Diocese of Salisbury
Academy Trust
'Beyond expectations for all of God's children'

Religious Education (RE) Policy

Policy Date: January 2026

Review Date: January 2029

This policy applies to all schools

Religious Education Policy

Vision and Purpose

'Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold' - Proverbs 8:10

In a world of confusion and shifting values, children need accurate information and a safe environment in which they can explore and form their own values and develop skills to deal with life's big questions. Our RE curriculum is rooted in providing all pupils with rich, rigorous and relevant opportunities to engage with Christianity and other religions and worldviews that shape our communities and world.

As a Trust, we are determined that all of our children will have access to a meaningful, engaging and ambitious RE curriculum which achieves two key outcomes:

1) enables children to grapple with the 'big ideas' of theology and gain deep conceptual understanding over time, and
2) equips children with the knowledge and skills to construct conceptual understanding of religions and worldviews and prepare them for their next phase of education and beyond.

Through this curriculum, pupils learn to value diversity, show respect for all, and recognise the importance of inclusion and equity in building flourishing communities.

In line with our funding agreements, which stipulate that the RE curriculum must be at least comparable with the locally agreed syllabus, and to ensure quality and consistency across the Trust, trustees have agreed that all of our schools should follow the Dorset Agreed Syllabus. We have chosen the Dorset Agreed Syllabus as this aligns closely with our Trust vision for a high quality RE curriculum.

Statement of Intent

"Make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with self-control…" — 1 Corinthians 13:2

RE has transformational intent: learning changes the learner. Our curriculum aims to equip pupils with the knowledge, understanding, and values needed to flourish as adults and to contribute positively to a diverse and complex world.

It develops theological understanding, critical thinking, empathy, and respect, helping children to make meaning of their own lives while understanding others.

Trust Expectations of RE Teaching and Learning

This document upholds the Church of England Statement of Entitlement and 'Developing a Religion and Worldviews approach in Religious Education in England' (here).

As a Trust, we have the highest expectations for the teaching of RE, delivered in accordance with the following guidance:

- RE lessons delivered weekly from Early Years through to Year 6, recognised as a core subject with it covering 5%-10% of curriculum time.
- Long term planning shows a minimum of 50% Christianity teaching in each year group.
- RE to be taught through disciplinary and substantive concepts (outlined below).
- RE learning provides opportunity for personal reflection as Spiritual growth: self, others, world and beyond.
- Each unit develops RE skills of scholarship, interpreters, navigators, contributors, influencers and reflective participators.
- Use of a knowledge organiser to capture knowledge and skills which outlines key vocabulary, key knowledge, and key theology within each unit.
- Lessons follow mastery lesson design.
- RE learning should be recorded in either floor books (EY/KS1 only) or personal RE books/journals.
- End of unit assessment is based on teacher judgement through children's understanding and recall of key knowledge outlined in unit plans and in response to the unit concept question.

Curriculum Design Principles

Our RE curriculum is designed to be:

Cohesive

The RE curriculum connects learning across year groups through carefully sequenced concepts and themes. The curriculum builds on the Church of England's Statement of Entitlement, ensuring that pupils develop a coherent understanding of Christianity alongside other worldviews.

Learning is structured around key theological concepts (Creation, Incarnation, Salvation, Worship and Witness, and After Life) which are revisited and deepened as pupils progress through the school. These 'big ideas' form threads that run throughout the curriculum, enabling children to see connections and make meaning across their learning journey. The whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts as children develop sophisticated schema for understanding religions and worldviews.

