



HEARTS ACADEMY TRUST

# Religious Education Policy

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## Religious Education at HEARTS

### Mission Statement and Values

The Wickford Church of England School is committed to providing a happy, caring and safe learning environment for all within a Christian context where children feel valued and grow in confidence and independence.

RE lessons are times when children can reflect on the school HEARTS values and explore them through story and through exploring the impact of religious beliefs and values on the lives of believers

HEARTS Academy Trust is committed to providing a happy, caring and safe learning environment for all within a values led context, where everyone feels valued and grows in confidence and independence.

We promote **HAPPINESS** through a creative, exciting and practical curriculum, which generates a love of, and interest in, learning and a resilience and hope which supports us through challenging times. RE is taught in a way which allows children to enjoy reflecting on stories and exploring the lives of people of faith. Creative response is a key element of our teaching of RE, allowing children to take pleasure in recording thoughts and reflections creatively.

Great value is placed on pupils' self **ESTEEM** which is developed through a positive and motivated attitude to learning, a healthy lifestyle, good social skills, self-discipline and a positive self-image. Positive attitudes to, and a curiosity about, different religions and traditions, settings and vocabulary support pupils' healthy and hopeful thinking.

We promote the highest standards of **ACHIEVEMENT** in all areas of the curriculum and help all pupils to fulfil their potential regardless of gender, race or ability. All adults have high expectations of what all children can achieve in RE and the highest achievements are displayed as models to others.

We foster **RESPECT and RESPONSIBILITY** for all by establishing good relations between the school, home and community. Pupils are taught respect for themselves, others and the environment. They are also taught to take full responsibility for their own choices and responsibility for themselves and their community. In RE children learn to value diversity, enjoy finding out about different faiths and lifestyles, meet visitors from different faith communities and listen respectfully to the views of others.

We encourage **TRUTH** and honesty in all aspects of school life – relationships, work and the curriculum and learn to trust and accept others' individuality and uniqueness.

We develop **SPIRITUALITY and SERVICE** so that calm, quiet, reflective times which support deep thought, including prayer, are part of school life and beauty is appreciated. We promote a service culture that reflects our duty to support and show compassion to all members of the community and not just ourselves.



*Children at the HEART*

## **AIMS**

We recognise that Religious Education (RE) makes a distinctive contribution to the development of spiritual, personal and moral education and understand that beliefs may influence personal and social behaviour. High-quality RE will support children's religious literacy. This means the ability to hold balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and world views. Children will be able to make sense of religion and worldviews around them and begin to understand the compelled world in which they live. RE is predominantly 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.

### **Aims of the Essex agreed Syllabus**

- 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.

In RE the school aims to give pupils the opportunity to:

- Consider questions about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human;
- Acquire and develop the skills necessary to study the religions and beliefs which form part of contemporary society;
- Develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other principal religions;
- Explore their own beliefs (whether they are 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 become religiously literate so that they can hold balanced and informed conversations about religions and beliefs;
- Encourage a sensitive attitude towards religious and non-religious beliefs, practices and ideas;
- Understand and respect the beliefs of others by promoting mutual respect and tolerance in a diverse society and by challenging prejudice;
- Offer opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development, deepening the understanding of how religion affects the lives of others – individually, communally and cross-culturally;
- Reflect on values represented in faith stories and practices.

## **Implementation**

All classes have a discrete weekly RE lesson taught by the teacher and supported by our spiritual advisor. This includes the Reception classes. In line with the Essex SACRE 2022 Syllabus RE is explored through three distinct lenses.

### **1) Theology Lens – Thinking through Believing**

- Ask questions that believers would ask
- Think like theologians
- Explore questions and answers that arise from inside religions and worldviews

### **2) Philosophy Lens - Thinking through Thinking**

- Ask questions that thinkers would ask
- Think like philosophers
- Explore questions and answers raised through considering the nature of knowledge, existence and morality

