

Guidance for Delivering Religious Education in Church Schools



Guidance from the
Diocesan Board of Education

October 2020

Guidance for Delivering Religious Education in Church Schools

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, *Growing disciples wider, younger, deeper* is lived out in our church schools, the DBE 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, 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. It is also about helping 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' (2019)

The Church of England National Society has set down the following aims and objectives for RE in a Church of England School :

- To know about and understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith through the exploration of core beliefs using an approach that critically engages biblical text
- To gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews appreciating diversity, continuity and change within the religions and worldviews being studied
- To engage with challenging questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence and experience
- To recognise the concept of religion and its continuing influence on Britain's cultural heritage and in the lives of individuals and societies in different times, cultures and places.
- To explore their own religious, spiritual and philosophical ways of living, believing and thinking

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 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 and understanding

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 Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Locally Agreed Syllabus 2021 'Religious Education for All' and supplement this with material from the Understanding Christianity curriculum resource. The diocese through its Religious Education Advisers and representatives on SACRE has contributed to the writing of the agreed syllabus materials and is confident that alongside '*Understanding Christianity*' reflects 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 2021 'Religious Education for All.' The diocese recommends the use of '*Understanding Christianity*' as a curriculum resource for the teaching of Christianity.

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 (SMSCD)

SMSC prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. Learning about and from religions, beliefs and worldviews 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 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, belief and worldviews and their 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 & tolerance. These discussions may also play a part in helping schools with their 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 and worldviews. 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.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is a concept from the Ofsted Framework. It is a sociological concept which describes a person's social assets usable in seeking and securing status within the social groups to which they belong from the local and familial to the national or global. The Ofsted framework states: *'Intent – leaders take on or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all learners, particularly the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or high needs, the knowledge and the cultural capital they need to succeed in life'*.

The table below offers some reflections as to how this might be possible in RE.

<p>Experiences in RE that enhance cultural capital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to explore the culture and values of different religions and worldviews • Receiving visitors from different faith communities • Visiting places of worship from different faith communities • Engaging with music, dance, drama and the arts inspired by religions and worldviews • Recognising expressions of religion and culture: food, symbols, dress 	<p>Opportunities to demonstrate cultural capital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative teamwork activities • Engaging in activities which enable learners to see, experience and use for themselves 'the best that has been thought and said' in religions and worldviews • Chances to participate in making cultural experiences that have lasting positive impact on the learners e.g in performance of music, drama or worship
<p>A religiously educated young person: skills and competencies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The skills needed to navigate a society in which different cultures and religions are present 	<p>Skills and competencies in cultural capital which RE offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to speak confidently about their engagement with and appraisal of religious and spiritual aspects of culture

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The skills of listening and dialogue which enable mutual understanding and respect • The skills needed to contribute to enabling inclusive communities e.g in class or school to flourish for the wellbeing of all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to engage with and respond for themselves to dilemmas of belief and value in their society • The ability to relate without embarrassment or fear to people who are different, being polite, showing interest and always avoiding negativity such as ridicule • The ability to make and enjoy cultural 'products' such as art, music, dance, drama in the context of RE
---	--

Taken from the Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Agreed Syllabus 2021 p19

Relationships and sex education

There are clearly links between the statutory (2020) relationships and sex education framework (RSE) and RE. Learning about and discussion around marriage in different traditions, meaning of commitment, parenting and values are just some of those links. It might therefore be appropriate to draw on different religious and worldviews when exploring such topics.

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 other 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; 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. Guidance on this can be found in the Nottinghamshire Agreed Syllabus (2021) and in assessment materials provided by the diocesan schools 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 work scrutiny, learning walks, analysis of assessment data and pupil voice.

It is expected that the RE subject leader will play a lead role in monitoring RE within the school and that they 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 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 network meetings for RE subject leaders 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.

Other resources such as Godly Play materials are available to loan from the diocese alongside other bespoke training on a range of teaching and learning styles in RE.

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. Artefacts can be loaned from the RS Resource Centre www.rsresources.org.uk The centre can also provide 'Faiths Experience Days' on a number of different religions that can be brought into school. The St Philips Centre <https://www.stphilipscentre.co.uk> can arrange visits to different places of worship in Leicester and the opportunity to meet faith leaders. The diocese also works in partnership with the centre to provide a Faiths Roadshow giving pupils the opportunity to meet

faith practitioners, handle artefacts and explore what it means to live alongside others with a different religion or worldview to your own.

The diocesan schools advisers also work in partnership with the Minster Education team <https://www.southwellminster.org/learning/> More details of what is offered in the Minster for schools can be found by following the link.

Further reading:

Agreed Syllabus (2021) Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Agreed Syllabus for RE 'Religious Education for All'.

Making a Difference? A Review of RE in Church of England schools The National Society (2014) https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/2014_making_a_difference_-_a_review_of_religious_education_in_church_of_england_schools_web_final.pdf

Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education The Church of England Education Office (2019) <https://southwell.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/RE-Statement-of-Entitlement-for-Church-Schools.pdf>

Understanding Christianity Published by RE Today & National Church of England Education Office (National Society) Curriculum materials for the teaching of Christianity (2016)