

# St. John's Church of England Infant and Nursery School



## Religious Education Policy

***'Start children off on the way they should go,  
and even when they are old they will not turn from it' Proverbs 22:6***

### Statement of Intent

As a church school everything we do is rooted in our Christian values. At St. John's we teach the children about these core values: Love, respect, honesty, forgiveness, friendship, courage, cooperation, peace, perseverance, trust, patience and understanding.

This is reflected in all our relationships between staff, children, parents, governors and the local community. It is reflected in how we teach, what and how our children learn within and beyond the classroom.

These values are fundamental in the implementation of this policy to ensure that we maintain our distinctive Christian character of which we are proud.

Written by:	Joanne Connew
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Target Audience:	All Stakeholders

*The governing body conducts the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement. St John's CE Nursery and Infant School is committed to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between different groups. These factors were considered in the formation and review of this policy and will be adhered to in its implementation and application across the whole school community.*

## **1. Vision**

Religious Education at St John's supports children's personal development and develops their understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues in today's world. At St John's we recognise every child as a unique individual and through our Religious Education lessons and our distinctive Christian character we empower the children to make informed choices about religions and moral issues. We develop positive attitudes of respect towards other people who hold different beliefs to their own and towards living in a diverse and inclusive society.

## **2. Religious Education Policy Statement**

Religious Education is unique in the curriculum in that it is neither a core subject nor a foundation subject. 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 children'.

As Religious Education is not nationally determined the Local Education Authority must provide an Agreed Syllabus for us to follow. The Agreed Syllabus for Hertfordshire sets out the contribution that Religious Education makes to the education of all children growing up in contemporary British society. It is this Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus which we have used as the basis of our planning and delivery of RE.

## **3. Values and Aims**

The broad aims of Religious Education are set out within the Agreed Syllabus for Hertfordshire and Church of England Education Office Statement of Entitlement. The primary purpose of Religious Education is to promote religious literacy. By this we mean that children are able to hold balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief.

The aims of Religious Education are to enable children of whatever ability and level of development 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;
- Gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews, appreciating diversity, continuity and change within the religions and worldviews studied;
- Engage with challenging questions of meaning and purpose raised by human experience and existence;
- 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;

- Explore their own religious, spiritual and philosophical ways of living, believing and thinking.

In achieving these aims, Religious Education contributes in a significant way to the flourishing of all children, allowing them to live life in all its fullness (John 10:10).

Religious Education plays an important part within the broad and balanced curriculum offered at St. Johns. We believe that Religious Education both supports and strengthens what we aim to do in every aspect of school life and our Values education runs in conjunction with Religious Education teaching. The Religious Education curriculum reflects our caring ethos and the value which we place on the development of the whole child; spiritually, morally, socially, culturally and intellectually.

#### **4. The Curriculum**

Religious Education is an academic subject, delivered in an academic, objective and pluralistic manner.

The curriculum for Religious Education is designed to ensure religious literacy lies at its heart. A multi-disciplinary approach to curriculum design provides a balance between theology, philosophy and the human/social sciences.

- **Theology:** This examines where beliefs come from, how they have changed over time, how they are applied differently in different contexts and how they relate to each other.
- **Philosophy:** This is about finding out how and whether things make sense. It deals with questions of morality and ethics. It takes seriously questions about reality, knowledge and existence.
- **Human/Social Sciences:** This explores the diverse ways in which people practice their beliefs, both now and in the past. It engages with the impact of beliefs on individuals, communities and societies.

In order to ensure that our aims are met and the Programme of Study is covered at each key stage, a sequential long term plan has been designed in order to allow children to become religiously literate through developing, year on year, their knowledge and skills. We use the resource 'Understanding Christianity' to support our teaching of Christianity which is built into our long-term plan.

At St John's children study primarily Christianity, with reference made to other principal religions, beliefs and worldviews. In accordance with the Statement of Entitlement, at least 50% of curriculum time is allocated to the teaching of Christianity and Religious Education forms at least 5% of our school curriculum allocation.

