

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

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.'



RE POLICY

This policy is adopted by the Governing Body in consultation with the Headteacher, RE Subject Leader, and teaching staff. It was revised and approved in June 2026 and is reviewed every two years.

Context

The context of RE at St Mary's VA Primary School is that of a one-form entry primary school set in a small town in the rural countryside of Essex.

We teach RE in accordance with the 2026 Statement of Entitlement, the local agreed syllabus, and our funding agreement where applicable.

We recognise and celebrate the diversity of religious and non-religious backgrounds of our pupils. We aim to be sensitive and respectful of each child's home and community background.

We actively support links with local faith communities and other organisations to enrich our RE provision.

We acknowledge the inter-relationship between pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, and the vital role RE plays in supporting these aspects.

Our Aims

RE at our school aligns with legal requirements and the 2026 Statement of Entitlement. The aims are to ensure that all of our pupils:

- Develop a rich understanding of Christianity as a diverse, global, and living faith, engaging critically with biblical texts and theological ideas.
- Gain knowledge of and understanding about other principal religions and worldviews, including Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and secular perspectives like Humanism.
- Explore and reflect on questions of meaning, purpose, and human experience through theological, philosophical, and social science lenses.
- Make reasoned and informed judgments on religious and moral issues, respecting diversity and promoting mutual understanding.
- Recognise the influence of religion and belief on Britain's cultural heritage and contemporary society.
- Reflect on their own beliefs, values, and experiences, fostering personal spiritual development and respect for others.

Parental Rights and Engagement

We hope that by sharing our approach to teaching RE, you will feel reassured about the content and values being covered in our curriculum. We are committed to providing a respectful, inclusive, and meaningful learning experience for all pupils.

Please be aware that parents have the right to withdraw their child from all or part of the RE curriculum. If you wish to exercise this right, you should contact the Headteacher in writing, stating your wishes. The school will then discuss the implications of withdrawal with you and make arrangements to support your child's needs, which may include supervision during RE lessons.

We encourage open dialogue and are happy to discuss any concerns or questions you may have about the RE curriculum.

Curriculum Rationale and Approach

When making choices about our curriculum for RE, we took into account the requirements of the Statement of Entitlement for RE and the Local Authority's Agreed Syllabus for Essex.

As a church school, Christianity is the principal religion in our curriculum. We use big questions to explore Christianity through the three lenses of theology, philosophy, and human/social sciences. We are committed to developing children's religious literacy through our carefully crafted curriculum, which builds on prior learning and offers a progressive learning journey.

At our school, we recognise that some families are of no faith and that exposure to other religions is minimal. We are keen to support understanding and confidence to be curious about other views, developing religious literacy.

In KS1, we focus on the Jewish faith as our other principal world religion, which supports us to make sense of the connections with Christianity as an Abrahamic religion. We ensure that other religions and non-religious worldviews are encountered—ahead of their more in-depth study in Key Stage 2.

Islam is one of our focus religions in KS2 to support our children in being outward-facing and respectful global citizens. Units address misconceptions and promote understanding.

Humanism is the second principal worldview that we explore. We feel that it is important that children understand different worldviews and learn about Humanism as a moral and ethical perspective. By studying Humanism, children can explore values such as empathy, kindness, and social responsibility. Although humanists don't have regular places of worship, they value community, friendship, and helping others. Children can learn about supporting fellow humans and contributing positively to society.

In addition to our choices about which principal religions we explore, we also provide encounters with the Jewish, Hindu and Sikh faiths, which supports our intention to understand the beliefs and practices of Dharmic traditions, and further our KS1 focus on understanding the connections between Abrahamic religions, e.g. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Time Allocation

We allocate a minimum of 5% of curriculum time, approaching 10% where possible.

RE is taught as a discrete subject, separate from collective worship and assemblies.

In EYFS, RE is embedded within the Early Years Framework.

Scheme of Work

St Mary's RE Curriculum uses a wide range of good-quality resources, including the Understanding Christianity resource, the SAT (Saffron Walden Academy Trust) RE scheme, Discovery RE, and Anti-Racist RE units. Our scheme of work is aligned with the 2026 Statement of Entitlement and the Essex local agreed syllabus. It ensures progression, depth, and breadth, covering biblical texts, theological ideas, religious practices, and contemporary issues. Topics are sequenced to promote enquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking.

