



Religious Education Policy

Updated: September 2015

Religious Education in a Church School should be of the highest standard, always striving for excellence, reflecting the school's distinctive Christian character.

Mission Statement

Based on our Christian ethos and values of kindness, caring, forgiveness, compassion and cooperation, we actively support the spiritual and moral development of our children and wider community. Additionally, we are committed to high quality independent and academic learning within a happy, inclusive safe and secure environment.

Aims

- To create a happy school in which children work hard and learn well, within a Christian environment.
- To promote a Christian ethos and Christian values in all aspects of education.
- To develop in children a sense of awe and wonder at the world around them.
- To help children to become caring and responsible citizens who have positive attitudes and respect towards themselves and others.
- To respect the dignity and cultural inheritance of each child.
- To provide equal opportunities regardless of race, gender, class and ability.
- To see all children as individuals and help them to achieve their full potential.
- To create a secure, purposeful and stimulating environment for personal and academic development
- To enable children to achieve their potential and provide opportunities appropriate to each child's needs.
- To encourage, develop and extend individual self-worth and confidence through a celebration of children's personal achievements.
- To equip children to become independent learners and develop skills to make informed decisions
- To promote positive relationships between governors, staff, parents, church and the wider community
- To actively encourage parental participation in all aspects of school life

Rationale

St. Thomas' is a Voluntary Aided School and as such, the management of Religious Education is a distinctive role of the governors and Headteacher. RE has to be in accordance with the Trust Deed and in accordance with the rites, practices and doctrines of the Church of England. The Governing Body as a whole is responsible for determining the nature of Religious Education provided in its school. Although Religious Education and Collective Worship naturally compliment and enrich one another, they are managed separately.

Religious Education lies at the very heart of our curriculum. The Governors adopted the Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education Syllabus for RE which reflects the National Framework for RE, the National Society Statement of Entitlement and the requirements of SIAMS in September 2015.

- At least 5% of curriculum time is devoted to RE;

- Christianity plays a central role in RE, taking up between two thirds and three quarters of the time available;
- Appropriate teaching about other faiths and world views is included.

It is essential that the Religious Education curriculum maintains a balanced approach of Learning about Religion (Attainment Target 1) and Learning from Religion (Attainment Target 2).

This can be expressed distinctively as

Learning about Religion

We learn about

- God who reveals the truth about himself and humanity through creation, the giving of the law, his action in history and through the prophets;
- God who reveals himself ultimately in Jesus his Son, living among us and dying and rising for us;
- God who reveals himself in his Spirit working in the living faith of the Church experienced through scripture, tradition and reason.

Learning from Religion

We learn from

- an empathetic response to the Christian faith and a critical engagement with it;
- responding personally to the stories and teachings of Jesus Christ;
- examples of Christian living which give priority to the values of unconditional love, forgiveness, reconciliation, justice, compassion and faith.

Religious Education in Church Schools should help pupils to:

- reflect theologically and explore the ultimate questions and challenges of life in today's society;
- reflect critically on the truth claims of Christian belief;
- see how the truth of Christianity is relevant today;
- understand the challenge faced by Christians in today's pluralist and post-modern society;
- develop the skills to handle the Bible text;
- recognise that faith is based on commitment to a particular way of understanding God and the world;
- begin to develop their own commitments, beliefs and values;
- develop a sense of themselves as significant, unique and precious;
- experience the breadth and variety of the Christian community;
- engage in thoughtful dialogue with other faiths and traditions;
- become active citizens, serving their neighbour;
- find a reason for hope in a troubled world;
- understand how religious faith can sustain believers in difficult circumstances and in the face of opposition.;

It is entirely appropriate and necessary in today's world that children should be encouraged to foster a respect for the followers of the other world faiths. It is essential that this respect is based on an accurate and sympathetic understanding of those faiths.

Therefore, RE in Church Schools should also help pupils to:

- learn *about* other faiths, their beliefs, traditions and practices and *from* them through encounter and dialogue;
- recognise and respect those of all faiths in their search for God;
- recognise areas of common belief and practice between different faiths;
- enrich and expand their understanding of truth while remaining faithful to their own tradition;
- enrich their own faith through examples of holy living in other traditions.

