

Religious Education Policy

Vision

Pupils are given ample opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development. They develop their own spiritual awareness through a range of events including: assemblies where children have moments of reflection on key issues; active and experiential visits to places of worship; visits by members of faith communities; festivals and themed weeks, such as Diwali and Inter Faith Week. Pupils share their own traditions, values and experiences while being keen to develop an understanding of other religious beliefs, teachings, practices and forms of expression. They learn to demonstrate respect for and sensitivity to others, in particular those whose faiths and beliefs are different from their own.

Pupils respond thoughtfully to stories from the principal world faiths and can draw comparisons between them. They identify puzzling questions and suggest answers. They relate to moral and religious issues and develop their understanding of why certain things are held to be right or wrong.

Pupils learn in an environment which challenges misconceptions and prejudices and inspires children to develop their sense of identity and belonging. They are encouraged to flourish individually within their communities and as citizens in a diverse society and global community.

Aims

- Help children to develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world religions and value systems found in Britain.
- Help pupils reflect on their own religious beliefs and practices.
- Actively promote tolerance and mutual respect of those who are committed to different religious traditions or set of non-religious beliefs.
- Give pupils the opportunity to question, discuss and defend points of view based on philosophical, spiritual and moral issues.
- Ensure that the curriculum reflects the richness and diversity of modern Britain and helps pupils develop the skills to live harmoniously within a multi-cultural society.
- Help pupils develop a positive attitude towards others regardless of background and respect the right of people to hold beliefs that are different from their own.
- Maintain and develop an inclusive culture where every individual feels valued and aspires to succeed.

Legal Requirements

The Education Act (1998) stipulates that Religious education should be taught to all pupils in full time education with the exception of those withdrawn by their parents. Our school RE curriculum is based on the LA's Agreed Syllabus (2017). The Education Act requires the local agreed syllabus to reflect 'that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'. Furthermore the syllabus 'must not be designed to convert pupils or to urge a particular religion or religious belief on pupils'.

As well as forming an important part of our school's spiritual, moral and social teaching, the religious education curriculum promotes education for citizenship. 78 (1) of the 2002 Education Act states that all pupils should follow a balanced and broadly based curriculum which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, mental and physical development of pupils and of society, and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life'.

Withdrawal from RE

Parents have the statutory right to withdraw their children from RE lessons and acts of Collective Worship and are not obliged to give a reason for requesting withdrawal. However, before exercising any right of withdrawal we would recommend discussing concerns with the Headteacher. Parents will also be advised to make any request for withdrawal in writing. To help them make an informed decision, parents can also speak to the RE Leader who can provide more information about the educational objectives and content of the RE syllabus.

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 (Section 71(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998).

The Tower Hamlets Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

RE topics are taught in accordance with the current Tower Hamlets Religious Education Syllabus (2017). The syllabus, which has been created by the SACRE's Agreed Syllabus Conference in consultation with schools, brings together guidance materials and primary scheme of work for RE. 43 units are integrated in the scheme of work for 4-11s. The RE Syllabus for Tower Hamlets establishes what shall be taught in RE, providing teachers with practical support and guidance about how to teach RE effectively.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

We seek to combine excellence in teaching RE with enjoyment of learning in RE. Our varied range of teaching and learning styles is based on the key principle that children should both learn about religious traditions as well as reflect on what the religious ideas and concepts mean to them. Hence, 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. Religious Education is a key opportunity for children to develop morally, spiritually, socially and culturally. In RE lessons, as well as PHSE and our Collective Worship programme, children are invited to reflect on their personal responses to issues, consider other people's responses, and appreciate that for some people belief in a spiritual dimension is important. Through their experiences of listening to leaders from local places of worship, children consider the answers offered by faith groups to questions of meaning and purpose and problems within society and their individual experiences.

RE also promotes citizenship by introducing pupils to the significance of belonging to a community, the diversity of communities in the wider communities, faith rules and their application to moral and ethical issues and cultural influences on religious practice.

Teaching and Learning

Our Religious Education is based on the three aims in the Agreed Syllabus: The curriculum for RE aims to ensure that all pupils:

1. Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews, so that they can:
 - Describe, explain and analyse beliefs and practices, recognising the diversity which exists within and between communities and amongst individuals
 - Identify, investigate and respond to questions posed, and responses offered by some sources of wisdom found in religions and worldviews
 - Appreciate and appraise the nature, significance and impact of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning
2. Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews, so that they can:
 - Explain reasonably their ideas about how beliefs, practices and forms of expression influence individuals and communities
 - Express with increasing discernment their personal reflections and critical responses to questions and teachings about identity, diversity, meaning and value, including ethical issues
 - Appreciate and appraise varied dimensions of religion
3. Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews, so that they can:
 - Find out about and investigate key concepts and questions belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, responding creatively
 - Enquire into what enables different individuals and communities to live together respectfully for the wellbeing of all
 - Articulate beliefs, values and commitments clearly in order to explain why they may be important in their own and other people's lives.

These aims incorporate the former attainment targets of 'learning from religion' and 'learning about religion'.

Effective teaching and learning of Religious Education and high standards are achieved by:

- Children having enthusiasm to explore openly, respecting their beliefs and those of others.
- Children being confident in their spiritual and moral awareness through reflection on their experiences in RE
- Adopting a wide range of learning strategies appropriate to learners' needs including those with SEN and subject to content.
- Effective resources being used to engage children and enrich learning.
- Children having an effective understanding of Christian faith and practice
- Full and consistent use of assessment data to inform teaching and learning.
- Children being reflective, understanding how they learn and actively identifying how to improve
- The relevance of religion and faith informing planning across the curriculum.
- The whole school community celebrating religious and cultural diversity in school, locally, nationally and globally.

Inclusion

We teach RE to all children, whatever their ability and individual needs. RE implements the school curriculum policy of providing a broad and balanced education to all children. Through our RE teaching, we provide learning opportunities that match the needs of children with learning difficulties, and we take into account the targets set for individual children in their Pupil Passports. We strive hard to meet the needs of those pupils with special educational needs, those with disabilities, those with special gifts and talents, and those learning English as an additional language, and we take all reasonable steps to achieve this. We endeavour to draw on the varied experiences and backgrounds of our pupils and staff in order to make RE relevant and interesting to our pupils. One way of doing this is through our links with local religious communities and places of worship. We try to ensure that children have at least one RE trip every year and we carry out a risk assessment prior to the outing to ensure that the activity is safe and appropriate for all pupils.

Assessment

Assessment carried out in RE is for learning rather than for making comparisons. In RE, learning must be focused on individual pupils' needs and abilities as expected in all areas of the curriculum. We use assessment for learning as a powerful tool for making sure that learning fits individual needs. Formative assessment such as marking will be used to enable pupils to develop their understanding.

Resources

Teaching resources from a wide variety of sources are used to help pupils understand a range of faiths and cultures. There are comprehensive sets of artefacts, visual resources and teaching materials to support learning about each of the major faiths explored in school. Religious artefacts which we use to enrich teaching in religious education are stored in large boxes in a cupboard. Resources can also be borrowed from Tower Hamlets Library Services. It is encouraged that teachers make use of a range of ICT based resources including the interactive whiteboard, visualiser, digital camera, iPad and DVD camcorder to further improve teaching and learning in RE.