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St. Giles' Church of England Primary School (VA)

Religious Education (RE) Policy

Christian Ethos

As a Church of England School, all of our policies take into consideration and reflect the Christian ethos of our school.

1 Aims and objectives

Religious education enables children to investigate and reflect on some of the most fundamental questions asked by people. At St. Giles' 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.

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

- develop an awareness of spiritual and moral issues arising in their lives;
- develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and 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

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 combines elements of the Understanding Christianity scheme, as recommended by St Alban's diocese, and the Herts Agreed RE syllabus. Children learn in the majority about the Christian faith, but meaningful links are made to ensure they learn about all world religions alongside this.

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 organise visits to local places of worship, and invite representatives of local religious groups to come into school and talk to the children.

Children carry out research into religious topics. They study particular 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.

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, for example, by:

- setting tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses;
- setting tasks of increasing challenge (we do not expect all children to complete all tasks);
- 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 Curriculum planning in religious education

We plan our religious education curriculum by combining Understanding Christianity and the Herts Agreed syllabus. Topics are planned on a two-year cycle to ensure children's learning is progressed as they move through the school to offer increasing challenge. We offer opportunities for children of all abilities to develop their skills and knowledge in each unit.

Our curriculum planning is mapped out in a two-year cycle as we have mixed-age classes in Key Stage 1 and 2 and this allows for complete coverage, rather than allowing any repetition. On this plan, topics are allocated to each class for each half-term. The class teacher then writes plans for individual lessons, discussed with the RE subject leader where appropriate. Other subjects are taught in conjunction with religious education as part of a topic, but there are also aspects of R.E. which need teaching discretely and weekly RE lessons teach these aspects.

5 The Foundation Stage

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

As the reception class is part of the Early Years Foundation Stage, we relate the religious education aspects of the children's work to the objectives set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the steps leading to them which underpin EYFS the curriculum planning for children aged from birth 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, drama, 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.

Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)

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, review, modify and evaluate their work, and use ICT to improve its presentation. Children can take photographs and videos during RE lessons, and they can also find the various artefacts in churches by doing virtual tours on church websites. In compliance with our E-Safety Policy and guidelines.

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.

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 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 story from the Bible, whilst older pupils might produce a 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. Older children are encouraged to make judgements about how they might improve their work in the future. Teachers make termly assessments of each child in relation to the National Curriculum levels and record this on Target Tracker. 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.

10 Resources

Resources for religious education are kept in a central store. There is a set of bibles in each class, and religious artefacts are used to enrich teaching in religious education. The school library has a 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 action plan which evaluates strengths and weaknesses in the subject and indicates areas for further improvement. S/he has specially-allocated time when possible for carrying out the vital task of reviewing samples of the children's work and visiting classes to observe teaching in the subject.

The Governing Body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. It is the responsibility of the Governors to monitor overall standards, through school development plan and SIAMS report.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years.