



Policy for Religious Education

Introduction

Church of the Ascension C. E. Primary School is a voluntary controlled primary school with close ties to the local church and other places of worship in the local community. It is a suburban school set in a predominately white, middle-class area. The majority of the children are from Christian backgrounds and there are a small number of children from other ethnic groupings. The school takes pupils aged four to eleven and it is a one and a half-form entry school. In each year group, there are a few children with special education needs.

Our Distinctive Christian Nature and Core Christian Values

"The Church of the Ascension Primary School is an outstanding church school which provides a rich learning environment based in a strong Christian vision. The children learn in an ethos which enables them to thrive as individuals. Everyone works together in an atmosphere which celebrates mutual respect and inclusiveness, and encourages spiritual development."
(SIAS inspection report, 2012)

At Church of the Ascension, we are committed to building a distinctive Christian community and draw much inspiration from the Christian tradition, and universal cultural values. Throughout all aspects of school life, we encourage children to think about Christianity and values to which we all aspire; Thankfulness, Generosity, Respect, Forgiveness, Honesty and Perseverance. We focus on a core Christian value each half-term and explore its meaning throughout our collective worship, teaching, learning and everyday life. Examples of these values are shared and celebrated with all members of the school community. Our motto is "Learn with love, flourish in faith". As Church of the Ascension is a Church of England controlled school, the Christian faith is strongly represented whilst provision is made to consider the other principal world religions.

Religious Education

"Religious education encourages pupils to learn about religion and so gain knowledge and understanding of the principal religious traditions and of other belief traditions. It enhances pupils' awareness and understanding of religious beliefs, teaching, practices and of the various forms of religious expression. It also encourages pupils to gain knowledge and understanding of the influence religion has on individuals, families, communities and cultures."

(Dudley Agreed Syllabus 2013)

We believe that Religious Education has a very important role in the education of every young person. Religion and belief have been, and continue to be highly visible in public life locally, nationally and internationally. Without some knowledge of religion, any understanding of the contemporary world be less than adequate. Religion concerns itself with moral and social questions. It has also sought to address fundamental questions to do with what sustains human existence and what gives it value and purpose. We feel that education needs to play its part in helping young people to consider such questions and by doing so, help young people engage in their own personal search for meaning. Religious education plays a principle role in this and therefore maintains a high status at our school. It does this by providing opportunities for personal reflection and by helping pupils to consider and express their views.

Aims of the Poilcy

The school's curriculum will aim to promote the academic, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils and to prepare them emotionally and academically for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life. We aim:

- to enable pupils to flourish as individuals within the community as citizens of a pluralistic society and of a global community
- to gain knowledge and understanding of the influence religion has on individuals, families, communities and cultures.
- to learn from different religions and beliefs
- to explore their own beliefs, values and traditions
- to challenge pupils to reflect on, analyse and evaluate issues to do with belief, faith, beliefs about God, the purpose of life, ultimate meaning, the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human
- to develop respect for and sensitivity to others particularly for those whose faiths and beliefs are different from their own
- to promote discernment and to enable pupils to combat prejudice.

Curriculum Provision

As a church school, the predominant religion studied is Christianity, but we appreciate the importance of learning, not merely about religions but from different religions, particularly Judaism, Islam, Sikhism and from any other faith community which is represented in our school. Multi-cultural experiences for children are encouraged at Church of the Ascension Primary School including links locally; with other places of worship and worship groups and globally; which we believe will enrich children's understanding of and involvement with cultural diversity.

As a voluntary controlled school, we are guided by the programmes of study as set out in the Dudley Agreed Syllabus for RE (2013) and takes account of our children's needs. This framework forms the basis for the Scheme of Work for Religious Education.

Foundation Stage: Pupils will begin to explore at least two religious traditions, mainly **Christianity**, through stories, special people, times and books. They will begin to reflect on their own feelings and experiences and to use and develop their imagination and appreciation of the world around them.

Key Stage 1: Pupils should be introduced to at least two religious traditions: **Christianity** and **Islam**. Pupils may also have an opportunity to be acquainted with no more than two other principal religions: **Hinduism & Judaism**

Key Stage 2: Pupils should study at depth at least two religious traditions: **Christianity** and **Islam**. Pupils will also have an opportunity to be acquainted with other principal religions: **Judaism, Hinduism & Sikhism**.