Focused, Ambitious and Rigorous

The curriculum is built upon clearly identified substantive knowledge (the content) and disciplinary knowledge (the how) set against expected outcomes for each year group. The focused knowledge can be found in the progression tables that accompany this policy. Our curriculum:

- Provides depth rather than superficial coverage
- Challenges pupils to think critically about complex theological ideas and ethical questions
- Develops sophisticated religious literacy appropriate to each stage
- Expects pupils to engage with primary sources, sacred texts and authentic religious practices
- Builds systematic knowledge of Christianity (50% of curriculum time) and other worldviews including Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Humanism (50% of curriculum time)

- Ensures that subject-specific RE curriculum maps and resources provide rigour so that children can, for example, think like a theologian, understand how religious believers interpret sacred texts, and engage with philosophical and ethical reasoning
- Maps both substantive knowledge (what is taught) and disciplinary knowledge (how we study religions) for each curriculum subject area

Relevant

The curriculum connects religious education to pupils' lives, experiences and the contemporary world. It:

- Explores how religious beliefs influence individual lives and community practices
- Examines the role of religion in British culture and global contexts
- Addresses real ethical questions and dilemmas that matter to children and society
- Provides opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own values, beliefs and identity
- Considers how diverse communities can live together for the well-being of all
- Builds cultural capital through exposure to rich and diverse materials, texts and experiences
- Enables pupils to become culturally literate (Hirsch, 1987) and engage with powerful knowledge (Young, 2013)

Appropriate

The curriculum is carefully designed to be age-appropriate, developmentally suitable and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds of our pupils. Content is selected and presented in ways that:

- Match pupils' cognitive and emotional development
- Build gradually from concrete to abstract concepts through small, deliberate steps
- Respect the integrity of different faith traditions
- Are sensitive to pupils' own religious or non-religious backgrounds
- Create safe spaces for enquiry, questioning and respectful dialogue
- Never scale back (differentiate down) the curriculum as this creates and adds to the disadvantage gap
- Enable all children, regardless of their individual needs or abilities, to access learning through scaffolding of teaching and tasks

Sequenced and Progressive

Learning is deliberately and logically sequenced and built around enquiry questions and key concepts so that knowledge and skills connect and develop over time, enabling children to know more and remember more.

Through careful consideration of the sequencing of the curriculum, ensuring that knowledge builds on and grows from previous knowledge, the curriculum has become the progression model. The sequences of knowledge are exposed in the progression tables that accompany this policy, showing how learning develops from Early Years through to Year 6.

Subject leaders have determined a clear, coherent and effective RE progression map which builds from the Early Years right through to the end of Year 6. This takes into account the 'big ideas/threads' as well as key knowledge, vocabulary and skills. The whole school progression map enables teachers to:

- Build upon prior learning
- Signpost to future learning
- Deepen children's ability to connect learning over time
- Help pupils see that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts

Content and Coverage

To ensure high-quality and consistent RE provision for all pupils within DSAT schools, trustees have agreed to follow the Dorset Agreed Syllabus. This syllabus for RE follows an enquiry approach to learning.

To fulfil the requirements of this syllabus, we use units from the 'Understanding Christianity' project, along with units from 'The Emmanuel Project' as the basis for planning. These are identified as approved published vehicles for RE curriculum implementation within the Trust (see Appendix 1).

Any published vehicle used must be carefully considered and tailored for use in the context of the individual academy. These resources should not be used as an 'off the shelf' solution. Schools must adapt appropriately to meet the needs of their children.

RE learning makes up 5-10% of our weekly timetable. Christianity covers 50% of our curriculum and World Views 50%, introduced and revisited according to age and stage of learning.
Children acquire and apply knowledge and understanding of how religions and worldviews are global, living and diverse.

Curriculum Implementation

The intent of the curriculum is reflected through its implementation.

Teaching staff use the underpinning knowledge and skills progression documents to plan sequences of lessons that build on prior learning. Elicitation and diagnostic activities are carried out at the start of each new unit of learning to establish children's prior knowledge and understanding as the starting point. Any identified gaps or misconceptions are addressed before embarking on new learning.

Teaching and Learning Approaches

The RE curriculum uses the concepts of: Creation, Intermediary, Salvation, Witness and Worship and Afterlife, to organise and connect the learning throughout long term planning. Within each year group and concept, pupils will have opportunities to compare and contrast world religions and world views. Pupils will cover Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism), Humanism and other non-religious world views.

