Model Policy for Religious Education in Church Schools

Guidance from the Diocesan Board of Education

January 2015
Introduction

Schools/academies should note that where ‘pupil’ appears in this document it can be substituted for ‘student’, likewise ‘school’ can be substituted for ‘academy’ as appropriate.

This suggested policy could be used as a template for the governing bodies of Church of England schools/academies in the Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham to discuss, amend and adopt in the light of their unique school context. Following agreement on a school policy it should be signed by the Chair of Governors.

The document is intended as both a suggested outline policy and to provide guidance for schools in writing that policy. Text in red should be regarded as guidance and should not be included in the school policy. Additional support can be found in the supporting document ‘Guidance for delivering religious education in church schools’.

Name of school/academy

School Mission/Vision Statement here....
1. **A statement regarding the legal position of RE in your school - (Controlled or Aided) including syllabus taught.**

Religious Education is unique in the school curriculum in that it is neither a core subject nor a foundation subject but the 1988 Education Act states that ‘Religious Education has equal standing in relation to core subjects of the National Curriculum in that it is compulsory for all registered pupils’

**Either:**

…………… is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled school therefore we deliver RE in line with the Nottinghamshire Locally Agreed Syllabus 2015 ‘Religious Education for All’

**Or:**

……………..is a Church of England Voluntary Aided School therefore the provision of RE must be in accordance with the Trust Deed of the School. The Governors in consultation with the Head teacher have decided, following advice from the diocese, to adopt the Locally Agreed Syllabus (see above) and supplement this with material from the Diocese and elsewhere.

In a Church of England Academy the requirements for Religious Education are specified in the funding agreement for that academy. For a VA school that converts to academy status the model funding agreement specifies that an academy with a religious designation must provide RE in accordance with the tenets of the particular faith specified in the designation. Foundation or Voluntary Controlled schools with a religious designation that convert to academy status must arrange for RE in accordance with the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The wording of the policy should reflect this.

..........is a Church of England Academy therefore RE is provided.........

Religious Education is central to the churches understanding of education and mission. ‘The National Society Statement of Entitlement’ outlines the following aims for RE in a Church of England School.

- To enable pupils to encounter Christianity as the religion that shaped British culture and heritage and influences the lives of millions of people today
- To enable pupils to learn about the other major religions, their impact on culture and politics, art and history, and on the lives of their adherents
- To develop understanding of religious faith as the search for and expression of truth
- To contribute to the development of pupils’ own spiritual/philosophical convictions, exploring and enriching their own faith and beliefs
2. **Rationale/Aims for teaching RE in the school should be stated** making reference to the aims quoted above, the Locally Agreed Syllabus – ‘Religious Education for All (2015) & Religious Education in English schools: Non statutory guidance 2010

In Religious Education at ……………School we aim that Religious Education will:

Outline the aims of RE in your school which may be taken from any of the above documents as well as your school specific aims

In addition schools may wish to add outcomes of teaching RE (Schools may wish to refer to those found in the National Society documentation)

3. **The contribution RE makes to other curriculum aims in particular to SMSC, promotion of the schools Christian values and the promotion of ‘British Values’**

**Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**
SMSC prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life’. Learning about and from religions and beliefs, through the distinct knowledge, understanding and skills contained in RE within a broad-based curriculum, is essential to achieving these aims. Exploring the concepts of religion and belief and their roles in the spiritual, moral and cultural lives of people in a diverse society helps individuals develop moral awareness and social understanding.

**The school’s Christian values**
RE should contribute to the promotion of the school’s distinctively Christian values. Making connections between the values and learning in RE will bring about greater understanding of the values and how they can be put into practice across a range of experiences.

**Respect for All & Global Learning**
RE makes an important contribution to a school’s responsibility to promote respect for all & global learning. It provides a key context to develop young people’s understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism, discrimination & extremism.

**The school community** – RE provides a positive context within which the diversity of cultures, beliefs and values can be celebrated and explored.

**The community within which the school is located** – RE provides opportunities to investigate patterns of diversity of religion and belief and forge links with different groups in the local area in particular local churches.

**The UK community** – a major focus of RE is the study of diversity of religion and belief in the UK and how this influences national life.
The global community – RE involves the study of matters of global significance recognizing the diversity of religion and belief and its impact on world issues.

The promotion of ‘British Values’
RE provides opportunities to promote the ‘British Values’ of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty & mutual respect. (See Nottinghamshire Agreed Syllabus for RE 2015 ‘Religious Education for All’ and the supporting document ‘Guidance for delivering Religious Education in church schools’)

4. Approaches to teaching RE

Select from the bullet points below and add others as appropriate:

- RE has an important part to play as part of a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum to which all pupils are entitled
- High quality learning experiences in RE are designed and provided by careful planning through the locally agreed syllabus and diocesan materials taking into account the need to offer breadth of content
- In order to make religious education a lively, active subject we employ a variety of teaching methods including art, music, discussion, the development of thinking skills, drama, the use of artefacts, pictures, stories, and the use of periods of stillness and reflection
- Where possible we want our pupils to have opportunities to encounter local faith communities through visits to local places of worship or visits from members of local faith communities

We use as a basis for our planning the Locally Agreed Syllabus. As a source of ideas and teaching strategies we also make use of

Schools may wish to include other church school specific materials e.g. the National Society ‘Christianity in RE Project’ or material provided by the diocese on Christian concepts to enhance the teaching of Christianity.

