

WHITEHILLS PRIMARY SCHOOL

"...putting children first..."



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

Date reviewed: **July 2026**

Reviewed by: **N James and A Amos**

Ratified by Governors:

Religious Education Policy

Respect • Responsibility • Hard work

Introduction

Religious Education is unique in the school curriculum in that it is neither a core subject nor a foundation subject but the 1988 Education Act states that 'Religious Education has equal standing in relation to core subjects of the National Curriculum in that it is compulsory for all registered pupils'.

OFSTED's key statement regarding religious education states, *it is intellectually challenging and personally enriching*.

Whitehills Primary school is West Northamptonshire Local authority school. We deliver RE in line with the Locally Agreed Syllabus, SACRE. We use the Jigsaw RE programme as our scheme of work to support the delivery of SACRE.

This RE policy is informed by current national guidance:

- RE in English Schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010 (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190260/DCSF-00114-2010.pdf)
- National Content Standard for RE in England July 2023 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190260/DCSF-00114-2010.pdf
- RE : realising the potential Ofsted 2013 (www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/religious-education-realising-potential)
- A Curriculum Framework for RE in England, REC 2013 (<http://resubjectreview.recouncil.org.uk/re-review-report>)

Jigsaw RE meets the requirements of our locally agreed syllabus, Standards Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) and is aligned to the non- statutory guidance described above.

By following Jigsaw RE at Whitehills Primary school we intend that Religious Education will:

- **adopt an enquiry- based approach** as recommended by Ofsted, beginning with the children's own life experience before moving into learning about and from religion.
- **provoke challenging questions** about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs, the self, and issues of right and wrong, commitment and belonging. It develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other principal religions, and religious traditions that examine these questions, fostering personal reflection and spiritual development.
- **encourage pupils to explore their own beliefs** (religious or non-religious), in the light of what they learn, as they examine issues of religious belief and faith and how these impact on personal, institutional and social ethics; and to express their responses.
- **enable pupils to build their sense of identity and belonging**, which helps them flourish within their communities and as citizens in a diverse society.
- **teach pupils to develop respect for others**, including people with different faiths and beliefs, and help to challenge prejudice.
- **prompt pupils to consider their responsibilities** to themselves and to others, and to explore how they might contribute to their communities and to wider society. It encourages empathy, generosity and compassion.
- **develop a sense of awe, wonder and mystery.**
- **nurture children's own spiritual development.**

Curriculum Intent

It is our intent for the Religious Education curriculum to engage, inspire and promote diversity to equip our children with the knowledge and skills to answer challenging questions; explore different religious beliefs; values and traditions. We want our children to develop a deeper understanding of the varied religious traditions, beliefs and practices that are followed in our multi-cultural society. We want our children to know how religious education enables pupils to combat prejudice; enhance modes of communication and prepare them for adult life; employment and life-long learning in modern Britain as well as in the wider world.

The RE curriculum aims to offer a multitude of opportunities to communicate with others in a variety of ways such as: class discussions and debates, paired and teacher talk and development of RE vocabulary. High levels of engagement by children is also paramount through communication. Teachers will be well equipped with the knowledge to teach the religion/culture/tradition to their class and offer opportunities to ask thought-provoking questions. News and current affairs may play a key part in providing a hook for the children. Relevant texts will also be used to enhance the experience for all children.

Jigsaw RE Content

Jigsaw RE covers all areas of RE for the primary phase, Christianity plus one other religion is taught in each year group.

How is RE organised in this school?

Jigsaw RE brings together learning about and from religion, questioning and spiritual development in a comprehensive scheme of learning. Teaching strategies are varied and are mindful of teaching and learning theories and the need for adaptive teaching

Learning is assessed and children have the opportunity to express their own thoughts and beliefs and empathise with believers of that religion or belief position.

SEND Provision

Jigsaw RE is written as a universal core curriculum provision for all children. Inclusivity is part of its philosophy. Teachers will add to the planning to meet the needs of the children in their classes. To support this, many enquiries suggest creative learning activities that allow children to choose the media with which they work and give them scope to work to their full potential. To further help teachers adapt the teaching, for children in KS1 and 2, each enquiry has exemplars for those children working towards the learning objective, at the expected level for this age group and those working beyond the expected level of achievement.

Assessment

Teachers are eager to ensure children are making progress with their learning throughout their RE. Therefore, each enquiry has a built-in assessment. This task is the formal opportunity for teacher assessment of the children's knowledge of that religion, depth of critical thinking, and ability to answer the enquiry question. This stand-alone evidence is used in conjunction with other evidence such as records of discussions, recorded work and annotations from other lessons within the enquiry to assist the teacher in assessing whether a child is working at the expected level or towards or beyond it. Children are assessed over three aspects of learning:

- a personal resonance with or reflection on the material/religion being studied to answer the enquiry question.
- knowledge and understanding of the material/religion being studied to answer the enquiry question.
- evaluation/critical thinking in relation to the enquiry question

These are tracked throughout the planning stage so that teachers can utilise the appropriate evidence accordingly. In line with non-statutory guidance issued by the RE Council in 2013 (cited on page 1) descriptors of these aspects utilise age-related expectations of working towards, working at the expected attainment and working beyond.

