



Whitburn Church of England Academy

Religious Education Policy

Preface - Vision and values

The Academy Vision and Values can be found here:

<https://www.whitburncofeacademy.org/about-us/academy-ethos.html>

This policy and its associated procedures are based on these key principles and values.

Introduction

This policy document is intended to outline how the RE department at Whitburn Church of England Academy will put the Diocesan Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education into practice. It seeks not only to give a rationale for development, but also to give clear and detailed guidelines for effective implementation of RE for all students.

The Head of RE and all members of the department have the responsibility to implement the policies enshrined here to the best of their ability.

Whitburn C of E Academy's Context

The syllabus that we follow is set within the context of the Church of England Vision for Education: *Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good*, July 2016. It is a vision that:

‘...embraces the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development of children and young people. We offer a vision of human flourishing for all, one that embraces excellence and academic rigour, but sets them in a wider framework. This is worked out theologically and educationally through four basic elements which permeate our vision for education:

- Wisdom
- Hope
- Community
- Dignity

...The vision is for the common good of the whole human community and its environment, whether national, regional or local. It is hospitable to diversity, respects freedom of religion and belief, and encourages others to contribute from the depths of their own traditions and understandings.’

Aims and Intent of Religious Education in Whitburn C of E Academy

The principal aim of RE is to enable students to hold balanced and informed conversations about religion and belief. RE at Whitburn C of E Academy is central to our deeply Christian character. It is a key way in which the school works towards ‘life in all its fullness’ through growth in body mind and spirit. We study religion within a Christian context, reflecting the Anglican tradition of our school. We aim for the highest standards of excellence. We provide a safe space for each unique individual to explore their beliefs, whatever those beliefs might be.

This principal aim incorporates the following aims and intent of Religious Education in Whitburn Church of England Academy:

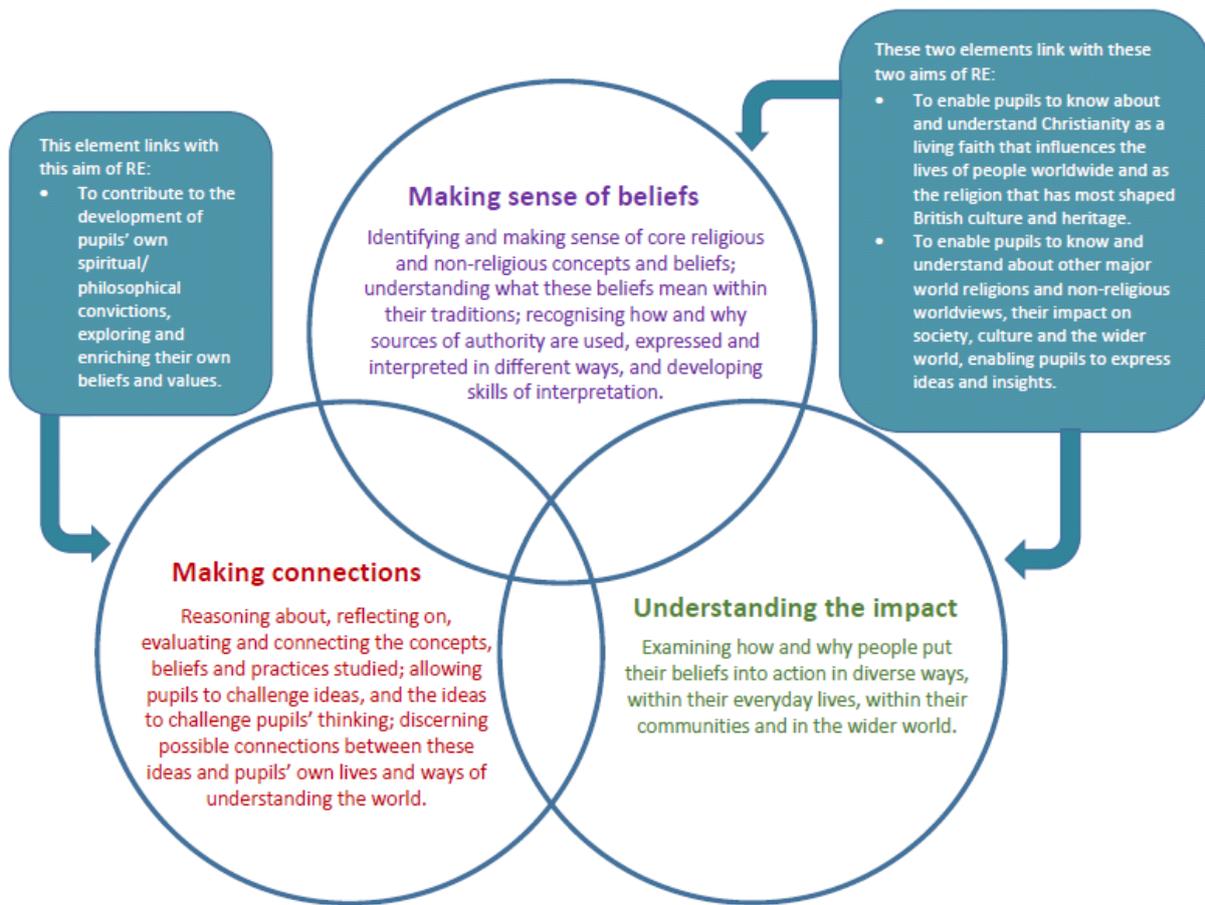
- To know about and understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith through the exploration of core beliefs using an approach that critically engages with biblical text
- To gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews appreciating diversity, continuity and change within the religions and worldviews being studied.
- To engage with challenging questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence and experience.
- To recognise the concept of religion and its continuing influence on Britain’s cultural heritage and in the lives of individuals and societies in different times, cultures and places.
- To explore their own religious, spiritual and philosophical ways living, believing and thinking.