5. How RE is organised

This will include how RE is delivered i.e. as a discrete subject or part of topic work or humanities etc. What religions are taught at which Key Stage, who is responsible, where resources are stored etc

In accordance with the structure of the locally agreed syllabus we have agreed that

At KS 1 pupils study Christianity and...
At KS 2 pupils study Christianity and...
At KS 3 pupils study Christianity and...
At KS 4 pupils follow...
6. **Assessment and Recording of RE**

In line with the school policy on assessment and recording...

7. **Arrangements for monitoring standards of teaching and learning in RE, including how RE contribute to SIAMS School Self Evaluation**

The co-ordinator will monitor RE within the school through analysis of assessment data and...

The co-ordinator is responsible for contributing to the Church school self evaluation process by...

8. **Responsibilities for RE within the school, (Head teachers and Governors)**

As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, the governing body and head teacher should also make sure that:

Select from the bullet points below and add others as appropriate:

- all pupils make progress in achieving the learning objectives of the RE curriculum
- the subject is well led and effectively managed and that standards and achievement in RE and the quality of the provision are subject to regular and effective self-evaluation
- those teaching RE are suitably qualified and trained in the subject and have regular and effective opportunities for CPD
- teachers newly appointed to church schools are provided with support offered by the diocese to enable them to become effective teachers of RE
- teachers are aware of RE’s contribution in developing pupils’ understanding of religion and belief and its impact as part of the duty to promote community cohesion
- where appropriate, pupils have opportunities to take courses leading to an accredited qualification in the subject
- teachers explore how new pedagogies and technology can be fully utilised to support RE learning objectives
- clear information is provided for parents on the RE curriculum and the right to withdraw
• teachers are aware that they do not have to teach RE unless specifically appointed to do so

• RE is resourced, staffed and timetabled so that the school can fulfil its legal obligations on RE and pupils can make good progress

• where there are insufficient teachers in a school who are prepared to teach RE, the head teacher ensures that pupils receive their entitlement to RE. In these circumstances, head teachers might wish to seek advice from the diocese, or LA SACRE.

The right of Withdrawal from RE

It is hoped that in a Church of England School it will not be necessary for any pupils to be withdrawn from RE. However we recognise that this may sometimes be necessary. The school policy should therefore state clearly how that withdrawal will be managed.

At ………school we wish to be an inclusive community but recognise that parents have the legal right to withdraw their children from religious education on the grounds of conscience. However, the right of withdrawal does not extend to other areas of the curriculum when, as may happen on occasions, spontaneous questions on religious matters are raised by pupils or there are issues related to religion that arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship. We would ask any parent considering this to contact the head teacher to discuss any concerns or anxieties about the policy, provision and practice of religious education at ………school.

Managing the right of withdrawal

• The school will ensure that parents who want to withdraw their children from RE are aware of the RE syllabus and that it is relevant to all pupils and respects their own personal beliefs.

• Parents should be made aware of its learning objectives and what is covered in the RE curriculum and should be given the opportunity to discuss this, if they wish.

• The school may also wish to review such a request each year, in discussion with the parents.

• The use of the right to withdraw should be at the instigation of parents (or pupils themselves if they are aged 18 or over), and it should be made clear whether it is from the whole of the subject or specific parts of it. No reasons need be given.

• Parents have the right to choose whether or not to withdraw their child from RE without influence from the school, although a school should ensure that parents or carers are informed of this right and are aware of the educational
objectives and content of the RE syllabus. In this way, parents can make an informed decision.

- Where parents have requested that their child is withdrawn, their right must be respected, and where RE is integrated in the curriculum, the school will need to discuss the arrangements with the parents or carers to explore how the child’s withdrawal can be best accommodated.
- If pupils are withdrawn from RE, schools have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost. Pupils will usually remain on school premises.
- Where a pupil has been withdrawn, the law provides for alternative arrangements to be made for RE of the kind the parent wants the pupil to receive. This RE could be provided at the school in question, or the pupil could be sent to another school where suitable RE is provided if this is reasonably convenient.
- If neither approach is practicable, outside arrangements can be made to provide the pupil with the kind of RE that the parent wants, and the pupil may be withdrawn from school for a reasonable period of time to allow them to attend this external RE.
- Outside arrangements for RE are allowed as long as the LA SACRE (VC schools) or diocese (VA schools) is satisfied that any interference with the pupil’s attendance at school resulting from the withdrawal will affect only the start or end of a school session.

As .............school is a secondary school and parents have withdrawn a pupil from RE provided at the school and asked for alternative RE to be provided in accordance with the tenets of a particular religion or denomination, then the School must either:

- provide facilities for the alternative RE to be given at the school unless there are special circumstances which would make it unreasonable to do so

or

- agree to outside arrangements being made as long as no financial burden falls on the school as a result of these arrangements.

9. **Other generic statements the school would normally include in any curriculum policy**

10. **Date of policy review:**