



St. Joseph's Catholic School

Religious Education Policy

**At St. Joseph's we live,
love and learn
by the example of Jesus**

1 Aims and objectives

Religious education enables children to investigate and reflect on some of the most fundamental questions asked by people. At our School we develop the children's knowledge and understanding of the children's own faith and the major world faiths, and we address the fundamental questions in life, for example, the meaning of life and the existence of a divine spirit. We enable children to develop a sound knowledge not only of Christianity but also of other world religions, especially those that are the main faiths of children within our school. Children reflect on what it means to have a faith and to develop their own spiritual knowledge and understanding. We help the children learn *from* religions as well as *about* religions.

The aims of religious education are to help children:

- develop an awareness of spiritual and moral issues in life experiences;
- develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world religions and value systems found in Britain;
- 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;
- develop an understanding of religious traditions and to appreciate the cultural differences in Britain today;
- develop investigative and research skills and to enable them to make reasoned judgements about religious issues;
- have respect for other peoples' views and to celebrate the diversity in society.

2 The legal position of religious education

Our school curriculum for religious education meets the requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). The ERA stipulates that religious education is compulsory for all children, including those in the reception class who are less than five years old. The ERA allows parents to withdraw

their child from religious education classes if they so wish, although this should only be done once the parents 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. Our school RE curriculum is based on the Westminster Diocese Syllabus and it meets all the requirements set out in that document. The ERA states that the RE syllabus should reflect the fact that the 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.

3 Teaching and learning style

We base our teaching and learning styles in RE on the key principle that good teaching in RE allows children both to learn about religious traditions and to reflect on what the religious ideas and concepts mean to them. Our teaching enables children to extend their own sense of values and promotes their spiritual growth and development. We encourage children to think about their own views and values in relation to the themes and topics studied in the RE curriculum.

Our teaching and learning styles in RE enable children to build on their own experiences and extend their knowledge and understanding of religious traditions. We use their experiences at Christian religious festivals, celebrations and Masses such as Easter, Advent, All Saints etc. to develop their religious thinking. We organize visits to local places of worship and invite representatives of local religious groups to come into school and talk to the children.

Children carry out research into religious topics. They study particular religious faiths and also compare the religious views of different faith groups on topics such as rites of passage or festivals. Children discuss religious and moral issues using computers and working individually or in groups. Sometimes they prepare presentations and share these with other members of the school in assemblies.

We recognise the fact that all classes in our school have children of widely differing abilities, and so we provide suitable learning opportunities for all children by matching the challenge of the task to the ability of the child. We achieve this in a variety of ways, for example, by:

- setting common tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses;
- using a variety of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning styles,

- setting tasks of increasing difficulty (we do not expect all children to complete all tasks);
- providing resources of different complexity, adapted to the ability of the child;
- using classroom assistants to support the work of individuals or groups of children.

4 Curriculum planning in religious education

We plan our religious education curriculum in accordance with the Westminster Diocese Agreed Syllabus. The "Here I Am" RE scheme has been used for the majority of religious education lessons. This scheme is approved and recommended by Westminster Diocese and staff have received the training necessary to plan and teach lessons and assess work using this scheme. The topics studied in religious education build upon prior learning. We offer opportunities for children of all abilities to develop their skills and knowledge in each unit, and we ensure that the planned progression built into the scheme of work offers the children an increasing challenge as they move through the school.

We carry out the curriculum planning in religious education in three phases (long-term, medium-term and short-term). The long-term plan maps the religious education topics studied in each term during each key stage. The "Here I Am" scheme of work is used for long-term planning.

We teach religious education topics in conjunction with other subjects. We place an increasing emphasis on independent study of religious themes and topics.

Our medium-term plans give details of the three "Here I Am" units of work for each term. Each topic lasts approximately four weeks and two world faiths are also studied for two weeks of the year. The "Here I Am" medium-term planning sheets are used to show the teaching and learning for each topic and are also annotated to show religious teaching on specific feasts and seasons. The RE subject leader keeps examples of the plans and reviews them on a regular basis.