The expectation is that all students will be religiously literate, as appropriate to their age, and will be able to:

- Give a theologically informed and thoughtful account of Christianity as a living and diverse faith.
- Show an informed and respectful attitude to religions and non-religious worldviews in their search for God and meaning.
- Engage in meaningful and informed dialogue with those of other faiths and none.
- Reflect critically and responsibly on their own spiritual, philosophical and ethical convictions.

Implementation - Teaching and Learning Model in Religious Education

Teaching and Learning in the classroom will encompass all three elements below, as outlined in the Diocesan Syllabus for Religious Education, allowing for overlap between elements as suits the religion, concept and questions being explored.



Religions and worldviews will be studied through the following three approaches:

1. The phenomenological approach or explicit approach – the idea that RE is about studying religions. **Theology**
2. The implicit approach – the importance of students' own experiences and making RE relevant to them. **Philosophy**
3. The moral approach – RE is valuable if it helps students develop their own ideas, beliefs and values. **Social Sciences**

Taken together, the aims and teaching and learning model give a broad picture of what RE is all about, in the educational context of the school.

We aim to provide students with a mature understanding of the Christian faith alongside promoting love and understanding for people of other faiths. Young people gain understanding of Christian values through their study of RE. Their studies help them to understand why values such as love, forgiveness, compassion and justice are important and help them to understand Christian theological teaching about these values. We hope that students will also be presented with challenges to some of the values that are current in modern materialistic society.

Unit Overview for KS3 and KS4

As a Church of England academy, in accordance with our funding agreement, our vision and curriculum fulfil the Statement of Entitlement for RE issued by the Church of England Education Office (2019).

Year 7	Introduction to the Big Story of the Bible.
	UC 3.1 What does it mean for Christians to believe in God as Trinity?
	UC 3.6 Why do Christians believe Jesus was God on earth?
	3.13 What is good and what is challenging about being a Jewish teenager in the UK today?
	3.14 How are Sikh teachings on equality and service put into practice today?
	UC 3.18 Why is there suffering? Are there any good solutions?
	UC 3.7 What is so radical about Jesus?
Year 8	3.12 What is good and what is challenging about being a Muslim teenager in Britain today?
	UC 3.4 Does the world need prophets today?
	UC 3.8 Saving the world: What kinds of salvation do Christians believe in?
	UC 3.9 What do Christians believe about God’s Heavenly Kingdom and life after death?
	3.17 How far does it make a difference if you believe in life after death?
	3.16 Good, bad; right, wrong: how do I decide?
	UC 3.15 What do people do when life gets hard?
Year 9	Religion, peace and conflict.
	Religion, crime and punishment.
	Religion and life.
	Religion, human rights and social justice.
Year 10	Relationships and families.
	Christianity beliefs.
	Christianity practices.
Year 11	Islam beliefs.
	Islam practices.