Recording and tracking progress

To support the teacher in tracking each child's progress throughout the year, there is an overview sheet for each enquiry on which to record the progress of the whole class. This supports teacher overview and facilitates subject leader monitoring and moderation. This information is inputted onto Sonar Tracker.

Reporting to Parents/Carers

The assessment process described above helps teachers report to parents/carers. Jigsaw RE enquiries give teachers meaningful evidence to cite in reports.

Monitoring and evaluation

The RE leader monitors delivery of the programme through observation and discussion with teaching staff, as well as discussions with children and scrutiny of their written work to ensure consistent and coherent curriculum provision.

Evaluation of the programme's effectiveness is conducted on the basis of:

- Pupil and teacher evaluation of the content and learning processes
- Staff meetings to review and share experience
- Monitoring of assessment to ensure progression throughout the school.

External contributors and enhancements

RE gives particular opportunities to promote an ethos of respect for others, challenge stereotypes and build understanding of other cultures and beliefs. This contributes to promoting a positive and inclusive school ethos that champions democratic values and human rights. The British Values agenda is intrinsic to Jigsaw RE.

External contributors from the community, e.g. local clergy, local members/speakers from other religions etc make a valuable contribution to the RE programme as do visits to places of worship. Their input is carefully planned and monitored so as to fit into and complement the programme.

Teachers are always present during these sessions and remain responsible for the effective delivery of the RE programme.

We recognise the inter-relationship between pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the leading role which the RE curriculum plays in some of these areas.

We feel that it is important that the children are not only introduced to the faiths of those within their school community but also to those faiths represented in the wider community ensuring our children have understanding of the diverse range of beliefs and cultures within our school community and the wider world.

An introduction to the key beliefs, practices and impact of faith will hopefully lead to understanding, sensitivity and respect for fellow humankind.

Religious Education helps this by welcoming visitors from other cultures and beliefs to talk to the pupils and by pupils experiencing visits to diverse places of worship themselves. Pupils also have the opportunity to experience the celebration of different cultures and festivals other than their own, within RE and other areas of the curriculum and Collective Worship.

The Learning Environment

Establishing a safe, open and positive learning environment based on trusting relationships between all members of the class, adults and children alike, is vital. To enable this, it is important that respect for each others' views and beliefs and those of the believers of that religion is encouraged at all times and that any artefacts are handled with respect and care.

Teaching Sensitive and Controversial Issues

Sensitive and controversial issues are certain to arise in learning from real-life experience and discussing personal beliefs.

Topics are presented using a variety of views and beliefs so that pupils are able to form their own, informed opinions but also respect that others have the right to different opinions. Teachers should never feel obliged to discuss their own beliefs unless they feel comfortable doing so and can ensure that this will not influence or restrict the children's own expression. *(Church schools may wish to include a comment regarding upholding the Christian ethos of the school whilst still respecting the beliefs and views of others).*

Involving parents and carers

The school believes that it is important to have the support of parents, carers and the wider community for the RE programme. Parents and carers are/will be given the opportunity to find out about and discuss RE through:

- * Response to RE comments on reports
- * Curriculum overviews

Links to other policies and curriculum areas

We recognise the clear link between RE and the following policies and staff are aware of the need to refer to these policies when appropriate.

- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Therapeutic Thinking Policy

Each year group will visit a place of worship, as well as having a visitor from the local religious community into the school during the academic year. This will help promote both engagement, diversity and a feeling of belonging in the community.

Equal Opportunities

In keeping with the aims of the school policy for equal opportunities, the teaching of RE endeavours to ensure that all pupils receive equal access to educational opportunities regardless of their religious beliefs, gender, race, ability, social background or physical capacity. Care is taken in RE to avoid the reinforcement of negative or stereotypical images and RE aims to celebrate and appreciate cultural diversity through a variety of materials, tasks and experiences, in order to reflect the cultural diversities of our society.

All children should have equal access to RE in order to develop their personal capabilities. When children are working in groups, we endeavour to ensure that their hands-on experience is equitable. Resources are checked to ensure that gender and ethnicity are reflected in a balanced way without stereotyping.

PSHE, Citizenship and Community Cohesion

Religious Education looks at moral codes and values that underpin people's behaviour. It promotes values and attitudes that develop respect and sensitivity for others and enables discussion of a range of views, opinions and beliefs which help to prepare children to become valuable citizens in a culturally diverse society. British values are also taught within RE lessons where relevant as well in the PSHE curriculum.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Religious Education plays a key role in pupils "spiritual and moral development, and makes a distinctive contribution to their social and cultural development." This is outlined in detail in the Agreed Syllabus.

Literacy

RE embeds skills of literacy in a variety of ways. For example, speaking and listening skills, drama conventions, reading different texts and writing in different genres.

