

# Westbury-on-Severn Church of England School

## Religious Education Policy

### Introduction:

As a Church Aided School we, the Governors and staff, believe that Religious Education (RE) has a vital part to play in the education of children of primary age. The principal aim of RE in Gloucestershire is “to engage pupils with key questions arising from the study of religion so as to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development” (AS 2011). As a subject that is considered central to the ethos of our church school, we expect RE to be taught with the same rigor, enthusiasm and academic study and any other core curriculum subject. Indeed, we aim to ensure that progress and achievement in RE is in line with, or better than standards in other core subjects. With acknowledgement to the ‘Making a Difference’ report commissioned by the Bishop of Oxford in September 2014; as a response to the Ofsted report ‘Releasing the Potential’, we aim to ensure that as a Church school, the teaching of religion, especially Christianity, is accurate, meaningful and based on a growing theological understanding.

### Aims:

In accordance with the National Society’s statement of entitlement for Religious Education (2011), the aims of Religious Education in church schools are:

- To enable pupils to encounter Christianity as the religion that shaped British culture and heritage and influences the lives of millions of people today
- To enable pupils to learn about the other major religions, their impact on culture and politics, art and history, and on the lives of their adherents
- To develop understanding of religious faith as the search for and expression of truth
- To contribute to the development of pupils’ own spiritual / philosophical convictions,
- exploring and enriching their own faith and beliefs

In addition, the outcomes for pupils at the end of their education in church schools are that they are able to:

- Think theologically and explore ultimate questions
- Reflect critically on the truth claims of Christian belief
- Develop the skills to analyse, interpret and apply the Bible text
- Make connections between Christian values and Bible teaching; relating them to personal behaviours and relationships
- Recognise that faith is a particular way of understanding and responding to God and the world
- Analyse and explain the varied nature and traditions of the Christian community
- Make a well informed response to Christianity
- Respect those of all faiths in their search for God
- Reflect critically on areas of shared belief and practice between different faiths
- Enrich and expand their understanding of truth
- Reflect critically and express their views on the human quest and destiny

Religious education in this school is provided under the terms of the Gloucestershire Agreed Syllabus. The Agreed Syllabus sets the standards expected for pupils work in religious education. It does this by:

- a. identifying two attainment targets:
  - AT1 Learning about religion and belief
  - AT2 Learning from religion and belief
- b. identifying the knowledge, skills and understanding expected in each key stage

- c. use of level descriptors to describe the types and range of performance that pupils working at each level should characteristically demonstrate

Religious education is an important subject. It can make a substantial contribution to the general personal and social development of every child in line with the overall aims of the school. We hope that through religious education pupils will develop positive attitudes towards themselves, other pupils and the natural world.

Religious education has a particular part to play in pupils' spiritual development. We see spiritual development in terms of the pupils' capacity to reflect on fundamental aspects of life. This is not to be viewed too narrowly in the terms of RE and collective worship; other subject areas should also contribute such as science where the element of "awe and wonder" can be seen in the natural beauty of the world in which we live.

### **Opportunities for spiritual development include:**

- Exploring questions of meaning and purpose about what it is to be human and to live fully.
- Exploring the insights, beliefs and teaching of faith traditions.
- Responding to the challenging experiences of life, death, suffering, goodness, evil.
- Exploring beliefs and values through stories, celebrations, rituals and practices.
- Being aware of things other than the material and physical.

### **Entitlement**

All pupils have access to the study units found in the Gloucestershire Agreed Syllabus: this entails 7 study units at Key Stage 1 and 9 units at Key Stage 2. The units in Key Stage 1 are designed to be taught thematically, drawing on material from both Christianity and Judaism. In Key Stage 2 each unit focuses on the exploration of a key question but all units will be delivered in relation to Christianity. The prescribed requirements for Hinduism, Judaism and Islam are built around selected aspects only.

Children in the Foundation Stage are taught religious education as part of the Knowledge and Understanding of the World.

Work in RE contributes to the development of certain general study skills. The subject is particularly suitable as a vehicle for developing the key skills of reading and writing, speaking and listening. RE involves intellectual challenge for both the most and the least able. Teachers take particular care that pupils with Special Educational Needs derive benefit from their work in RE.

In this, as in all other subjects, pupils are entitled to a wide variety of learning experiences. This variety includes an emphasis on:

- gaining an understanding of religious concepts such as spirituality, mystery, values and commitment;
- developing general study skills such as observation, investigation analysis and evaluation;
- developing sound attitudes such as sensitivity, empathy, reflection and response.

RE and collective worship are legally distinct. RE is an educational process, while worship is a chance to take part in the affirmation and celebration of certain basic values, which in our school refer to Christian values. While recognising the separate nature of the two activities, teachers will, on occasion, draw upon work in RE as part of worship.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RE. If they wish to do this they should inform the Headteacher and the school will make other arrangements for the children during RE lessons.

RE has a part to play in helping children to learn about the rich ethnic and cultural diversity found in this country and the wider world. RE is also about a valuable means of exploring attitudes towards the roles of women and men.

Teachers seek to deliver some cross-curricular themes through the subject. RE has a particularly important part to play in themes such as citizenship and environmental education. We expect it to play a significant part in our promotion of and teaching of our schools' Christian values.

It is expected that all pupils visit some local churches and other places of worship during their time at this school. The conduct of these trips is in compliance with the LA guidance on school visits.

All parents receive a written comment on progress in RE in the annual report to parents. Teachers use the statements of attainment in the Agreed Syllabus as the starting point for the writing of comments. Teachers do not comment on pupils' own religious beliefs or their spiritual development.

Assessment in this, as in other subjects, seeks to raise standards of achievement in the subject through:

- ◆ providing teachers with the information on individual strengths and weaknesses in the subject
- ◆ informing the planning of future work
- ◆ involving pupils, as they get older, in the assessment of their own learning.

Any staff development needs relating to the teaching of RE will be identified as part of the school development plan. It is the responsibility of the RE co-ordinator to arrange training. This could involve reference to:

- ◆ disseminating information from external courses
- ◆ leading staff meetings and staff development in-set when it is devoted to the subject
- ◆ arrange for staff to attend specific courses so as to develop teachers' subject knowledge.

### **Review:**

This is a working document and it should be under constant review every 2 years. Responsibility for monitoring and review lies with the subject co-ordinator.

Signed:

Dated: