

Guidance for Delivering Religious Education in Church Schools



Guidance from the
Diocesan Board of Education

August 2017

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Diocesan Rationale

The diocese has a commitment to enabling high quality, meaningful and transformative religious education (RE) in church schools across the diocese as it sees RE as a core part of a school's Christian distinctiveness. It recognises that RE continues to have a unique legal position in the curriculum as an academic subject but it is also clear that in a church school its significance goes well beyond these two reasons. In considering how the diocesan mission statement, ***Joining Together in the Transforming Mission of God***, is lived out in our church schools, the diocese recognises that relevant RE, which offers pupils opportunities to deepen their understanding of other people's faith and beliefs and provides opportunities for God and faith to be discussed openly and honestly, also has a vital part to play in offering children and young people from Christian backgrounds the opportunity to grow as disciples.

RE in a church school should provide opportunities for children to understand what it means to be a religious believer in the world today and help them to understand how Christian beliefs inspire and underpin the values of the school community that they are a part of. RE in the church school should support children to recognise and act on the insights, principles, beliefs, attitudes and values that could influence, inspire or guide them in life.

'The National Society Statement of Entitlement'

The Church of England National Society has set down 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.

Opportunities in RE

In a Church of England school pupils should have opportunities to :

- Learn about and from the life, teaching and example of Jesus Christ through the gospels.

- Explore and discover Christianity locally, nationally and globally.
- Recognise and learn from diversity within Christianity.
- See the Christian faith in the context of religious diversity, learning about and from other major religions and beliefs in the UK and beyond.
- Face the challenges of diversity with respect.

Religious Education in Different Types of Church Schools

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 and that it is compulsory for all registered pupils.'

Religious Education in Voluntary Aided (VA) schools

For Voluntary Aided Schools with a religious character Religious Education is the responsibility of the governing body. Provision of RE must be in accordance with the Trust Deed of the School. The Diocesan Board of Education recommends that governors, in consultation with the Head teacher, adopt the Nottinghamshire Locally Agreed Syllabus 2015 'Religious Education for All' and supplement this with material from the Diocese and elsewhere. The diocese through its Religious Education Advisers and representatives on SACRE has contributed to the writing of these materials and is confident that they reflect the religious foundation of a Voluntary Aided school in Southwell and Nottingham Diocese

Religious Education in Voluntary Controlled (VC) and Foundation schools

Voluntary Controlled or Foundation Schools with a religious designation must arrange for RE to be delivered in accordance with the Nottinghamshire Locally Agreed Syllabus 2015 'Religious Education for All.'

Religious Education in an Academy

The requirements for Religious Education in an academy with a religious foundation are specified in the funding agreement for that academy. For a VA school which 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 Contribution of RE to Other Curriculum Aims

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC)

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 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. Church schools are particularly concerned about the holistic development of children and young people and recognise that a good education is about forming people who have the moral strength and spiritual depth to live a fulfilled life in a society that is marked by rapid change, global competition and insecurity. RE should play a key role in this.

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 these values, where they come from 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, responsible citizenship and 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. It can also impact on the school's duty to promote community cohesion. By examining the beliefs and inspiration provided by key religious figures, RE should also play a part in encouraging pupils to contribute to the school and wider community and to develop attitudes of service to others.

RE provides a positive context within which the diversity of cultures, beliefs and values within the school community can be celebrated and explored. It provides opportunities to investigate patterns of diversity of religion and belief in the local community in which it is located and for forging links with different religious groups in the local area in particular local churches. A major focus of RE should be the study of diversity of religion and belief in the UK and how this influences national life. RE also involves the study of matters of global significance recognising the diversity of religion and belief and its impact on world issues.

The promotion of 'British Values'

RE provides opportunities to promote and discuss the 'British Values' of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty & mutual respect. These discussions may also play a part in helping schools with their new duties in terms of preventing individuals from being drawn into terrorism. Church of England Schools should see themselves as part of the solution to the threat of radicalism. This should involve not just trying to prevent the development of an extremist view but should be more about promoting a positive vision of the contribution of different religions. This means high quality religious education should equip children with accurate information, critical skills and that pupils should be taught that those who advocate violence and hatred in the name of God are distorting their faith.

Approaches to teaching RE

For RE to play its full part within the broad, balanced and coherent curriculum to which all pupils are entitled, schools should ensure that :

- 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
- RE is delivered in ways that make it a lively, active subject by employing a variety of teaching methods; including technology, 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 pupils should have opportunities to encounter local faith communities through visits to places of worship or visits from members of local faith communities.

Assessment and Recording of RE

Assessment and recording of progress in RE should be conducted with the same rigour as it is for all other areas of the school curriculum and in line with the school policy. Further guidance on this can be found in the Nottinghamshire Agreed Syllabus (2015) and from diocesan advisers.

Monitoring and Evaluation of RE

Standards of teaching and learning in RE should be regularly monitored as part of the agreed monitoring cycle in school. This should include the usual methods of lesson observations, work scrutiny, learning walks, analysis of assessment data and pupil voice.

It is expected that the RE co-ordinator will play a lead role in monitoring RE within the school and that the co-ordinator will be responsible for providing evidence of how

RE contributes to the life of the school as part of the (SIAMS) self evaluation process.

Responsibilities of Headteachers and Governors for RE

The legal responsibilities of headteachers and governors including the requirement to make arrangements for parents to exercise the right of Withdrawal from RE are set down in the model policy template for an RE policy provided by the diocese.

Support Provided by the Diocese

The diocese has two part-time school advisers who are both specialists in RE. They are available to offer courses and in-service training on all aspects of RE to staff and governors in schools. They can also provide advice on resources and offer help to schools in preparing for SIAMs inspections. They run regular network meetings for RE co-ordinators in different parts of the diocese and central training events. Details of these can be found in the annual training brochure.

The diocese recognises the unique role Philosophy for Children (P4C) can play in developing children's thinking and questioning skills, including within RE. One of our advisers is skilled in offering training in this area and can offer model lessons in classrooms.

The diocese also has a resource room with samples of RE resources and materials.

Diocesan Links

The diocese has strong links with the St. Phillips Centre in Leicester and the Religious Studies Resource Centre at The Vine Centre, Hyson Green. Both of these organisations offer excellent resources to schools and offer high quality interactive experiences / workshops in schools which help to deepen children's understanding of other religions. They bring learning to life through offering first hand experiences and an introduction to some of the cultural practices of different religions.

Further reading:

Nottinghamshire Agreed Syllabus (2015) Nottinghamshire LA.

Diocesan materials available on teaching Christian concepts from the Southwell and Nottingham diocesan website.

<http://southwell.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/RE-concepts-FINAL.pdf>

Making a Difference? A Review of RE in Church of England schools The National Society.

Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education The National Society.