Wherever possible, pupils are actively engaged in creative, inclusive and curious learning including opportunities to:

- Observe religious artefacts, paintings, books, photos, pictures
- Study sacred texts and stories
- Visit places of worship in a planned and structured way
- Meet and talk to believers of various faiths in planned contexts
- Reflecting personally on values, identity, and belonging

Lesson Design

As a Trust we use a mastery approach to lesson design across the curriculum, including RE. This ensures a small step approach where children are guided through their learning to support metacognition and reflection, and depth of understanding.

Use of High-Quality Resources

The use of high-quality resources is a fundamental part of the learning process. As a Trust we support the use of a range of published curriculum vehicles (see Appendix 1) though none of these should be used as an 'off the shelf' solution. Schools must tailor and adapt appropriately to meet the needs of the children.

Inclusion, Respect and Equity

Through all aspects of learning, RE enables pupils to:

- Listen and engage respectfully with people of all faiths and worldviews
- Develop empathy, understanding, and moral reasoning
- Reflect on questions of meaning, purpose, and justice
- Appreciate diversity as a strength of community life

All children take part in every aspect of RE. Our curriculum ensures that all beliefs and identities are valued, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual understanding. Through enquiry, dialogue, and reflection, pupils learn to challenge prejudice, recognise inequality, and contribute to a fair and just society.

The curriculum is never scaled back for any learner. Instead, scaffolding, pre-teaching, and vocabulary support enable access for all, ensuring every pupil can achieve success and deepen understanding.

For children who readily master the age-appropriate learning, they are enabled to utilise their subject-specific knowledge and skills through **deeper application** rather than moving on to new content.

Expectations and Progression

By the end of the Foundation Stage

Most children will have had opportunities to:

- Find out and learn about the world they live in
- Learn about the beliefs and cultures of others
- Share in the celebration of different festivals
- Hear stories from a variety of cultural and religious traditions

By the end of Key Stage 1

Most children will be able to:

- Recall and name different beliefs and practices, including festivals, worship, rituals and ways of life, in order to find out about the meanings behind them.
- Retell and suggest meanings to some religious and moral stories, exploring and discussing sacred writings and sources of wisdom and recognising the traditions from which they come.
- Recognise some different symbols and actions which express a community's way of life, appreciating some similarities between communities.
- Ask and respond to questions about what individuals and communities do, and why, so that pupils can identify what difference belonging to a community might make.
- Observe and recount different ways of expressing identity and belonging, responding sensitively for themselves.
- Notice and respond sensitively to some similarities between different religions and worldviews.
- Explore questions about belonging, meaning and truth so that they can express their own ideas and opinions in response using words, music, art or poetry.
- Find out about and respond with ideas to examples of cooperation between people who are different.
- Find out about questions of right and wrong and begin to express their ideas and opinions in response.

By the end of Key Stage 2

Most children will be able to:

- Describe and make connections between different features of the religions and worldviews they study, discovering more about celebrations, worship, pilgrimages and the rituals which mark important points in life, in order to reflect on their significance.
- Describe and understand links between stories and other aspects of the communities they are investigating, responding thoughtfully to a range of sources of wisdom and to beliefs and teachings that arise from them in different communities.
- Explore and describe a range of beliefs, symbols and actions so that they can understand different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.
- Observe and understand varied examples of religions and worldviews so that they can explain, with reasons, their meanings and significance to individuals and communities.
- Understand the challenges of commitment to a community of faith or belief, suggesting why belonging to a community may be valuable, both in the diverse communities being studied and in their own lives.
- Observe and consider different dimensions of religion, so that they can explore and show understanding of similarities and differences within and between different religions and worldviews.
- Discuss and present thoughtfully their own and others' views on challenging questions about belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, applying ideas of their own in different forms including reasoning, music, art and poetry.

- Consider and apply ideas about ways in which diverse communities can live together for the well-being of all, responding thoughtfully to ideas about community, values and respect.
- Discuss and apply their own and others' ideas about ethical questions, including ideas about what is right and wrong and what is just and fair, and express their own ideas clearly in response.

