



Religious Education (RE) Policy for Taverham VC CE Junior School

Religious Education (RE) Policy Aims and Objectives

As a Church of England school, we see it as our duty to give children and members of the school community the skills to maximise their engagement with the world around them, enable them to grow spiritually, emotionally and personally, and develop the character and values which will serve them well in future life and support success.

‘Religious education is primarily about enabling pupils to become free thinking, critical participants of public discourse, who can make academically informed judgements about important matters of religion and belief which shape the global landscape’ (Norfolk Agreed Syllabus 2019).¹

RE aims to broaden children’s awareness, understanding and tolerance of different belief systems, cultures and lifestyles worldwide, and to encourage and develop in pupils the skills required to interact peacefully with others they will meet in this changing world, who believe, think and live differently. Our intent is to provide pupils with the opportunities to explore some of the key ideas and concepts of major religions and worldviews in a safe environment, investigating and reflecting upon religious values and questions within the three disciplines of RE – theology (believing), philosophy (thinking) and human and social sciences (living)² – within which are housed ten Age-Related Expectations in each year group (see below).

At Taverham VC CE Junior School, we develop pupils’ knowledge of Christianity, its values and its impact on citizens around the world while also investigating key concepts in other major religions and worldviews. We address fundamental questions concerning, for example, life as a journey, the existence of a creator deity and life after death. RE Days follow an enquiry-based process of learning based around a Big Question to enable children to engage with and explore a key concept. To broaden their understanding we use resources such as artefacts, analyse holy texts and explore the impact of an idea on people’s lifestyles worldwide as well as making connections between the texts and real life and considering different interpretations, developing critical thinking while questioning whether a belief or idea is rational or reasonable. We enable children to develop a sound knowledge of Christianity as well as other world religions, and through this we intend to develop within pupils respect and tolerance for other people worldwide. Children reflect on what it means to have a faith and to develop their own spiritual knowledge and understanding. We help pupils learn *from* religions as well as *about* religions.

As a Church of England School, we believe that all children, whether they have a faith or not and whatever their background or culture, deserve a rich, broad and balanced RE curriculum with engaging

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NTW2bsFTLY>

² <https://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/schools/siams-re-collective-worship/religious-education/age-related-expectations>

opportunities to develop all pupils' becoming moral, social, spiritual, confident and aware individuals. We base our curriculum design on the research of four diocesan RE advisers — Jane Chipperton (Diocese of St Albans), Gillian Georgiou (Diocese of Lincoln), Olivia Seymour (Diocese of York) and Kathryn Wright (Diocese of Norwich) – who developed the set of Age-Related Expectations that 'enable pupils to hold balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief. Implicit within this is the study of a range of religions, belief systems and worldviews.'³

The Aims of the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus 2019 (and therefore of Taverham VC CE Junior School)

- To know about and understand a range of religious and non-religious worldviews by learning to see these through theological, philosophical and human/social science lenses.
- To express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religious and non-religious worldviews through a multidisciplinary approach.
- To gain and deploy skills rooted in theology, philosophy and the human/social sciences engaging critically with religious and non-religious worldviews.⁴

Further objectives of teaching religious education in our school are to help children:

- develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity as well as one other major religion (Islam in Lower Key Stage 2 and Hinduism in Upper Key Stage 2);
- develop an awareness of spiritual and moral issues arising in their lives;
- develop knowledge and understanding of major world religions and value systems found in Britain (and across the world);
- develop an understanding of what it means to be committed to a religious tradition;
- be able to reflect on their own experiences and to develop a personal response to the fundamental questions of life (class Big Question);
- develop an understanding of religious traditions and appreciate the cultural differences in Britain (and across the world) today;
- develop investigative and research skills, and make reasoned judgements about religious issues;
- have respect for other people's views, and celebrate the diversity in society;
- develop our Vision as a school, 'learning for a fuller life' (John: Chapter 10 Verse 10).

Extract From Our Vision as a School

In adopting 'Learning for a fuller life', we want all children at Taverham VC Church of England Junior School to become:

- **Successful and happy individuals**, who participate fully, enjoy learning, make progress and achieve;
- **Confident and resilient young people** who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives;
- **Responsible citizens** who make a positive contribution to society, locally, nationally and globally;

³ Norfolk Agreed Syllabus 2019

⁴ These aims are based on those found in The Non-Statutory National Framework for RE (2013)

- **Caring, respectful and tolerant** members of their community;
- **Reflective individuals**, with a strong spiritual and moral awareness.