Departmental Organisation and Management

Organisation

The department is staffed with three full time specialist teachers and two non-specialist (Humanities) teachers:

- Head of Religious Education
- Collective Worship Coordinator
- Specialist Teacher of Religious Education
- Two non-specialist teachers of Religious Education/Sociology/Psychology/History – all with BA (Hons) PGCE

Accommodation

The department has three fully equipped permanent Religious Education bases in the school.

Absences

The department deals with staff absence by asking staff to set work for predictable absences and where possible sending in or suggesting work when ill. If this is impossible, the Head of Subject will attend to the class setting appropriate work using textbooks and worksheets.

Students who are absent will be expected to catch up on missed work where possible by completing the task set or if this is impossible due to large teacher input students will copy up the work. Head of Learning requests set work for lengthy absences the student will be set work by the teacher responsible for that group so that tasks are completed simultaneously with others in the group.

Agendas and minutes of departmental meetings

Departmental meetings are held regularly. Action points are recorded and circulated via the S drive.

Awards and sanctions

The department will operate the rewards and sanctions programmes identified in school policy. Members of staff will reward on the basis of their professional expertise, using positive points. As a matter of course, examples of good work will be shared with the whole department. School policies are followed with regard to sanctions and individual teachers may use detentions, contact with home as appropriate.

Groups

Students are taught in streamed groups in Years 7 and 8. In Years 9, Years 10 and 11, students are taught in sets determined by English ability.

Monitoring of student attendance

Teachers will take a class register every lesson to monitor student attendance.

Homework

Is set in line with school policy.

Primary/secondary liaison

The Diocesan RE Agreed Syllabus dictates continuity and progression between primary and secondary institutions. The department has contributed students to the Diocesan Christingle service and the Year 6 Leavers Service, held annually at Durham Cathedral.

Timetables

Departmental timetables are held by Head of Subject.

Entitlement

At Whitburn Church of England Academy, in support of our Christian distinctiveness, we teach RE to all students whatever their ability and individual needs. RE forms part of our commitment to provide a broad and balanced education for all children. Through our RE teaching we provide learning opportunities that enable all students to make good progress. We strive hard to meet the needs of all students and we take all reasonable steps to achieve this.

Groups to whom entitlement may not apply

The legal requirements concerning withdrawal from RE state that “a parent of a student may request that the student may be wholly or partly excused from receiving Religious Education given in accordance with the school’s basic curriculum” (ERA 1988 s9(3)).

The Diocesan Religious Education Agreed Syllabus also gives guidance for those parents and students who do not wish to take up the RE and Collective Worship entitlement offered by the school. Since parents and carers chose to send their children to this Church of England academy, we hope that they would not wish to withdraw their children from RE. However, there is a policy in place to address this, should the need arise.

Procedures for withdrawal at Whitburn Church of England Academy

The school’s prospectus and website clearly sets out its position in relation to RE and Collective Worship. RE is taught in accordance with the Diocesan Agreed Syllabus and is, therefore, educational. Collective Worship is held in accordance with the school’s trust deed and is Christian Worship. It is however, understood that parents have a right of withdrawal on conscience grounds from either or both of these activities. If parents insist upon withdrawing their children from RE and/or Collective Worship, it is asked that this request is submitted in writing.

The Pastoral Lead will contact the parents who have indicated that they would like to withdraw their child from RE and/or Collective Worship. They will be invited into school to discuss these matters, the Agreed Syllabus and, in particular, the syllabus relating to Whitburn C of E Academy, in an attempt to meet their concerns.

Parents of withdrawn students will then be asked to provide alternative material of a religious nature, which will constitute their child’s RE. Tasks can then be completed during timetabled RE periods and seen by parents. The school will not be required to comment upon the academic performance of these students in RE. As it is impractical for students to be unsupervised in school, withdrawn students may be asked to work in the Pastoral Hub area.

Implementation

The Programme areas of study in the Diocesan RE Agreed Syllabus are covered through appropriate units of work. All programme areas, outcomes and example indicators shown contribute to units of work and as the syllabus progresses, these will be updated to complement classroom strategies and activities.

The teaching groups are organised in Years 7 - 8, on a streamed basis. All students in Year 9 follow the AQA RE Syllabus A, studying Christianity, and Islam to Full course GCSE. In Year 10/11 RE is taught in groups based upon English sets. As of September 2021, students in Years 7 to 8 will study 3 hours per fortnight (6%) and KS4 will study RE for 5% of curriculum time. This provision is in line with diocesan guidelines and the Church of England Education Office Statement of Entitlement 2019. These suggest that RE should occupy a minimum of 5% curriculum time with an aspiration of reaching 10% curriculum time.