This entitlement is met both through the weekly or blocked teaching of Religious Education, and through additional 'Religious Education' days which focus on an aspect of

the Christian Faith. In line with the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for Hertfordshire, Religious Education is delivered flexibly according to the statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. At Key Stage 1 children spend at least 60 hours over 2 years (approximately 10 hours per term).

The use of the resource Understanding Christianity particularly supports the development of the theological perspective.

## **5. Teaching Religious Education**

In Religious Education we foster a reflective approach to learning by encouraging an open and honest enquiry, awareness of prejudice, a growing self-understanding and respecting the rights of others to hold beliefs different from their own by developing their understanding of Sources of Wisdom and their impact whilst exploring personal and critical responses.

Religious Education lessons at St John's follow an enquiry-based approach with each year group focusing on a different 'big' question every half term based around one of the eight key areas of learning as set out in the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus (see below).

The structure of each unit of work is based around the three principle questions 'What does it mean to me?', 'What does it mean to be you?' and 'What does it mean to be human?'. This is based on the best practice framework in the Agreed Syllabus for Hertfordshire and Understanding Christianity.

This approach enables children to explore aspects of the theological, philosophical and human/social sciences. A range of teaching strategies are used to ensure learning is challenging and relevant including the use of art, music, thinking skills, artefacts and stories.

Where possible we want children 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 lessons should contribute to children's knowledge and understanding and provide opportunities for reflection on eight key areas, identified clearly in our long-term plan:

- Beliefs and Practices – e.g. festivals, people, pilgrimages, worship, rituals, life style choices
- Sources of wisdom – e.g. stories, sacred writing, traditions
- Symbols and actions – e.g. art, music, literature, symbolism, poetry, dance, drama, prayer, silence/stillness
- Prayer, worship and reflection – e.g. prayer, silence/stillness
- Identity and belonging – e.g. families, groups, commitment rules, principles

- ultimate questions – e.g. amazement, sadness, disappointment, joy, awe, in connection with the natural world and life’s journey, ultimate questions of life raised by life experiences
- Human responsibilities and values – e.g. preferences, relationships within family and community, influences on own lives, humanity, looking after the world
- Justice and fairness – e.g. values, ethics, principles, rules, moral dilemma, influences

Religious Education teaching at St Johns’ draws on the following:

- visits and visitors; enabling children to see at first hand religious people, objects, symbols, places, events, stories and explore with people who have faith;
- role play; encouraging children to learn through familiar or unfamiliar settings and ask questions from their own encounters;
- artefacts; being able to explore items which are precious and/or used in religious worship, encouraging respect whilst deepening knowledge;
- parents; by valuing the family backgrounds of the children and making them part of the school community.

The teaching of Religious Education involves some direct teaching as well as whole class, group, paired or individual activities. A range of teaching styles is used including enquiry, exploration, discussion, role play, drama, asking and answering questions, using a range of sources including computing, works of art, artefacts, visits and visitors.

## **6. Entitlement and Inclusion - EAL, SEN, More Able Children**

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 opportunity to develop their skills independently and in groups, enhancing their own confidence and self-esteem.

## **7. Assessment**

The Agreed Syllabus for Hertfordshire sets out the end of key stage learning outcomes and provide a structure for children’s development in becoming religiously and theologically literate. The school use its own assessment system for tracking and assessing progress in Religious Education.

- In the Early Years Foundation stage children are assessed as part of the key area Understanding of the World in line with school assessments procedures.
- In KS1 children are assessed using layered outcomes.

These assessments are done in a variety of ways e.g. through written activities, role play, art work, discussion, child initiated learning, adult directed activities and through

observations. In KS1, at the end of each unit of work (half termly) the children carry out a reflection task based on the learning in that unit of work which forms an integral part of the assessment of the children's learning.

Assessment is regarded as an integral part of teaching and learning and is a continuous process. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to assess all children in their class. We assess the children in order to ensure that they make good progress in this subject and to plan future work.

Each year group produces an A3 learning journey for each unit of work which shows the 'journey' of that unit. This 'learning journey' is completed and shared with the children during their Religious Education lessons to recap and embed previous learning as well as moving learning forward. The 'learning journey' includes the overarching enquiry question for that unit and key questions for each lesson. In addition, it includes photographs, images, key vocabulary and quotes from the children.

