Religious Education Policy

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RE Policy Statement

Religious Education is unique in the academy 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'

Aims

The broad aims of religious education are set out within the local agreed syllabus and the National Society Statement of Entitlement. The primary aim of religious education is to promote religious literacy.

At Henlow Church of England Academy, we aim for Religious Education to enable pupils to: -

- encounter Christianity as the religion that shaped British culture and heritage and influences the lives of millions of people today;
- learn about the other major religions, their impact on culture and politics, art and history and on the lives of their adherents;
- develop an understanding of religious faith as a search for and expression of truth;
- provoke challenging questions about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs, the self, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human;
- explore their own beliefs (whether they are religious or non-religious) in the light of what they learn, developing their own spiritual/philosophical convictions and enriching their own beliefs;
- examine moral and ethical issues relating to religious belief and faith and how these impact on personal, institutional and social ethics; building resilience to anti-democratic or extremist narratives;
- develop their sense of identity and belonging, which helps them flourish within their communities and as citizens in a diverse society;
- develop respect for others, including people with different faiths and beliefs, helping to challenge prejudice;
- consider their responsibilities to themselves and to others, and to explore how they might contribute to their communities and to wider society.

Curriculum aims

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'.

Learning about and from religions and beliefs, through the distinct knowledge, understanding and skills contained in RE within a broad-based curriculum, is essential to achieving these aims. Exploring the concepts of religion and belief and their roles in the spiritual, moral and cultural lives of people in a diverse society helps individuals develop moral awareness and social understanding.

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 become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. 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.

Community Cohesion

RE makes an important contribution to an academy's duty to promote community cohesion. It provides a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism and discrimination. Effective RE will promote community cohesion at each of the four levels outlined in DCSF guidance.

The academy community – RE provides a positive context within which the diversity of cultures, beliefs and values can be celebrated and explored.

The community within which the academy is located – RE provides opportunities to investigate patterns of diversity of religion and belief and forge links with different groups in the local area.

The UK community – a major focus of RE is the study of diversity of religion and belief in the UK and how this influences national life.

The global community – RE involves the study of matters of global significance, recognising the diversity of religion and belief and its impact on world issues.

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 academy ethos that champions democratic values and human rights.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The RE coordinator will monitor RE provision and standards within the academy through observation, looking at work, talking to children and reviewing the curriculum with staff.

The RE coordinator is responsible for contributing to the academy's self-evaluation process.

The governing body monitors the role of religious education and its contribution to the Christian ethos of the academy.

Responsibilities for RE within the academy (Headteacher and Governors)

As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, the governing body and the Headteacher should also make sure that:

- all pupils make progress in achieving the learning objectives of the RE curriculum;

- the subject is well led and effectively managed and that standards and achievement in RE and the quality of the provision are subject to regular and effective self-evaluation;
- those teaching RE are suitably qualified and trained in the subject and have regular and effective opportunities for CPD;
- teachers are aware of RE's contribution in developing pupils' understanding of religion and belief and its impact as part of the duty to promote community cohesion;
- teachers explore how new pedagogies and technology can be fully utilised to support RE learning objectives and promote community cohesion;
- clear information is provided for parents on the RE curriculum and the right to withdraw;
- teachers are aware that they do not have to teach RE unless specifically appointed to do so;
- RE is resourced, staffed and timetabled so that the academy can fulfil its legal obligations on RE and pupils can make good progress;
- where there are insufficient teachers in an academy who are prepared to teach RE, the Headteacher ensures that pupils receive their entitlement to RE. In these circumstances, head teachers might wish to seek advice from the Diocese.

The Right of Withdrawal From RE

At Henlow Church of England Academy, 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 citizenship.

We would ask any parent considering this to contact the Headteacher to discuss any concerns or anxieties about the policy, provision and practice of religious education at Henlow Church of England Academy.

Managing the right of withdrawal

• The academy will ensure that parents who want to withdraw their children from RE are aware of the RE syllabus and that it is relevant to all pupils and respects their own personal beliefs.

• Parents should be made aware of its learning objectives and what is covered in the RE curriculum and should be given the opportunity to discuss this, if they wish.

• The academy may also wish to review such a request each year, in discussion with the parents.

• The use of the right to withdraw should be at the instigation of parents, and it should be made clear whether it is from the whole of the subject or specific parts of it. No reasons need be given.

• Parents have the right to choose whether or not to withdraw their child from RE without influence from the academy, although an academy should ensure that

parents or carers are informed of this right and are aware of the educational objectives and content of the RE syllabus. In this way, parents can make an informed decision.

• Where parents have requested that their child is withdrawn, their right must be respected, and where RE is integrated in the curriculum, the academy will need to discuss the arrangements with the parents or carers to explore how the child's withdrawal can be best accommodated.

• If pupils are withdrawn from RE, academies have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost. Pupils will usually remain on academy premises.

• Where a pupil has been withdrawn, the law provides for alternative arrangements to be made for RE of the kind the parent wants the pupil to receive. This RE could be provided at the academy in question, or the pupil could be sent to another academy where suitable RE is provided if this is reasonably convenient.

• If neither approach is practicable, outside arrangements can be made to provide the pupil with the kind of RE that the parent wants, and the pupil may be withdrawn from academy for a reasonable period of time to allow them to attend this external RE.

Outside arrangements for RE are allowed as long as the LA is satisfied that any interference with the pupil's attendance at academy resulting from the withdrawal will affect only the start or end of an academy session.

Role of the RE Leader/Coordinator

- To keep the RE policy under regular review.
- To have oversight of the RE curriculum and keep up to date with local and national changes.
- To monitor, review and update resources.
- To monitor pupil progress and achievement.
- To maintain and build priorities set by the academy.
- To contribute to the academy's self-evaluation.
- To develop links with the Church and Diocese.
- To coach, mentor and support teachers in developing their strengths in teaching RE, including planning, arranging and delivering CPD as appropriate.
- To liaise with parents to ensure full participation in the programme.

Entitlement and Inclusion - EAL, SEN, More Able

All children are entitled to access a broad and balanced curriculum at an appropriate level. Teachers should include a range of teaching styles and groupings to allow all children to make progress. Every child should be given the opportunity to

develop their skills independently and in groups, enhancing their own confidence and self–esteem.

Resources

There is a wide range of resources to support the teaching of RE across the academy. We keep most of our resources in a dedicated room there are also suitable books to support teaching in the library.

Parental and Community Involvement

Parents are encouraged to involve themselves in RE within the academy. Parents are invited to assist with trips and visits, and a report on their child's progress is given out to parents termly. The community is encouraged to support the teaching of RE through e.g. the children visit the churches to learn about concepts such as salvation and God as well as visit our local church, St Mary's for collective worship

Professional Development

Whole staff and individual training needs will be identified through the Academy's self-evaluation process and staff appraisal. At Henlow Academy the aspiration is for the school to achieve the RE Quality Mark and professional development supports this aim.

Dissemination of the Policy

This policy is available on the school website, on request to parents and carers, the Local Authority and Ofsted through the Headteacher.

Other policies and guidance documents that are relevant:

Monitoring & Review of Policy

The implementation and impact of the policy will be evaluated through the Academy's self- evaluation processes. The policy will be reviewed every three years.

Links to Other Policies

- Teaching & Learning Policy
- Collective Worship
- Curriculum Policy