



Joseph Turner Primary School

Religious Education (RE) Policy

Approved by Governors January 2024
Curriculum and Standards Committee

To be reviewed at least every four years
Review Date January 2028

Chair of Governors print _____

Chair of Governors signed _____

Date _____

Introduction

At Joseph Turner Primary we recognise that Religious Education enables children to investigate and reflect on some of the most fundamental questions asked by people. It is vital to help children to develop their own ideas and ways of living, to learn to be reasonable about belief and religions and to be respectful to those who see the world differently. If everyone finds their own path in life, then the great religions of the world can act as guides. RE introduces pupils to the influences of faith over thousands of years and for billions of people.

At Joseph Turner Primary, we follow Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (RE) created by the Sandwell Agreed Syllabus Conference. It is the legal basis for RE in Sandwell schools. In line with legal requirements, an agreed syllabus must “reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of other principal religions represented in Great Britain.” (s375 (3) Education Act 1996) The Sandwell Agreed Syllabus was reviewed by Sandwell and introduced to schools in Feb 2018.

Purpose

Religious Education is an essential component of a broad and balanced education. Religious Education is concerned with the deep meaning that individuals and groups make of their experiences and how this helps them give purpose to their lives. The purpose of Religious Education is to help pupils to reflect upon the experiences and the mysteries of life and the contribution of religious and spiritual dimensions. It provides opportunities to explore, make and respond to the meanings of those experiences in relation to the beliefs and experiences of others as well as to one's own experiences.

Aims

RE education aims to enable pupils to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other principal religions represented in the United Kingdom and particularly in Sandwell;
- Develop an understanding of the influence of beliefs, values and traditions on individuals, communities, societies and cultures;
- Develop the ability to make reasoned and informed judgements about religious and moral issues, with reference to the teachings of the principal religions represented in the United Kingdom, and thereby develop confidence in their own beliefs and values;
- Enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by:
 - Developing awareness of the ultimate questions of life raised by human experiences, and of how religions can relate to them;
 - Responding to such questions with reference to the teachings and practices of religions and other belief systems, relating them to their own understanding and experience;
 - Reflecting positively on their own identity, beliefs, values and experiences in the light of their study;
- Develop positive attitudes:
 - of respect towards other people who hold views and beliefs different from their own, and;
 - towards living in and contributing to an inclusive and caring community and a society of diverse religions.

RE and SMSC

RE makes an enormous contribution to SMSC development however every subject and every teacher, including assemblies and whole school events, have a duty to promote children's SMSC development. RE lesson content, skills and resources are rich in SMSC. Below there are a range of suggestions and ideas for each category of SMSC which teachers should refer to when planning RE lessons.

Activities for Spiritual Development in RE

The 'spiritual' should not be confused with 'religious'. Spiritual development refers to the aspects of the child's spirit which are enhanced by school life and learning, and may describe the 'spirit' of determination, sharing or open-mindedness. RE can support this by;

Self-awareness: offering opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own views and how they have been formed, as well as the views of others;

Curiosity: encouraging pupils' capacity for critical questioning, such as by keeping big questions in a 'question box' or as part of a wall display, and allowing time and space where these questions can be addressed to show that they are important;

Collaboration: utilising lesson techniques which engender group collaboration and communication;

Reflection: providing opportunities to reflect on pupils' own values and views, as well as those of others, and to consider the impact of these values;

Resilience: promoting a spirit of open enquiry into emotive or complicated questions, in order to learn how to cope with difficult ideas when they arise in the future;

Response: exploring ways in which pupils can express their responses to demanding or controversial issues;

Values: promoting an ethos of fairness and mutual respect in the classroom and compassion and generosity in pupils.

Activities for Moral Development in RE

Moral development is about learning to navigate the fact of moral diversity in the world as much as exploring and strengthening pupil's own moral outlook. RE is extremely well-suited to explore social and personal morality in three main ways:

1) Moral diversity: activities in RE lessons should help pupils feel confident when taking part in debates about moral issues. Debates and discussions should prepare pupils for the fact that there will always be disagreement on matters of morality and their right of expression is balanced by a responsibility to listen to the views of others;

In the classroom: allow appropriate exploration of different moral outlooks such as religious stories about right and wrong, codes for living, treatment of animals and the environment etc.

