to have respect for other people's views, and hence to celebrate diversity in society.

Religious Education in the West Tyne Federation helps pupils to:

- reflect theologically and explore the ultimate questions and challenges of life in today's society
- reflect critically on the truth claims of Christian belief
- see how the truth of Christianity is relevant today
- understand the challenge faced by Christians in today's pluralist and post-modern society
- develop the skills to handle the Bible text
- recognise that faith is based on commitment to a particular way of understanding God and the world
- begin to develop their own commitments, beliefs and values
- develop a sense of themselves as significant, unique and precious
- experience the breadth and variety of the Christian community
- engage in thoughtful dialogue with other faiths and traditions
- become active citizens, serving their neighbour
- find a reason for hope in a troubled world
- understand how religious faith can sustain believers in difficult circumstances and in the face of opposition.

2 The legal position of religious education

The management of Religious Education is a distinctive role of the governors and headteacher. RE and is in accordance with the Trust Deed and in accordance with the rites, practices and doctrines of the Church of England. The Governing Body as a whole is responsible for determining the nature of Religious Education provided in its school.

Religious Education and Collective Worship naturally compliment and enrich one another, however, they are managed separately.

Religious Education within the West Tyne Federation lies at the very heart of the curriculum.

- Governors have adopted the Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle Syllabus for RE which reflects the National Framework for RE, the National Society Statement of Entitlement and the requirements of SIAMS.
- At least 5% of curriculum time is devoted to RE.
- Christianity plays a central role in RE, taking up between two thirds and three quarters of the time available.
- Appropriate teaching about other faiths and world views is included.

- 2.1 Our school curriculum for RE 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 and carers 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. We follow the Diocesan Syllabus for RE.

3 Teaching and learning style

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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 organise visits to local places of worship, and invite representatives of local religious groups to come into school and talk to the children.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 We recognise the fact that all classes in our 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, e.g. by:
- setting tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses;
 - setting tasks of increasing difficulty (we do not expect all children to complete all tasks);
 - grouping the children by ability in the room, and setting different tasks for each ability group;
 - providing resources of different complexity, adapted to the ability of the child;
 - using classroom assistants to support the work of individuals or groups of children.

4 RE curriculum planning

- 4.1 RE is a foundation subject in the National Curriculum. We plan our RE curriculum in accordance with the Diocesan Agreed Syllabus, with reference to the LA Agreed Syllabus. We ensure that the topics studied in RE 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.
- 4.2 We carry out the curriculum planning in RE in three phases (long-term, medium-term and short-term). The long-term plan maps the RE 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 RE 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.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 The RE teacher writes the plans for each lesson and lists the specific learning objectives and expected outcomes.

It is entirely appropriate and necessary in today's world that children should be encouraged to foster a respect for the followers of the other world faiths. It is essential that this respect is based on an accurate and sympathetic understanding of those faiths.

Within the West Tyne Federation, we also help pupils to:

- learn *about* other faiths, their beliefs, traditions and practices and *from* them through encounter and dialogue
- recognise and respect those of all faiths in their search for God
- recognise areas of common belief and practice between different faiths
- enrich and expand their understanding of truth while remaining faithful to their own tradition
- enrich their own faith through examples of holy living in other traditions.

Within the West Tyne Federation, we also promote the distinctive content of the Religious Education Curriculum by:

- opportunities to explore the experience of the Church's year
- study of the story of the local Christian community with its saints and martyrs
- visits to places of worship, especially the local parish Church and a Cathedral, to develop the understanding of the Church as a living community.
- welcoming visitors from the local parish to share their experience of Christian belief and life
- liaison with the local parish to enable these visits and links to occur.

- skills to confidently use religious language to express knowledge and opinions.
- a well-used set of Bibles in language that can be understood by the learners and examples of Bibles and prayer books from a variety of contexts.
- the facility to listen to Christian ‘psalms, hymns and spiritual songs’ from a wide variety of traditions.
- access to Christian artefacts that are used with care, respect and confidence.
- a sacred space that can be used as a focus for prayer and silent reflection.

Within our West Tyne Federation we enable:

- pupils and teachers to talk openly and freely about their own personal beliefs and practice without fear of ridicule.
- pupils to make excellent and appropriate progress in their knowledge and understanding of Christianity.
- pupils from Christian families to talk openly about their beliefs and values in lessons and to grow in their faith.
- pupils from other faith backgrounds to understand and be encouraged in their faith
- pupils with no religious background to be given an insight into what it means to be a person of faith.
- pupils of all backgrounds to have a safe place to explore the ultimate questions and challenges of life in today’s society.