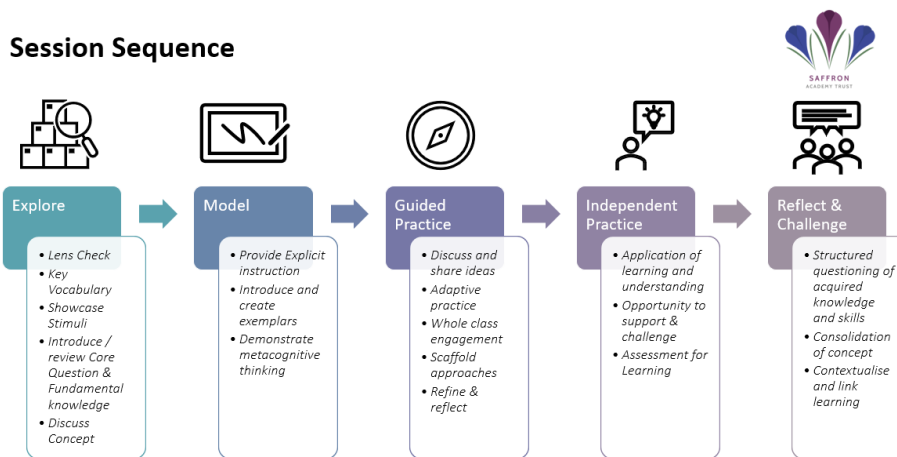
### **3) Human and Social science Lens – Thinking through living**

- Ask questions that people who study reality would ask
- Think like human scientists
- Explore questions and answers raised in relation to the impact of religions and worldviews on people and their lives

Effective RE balances these three disciplinary lenses in order for more pupils to become more religiously literate.

We use the Saffron Academy Trust scheme of work to support the planning of RE. This is used alongside other resources such as Understanding Christianity.

Rosenshein’s principles of Instruction are used to support the teaching of RE with a strong emphasis on *Modelled Exemplar – Guided Practice – Independent practice (My Turn – Our Turn – Your Turn)*. This approach allows for often complex concepts and applied activities to be broken down into small steps, allowing all pupils to engage and succeed.



### RE in EYFS

As explained in the Essex Agreed syllabus, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum areas most related to RE are Communication and Language, Literacy, Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Understanding the World and Expressive Art and Design.

Children within our EYFS, including pre-school and reception, through play opportunities, stories and adult led activities are encouraged to notice differences between people, develop positive attitudes about the differences between people and recognise that people have different beliefs and celebrate special times in different ways linked to Understanding of the World. Personal, Social and Emotional Development encourages children to empathise with others and to see themselves as a valued individual. Within our EYFS, the children will work towards the ELGs where they are encouraged to show sensitivity to others, build positive relationships and know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities,

In the Reception classes the RE lesson is used to support development in the related Early Learning Goals and to support spiritual development.

Guidance from the Essex syllabus is used to plan a carefully structured RE curriculum for the Reception classes. This incorporates provision for children’s different starting points, relevant and appropriate content that matches the different levels of young children’s needs and planned and purposeful activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors. Practitioners are sensitive to the diversity of religious faith and are aware that even within one religious tradition, the celebrations and rituals observed by families may vary. Practitioners are also aware that children’s needs differ according to their experience and family circumstances and as a result that they respond accordingly.

Planning for discrete RE lessons and for continuous provision for RE in the Reception Class includes a key learning experiences including:

- activities based on first-hand experience;
- opportunities for play and learning that acknowledge children’s particular religious and non-religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds;
- activities that help children to become aware of, explore and question issues of difference in religion and culture;
- activities that promote emotional, moral, spiritual and social development alongside intellectual development;

- positive images in, for example, books and displays that challenge children’s thinking and help them to embrace differences in religion and culture.

### **Key Stage 1 (KS1)**

Our teaching is based on the Essex Agreed Syllabus, adapted to include Godly play sessions and to include content from the Understanding Christianity resource. All classes have a discrete RE lesson every week and RE is also related to other areas of study and to topic work. For example, the unit on “Why are some people leaders?” includes discussion of religious leaders and Ernest Shackleton/Ibn Battuta who is the focus of the term’s History Topic. We use an enquiry approach to RE. All units begin with children discussing a “Big Question”. As the unit progresses, they develop their knowledge, thoughts and opinions about this question. At the end of the unit, they discuss together what they have learnt and share their new insights and opinions.

In RE lessons we encourage children to explore and investigate, to question and to reflect on new ideas and emotions; Godly play sessions encourage these learning opportunities. As children discuss the values they see represented in stories and in faith communities they develop their empathy, religious literacy and awareness of their own place within the family, the school and the community.

We acknowledge the sensitive nature of this aspect of education and realise the need for a sincere and sympathetic approach. We are aware that some pupils (and/or parents/staff) may hold deep beliefs while others hold none. With this in mind we encourage questioning and discussion but respect the right of any individual who does not want to share their inner thoughts.

As a church school, Christianity has a high profile in our Religious Education programme. In line with National Curriculum guidelines RE is broadly Christian in nature. We also recognise that our pupils need to understand the beliefs of other religions as well as Christianity. RE plays an important role in helping them to understand and respect people who hold different religious beliefs and people from different cultures and traditions.