The Lenses of RE: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach

In line with the Essex Agreed Syllabus 2022, our RE curriculum encourages pupils to explore religion and worldviews through three key disciplinary lenses: Theology, Philosophy, and Human/Social Sciences. These lenses provide different ways of understanding and investigating religious beliefs, practices, and their impacts.

Theological Lens: Pupils examine questions from within faith perspectives, exploring sacred texts, beliefs, and practices as believers understand them. This lens asks, "What do believers think and feel about their faith?" and helps pupils understand religion from an insider's point of view.

Philosophical Lens: Pupils consider fundamental questions about existence, morality, and knowledge. This lens asks, "What can we know about the world and ourselves?" and encourages critical thinking about religious claims, ethical issues, and the nature of belief.

Human/Social Sciences Lens: Pupils explore how religion influences societies, cultures, and individual lives. This lens asks, "How does religion shape human experience and societal structures?" and involves investigating religious communities, customs, and their roles in history and contemporary life. Engaging with these lenses enables pupils to develop a nuanced understanding of religion and belief systems, fostering critical inquiry, respect, and informed perspectives. It supports their ability to hold balanced, well-informed conversations about complex religious and philosophical issues, aligning with the aims of the Essex Agreed Syllabus and the broader purpose of RE.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

We use active learning strategies including art, drama, storytelling, visits, ICT, and discussion.

Cross-curricular links support a broad, knowledge-rich, and respectful approach. Classrooms foster enquiry, respect, and open dialogue, providing a safe space for exploring beliefs.

Resources

Resources include books, artefacts, DVDs, posters, and digital media. Resources are regularly reviewed and supplemented by community donations and local resources. Staff are supported with time to familiarise themselves with new materials.

Visits and Visitors

Pupils have opportunities to visit local places of worship and attend faith-based events. Visitors from local faith communities or other organisations enhance learning. All visits and visitors are planned in line with school policies.

Inclusion

RE activities are carefully adapted to meet the diverse needs of all pupils, ensuring that every child can access and engage with the curriculum meaningfully. We recognise that some pupils have deep personal experience of religion through family practices, which enriches their understanding and participation. Our teaching strategies include flexible approaches and tasks, and appropriate scaffolding to support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Resources and activities are made accessible, culturally sensitive, and relevant to pupils' backgrounds and abilities. All pupils are encouraged to explore their own beliefs and values in a safe and respectful environment, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual respect within the school community.

Supporting Pupils' Holistic Development and Values

Our RE curriculum actively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development by encouraging reflection, empathy, and understanding of diverse beliefs and values. We aim to nurture open-minded, respectful individuals who appreciate the richness of human experience across different faiths and worldviews.

Supporting British Values and the Prevent Duty

Our RE curriculum supports the promotion of British Values—democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. It also upholds our duty under the Prevent strategy by fostering critical thinking about issues related to community cohesion, identity, and the importance of respecting diversity.

Promoting Critical Thinking and Enquiry

We encourage pupils to develop their enquiry skills through questioning, discussion, and reflection. Our curriculum promotes respectful dialogue and challenging stereotypes, equipping pupils to think critically about religious and non-religious worldviews and their place in society.

Assessment and Progress

Progress is monitored through formative and summative assessment, aligned with curriculum objectives. Pupils' ability to express their views and hold balanced and informed conversations about religion and worldview is the basis for assessment. Reports include specific comments on pupils' understanding and skills.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review

The RE Subject Leader oversees monitoring through lesson observations, book scrutiny, and pupil feedback. The policy is reviewed every three years, with updates informed by evaluation. Self-evaluation identifies strengths and areas for development.

Staff Training and CPD

We value and engage with the Chelmsford Diocese Education Team and participate in the courses and training opportunities they offer, which support the development of subject knowledge, teaching strategies, and understanding of current RE curriculum developments. All staff have access to ongoing professional development in RE, including external and internal courses. The RE Subject Leader facilitates networking and sharing of best practice.