5 The Foundation Stage

- 5.1 We teach RE to all children in the school, including those in the reception class.
- 5.2 In reception classes, RE 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 RE 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

6.1 English

RE 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 Literacy 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.

6.2 Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship

Through our RE 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.

6.3 Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Through RE 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 multi-cultural 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.

Spiritual development within our Federation enriches and encourages the pupils' discovery of God the creator, of their 'inmost being' and of the wonder of the environment. Moral development is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, which offer pupils a secure foundation stone on which to make decisions and build their lives.

Social development enriches pupils' understanding of what it means to live in a Christian community where Jesus' command to love one another is put into practice. Cultural development provides opportunities to develop an understanding of Christianity as a worldwide, multi-cultural faith that has an impact on the lives of millions of people.

7 RE and ICT

7.1 ICT enhances RE, 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 to 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 in which each pupil has his or her 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

- 8.1 Within our Federation, we teach RE to all children, whatever their ability and individual needs. RE forms part of the school's curriculum policy to provide a broad and balanced education to all children. Through our RE 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 Discrimination; Gifted and Talented Children; English as an Additional Language (EAL).
- 8.2 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.

- 8.3 Intervention through School Action and School Action Plus will lead to the creation of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for children with special educational needs. The IEP may include, as appropriate, specific targets relating to religious education.
- 8.4 We enable all pupils to have access to the full range of activities involved in RE. Where children are to participate in activities outside the classroom (a visit to a Jewish synagogue, 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

- 9.1 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 RE 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 grades awarded at the end of a unit of work in his or her mark book. 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.
- 9.2 We follow the assessment policy as set out by the Diocese and SACRE. This sets out the expected level of attainment for pupils at the end of each Key Stage. At the end of a whole unit of work, the teacher makes a summary judgement about the work of each pupil in relation to his or her expected level of attainment. This is recorded in the teacher's mark book. We use these grades as a basis for assessing the progress of the child, and we pass this information on to the next teacher at the end of the year.
- 9.3 The RE subject leader keeps samples of children's work in a portfolio/scrap books. This demonstrates the expected level of achievement in RE in each year of the school.

10 Resources

- 10.1 We have sufficient resources in our school to be able to teach all our RE teaching units. We keep resources for RE at Henshaw, where there are boxes of equipment for each unit of work. There is a range of Bibles for both Key Stages, and a collection of religious artefacts which we use to enrich teaching in RE. The school library has a good supply of RE topic books.

11 Monitoring and review

- 11.1 The coordination and planning of the RE curriculum are the responsibility of the subject leader, Mrs Val Wilson, who also:
 - supports colleagues in their teaching, by keeping informed about current developments in RE and providing a strategic lead and direction for this subject;
 - gives the headteacher an annual summary in which she evaluates the strengths and weaknesses in RE and indicates areas for further improvement;

- uses specially allocated regular planning time to review evidence of the children's work.

11.2 The quality of teaching and learning in RE is monitored and evaluated by the headteacher as part of the school's agreed cycle of lesson observations.

Parental Rights of Withdrawal

Parents may request the governing body to provide Religious Education for their children according to the Agreed Syllabus. This can only be requested when parents cannot, with reasonable convenience, arrange for their children to attend another school where Religious Education is provided according to the Agreed Syllabus. The governing body **will** make provision unless the circumstances make it unreasonable to do so.

Should the governing body be unable to make such arrangements for Religious Education to be delivered according to the Agreed Syllabus, the responsibility for doing so then falls on the Local Authority. The Local Authority may decide that such a request for separate Religious Education is unreasonable and the parental request then fails.

Parents may withdraw their children from Religious Education as they may in any school.

'The Worship and Religious Education provided by the school is in accordance with the Church of England or Methodist Church Foundation. This foundation is also reflected in the curriculum and the whole life of the school community. Since the conduct of the school as a whole reflects the Church of England or Methodist Church ethos, removal of pupils from Worship and/or Religious Education (as parents are legally entitled to do) cannot insulate them from the religious life of the school.'

If such a request for withdrawal is made, the Headteacher will explore the reasons for the request and seek to arrive at an accommodation. It may be that only some elements of Religious Education or Worship are objected to.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years.

Signed:

Reviewed : September 2014