

ST MARY'S C.E. (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL

RE POLICY



School motto: 'Let your light shine... as you grow', (inspired by Matthew 5: 15-16)

School vision: 'We nurture our pupils to be the best they can be in every way - in an inclusive and supportive environment, rooted in Christian teachings.'

Date of policy review: March 2024

Principles

At St Mary's C of E (VA) Primary School the provision of RE is delivered in accordance with the Trust Deed of the School. St Mary's school is guided by the Essex Agreed Syllabus and takes into account the requirements of the RE Statement of Entitlement. St Mary's RE Curriculum uses a wide range of good quality RE resources to support this, including the Understanding Christianity resource, the SAT(Saffron Walden Academy Trust) RE scheme, Discovery RE and Anti-Racist RE units. RE is part of our Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural focus that extends into all areas of school life.

St Mary's provides a happy, caring, family environment where children feel inspired. We know that all children matter – whatever their skills and abilities, whatever their background and whatever their aspirations. Belonging to a safe and nurturing community, founded on strong Christian values, children develop an array of skills that will equip them to meet the challenges of our ever-changing world and to make their own positive contribution to our global society.

The Aims of Religious Education are:

- ✓ To explore and respond to the beliefs and practices of the world-wide Christian Church and other religions.
- ✓ To experience and investigate aspects of the local church.
- ✓ To consider other beliefs and lifestyles.
- ✓ To reflect on our own beliefs and values.
- ✓ To encourage children to question and be explorative in their learning.

Rationale and Aims

In Religious Education at St Mary's we aim to:

- **Deepen the children's knowledge and awareness of Christianity and other world religions** with at least 50% of the RE curriculum focusing on Christianity and the other 50% focusing on other religions.
- This is achieved by using Understanding Christianity as a resource and good quality units from the SAT RE scheme, Discovery RE, Anti-Racist Re units and other quality resources.
- **Provoke challenging questions** about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs, self, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human. It develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other religions and religious traditions that examine these questions, fostering personal reflection and spiritual development.
- **Encourage pupils to explore their own beliefs** (whether they are religious or not), in the light of what they learn, as they examine issues of religious belief and faith and how these impact on personal, institutional and social ethics and to express their responses. This also builds resilience to anti-democratic or extremist narratives.
- **Enable pupils to build their sense of identity and belonging**, which helps them flourish within their communities and as citizens in a diverse society.
- **Teach pupils to develop respect for others**, including people with different faiths and beliefs and helps to challenge prejudice.
- **Prompt pupils to consider their responsibilities** to themselves and to others, and to explore how they might contribute to their communities and to wider society. It encourages empathy, generosity and compassion.

The contribution RE makes to other curriculum aims in particular to community cohesion

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC)

Section 78 (1) of the 2002 Education Act states that all pupils should follow a balanced and broadly based curriculum which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and of society, and 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 within a broad-based curriculum, 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. In 2019, Ofsted stated that they 'continue to put SMSC 'at the heart' of school development. It requires schools to think about the kind of people we aspire to be, the kind of world we aspire to create, and the kind of education we aspire to provide.'

Personal development and well-being

RE plays an important role in preparing pupils for adult life, employment and lifelong learning. It helps children and young people become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. It gives them the knowledge, skills and understanding to discern and value truth and goodness, strengthening their capacity for making moral judgements and for evaluating different types of commitment to make positive and healthy choices. It also enables children to have respect and understanding for the diverse community in which they live.

Community cohesion

RE makes an important contribution to a school's duty to promote community cohesion. It provides a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism, xenophobia and discrimination. Effective RE will promote community cohesion at each of the four levels outlined in DFE guidance as follows:

- **The school community** – RE provides a positive context within which the diversity of cultures, beliefs and values can be celebrated and explored.
- **The community within which the school is located** – RE provides opportunities to investigate patterns of diversity of religion and belief and forge links with different groups in the local area.
- **The UK community** – a major focus of RE is the study of diversity of religion and belief in the UK and how this influences national life.
- **The global community** – RE involves the study of matters of global significance recognising the diversity of religion and belief and its impact on world issues.

RE subject matter gives particular opportunities to promote an ethos of respect for others, challenge stereotypes and build understanding of other cultures and beliefs. It also gives a chance for reflection. This contributes to promoting a positive and inclusive school ethos that champions democratic values and human rights.

The school's approach to teaching RE

RE has an important part to play as part of a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum to which all pupils are entitled. High quality learning experiences in RE are designed and provided through careful planning.

In order to make RE a lively, active subject, we employ a variety of teaching methods including big questions, children's questioning, art, music, discussion, the development of thinking skills, drama, the use of artefacts, pictures, stories and the use of reflection. There is a key focus on explorative learning in RE lessons, enabling children to think, reason and question for themselves in a safe, understanding environment.

RE teaching and learning opportunities exemplify best practice, providing a programme of activities which are inclusive, creative, appropriate and challenging.

Where possible, we want our pupils to have opportunities to encounter local faith communities through visits to local places of worship or visits from members of local faith communities.

RE teaching in the school is based on the Chelmsford Diocesan syllabus and the Understanding Christianity resource is used to support this, with other quality RE resources used to deepen the offer available to pupils. The RE subject leader works closely with the Diocesan advisor to ensure that the curriculum offered is the best possible for the children.

All Year 2 and KS2 classes use RE work books to record learning. All classes have a class book and practical lessons are recorded here. Reception and Year 1 classes have a specific RE class book where children's discussions, questions and practical work are collected, and used for children to look at during the year.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught RE using an integrated approach using the Early Learning Goals. They are also exposed to other cultures, in line with 'Understanding the World' and the Early Learning Goal 'People, Cultures and Communities'.

How RE is organised:

Timetabled RE is generally taught for one hour each week in EYFS/KS1 classes and over an hour in KS2. Sometimes RE is blocked so that the children can really get to grips with an enquiry. RE at St Mary's is regarded as a core subject.

Every effort is made to link the areas covered by the Agreed Syllabus to the curriculum topics taught, or with other areas of school life including worship and PSHE.

In accordance with the structure of the locally agreed syllabus we have agreed that:

At KS1 pupils study Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Judaism.

At KS2 pupils study Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism and Islam.

Year 6 also study Humanism as part of their RE learning.

EYFS look at Christianity in detail during the year as well as the seasonal festivals of different religions and cultures such as Diwali, Holi, Hannukakh, Chinese New Year, Eid.

Assessment and Recording of RE

Children receive a 'Big Question' for each unit of RE. Children write what they have learned based around this 'Big Question' at the end of a unit to help teachers with their assessment. Teachers make use of the unit outcomes and end of key stage learning outcomes to make age appropriate judgements. RE attainment is reported to parents in the annual end of year report.

Arrangements for monitoring standards of teaching and learning in RE

The subject leaders will monitor RE within the school through analysis of this assessment data, through lesson observations, work sampling and pupil interviews and pupil perception surveys. This information will feed into the Church school self-evaluation process (SIAMS).

The right of Withdrawal from RE

At St Mary's, we wish to be an inclusive community but recognise that parents have the legal right to withdraw their children from RE teaching on the grounds of conscience. However, the right of withdrawal does not extend to other areas of the curriculum when, as may happen on occasion, spontaneous questions on religious matters are raised by pupils or there are issues related to religion that arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship. We would ask any parent considering this to contact the Headteacher to discuss any concerns or anxieties about the policy, provision and practice of religious education at St Mary's.