The legal position of religious education

Taverham VC CE Junior School's religious education curriculum is set within the broader intent of the whole school curriculum and is based on the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus for RE 2019: it meets all the requirements set out in that document. To this end:

- RE is provided for all registered pupils in full time education except those withdrawn at their parents' request (see below). In junior school, this is a requirement for all children in Years 3 through 6.
- RE is taught in accordance with the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus, with Christian values at the heart of all we do.⁵
- Along with the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus, we reflect the fact 'that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'. [1996 Act, Ch 56 S375 (3).]
- Teaching of RE helps to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society.
- RE helps to prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

Our school RE curriculum meets the requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) and the 1996 Education and 1998 Schools Standards and Framework Act. The ERA stipulates that religious education is compulsory for all children. The ERA allows parents to withdraw their child from religious education classes if they so wish, although only after they have given written notice to the school governors. The ERA also allows teachers to refuse to teach religious education, but only after they have given due notice of their intention to the school governors. The religious education curriculum forms an important part of our school's spiritual, moral and social teaching. It also promotes education for citizenship. The ERA states that the RE syllabus should reflect the fact that religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, and that it should, at the same time, take account of the teachings and practices of other major religions.

Teaching and learning style

We base our teaching and learning style in RE on the guidelines and advice set out by the Diocese of Norwich and the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus 2019 and in line with SACRE, in order to encourage all pupils to become 'religiously literate.' Good teaching in RE focuses on the three disciplines (theology, philosophy and human and social sciences) and the ten Age-Related Expectations therein, using the *Understanding Christianity* resource where appropriate.

⁵ The Designation of Schools Having a Religious Character (England) Order 1999

By asking an interesting and relevant Big Question, the children's curiosity is fired. Within each year group, all pupils will have been given opportunities to develop in all ten areas within the three disciplines, and will have explored a broad range of questions relating to Christianity and other main worldly religions and views over six RE days, one per half term. By the end of each year, all pupils will have studied in depth multiple key concepts and beliefs within Christianity and another major world religion (Islam in Years 3 and 4; Hinduism in Years 5 and 6), whilst also comparing values and ideas between other major religions and world views as are relevant; RE Days are enquiry-based and encourage pupils to discuss key religious ideas along with their own in a safe classroom environment. By the end of Year 6, all pupils will have investigated twenty-four Big Questions and revisited all ten strands within the three core disciplines (theology, philosophy and human and social sciences) multiple times, so developing and consolidating their religious literacy.

RE in Taverham VC Junior School ties in closely with our policy of Collective Worship and with the school's Christian Ethos. Every class visits the local church twice a year as part of an RE day exploring Christianity; we also invite representatives of local religious groups to come into school and talk to the children, and organise RE trips when possible. Pupils investigate religious and moral issues individually, in groups and as a class. As in the teaching of other subjects, we recognise the importance of differentiating to suit all needs and abilities of the pupils we teach. We provide all pupils with choices and opportunities to develop their skills in other areas of the curriculum. We achieve this in a variety of ways, for example, by:

- clearly outlining the three or four Age-Related Expectations that are the goals of that specific RE Day, using language pupils in that year group will understand;
- setting tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses;
- setting tasks of increasing difficulty and depth;
- providing resources of different complexity, adapted to the ability of the child;
- inviting pupils to ask questions and follow their own trains of interest;
- allowing children to research certain areas thus working at their own pace and ability.

Curriculum planning in religious education

At our school, we plan the RE curriculum in accordance with Norfolk Agreed Syllabus for RE 2019, in alliance with the Diocese of Norwich and SACRE. We ensure that Big Questions, themes and topics studied in religious education are relevant to the world we live in and build on prior learning. We offer opportunities for children of all abilities to develop their religious literacy, awareness of the world and cross-curricular skills during each RE Day, and each subsequent enquiry offers pupils increasing challenge as they move through the school. Big Questions and Enquiry Outlines housing the specific Age-Related Expectations for each day are taken from the Curriculum Map and other documents created and provided by the RE Leader, who has also provided teachers with a way of assessing pupils' religious literacy, ie, their strengths in the ten individual strands within the three disciplines of RE (theology, philosophy and human and social sciences).

