



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

Policy Statement

Religious Education (RE) is not a National Curriculum subject, but it is a legal requirement that RE is provided for all registered pupils in state-funded schools in England including those in the sixth form, unless withdrawn by their parents. Every pupil has an entitlement to religious education (RE). RE is a necessary part of a 'broad and balanced curriculum' and must be provided for all registered pupils in state-funded schools in England, including those in the sixth form, unless withdrawn by their parents (or withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 or over). The 'basic' school curriculum includes the national curriculum, RE and relationships and sex education.

As RE is not nationally determined, a locally agreed syllabus of RE is prepared by a local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and adopted by a local authority. As an Academy Trust, we must adopt a syllabus for RE. There is no requirement for an academy to adopt a locally agreed syllabus, as long as its own RE syllabus meets the requirements for a locally agreed syllabus, set out in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph (5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The requirements are that a syllabus must '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'.

It is this Sunderland Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education 2021, which we have used as the basis of our planning and delivery of RE. The RE curriculum drawn up by a SACRE must meet the above aims. According to case law, the agreed syllabus has a duty 'to take care that information or knowledge included in the curriculum is conveyed in a pluralistic manner' and 'must accord equal respect to different religious convictions, and to non-religious belief' (the term 'religion' encompasses both religious and non-religious beliefs.) As education policy changes, the legal requirement for RE for all registered pupils remains unchanged. RE is an entitlement for all pupils, unless they have been withdrawn by their parents from some or all of the RE curriculum.

Last review date: 13.03.24

Persons Responsible: Mr S Wright (Head of School – Southmoor Academy)
Mr J Castling (Deputy Headteacher – Sandhill View Academy)

Rationale

The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.

In Religious Education at the Aspire North East Multi Academy Trust we aim that Religious Education will ensure that all pupils:

1. Make sense of a range of religious and non-religious beliefs, so that they can:
 - identify, describe, explain and analyse beliefs and concepts in the context of living religions, using appropriate vocabulary;

- explain how and why these beliefs are understood in different ways, by individuals and within communities;
 - recognise how and why sources of authority (e.g. texts, teachings, traditions, leaders) are used, expressed and interpreted in different ways, developing skills of interpretation.
2. Understand the impact and significance of religious and non-religious beliefs, so that they can:
 - examine and explain how and why people express their beliefs in diverse ways;
 - recognise and account for ways in which people put their beliefs into action in diverse ways, in their everyday lives, within their communities and in the wider world;
 - appreciate and appraise the significance of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.
 3. Make connections between religious and non-religious beliefs, concepts, practices and ideas studied, so that they can:
 - evaluate, reflect on and enquire into key concepts and questions studied, responding thoughtfully and creatively, giving good reasons for their responses;
 - challenge the ideas studied, and allow the ideas studied to challenge their own thinking, articulating beliefs, values and commitments clearly in response;
 - discern possible connections between the ideas studied and their own ways of understanding the world, expressing their critical responses and personal reflections with increasing clarity and understanding.

Contribution of RE to the whole school curriculum

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Section 78 (1) of the 2002 Education Act states that all pupils should follow a balanced and broadly-based curriculum which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, mental and physical development of pupils and of society, and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life'. Religious Education offers opportunities for pupils to develop their ability to be reflective about their own beliefs, religious or otherwise, that inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's faiths, feelings and values.

Religious Education helps students to learn mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; the pupils can develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain.

Personal development and well-being

RE plays an important role in preparing pupils for adult life, employment and lifelong learning. It helps children and young people to be reflective and articulate well rounded and thoughtful individuals equipped to play a full role in British Society. It gives them the knowledge, skills and understanding to discern and value truth and goodness, strengthening their capacity for making moral judgements and for evaluating different types of commitment to make positive and healthy choices.

RE subject matter 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.

Content and Approach

RE has an important part to play as part of a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum to which all pupils are entitled. High quality learning experiences in RE are designed and provided by careful planning through locally agreed syllabuses and considering the need to offer breadth of content.

In order to make religious education a lively, active subject we employ a variety of teaching methods including art, music, discussion, the development of thinking skills, drama, the use of artefacts, pictures, stories, and the use of periods of stillness and reflection.

Where possible we want our pupils to have opportunities to encounter local faith communities through visits to local places of worship or visit from members of local faith communities.

Religious Education at Aspire North East Multi Academy Trust is delivered in the following way:

Key Stage Three: one lesson of RE per week

At Key Stage 3, we deliver lessons covering aspects of all 6 principle religions; Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism. As well as this, our students learn about paganist, humanist and non-religious World views. In doing so, we ensure that students finish Key Stage 3 with a better knowledge and understanding of the religions and beliefs which form a part of our society.

Key Stage Four: Core RE is included as discrete modules in the overall personal development curriculum. GCSE RE is offered to pupils each year.

At Key Stage 4, we follow the AQA GCSE Religious Studies (A) specification, studying Christianity and Islam. Students are taught to be aware that Christianity and Islam are two of the diverse religious traditions and beliefs in Great Britain today and that the main religious tradition in Great Britain is Christianity. Students are challenged with questions about belief, values, meaning, purpose and truth, enabling them to develop their own attitudes towards religious issues. Students also gain an appreciation of how religion, philosophy and ethics form the basis of our culture. They develop analytical and critical thinking skills, the ability to work with abstract ideas, leadership and research skills. All these skills will help prepare them for further study.

Key Stage Five: Core RE is included as discrete modules in the overall personal development curriculum.

RE is taught by a specialist teacher and additional teachers within the Humanities faculty who receive regular professional development training to remain up-to-date with the latest curriculum. In addition, RE is taught by a range of specialist teachers within the Personal Development curriculum.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Within the Trust, we appreciate that a vital aid to learning is for pupils to be actively involved in their own assessment. Teachers of RE will be assessing and marking pupils in line with the wider Trust Learning Policy.

Right of Withdrawal

At the Aspire North East Multi Academy Trust, we wish to be an inclusive community but recognise that parents, of course, have the legal right to withdraw their children religious education on the grounds of conscience. However, the right of withdrawal does not extend to other areas of the curriculum when, as may happen on occasion, spontaneous questions on religious matters are raised by pupils or there are issues related to religion that arise in other subjects such as history or PSHE.

Any parent who wishes to consider withdrawing their child is expected to request this in writing to the Headteacher.