Organisation

RE is taught in whole class, mixed ability groups. The following time allocation is recommended by SACRE:

Early Years Foundation Stage approximately 5% of total curriculum time
Key stage 1 ~ 36 hours per year
Key stage 2 ~ 45 hours per year

At Church of the Ascension, this equates to:
Foundation Stage~ 60 minutes per week
KS1~ 60 minutes per week
KS2 ~ 75 minutes per week

Teaching and Learning

The teaching of RE is divided into two attainment targets in RE: AT1- Learning **about** religion (knowledge and understanding) and AT2- Learning **from** religion (evaluation and application.) At Church of the Ascension, we advocate the enquiry based approach to teaching RE, as recommended in the Dudley Agreed Syllabus and start each half-termly unit of work with The 'Big Question'. The 'Discovery' scheme of work is used for some aspects of planning and resourcing of RE.

We would like the children to be involved in a journey of discovery where the answer is not a given and where they have to do the thinking. They have to become familiar with the idea that often in RE, they have to solve the mystery and asking the teacher doesn't really provide an answer. We encourage children to be curious about concrete examples of religious life and behaviour, for example, religious stories, artefacts, festivals, prayer and beliefs. By probing into the religious material itself, we encourage independent thought and reflection, encouraging young children into adopting the mental habit of looking beyond the literal story, ritual or ceremony and asking more challenging questions about its meaning or purpose. We believe that this is fundamental to what it means to make progress in RE.

Teaching strategies

The enquiry based approach avoids blatantly telling young children, '*This is what the story means*'. As an enquiry, the teacher encourages questions, suggests questions, encourages children to share ideas, may give hints, or may offer possibilities. The role of the teacher in an inquiry-based approach is to be a facilitator, guide, and partner. Various classroom strategies can be used which support the enquiry based approach, for example:

- circle time, paired talk and community of enquiry to encourage discussion
- thinking time and snowballing ideas to generate good questions
- diamond nine, pyramid, mystery activities and using provocative images to suggest possibilities
- role-play and guided fantasy to enter emotionally into stories and rituals
- collective/individual reflection in floorbooks
- exploring religious artefacts
- visiting places of worship and inviting visitors from a range of faith communities
- marketplace activities, where children research and share their findings to answer 'The Big Question'.

Assessment

The school assesses pupil attainment against the level descriptors for each attainment target in the Agreed Syllabus. Progress is monitored termly by levelling children's attainment based on half-termly assessments, leading towards an overall level at the end of each academic year. Teachers use formal and informal assessment, over a period of time, to gather evidence to form and support their professional judgement about the level of attainment of each pupil. It is unlikely that any one piece of work, task or test is capable of demonstrating that a pupil has attained any level. Formative assessment takes place throughout every lesson and across units of work.

In line with our school marking policy, teachers may use 'three stars and a wish' to identify what has been achieved, and/or understood and to identify the next steps for progression in the child's learning. Throughout a unit of work, children will also be encouraged to reflect on their work, understanding or opinions to encourage a persona which is resilient, and take risks with their learning.

We aim for high achievement in RE at Church of the Ascension. Below are the levels we aim for at the end of each year:

EYFS ~ Level W/1

Year 1 ~ Level 1

Year 2 ~ Level 2

Year 3 ~ Level 2/3

Year 4 ~ Level 3

Year 5 ~ Level 3/4

Year 6 ~ Level 4/5

Withdrawal from Religious Education

We recognise that parents have the right to withdraw their child from Religious Education – in its entirety or in part. This is clearly stated in the School Prospectus. If a parent chooses to withdraw their child from Religious Education, then arrangements are made for that child to be withdrawn during Religious Education lessons by the class teacher in consultation with the Headteacher and alternative materials are to be provided by the parents.

Review and Evaluation

The policy will be reviewed every three years by all teaching staff and quality assured by the Head teacher and SLT. Appendices will be added and updated, as appropriate, to reflect statutory changes and best current practice. Review date: Autumn 2019