Religious Education Curriculum at St. Thomas' C.E. Primary School

- opportunities to explore the experience of the Church's year;
- study of the story of the local Christian community with its saints and martyrs;
- visits to places of worship, especially the local parish Church and a Cathedral, to develop the understanding of the Church as a living community;
- welcoming visitors from the local parish to share their experience of Christian belief and life;
- liaison with the local parish to enable these visits and links to occur;
- skills to confidently use religious language to express knowledge and opinions;
- a well-used set of Bibles in language that can be understood by the learners and examples of Bibles and prayer books from a variety of contexts;
- the facility to listen to Christian 'psalms, hymns and spiritual songs' from a wide variety of traditions;
- access to Christian artefacts that are used with care, respect and confidence;
- a sacred space that can be used as a focus for prayer and silent reflection;

Religious Education at St. Thomas' enables:

- pupils and teachers to talk openly and freely about their own personal beliefs and practice without fear of ridicule;
- pupils to make excellent and appropriate progress in their knowledge and understanding of Christianity;
- pupils from Christian families to talk openly about their beliefs and values in lessons and to grow in their faith;
- pupils from other faith backgrounds to understand and be encouraged in their faith;
- pupils with no religious background to be given an insight into what it means to be a person of faith;
- pupils of all backgrounds to have a safe place to explore the ultimate questions and challenges of life in today's society.

The significant contribution RE makes to pupils' Spiritual, Moral Social and Cultural development.

Spiritual development

Spiritual development within RE in a Church School enriches and encourages the pupils' discovery of God the creator, of their 'inmost being' and of the wonder of the environment.

Moral development

Moral development is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, which offer pupils a secure foundation stone on which to make decisions and build their lives.

Social development

Social development enriches pupils' understanding of what it means to live in a Christian community where Jesus' command to love one another is put into practice.

Cultural development

Cultural development provides opportunities to develop an understanding of Christianity as a worldwide, multi-cultural faith that has an impact on the lives of millions of people.

Resources

A large variety of resources to support the teaching of Religious Education can be found in the large cupboard in the hall. This includes resource boxes to support the teaching of world faiths (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Sikhism). Artefacts that are of a Religious nature should be treated with the up most respect at all times in accordance with the guidance from the said religion.

There is also a large selection of DVDs that retell stories from the Bible. Further books and DVDs can be found in the Headteacher's office. These are specifically recommended to support the Blackburn Diocese scheme of work.

SEND Provision

All children will be able to access Religious Education. This is done through differentiated work, tasks and resources to suit the needs of the individual pupil.

Assessment and Record Keeping

All children will have a Religious Education book; in which they record their work. In addition, there will be opportunities other than writing and drawing. This work will be recorded in the whole class evidence book.

Children will be assessed using the levelled National expectations in R.E. scale. This document will stay with the child and be passed to the next class. Teacher's will date the appropriate assessment criteria when a child has demonstrated competency at a particular outcome.

Parental Rights of Withdrawal in a Voluntary Aided School.

Parents may request the governing body to provide Religious Education for their children according to the Agreed Syllabus. This can only be requested when parents cannot, with reasonable convenience, arrange for their children to attend another school where Religious Education is provided according to the Agreed Syllabus. The governing body **should** make provision unless the circumstances make it unreasonable to do so.

Should the governing body be unable to make such arrangements for Religious Education to be delivered according to the Agreed Syllabus, the responsibility for doing so then falls on the Local Authority. The Local Authority may decide that such a request for separate Religious Education is unreasonable and the parental request then fails.

Parents may withdraw their children from Religious Education as they may in any school and this opportunity **must** be described in the school brochure. The Church of England Board of Education and the Methodist Church suggests an appropriate form of words might be:

'The Worship and Religious Education provided by the school is in accordance with the Church of England or Methodist Church Foundation. This foundation is also reflected in the curriculum and the whole life of the school community. Since the conduct of the school as a whole reflects the Church of England or Methodist Church ethos, removal of pupils from Worship and/or Religious Education (as parents are legally entitled to do) cannot insulate them from the religious life of the school.'

If such a request for withdrawal is made, the Headteacher should explore the reasons for the request and seek to arrive at an accommodation. It may be that only some elements of Religious Education or Worship are objected to.

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