Year 12 and 13 A-level Religious Studies students will follow OCR, studying modules on Philosophy of Religion, Ethics and Development of Christian Thought.

All students have the same entitlement to the Diocesan Agreed Syllabus for RE, which allows for a developmental approach, enabling the abilities of all students to be considered. Differentiation in RE is achieved through a variety of means such as outcome by task, using stepped tasks offering progress through the curriculum, by means of response, matching teaching approaches to students' different educational needs and learning styles. Students may also be given additional support with set tasks, by varying the help given. This may include support teaching, using writing frames, artefacts, headings, extension exercises and different resource text.

The school's curriculum must be sensitive to the religious beliefs of students which can affect participation in and delivery of the curriculum. Studies in other areas of the curriculum involving religious material should be conducted with sensitivity towards an appreciation of the religion concerned. Consequently, the department will employ a variety of teaching and learning styles in its delivery of the curriculum, ranging from child centred to teacher centred approaches. Planning is done collaboratively within the department to assist non-specialist staff.

Assessment

Assessment is in line with our Learning policy. We apply the principles of 'assessment for learning' in our planning and teaching in order to ensure that students know what they need to do to make progress and why they have achieved. Following an assessment and some other pieces of work, students will be given dedicated improvement and reflection time (FIT) and will often be asked to improve their work.

Evaluation

All staff and students are continually evaluating their work and performance through external results and internal initiatives/performance management. Revision sessions are provided for students to reinforce their learning and teaching. Mentoring of individual students to improve their performance, enables them to evaluate their learning. Emerging from lockdown restrictions, we are inviting a range of speakers from recognised world faiths to share their views, beliefs and experiences with students.

Resources for Religious Education

Staff enjoy support from advisors and other teachers, both from the diocese and the local authority. Resources include a wide-ranging collection of books, DVDs and videos. We have collected films and music from popular culture through which we aim to make connections between learning in RE and the lives of students. We regularly share multi-media resources and other resources developed by individual members of the department.

Contributions to the Wider Life of Whitburn C of E Academy

RE can make a key educational contribution to students' explorations of British values, and excellent teaching of RE can enable students to learn to think for themselves about them. The subject offers opportunities to build an accurate knowledge-base about religions and beliefs in relation to values. This in turn supports children and young people so that they are able to move beyond attitudes of tolerance towards increasing respect, so that they can celebrate diversity. Values education and moral development are part of a school's holistic mission to contribute to the wellbeing of each student and of all people within our communities.

The RE curriculum focuses learning in some of these areas, but students' moral development is a whole-school issue.

Mutual tolerance

Schools do not accept intolerant attitudes to members of the community; attitudes which reject other people on the basis of race, faith, gender, sexual orientation or age are rightly challenged. A baseline for a fair community is that each person's right to 'be themselves' is to be accepted by all. Tolerance may not be enough: RE can challenge children and young people to be increasingly respectful and to celebrate diversity, but tolerance is a starting point. It is much better than intolerance.

Respectful attitudes

In the RE curriculum, attention focuses on developing mutual respect between those of different faiths and beliefs, promoting an understanding of what a society gains from diversity. Students will learn about diversity in religions and worldviews, and will be challenged to respect others who see the world differently to themselves. Recognition and celebration of human diversity in many forms can flourish where pupils understand different faiths and beliefs, and are challenged to be broad-minded and open-hearted.

Democracy

In RE, pupils learn the significance of each person's ideas and experiences through methods of discussion. In debating the fundamental questions of life, pupils learn to respect a range of perspectives. This contributes to learning about democracy, examining the idea that we all share a responsibility to use our voice and influence for the wellbeing of others.

The rule of law

In RE, pupils examine different examples of codes for human life, including commandments, rules or precepts offered by different religious communities. They learn to appreciate how individuals choose between good and evil, right and wrong, and they learn to apply these ideas to their own communities. They learn that fairness requires that the law applies equally to all, irrespective – for example – of a person's status or wealth. They have the opportunity to examine the idea that the 'rule of law' focuses specifically on the relationship between citizens (or subjects) and the state, and to how far this reflects or runs counter to wider moral codes and precepts.

Individual liberty

In RE, pupils consider questions about identity, belonging and diversity, learning what it means to live a life free from constraints. They study examples of pioneers of human freedom, including those from within different religions, so that they can examine tensions between the value of a stable society and the value of change for human development.

Religious Education Policy		
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