



Guidelines for Religious Education

Diocesan Board of Education Rationale

The Diocesan Board of Education in Leicester has a commitment to enabling high quality, meaningful and transformative religious education (RE) in church schools across the diocese as RE is a core part of a school's Christian distinctiveness. It recognises that RE continues to have a unique legal position in the curriculum as an academic subject, but it is also clear that in a church school its significance goes well beyond these two reasons. The DBE recognises that relevant RE, which offers pupils opportunities to deepen their understanding of other people's faith and beliefs and provides opportunities for God and faith to be discussed openly and honestly, also has a vital part to play in offering children and young people from Christian backgrounds the opportunity to grow as disciples.

RE in a church school should provide opportunities for children to understand what it means to be a religious believer in the world today and help them to understand how Christian beliefs inspire and underpin the values of the school community that they are a part of. RE in the church school should support children, whether they come from a religious or non-religious worldview, to recognise and act on the insights, principles, beliefs, attitudes and values that could influence, inspire or guide them in life.

Church of England Education Office: a 'Statement of Entitlement'

The Church of England has set down the following aims for RE in a Church of England School:

- To know about and understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith through the exploration of core beliefs using an approach that critically engages with biblical text.
- To gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews appreciating diversity, continuity and change within the religions and worldviews being studied.
- To engage with challenging questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence and experience.
- To recognise the concept of religion and its continuing influence on Britain's cultural heritage and in the lives of individuals and societies in different times, cultures and places.
- To explore their own religious, spiritual and philosophical ways living, believing and thinking.

Opportunities in RE

In a Church of England school pupils should have opportunities to:

- Learn about and from the life, teaching and example of Jesus Christ through the gospels.
- Explore and discover Christianity locally, nationally, and globally and recognise and learn from diversity within Christianity.
- See the Christian faith in the context of religious diversity, learning about and from other major religions and beliefs in the UK and beyond.

- Understand the importance of freedom of religion and beliefs and face the challenges of diversity with respect.
- Engage with different religious and non-religious worldviews.
- Explore their own religious, spiritual and/or philosophical ways of seeing, living, thinking, believing, and belonging.
- Engage in meaningful and informed dialogue with those of all religions and worldviews.
- Develop a wide range of skills including enquiry, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and reflection.
- Explore sacred texts, beliefs, practices and/or places of worship of different religious and non-religious worldviews.

Religious Education in Different Types of Church Schools

The 1988 Education Act states that ‘Religious Education has equal standing in relation to core subjects of the National Curriculum and that it is compulsory for all registered pupils.’ Religious Education encompasses non-religious world views.

Religious Education in Voluntary Aided (VA) schools

For Voluntary Aided Schools with a religious character Religious Education is the responsibility of the governing body. Provision of RE must be in accordance with the Trust Deed of the School. The Diocesan Board of Education advises that governors, in consultation with the Head teacher, adopt the Locally Agreed Syllabus and supplement this with material from the Diocese to ensure that at least 50% of the curriculum is spent on Christianity.

Religious Education in Voluntary Controlled (VC) and Foundation schools

Voluntary Controlled or Foundation Schools with a religious designation must arrange for RE to be delivered in accordance with the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

Religious Education in an Academy

The requirements for Religious Education in an academy with a religious foundation are specified in the funding agreement for that academy. For a VA school which converts to academy status the model funding agreement specifies that an academy with a religious designation must provide RE in accordance with the tenets of the particular faith specified in the designation. Foundation or Voluntary Controlled schools with a religious designation that convert to academy status must teach RE that is similar in breadth and ambition that that in the locally agreed syllabus.

Withdrawal from RE

In the UK, parents still have the right to withdraw their children from RE on the grounds that they wish to provide their own RE. This provision will be the parents’ responsibility. This right of withdrawal exists for all pupils in all types of school, including schools with and without a religious designation. Students aged 18 or over have the right to withdraw themselves from RE. Parents also have the right to withdraw their child from part of RE and can do so without giving any explanation. Teachers also have the right to withdraw from the teaching of RE. However, this does not apply to teachers who have been specifically employed to teach or lead RE. If a teacher wishes to withdraw from the teaching of RE, a letter requesting this must be submitted to the head of the school and its chair of governors. If a teacher withdraws from the teaching of RE, the school must still make provisions for the pupils to receive their entitlement to RE.

When a request to withdraw is received by a school, the request should be granted without delay. The school may offer to speak with the parent to try to understand the basis for the withdrawal **but only after the request has been granted**. The school **must** make clear that the parent's right to withdraw their child has been granted and that they are not required to give reasons for their request.

Should parents take up the offer of a discussion, the school may seek to establish the religious issues about which the parent objects to their child being taught. Discussion may include the practical implications of withdrawal and the circumstances in which it may be reasonable to accommodate their wishes. Practical examples of how a school may reassure a parent who has withdrawn their child may include inviting the parent to observe a RE lesson, discussing curriculum documents and discussing the aims of RE in your school with them.

The Contribution of RE to Other Curriculum Aims

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC)

SMSC prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. Enquiring into religion and worldviews, through the distinct knowledge, understanding and skills contained in RE is essential to achieving these aims. Exploring the concepts of religion and worldviews and their roles in the spiritual, moral and cultural lives of people in a diverse society helps individuals develop moral awareness and social understanding. Church schools are particularly concerned about the holistic development of children and young people and recognise that a good education is about forming people who have the moral strength and spiritual depth to live a fulfilled life in modern day Britain and the global environment.

The school's Christian values

RE along with all the other subjects in the curriculum, should contribute to the promotion of the school's distinctively Christian values. RE makes an important contribution to a school's responsibility to promote respect for all, responsible citizenship and global learning. It provides a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism, discrimination & extremism. It can also impact on the school's duty to promote community cohesion. By examining the beliefs and inspiration provided by key religious figures, RE should also play a part in encouraging pupils to contribute to the school and wider community and to develop attitudes of service to others.

The promotion of 'British Values'

RE provides opportunities to promote and discuss the 'British Values' of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty & mutual respect. These discussions may also play a part in helping schools with their new duties in terms of preventing individuals from being drawn into terrorism. Church of England Schools should see themselves as part of the solution to the threat of radicalism. This should involve not just trying to prevent the development of an extremist view but should be more about promoting a positive vision of the contribution of different religions. RE encourages contributions to various aspects of British Values but schools should consider where else in the curriculum that British Values are taught, as RE should not be the only place for this.