Contribution of RE to the teaching in other curriculum areas

English

Religious education contributes significantly to the teaching of English in our school by actively promoting the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, as it regularly involves discussions about new ideas or concepts. Most RE Days include some kind of textual analysis, whether that means interpreting an excerpt from a holy text, annotating Christian symbols or researching important historical figures. Pupils' religious literacy is assessed mostly through discussion, explanation of key vocabulary or short pieces of writing. Some RE Days also provide pupils with opportunities to examine texts written in other languages and/or alphabets (eg Islamic text) and to try writing in other forms themselves.

Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Citizenship

'Religious education is primarily about enabling pupils to become free thinking, critical participants of public discourse, who can make academically informed judgements about important matters of religion and belief which shape the global landscape' (Norfolk Agreed Syllabus 2019).⁶ At Taverham VC CE Junior School, we make pupils aware of a wide range of situations and lifestyles and encourage every child to consider the values, emotions and choices of others, in order to develop their own moral compasses, to respect other people and to make positive decisions in the future. In religious education lessons, too, we teach pupils about the values and moral beliefs that underpin individual choices of behaviour. Because RE has such a prolific focus on what other people believe, what they think and how these impact on individuals, these subjects are intricately linked. We also promote the values and attitudes required for citizenship in a democracy by teaching respect for others and the need for personal responsibility. In general, by promoting tolerance and understanding of others, we enable children to appreciate what it means to be positive members of our pluralistic society.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

In Taverham VC CE Junior School, we wish to develop the 'whole child,' ensuring each child in our school is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. We hope to develop spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical, ethical, self-respecting and confident individuals. Through religious education in our school we provide opportunities for development in all of these areas. For example, in terms of spiritual development, children consider and respond to questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life. We help them to recognise the difference between right and wrong, through the study of moral and ethical questions. We enhance their social development by helping them to build a sense of identity in a multicultural society. Children explore issues of religious faith and values and, in so doing, they develop their knowledge and understanding of the cultural context of their own lives.

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NTW2bsFTLY>

RE and ICT

Information and communication technology enhances religious education, wherever appropriate, in all key stages. Opportunities to use ICT are in selecting and analysing relevant information using the Internet, and in the review, modification and evaluation of their work; also to improve presentation. Older children use ICT to research concepts they are not familiar with; younger children can take photographs of the class acting out a scene from the Bible on the school iPads.

RE and Inclusion

At Taverham VC CE Junior School, we teach religious education to all children, whatever their ability and individual needs; culture and background. It is not a faith school for Christians but a Christian school for all. Religious education forms part of the school's curriculum policy that provides a broad and balanced education for all children. Through our religious education teaching we provide learning opportunities that enable all pupils to make good progress. We strive hard to meet the needs of those pupils with special educational needs, those with disabilities, and those learning English as an additional language, and we take all reasonable steps to achieve this.

Progress and Attainment

All RE Days provide pupils with opportunities to develop their religious literacy in one of the ten strands encompassed by the three core disciplines of teaching and learning. The structure, aims and core knowledge of every RE Day is laid out on the Enquiry Outline provided by the RE Leader. Teachers' assessments of progress and attainment directly relate to these outcomes. For example, a Big Question in Year 3 is, 'How did it all begin?' Essential outcomes of the day directly relate to the Age-Related Expectations and therefore teachers can assess pupils' religious literacy by considering whether each pupil was 'working toward,' 'at' the level or working 'at greater depth' within each outcome. Teachers both observe pupils during lessons and read work in books to complete their assessment of pupils' progress and attainment.

Resources

We have sufficient resources in our school to be able to teach all our religious education teaching units, including 4 copies of the Qur'an (in English and Urdu); every child is given a Bible in Year 3. We have a range of resources for religious education which we keep in a central store: there is a box of resources for each religion taught. There is a collection of religious artefacts which we use to enrich teaching in religious education. The *Understanding Christianity* resource created by the Norfolk Diocese is used during some RE Days, as appropriate. The school library has a good supply of RE topic books and computer software to support the children's individual research.

Monitoring and review

The RE subject leader is responsible for monitoring the standards of the children's work and the quality of the teaching in religious education. She is also responsible for supporting colleagues in their teaching, for being informed about current developments in the subject, and for providing a strategic lead and direction for RE in the school. The subject leader presents the Headteacher with

an annual report which evaluates strengths and weaknesses in the subject and indicates areas for further improvement. She has allocated time when required for undertaking tasks identified in the RE action plan. This policy will be reviewed at least every three years.

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