2) Value of others: in exploring the views of others, young people are well-prepared in RE to appreciate the uniqueness of all humans and their moral value, and to act in the world and towards others accordingly.

In the classroom: offer activities which enable team-work and trust and require empathy. Teachers should plan for visitors or to visit places of worship to learn from people of different backgrounds, explore case studies centring on forgiveness, generosity and other beneficial social moral values, use puppets or toys with younger children to develop their sense of moral connection with others.

3) Moral character development: RE offers a safe space where pupils can learn from their mistakes, continue to strive after setbacks, take initiative, act responsibly and demonstrate resilience.

In the classroom: children are encouraged to take part in whole-school endeavours to enlarge their characters such as the Pupil Governors, sports day, debates, contributing to charity events and taking part in our 'buddy' schemes.

Activities for Social Development in RE

Social development refers to the ways young people are shaped in schools with an eye on the sort of society we wish to create in the future. Developing children socially means giving them the opportunities to explore and understand social situations and contexts they may encounter in school or outside. During RE, such social situations may include;

Shared values: opportunities to consider values which are or should be part of society, such as those associated with right and wrong, treatment of others or diversity;

Idealised concepts: reflecting on the abstract concepts our society is built on, and specific examples of how they affect our common life, such as justice, fairness, honesty and truth;

Moral sources; a chance to reflect on *where* ideas about how we should behave come from, whether religious or non-religious, in order to more fully understand social and behavioural norms;
Influences; opportunities to explore and reflect on the great influence on individuals of family, friends and the media, in order to understand how our behaviour is affected;
Social insight: a chance to acquire insight into significant social and political issues which affect individuals, groups and the nation;
Role models: teachers are expected to model the sort of behaviour we expect of our children;
Experiential learning: pupils have opportunities to embody for themselves expected behavioural and social norms, through class discussions, group work and ongoing behaviour expectations, as well as special events such as school visits and workshops.

Activities for Cultural Development in RE

There are two meanings associated with 'cultural' development and RE embodies both of them. Firstly the term refers to the pupils' own home culture and background, whether religious or not, and secondly the term describes our national culture. Schooling should prepare all young people to participate in Britain's wider cultural life, whatever their own background. Cultural development is evident in RE in two ways:

1) Own culture: RE enables pupils to explore Britain's rich diversity of religious, ethnic and geographical cultures. No child should feel their cultural background is a barrier to participation. Some common RE activities which promote children's understanding of communities and cultural groups, including their own:

In the classroom: through RE and other areas of the curriculum pupils will explore food, festivals, music, art, architecture and other forms of cultural expression. Parents, who are willing, will be invited to talk about their home culture, or send personal artefacts to school such as books, photos or clothes. Children should be encouraged to share their own cultural experiences in class discussions or assemblies.

2) Wider culture: schooling is a preparation for adult life in terms of behaviour and expectations as well as in achieving qualifications. This wider cultural education prepares children for adulthood.

In the classroom: cultural education is found whenever children make sense of the world around them and explore why we act the way we do. Children have opportunities to participate in classroom and whole-school events, work with others, and learn about expected behaviours.

SMSC and British Values

The government definition of British values was set out to ensure children in school are given opportunities to develop the fundamental British values of:

- democracy
- the rule of law
- individual liberty
- tolerance
- mutual respect between those of different faiths and beliefs

This forms an important part of all pupils' RE understanding and SMSC development. In line with government regulations, the school actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs. Extremism will not form any part of the teaching at Joseph Turner Primary and pupils are encouraged to respect other people and no pupil is discriminated against with particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. Any pupil, member of staff or parent/carer expressing opinions contrary to fundamental British values will be challenged. Anyone with concerns with regard to this should report them to the Head teacher.

As a school we recognise the important role RE has to play in promoting positive attitudes, tolerance and respect, and understanding diversity and all staff have a duty to promote children's SMSC development.

Excellent Teaching of Religious Education will enable pupils to learn to think for themselves about British values. RE offers opportunities to build an accurate knowledge base about religions and beliefs in relation to values. This in turn supports children so that they are able to move beyond attitudes of tolerance towards increasing respect, so that they can celebrate diversity.

The RE curriculum focuses learning in some of these areas, however pupils' moral development is embedded within the whole school ethos and curriculum.