The class teacher writes the plans for each lesson and lists the specific learning objectives for that lesson. She keeps these individual plans and often discusses them on an informal basis with the RE subject leader.

5 Contribution of religious education to the teaching of other subjects

English

Religious education contributes significantly to the teaching of English in our school by actively promoting the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Some of the texts that we use in the Literacy Hour have religious

themes or content, which encourages discussion, and this is our way of promoting the skills of speaking and listening. We also encourage the children to write letters and record information in order to develop their writing ability.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

We use ICT where appropriate in religious education. The children find, select and analyse information, using the internet and CD ROMs. They also use ICT to review, modify and evaluate their work and to improve its presentation. We have an interactive whiteboard in every classroom which is used (where appropriate) as part of the RE lesson.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship

Through our religious education lessons, we teach the children about the values and moral beliefs that underpin individual choices of behaviour. So, for example, we contribute to the discussion of topics such as smoking, drugs and health education. 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 other people, we enable children to appreciate what it means to be positive members of our pluralistic society.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Through teaching religious education in our school, we provide opportunities for 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 Teaching religious education to children with special needs

In our school we teach RE to all children, whatever their ability. The teaching of RE is a vital part of our school curriculum policy, which states that we provide a broad and balanced education for all our children. When teaching RE we ensure that we provide learning opportunities matched to the needs of children with learning difficulties. We take into account the targets set for individual children in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

7 Assessment and recording

We assess children's work in religious education by making informal judgements as we observe them during lessons. We mark a piece of work once it has been completed and we comment as necessary. This formative

assessment is used to influence and review planning as a topic is still being taught. At the end of each topic in the "Here I Am" Scheme each child completes an unaided written assessment piece which is in turn levelled by the teacher. On completion of a unit of work, we make a summary judgement about the work of each pupil in relation to the national curriculum levels of attainment. We record the attainment grades in our mark books, which we use as a basis for assessing the progress of each child, for setting new goals, and for passing information on to the next teacher at the end of the year. The assessment activities at the end of each "Here I Am" topic are also used as a method of summative assessment.

The RE subject leader keeps samples of children's work in a portfolio. This demonstrates what the expected level of achievement is in RE in each year of the school.

8 Resources

The "Here I Am" Teacher's Files and Planning disc have been used for teaching and learning. We have sufficient resources in our school to be able to teach all our religious education teaching units and other Liturgical feasts and seasons. We keep the majority of resources for religious education in the resource room. These include candles, drapes and artefacts to be used at different times in the Liturgical year. Resources for class and school Masses are also stored in this location.

The Subject Leader has organised an additional resource area with relevant books, posters, videos etc. that can be used to enhance lessons and displays. There is a set of bibles for each year group and a collection of religious artefacts that we use to enrich teaching in religious education. A set of Jewish and Sikh artefacts and other major world faith resource books are also available for studying different faiths.

The school library has a reasonable supply of RE topic and other world faith books, these were updated with new stock in 2005 and 2006. Computer software is also available to support the children's individual research and each classroom has an interactive whiteboards. An additional interactive whiteboard is located in the hall and is used (where appropriate) as part of Religious celebrations such as Masses and assemblies, and hymn practice.

9 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 the teaching of religious education, advising on Assemblies, Collective Act of Worship and Liturgies and organising resources needed for teaching different topics and displays.

The subject leader is also responsible for being informed about current developments in the subject, and for providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school. *The RE subject leader presents the headteacher with an annual report which evaluates the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and indicates areas for further improvement. She has specially-allocated time for carrying out the vital task of reviewing samples of the children's work and visiting classes to observe teaching in the subject.

The RE-link governor Fr. John meets with the subject leader to review progress in the subject.

*The head teacher is the Religious education subject leader at present in the school

Signed:

Date: