



Policy for Religious Education

Introduction

Reviewed February 2017

In accordance with Schedule 19 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, every maintained school in England must provide for all registered pupils a basic curriculum of which religious education must be a part except for those pupils whose parents have exercised their right to withdraw their children from religious education lessons.

Religion and beliefs inform our values and are reflected in our affiliations, what we say and how we behave. RE is an important subject in itself, developing an individual's knowledge and understanding of Christianity in its diverse forms and other religions and beliefs which form part of contemporary society. Religious education provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human. The subject encourages pupils to evaluate and critically engage with their own beliefs and those of others. In these ways RE contributes to pupils' spiritual, personal and academic development and well-being and to community cohesion by promoting mutual respect and tolerance in a diverse society. In Church schools faith is taken seriously so RE can also make important contributions to other parts of the school curriculum and the distinctive Christian character of the school. It offers opportunities for personal reflection, spiritual development, deepening the understanding of the significance of religion in the lives of pupils themselves and others – individually, communally and cross-culturally.

With these aspirations in mind the aims of religious education are set out as:

- To enable pupils to develop a good understanding of Christianity as a diverse global religion through its beliefs and practices.
- To enable pupils to develop an accurate understanding of the teachings and practices of other religions.
- To enable pupils to learn about the impact of Christianity and other religions on culture, politics, art and history and on the lives of their adherents.
- To promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by exploring ways in which religions engage with challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life and offering opportunities for personal reflection in their own search for meaning and truth.
- To provide pupils with the evaluative skills to make informed and meaningful decisions between conflicting beliefs and values.
- To develop an ethos in which there is genuine respect and encouragement for the diversity of religious and non-religious stances, traditions and viewpoints both within the school, and in the local community and wider society.
- To promote community cohesion through developing an understanding of the social and religious make-up of the local community, whilst also recognising the national diversity of religious make-up.
- To be at the adventurous forefront of inter-faith approaches by helping young people to build friendships across faith boundaries whilst at the same time helping students understand and respect their own religious heritage.

If these aims are to be fulfilled:

- ODST teachers have an obligation to be religiously well-informed, whatever their own background and the subject leaders guide the development of the subject across the age groups.
- ODST school staff have a responsibility to understand the diverse religious and multi-cultural practices in the local community and within the diverse pluralism of the UK.
- ODST school staff should encourage all within the Academy to be well-informed about and proud of their religious stance and culture, and should help them feel comfortable in practising it and in standing up and being counted as a member of their particular faith.

- As educational leaders teachers should challenge situations where pupils may make derogatory comments or act in an insensitive or hurtful way to others.

Experiences and opportunities within RE:

Religious education within ODST academies should provide a variety of experiences and opportunities to help fulfil the agreed aims of the subject and enrich pupils' learning.

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- encounter religion through visitors and visits to places of worship, focusing on the impact and reality of religion on the local and global community;
- discuss religious and philosophical questions, giving reasons for their own beliefs and those of others;
- consider a range of human experiences and feelings;
- reflect on their own and others' insights into life and its origin, purpose and meaning;
- express and communicate their own and others' insights through art and design, music, dance, drama and ICT;
- develop the use of ICT, particularly to enhance their awareness of religions and beliefs globally.
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Provision for religious education

In ODST academies Christianity is the major area of study. However, agreed syllabuses for RE of the local authorities within the Diocese of Oxford provide a good basis for planning providing guidance about other faiths in addition to Christianity. ODST academies can select any of the four syllabi found within the local authorities in the diocese as the basis for planning. In doing so they should take account of the benefits of working with other nearby schools and the flexibility the syllabus gives for developing an enquiry-focused approach and RE which is appropriate to their own context.

Planning, assessment and monitoring of RE

Planning will take account of pupils starting points and define intended learning outcomes which show how children might demonstrate what they have learnt. Progress will be monitored and reported annually to parents. Adequate records will be kept to ensure pupils make progress year on year.

The right of Withdrawal from RE

ODST academies continually aim to be inclusive communities, fully respecting a range of religious and moral beliefs and views, but recognise that parents, have the legal right to withdraw their children from religious education on the grounds of conscience. We ask any parent considering this to contact the Headteacher to discuss any concerns or anxieties they may have about the policy, provision and practice of religious education at the Academy.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be reviewed no less frequently than every two years. The effectiveness of its implementation will be assessed.