In addition, children in Key Stage 1 are encouraged to use self-assessment to evaluate their own knowledge and understanding using a traffic light system. A comment about their progress is made in the annual report to parents.

## **8. The contribution of Religious Education to other curriculum aims**

### *a) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development*

Section 78 (1) of the 2002 Education Act states that all children should follow a balanced and broadly based curriculum which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, mental and physical development of children and of society, and prepares children for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life'. Examining and exploring religions and beliefs, through the distinct knowledge, understanding and skills contained in Religious Education, 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.

### *b) Personal development and well-being*

Religious Education plays an important role in preparing children 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.

### *c) Community cohesion*

Religious Education makes an important contribution promoting community cohesion. It provides a key context to develop children's understanding and appreciation of

diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism and discrimination. Effective religious education will promote community cohesion at each of these four levels.

d) *The school community*

Religious Education provides a positive context within which the diversity of cultures, beliefs and values can be celebrated and explored.

e) *The community within which the school is located*

Religious Education provides opportunities to investigate patterns of diversity of religion and belief and forge links with different groups in the local area.

f) *The UK community*

A major focus of religious education is the study of diversity of religion and belief in the UK and how this influences national life.

g) *The global community*

Religious Education involves the study of matters of global significance recognising the diversity of religion and belief and its impact on world issues.

Religious Education 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.

## **9. Management and Evaluation**

The Religious Education leader manages this area of the curriculum in line with our job description for subject leaders. This includes monitoring the provision and standards within the school:

- To ensure that the Religious Education policy is implemented and to keep up to date with reviews;
- To have oversight of the Religious Education curriculum and keep up to date with local and national changes;
- To monitor, review and update resources;
- To monitor child progress and achievement;
- To maintain and build priorities set by the school;
- To develop links with the Church and Diocese;
- To coach, mentor and support teachers in developing their strengths in teaching Religious Education, including planning, arranging and delivering CPD as appropriate;
- To liaise with parents to ensure all children receive their entitlement.

There is a regular focus on Religious Education, led by the subject leader; where areas for development are discussed. Whole staff and individual training needs are identified through the school's self-evaluation process and staff appraisal.

## **10. Responsibilities for Religious Education at St John's (Executive Head, Head of School, Governors and Trustees)**

As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, the Governing Board, Executive Head and the Head of School should also make sure that:

- All children progress in achieving the learning objectives of the Religious Education curriculum.
- The subject is well led and effectively managed and that standards and achievement in Religious Education and the quality of the provision are subject to regular and effective self-evaluation.
- Those teaching Religious Education are suitably qualified and trained in the subject and have regular and effective opportunities for CPD.
- Teachers are aware of Religious Education's contribution in developing children's 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 Religious Education curriculum and the right to withdraw.
- Religious Education is resourced, staffed and timetabled so that the school can fulfil its legal obligations on Religious Education and children can make good progress.
- Children receive their entitlement to Religious Education, suitable provision being made to ensure they do not miss out in the event of a teacher withdrawing from teaching Religious Education.

## **11. The Right of Withdrawal From Religious Education**

St John's seeks to be an inclusive community. We recognise that parents have the legal right to withdraw their children from Religious Education on the grounds of conscience but aim to provide worship that means they do not feel the need to exercise this right.

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 children or there are issues related to religion that arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship.

Parents considering withdrawing their child should contact the Head of School to discuss any concerns or anxieties.

## **12. Resources**

In addition to the Understanding Christianity resource, we are developing a wide range of resources to support the curriculum. These include books, artefacts and toys to support learning.

## **13. Parental and Community Involvement**

Parents are encouraged to involve themselves in Religious Education. They are invited to assist with trips and visits or to give talks to the school about their religious experiences. The community is encouraged to support the teaching of Religious Education through hosting visits to local religious buildings.

## **14. Professional Development**

Whole staff and individual training needs are identified through the school's self-evaluation process and staff appraisal. At St John's the aspiration is for the school to achieve recognition for high quality Religious Education; professional development supports this aim.

*This Policy should be read in conjunction with:*

- *Collective Worship Policy*
- *Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education Policy*