Collective Worship

Religious Education is different in nature to both Worship and Assembly. The aims and objectives of RE are different and distinct from those of Collective Worship. RE is about developing skills, knowledge and understanding in order to make decisions about the important questions. Worship is about being given the opportunity to participate in an experience which can lead to a heightened sense of spiritual awareness. Assembly can emphasise the more ritual and ceremonial aspects of worship and can be used as a springboard from which to launch a project or inspire a larger number of children at one time.

Religious Education cannot be taught wholly through assemblies. The assembly context does not give the opportunity for the exercise of many skills; for example, research, which is a part of Religious Education for which a classroom context is essential.

Assembly, Worship and Religious Education are distinctive activities which help the school deliver a broad and balanced curriculum.

Teaching

OFSTED reports suggest that the range of teaching and learning strategies in use in RE is often too narrow, in the over-use of stories and a limited range of drawing and written tasks. Our policy is to ensure that a variety of methods ensures that Religious Education is accessible by all pupils. The variety enables pupils to develop a broad repertoire. The teaching and tasks used promote a range of skills such as thinking skills, reasoning, enquiry and research. Examples of active learning strategies and activities which we use are:

- Dramatic conventions;
- Group work;
- Individual reflection;
- Use of music and art;
- Artefact handling;
- Multi - sensory approaches;
- Visits and visitors;
- Use of Computing;
- Use of photos, posters, videos.

Special Educational Needs

RE contributes towards the policy by ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties are able to:

- Develop their self-confidence and awareness;
- Understand the world they live in as individuals and as members of groups;
- Bring their own experiences and understanding of life into the classroom;
- Develop positive attitudes towards others, respecting their beliefs and experience;
- Reflect on and consider their own values and those of others;
- Deal with issues that form the basis for personal choices and behaviour.

Access to RE for pupils with learning difficulties can be improved by:

- Using sensory materials and resources through sight, touch, sound, taste or smell, for example, music, tactile artefacts, plants in a sensory garden;
- Giving pupils first hand experiences, for example, visitors to schools, visits to religious buildings, involvement in festivals;
- Organising a range of activities to give personal experiences, for example, dance, drama, visits to a range of environments;
- Helping pupils to understand and appreciate their world and its diversity;
- Using a range of resources, for example, interactive/sensory stimuli, assisted technology to increase pupils' knowledge of religions and the elements in them;
- Using specialist aids and equipment;
- Providing support from adults or other pupils, when necessary, while allowing pupils the space, time and freedom to develop skills for themselves;
- Adapting tasks or environments and providing alternative activities where necessary, for example, tactile story books, puppets, role-play, music making, presenting work as a painting instead of writing.
- Being aware of the pace at which pupils work and of the physical and mental effort required.
- Balancing consistency and challenge, according to individual needs.

INCLUSION

Teachers ensure that the work undertaken by children with a disability: takes account of their pace of learning and the equipment they use; takes account of the effort and concentration needed in oral work, or when using, for example, vision aids; is adapted or offers alternative activities in those subjects where children are unable to manipulate tools or equipment, or use certain types of materials; allows opportunities for them to take part in educational visits and other activities linked to their studies; uses assessment techniques that reflect their individual needs and abilities.

From setting high expectations we aspire for our children to:

- Show high levels of insight into and discernment beyond, the obvious and ordinary;
- Make sense of and draw meaning from religious symbols, metaphors, texts and practices;
- Are sensitive to, or aware of, the mysteries of life and have a feeling for how these are explored and expressed;
- Understand, apply and transfer ideas and concepts across topics in Religious Education and into other religious and cultural contexts.

It is important that the full range and scope of Religious Education activities and learning experiences give pupils access to high levels of attainment and should be appropriately challenged by:

- Using a variety of challenging questioning strategies to explore religious phenomena;
- Setting extension tasks to encourage greater depth of understanding;
- Using authentic materials from a faith;
- Focusing on interpretation of symbol, metaphor, text and story and the ways in which these stimulate reflection on meaning and discernment;
- Challenging and developing use of spoken and written religious language with both sacred texts and general literature;
- Teaching pupils correct terminology and language needed to handle sophisticated religious, spiritual, ethical and philosophical questions ideas and materials;
- Using questions and tasks from later key stages to stimulate responses through argument, analysis and prediction;
- Encouraging pupils to make connections between their work in RE and other subjects.

Right of Withdrawal

In keeping with the law, parents may withdraw their children from Religious Education provided they give written notification to the school. The school will ensure that suitable supervision is provided. Please refer to the Subject Leader or Head teacher any questions from parents about withdrawals. We note that teachers can exercise their right to withdraw from teaching RE if they wish to do so but must give notice of their intention in writing to the Governing Body.

RE does not seek to urge religious beliefs on children or staff, or to compromise the integrity of their own beliefs by promoting one religion over another.

We hope that all parents and teachers will feel comfortable with the open Religious Education being taught at our school and we encourage the participation of all.

Named RE Subject Leader: *Mrs A Amos*

Headteacher: *Mrs N James*

Link Governor: *Harvie Hughes*