The cultural development of pupils is supported through exploration and discussion of beliefs, Art, ideas, customs and lifestyles.

In KS1 we focus on providing opportunities for children to explore Christianity, Judaism and Islam in depth and to relate different aspects of these faiths. Aspects of Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism are covered more briefly. The content of the R.E. syllabus is outlined in the document **the Essex Agreed Syllabus for religious education 2022, A Religious Education for the Future**.

Planning also incorporates elements of the **Understanding Christianity** resource. These elements of the planning focus on giving opportunities for children to develop their religious literacy, developing children’s ability to think deeply about questions, ask questions and talk about religion in an informed way. They also focus on ensuring that children begin to understand the nature and diversity within religions through, real experiences, images and video of different artefacts and traditions within each religion around the world. Lessons in each unit focus specifically on the impact of religious belief on individuals and communities.

An important part of the curriculum is the provision of high quality opportunities for children to respond to different forms of religious expression such as Art work and music. Regular opportunities for pupils to express their understanding of religion through Art reflect the whole school focus on creative Arts.

During KS1, children learn about different beliefs about God and the world around them. They encounter and respond to a range of stories, artefacts and other religious materials.

They learn to recognise that beliefs are expressed in a variety of ways and begin to use specialist vocabulary. They begin to understand the importance and value of religion and belief, especially for other children and their families. Children ask relevant questions and develop a sense of wonder about the world, using their imaginations. They talk about what is important to them and others, valuing themselves, reflecting on their own feelings and experiences and developing a sense of belonging.

## **Visits and Visitors**

RE is planned to give children a broad range of rich experiences. Visits to our local church take place regularly throughout the year. KS1 pupils also visit other places of worship such as Chelmsford Cathedral and Southend Synagogue. We also arrange visits to the school from members of different faith communities.

Pupils will be expected at all times to respect any procedures associated with places of worship visited and to treat visitors with respect. The teacher organising the visit is expected to liaise with the faith leader/visitor so that the expectations of both parties are made clear in order to avoid any possibilities of misunderstanding or offence. We visit these places of worship as guests and learners and NOT as worshippers.

## **Community links**

Our primary link is with the churches within the Diocese of Wickford and Runwell, predominantly St Catherine's. The clergy from the church/es are regular visitors to the school and facilitate visits to the church/es. Foundation governors are drawn from church members.

Members of the congregation also support the school in a number of ways throughout the school year.

## **Teacher CPD**

Staff meetings are used for CPD to support teachers in developing subject knowledge and pedagogy in RE. Trust twilight sessions are used to enhance subject knowledge. Support is also given on an informal basis from the spiritual advisor, Trust RE leader and the school RE subject leader.

Our school Diocesan Advisor also provides training for staff as requested. Staff attend CPD led by Chelmsford Diocese on a regular basis including attending RE network meetings each term.

## **Withdrawals**

The school recognises the legal right of parents to withdraw their children from all or some RE lessons if they wish to do so. Parents are asked to contact the headteacher in this instance.

A parent of a pupil may request:

- that their child be wholly or partly excused from receiving RE given in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus;
- that a pupil who is wholly or partly excused from receiving RE provided by the school may receive RE of the kind desired by the parent elsewhere, provided that it will not interfere with the attendance of the pupil on any day except at the beginning or end of a school session;
- that a pupil who is wholly or partly excused from receiving RE provided by the school may receive RE of the kind desired by the parent on the school premises provided that it does not entail any expenditure by the responsible authority.

It is also noted that staff have the right to withdraw from RE should they wish to do so. The RE aspect of the curriculum will be covered by another member of staff.

## **Progression and Assessment**

Teachers carry out assessments of knowledge, understanding and skills covered in each unit. These follow the HEARTS Academy Trust progression document which shows the progression across all aspects of learning in RE across the primary age range. The RE subject leader analyses these assessments and supports teachers in adapting planning to meet needs identified.

## **Opportunities for all children to learn and make good progress in RE**

- Additional support is provided where needed to allow all children to access and make progress in the RE curriculum.
- Gender equality is promoted by ensuring that both boys and girls have access to all aspects of the RE curriculum. Opportunities for children to choose how they will respond creatively to stories enable all children to explore RE in ways that they find helpful.
- Opportunities to address issues of gender, race etc are provided through discussion, texts and resources.
- We provide opportunities for children to engage in deeper and more challenging small group discussion regularly. Members of the local clergy are a valuable support for this.