Democracy: In RE pupils learn the significance of each person's ideas and experiences through methods of discussion. In debating the fundamental questions of life, pupils learn to respect a range of perspectives. This contributes to learning about democracy, examining the idea that we all share a responsibility to use our voice and influence for the wellbeing of others.

The Rule of Law: In RE pupils examine different examples of codes for human life, including commandments, rules or precepts offered by different religious communities. They learn to appreciate how individuals choose between good and evil, right and wrong, and they learn to apply these ideas to their own communities. They learn that fairness requires that the law apply equally to all, irrespective – for example - of a person's status or wealth.

Individual liberty: In RE, pupils consider questions about identity, belonging and diversity, learning what it means to live a life free from constraints. They study examples of pioneers of human freedom, including those from within different religions, so that they can examine tensions between the value of a stable society and the value of change for human development.

Mutual Tolerance: Intolerant attitudes to members of the community is not accepted. Attitudes which reject other people on the basis of race, faith, gender, sexual orientation or age are rightly challenged. A baseline for a fair community is that each person's right to 'be themselves' is to be accepted by all. Tolerance may not be enough: RE can challenge children to be increasingly respectful and to celebrate diversity, but tolerance is a starting point.

Respectful attitude: In the RE curriculum attention focuses on developing mutual respect between those of different faiths and beliefs, promoting an understanding of what a society gains from diversity. Pupils will learn about diversity in religions and worldviews, and will be challenged to respect other persons who see the world differently to themselves. Recognition and celebration of human diversity in many forms can flourish where pupils understand different faiths and beliefs, and are challenged to be broad minded and open hearted.

Teaching and Learning

At Joseph Turner Primary School the expectation is that all pupils are provided with high quality learning experiences across all subjects. Teaching and learning opportunities across all subjects, including RE, should provide pupils with open-ended tasks with a focus on problem solving, discussion, collaboration and imaginative thinking that leads to the following behaviours:

- questioning and challenging
- envisaging what might be
- exploring ideas, keeping options open
- reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes
- making connections and seeing relationships

All teachers are required to read the school's Teaching and Learning Policy in full which has further information the school's teaching and learning expectations.

In addition to taught RE lessons, we use children's experiences at religious festivals such as

Easter, Eid 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.

For the specified religions, the Agreed Syllabus outlines the knowledge, skills and understanding, areas of study and the experiences and opportunities for children in EYFS, KS1 and KS2.

Staff who feel the need to further develop their own subject knowledge can take up training opportunities to support this.

Religious Education – Religions and Beliefs

The Syllabus Conference's decisions about which religions shall be studied reflect the population of Sandwell, the Midlands region and the UK, in line with the law and good practice in RE.

Key Stage	Religious and Beliefs studied
EYFS	Beginning to learn about religions among the children in the class
Key Stage 1	Beginning to learn about Christianity + Sikhism + Islam
Key Stage 2	Learning more about Christianity + Sikhism + Islam Beginning to learn about Hinduism + Judaism

Assessment

There are two attainment targets for RE which reflect the aims of RE concisely.

RE is to be relevant to pupils' own personal development: the two attainment targets are sometimes distinct in planning, but often interwoven in good teaching.

AT1 - Learning about religion and beliefs Developing knowledge and understanding of religions: Enquiring into, investigating and building knowledge of religions and beliefs. This includes 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 and beliefs Developing reasoning and evaluation skills: Questioning, exploring, reflecting upon, interpreting and justifying ideas about human experience in the light of religions and beliefs studied. This includes communicating reflections, responses and personal and critical evaluations about questions of identity, belonging, diversity, meaning, purpose, truth, values and commitments, making increasingly insightful links to the specific religions studied.

Time Allocation

In order to deliver the aims and expected standards of the syllabus, the Agreed Syllabus Conference strongly recommends a minimum allocation of curriculum time for RE: a minimum 5% of curriculum time is required for teaching RE. In practice the expectations are as follows:

Reception Year: A minimum of 30 hours identifiable within adult led experiences.

Key Stage 1: 36 hours of tuition per year.

Key Stage 2: 45 hours of tuition per year.

Withdrawal

The school teaches open minded religious education, and is inclusive: all pupils develop their own beliefs and values through RE. So any parent considering exercising the right of withdrawal and removing their child from the subject is invited to make an appointment with the Head Teacher to discuss the approach we take to RE. The school does not support selective withdrawals from RE lessons.