Features of Progression

As they move through our schools, children progress:

From	To
Using everyday language	More fluent, precise and competent use of religious vocabulary, language and terminology
Personal knowledge of a few areas of RE	A deeper understanding of the meaning of stories, symbols, events and practices and the links between the wider areas of RE
Unstructured exploration	More systematic investigation of questions
Identifying what is of value and concern to themselves and others	Increased levels in skills of asking and responding to questions of identity, meaning, purpose, values and commitment enabling children to suggest answers to moral and religious questions

Assessment

Assessment is an ongoing process and is borne out of information-rich classrooms, where the teacher pays careful attention to pupil talk and recorded evidence. Gaps in vocabulary or knowledge are quickly identified and rectified. Any arising misconceptions are planned for in subsequent learning experiences.

Feedback is a key tool, as children are supported in accurate learning and knowing what they know (metacognition). Assessment, ultimately, enables precision in knowing both the security of learning and next steps.

Assessment in RE focuses on three key areas:

1. Knowing about and understanding religions and worldviews

- Recall, name and talk about materials in RE
- Retell stories, suggesting meanings for sources of wisdom, festivals, worship
- Describe religions and worldviews, connecting ideas
- Understand ideas and practices, linking different viewpoints
- Explain the impact of and connections between ideas, practices, viewpoints
- Appreciate and appraise different understandings of religion and worldviews

2. Expressing and communicating ideas related to religions and worldviews

- Observe, notice and recognise materials in RE
- Ask questions and give opinions about religions, beliefs and ideas
- Give thoughtful responses using different forms of expression in RE
- Express and apply ideas thoughtfully in RE
- Explain diverse ideas and viewpoints clearly in various forms

- Express insights into questions, giving coherent accounts of beliefs and ideas

3. Gaining and deploying the skills for studying religions and worldviews

- Notice and find out about religions and worldviews
- Collect, use and respond to ideas in RE
- Consider and discuss questions, ideas and points of view
- Apply ideas about religions and worldviews thoughtfully
- Investigate and explain why religions and worldviews matter
- Enquire into and interpret ideas, sources and arguments

Impact of the RE Curriculum

An effective RE curriculum will impact widely on the outcomes achieved by children.

- Builds pupils' knowledge, skills, and cultural capital
- Fosters curiosity, critical thinking, and deep respect for difference
- Equips children to live with integrity, compassion, and understanding in a plural society
- Promotes inclusion, equality, and justice — the foundations of a fair and flourishing community.

Schools provide opportunities for overlearning, retrieval and assessment to ensure that knowledge and concepts have been understood and retained. The focus on vocabulary and language acquisition ensures that all children, including learners experiencing disadvantage, have equal access to learning and build learning security commensurate with their peers.

The Role of the RE Subject Leader

RE subject leaders are supported in developing their skill set to be able to articulate the intent, implementation and impact for RE. Key to their role is the necessity to be involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning so that they can check the implementation matches the intent and is having the desired impact on outcomes for children.

RE subject leaders must be given opportunities for professional learning to support them in developing others.

Collaboration is a strength of our Trust. Schools readily share the work they are doing with each other and support one another on the improvement journey. It is an expectation that schools will share their expertise, skills and resources for the benefit of all in the Trust.

Where schools are working to develop their RE curriculum, they must reach out to others in the Trust to seek support so that they can benefit from work that has already been completed by others.

Withdrawal from RE

We acknowledge the right of parents/guardians to withdraw their children from RE lessons and of teachers to withdraw from teaching the subject. Parents/guardians/teachers do not need to provide a reason for withdrawal.

Should a parent/guardian request withdrawal, we will communicate clearly the place of RE within a broad and balanced curriculum to ensure they are in possession of all necessary information before confirming their decision. However, we will not attempt to persuade them to alter their decision.

Any queries regarding withdrawal from RE should be directed to the Headteacher.