

Religious Education (RE) Policy

1 Aims and objectives

1.1 Religious education enables children to investigate and reflect on some of the most fundamental questions asked by people. At **Townley** School we develop the children's knowledge and understanding of the major world faiths, and we address the fundamental questions in life. 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.

1.2 The aims of religious education are to help children:

- develop an awareness of spiritual and moral issues in life experiences;
- 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 to enable them to make reasoned judgements about religious issues;
- have respect for other peoples' views and to celebrate the diversity in society.

2 The legal position of religious education

2.1 Our school curriculum for religious education meets the requirements of the 1996 Education Act / 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 this should only be done once the parents 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 is based on the **Cambridgeshire Syllabus 2002** (QCA scheme to support) and it meets all the requirements set out in that document. The ERA states that the RE syllabus should reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, and that it should, at the same time, take account of the teachings and practices of other major religions.

3 Teaching and learning style

3.1 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

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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.

- 3.2 Our teaching and learning styles in RE enable children to build on their own experiences and 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 organize visits to local places of worship and invite representatives of local religious groups to come into school and talk to the children.
- 3.3 Children carry out research into religious topics. They study particular religious faiths and also compare the religious views of different faith groups on topics such as rites of passage or festivals. Children discuss religious and moral issues using computers and working individually or in groups. Sometimes they prepare presentations and share these with other members of the school in assemblies.
- 3.4 We recognise the fact that all classes in our school have children of widely differing abilities, and 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.

4 Curriculum planning in religious education

- 4.1 We plan our religious education curriculum in accordance with the **Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus 2002**. We ensure that the topics studied in religious education build upon prior learning. We offer opportunities for children of all abilities to develop their skills and knowledge in each unit, and we ensure that the planned progression built into the scheme of work offers the children an increasing challenge as they move through the school.
- 4.2 We carry out the curriculum planning in religious education in three phases (long-term, medium-term and short-term). The long-term plan maps the religious education topics studied in each term during each key stage. The RE subject leader works out this plan in conjunction with teaching colleagues in each year group.
- 4.3 Our medium-term plans give details of each unit of work for each term. The RE subject leader keeps and reviews these plans on a regular basis. As we have some mixed-age classes, we carry out the medium-term planning on a two-year / 3 year rotation cycle. By so doing, we ensure that children have complete coverage of the Agreed Syllabus but do not have to repeat topics.
- 4.4 The class teacher writes the plans for each lesson and lists the specific learning objectives for that lesson. S/he keeps these individual plans and often discusses them on an informal basis with the RE subject leader.

5 Foundation Stage

- 5.1** We teach religious education to all children in the school, including those in the reception class.
- 5.2** In reception classes, religious education is an integral part of the topic work covered during the year. As the reception class is part of the Foundation Stage of the National Curriculum, we relate the religious education aspects of the children's work to the objectives set out in the Early Learning Goals which underpin the curriculum planning for children aged three to five.

6 Contribution of religious education to the teaching of other subjects

6.1 RE and Collective Worship

Assemblies, including those incorporating the statutory act of collective worship, may make a contribution to some of the aims of the agreed syllabus; religious education **cannot** be provided through the assembly programme (see 'Themes for Collective Worship').

6.2 RE and Literacy

- Religions use a huge variety of literary form and many registers of language.
- There is specialist religious language, which needs to be known and to be used with care.
- Religious language often moves between the literal and the metaphorical.
- Skills of speaking and listening are developed in RE because it encourages and often requires the discussion of controversial issues.
- RE offers the opportunity to discuss on the basis of experience

6.3 RE, PSHE and Citizenship

- RE has close ties with PSHE and Citizenship. Pupils who are "developing confidence, responsibility and making the most of their abilities" and who are "developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people" ("The National Curriculum. Key Stages 1 and 2" Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1999, pp. 19, 136) are being equipped with skills, which are central to learning in religious education. Conversely, RE will itself develop those skills.
- Links can be found:
 - In approaches such as reflecting on experiences;
 - Through content such as meeting and finding out about people with beliefs and customs different from pupils' own.

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- In RE, PSHE and Citizenship social and moral issues will be considered which may be controversial. This should enable pupils to deal with difference and to develop considered and well-informed views.
- It is important to recognise that although there are close links, each area has its own objectives and specific learning outcomes. The subjects should not be substituted for one another.

6.4 RE and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

- RE contributes to **spiritual** development through the consideration and discussion of examples of things spiritual in people's behaviour as expressed through their religion. In RE there is specific opportunity for pupils to reflect on their own spirituality.
- RE contributes to **moral** development when it presents for consideration systems of moral guidance and ethical principles, which are developed by or from religions.
- RE contributes to **social** development by showing pupils different religious communities and groupings locally, nationally and globally, and by giving opportunities to learn about the expression of their beliefs in some detail.
- RE contributes to **cultural** development when pupils see how a religion can create or influence the art, architecture, language and music of its practitioners.

6.5 RE and ICT

RE needs ICT, and it can use ICT at least as well as other school subjects, because:

- ICT facilitates investigation, preparation and organisation: RE will increase pupils' familiarity with ICT as an instrument and as a resource;
- ICT offers a stimulating variety of visual images, and, especially through the worldwide web, it provides opportunity for communication with a diversity of faith communities, organisations, believers and experts.

Properly used, ICT in RE will:

- Support the achievement of RE objectives;
- Enrich or enhance the quality of teaching and learning;
- Contribute to pupils' understanding of ICT;
- Aid the planning and teaching of RE.

ICT is best avoided if:

- Learning objectives can be achieved more effectively using other means;
- The ICT interest overtakes the RE purpose.

7 Teaching religious education to children with special needs

7.1 In our school we teach RE to all children, whatever their ability. The teaching of RE is a vital part of our school curriculum policy, which states that we provide a broad and balanced education for all our children. When teaching RE we ensure that we provide learning opportunities matched to the needs of children with learning difficulties. We take into account the targets set for individual children in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

8 Assessment and recording

8.1 What can be assessed in RE?

- Knowledge: for example, factual knowledge about Christian worship or Muslim observance of Ramadan;
- Understanding: for example, of concepts such as praise, forgiveness, symbol, and deity;
- Skills: for example, ability to synthesise information about different faiths or aspects of faith.

8.2

Teachers should be familiar with the practice of assessing knowledge and understanding of religions but may be less sure in assessing pupils' achievements when they draw on religion in order to explore, reflect and respond (AT2). Some of the skills and processes, which contribute to this, are included in the summary of RE skills on p. 7; these skills can be assessed alongside the level of pupils' knowledge.

8.3 What cannot be assessed in RE?

- How 'religious' a pupil is.
- Levels of spiritual or moral development. A school should evaluate its own provision, but it would be both difficult and improper to assess pupils' attainment in these areas in any systematic or comparative way in RE.

9 Resources

9.1 We have building up resources in our school to be able to teach all our religious education teaching units. We keep resources for religious education in a central store where there is a box of equipment for each unit of work. There is a set of bibles for both key stages and a collection of religious artefacts which we use to enrich teaching in religious education. The school library has a good supply of RE topic books and computer software to support the children's individual research.

10 Monitoring and review

- 10.1** 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 the teaching of religious education, for being informed about current developments in the subject, and for providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school.

Signed:

Date: