



# Religious Education

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## **Introduction**

At Tees Valley Education Trust, all curriculum policies are developed in close communication with academy and trust stakeholders and support the overall trust policies. All policies are shared between academies to ensure cohesion and continuity while allowing each individual academy to personalise these in order to best support the unique learning journey of their pupils.

The following policy has been written to support the ethos, vision and values of both Discovery Special Academy and Tees Valley Education Trust. As a special school, the policy reflects the unique character of the academy and needs of the pupils while continuing to uphold the overall identity of the Trust.

Religious Education is taught as part of a cross-curricular approach and expectations are clearly planned into half termly curriculum overviews. Evidence is recorded in class learning journeys as well as displayed throughout the academy. Through this, we aim to promote the spiritual, moral, and cultural development of all pupils.

Religious Education is a compulsory subject and forms part of the national curriculum. The RE syllabus used at Discovery follows the Middlesbrough Agreed Syllabus for Key Stage One and Key Stage Two, created by SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education).

<https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/schools-and-education/find-education-service/middlesbrough-sacre>

Parents do have the right to withdraw their child from RE. Where parents are wishing to exercise this right, the academy would first suggest that the parents meet with the Executive Headteacher to discuss their concerns. If the matter cannot be resolved, parents need to apply in writing to withdraw their child from RE lessons. The headteacher will make arrangements for pupils to be supervised or engaged in another activity during this time.

RE is taught, as in other curriculum areas, by starting from the pupils' own life experiences and relating these to similar or different experiences of other people in the local community and in the wider national and international community.

Every child is entitled to be taught RE regardless of their age, culture, gender, background or special need or disability. RE develops a balanced view of the multi-cultural society which we live in without compromising the faith, non-faith or cultural background of any pupil.

The teaching of RE is approached sympathetically to all religious beliefs and teachers must remain mindful of the PREVENT and British Values duties throughout their planned approach to teaching RE (Please see the Equality Policy).

## **Aims**

RE is an important part of the academy curriculum and is taught relevant to the child's stage of development and experience. We aim to:

- provide a clearer idea of what religion is about;
- ensure pupils enjoy learning about religion because it is taught in a stimulating and interesting way that arouses their curiosity and develops positive skills and attitudes;
- develop understanding of the importance that it plays in many people's lives emphasising tolerance and respect of others; and
- provide knowledge of how that faith is expressed in their daily lives and routines.

## Objectives

- To support pupils to form their own opinions about religious beliefs and customs so they develop an understanding and tolerance of people who hold a strong faith.
- To allow pupils to develop a sense of awe and wonder about the world around them;
- To teach pupils about religion throughout the world, how it influences the lives of individuals and communities and its effect on the cultural diversity of their own and other societies both presently and in the past;
- To support pupils spiritual, moral social and cultural development by encouraging self-awareness and self-respect.
- To help pupils develop socially and morally by encouraging a positive attitude and valuing the beliefs of others, however different from their own.
- To develop knowledge and understanding of Christian and other major religion in Britain as a whole and in the local community.

## Roles and Responsibilities

The RE Co-ordinator has the following responsibilities:

- To lead the bi-annual review of the RE policy.
- To ensure that resources used are relevant and appropriate to the needs of the pupils.
- To lead on the evaluation of the RE policy and programme.
- To ensure that staff have the necessary skills, confidence, knowledge, and resources in order to deliver effective RE.

Trustees have the following responsibilities:

- To ensure that an up-to-date RE policy is in place and is made available to parents and for inspection.
- To ensure that the RE policy and curriculum are in line with current legislation.
- To ensure that the policy and programme reflect a whole academy approach particularly in relation to consultation.

Teachers have the following responsibilities:

- To ensure that they, or anyone working in their classroom to deliver/support RE, is doing so in line with the academy's RE policy, and other relevant academy policies.
- To contribute to the evaluation of the programme.
- Assessing pupils' progress against the agreed learning outcomes.
- Communicating the year group content with parents via the newsletters.

## Working with Parents/Carers

- We recognise that parents/carers are key partners in our delivery of a comprehensive RE programme for pupils at the academy.
- If parents/carers have concerns about any of the content to be covered, we ask that these are addressed to the headteacher.
- Legally parents have the right to withdraw their children from RE. Any parent wishing to take this course of action should send a letter to the headteacher outlining their concerns. The parent will be asked if they would like to meet to discuss this further. We will do our best to address

any worries that the parent may have. In the event of a parent still choosing to withdraw their child we will provide alternative work on a different topic.

## **The RE curriculum**

### **Provision**

RE should be planned using the Middlesbrough Agreed Syllabus as a content guide. This has two main attainment targets;

#### **1. Learning about religion**

This includes enquiry into, and investigation of the nature of religion, the range of beliefs, teachings and ways of life, sources, practices and forms of expression. It includes the skills of interpretation, analysis and explanation. Through this, the pupils should develop an understanding of ethical issues and an understanding of individual religions and how they relate to each other. Pupils should also develop an understanding of the nature and characteristics of religions.

- knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and teachings;
- knowledge and understanding of religious practices and lifestyles;
- knowledge and understanding of ways of expressing meaning.

#### **2. Learning from religion**

This focuses on developing pupils' reflection on and in response to their own and other's experiences in the light of their learning about religion. Pupils should develop the skills of application, interpretation and evaluation of what they have learned about religions. Pupils should learn to communicate their own ideas, particularly in relation to questions of identity and belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, values and commitments.

- skill of asking and responding to questions of identity and experience;
- skill of responding to questions of meaning and purpose;
- skill of asking and responding to questions of values and attitudes.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Pupils in the Foundation Stage are taught RE through the area of Knowledge and Understanding of The World.

Religious Education is statutory for all pupils of compulsory school age, which is the term following their fifth birthday. Religious Education can form a valuable part of the educational experience of all pupils and although schools are not obliged to provide RE to pupils who are under compulsory school age there are many instances of good practice where it is taught to these pupils. Discovery Special Academy values the importance of building good foundations for later understanding in RE and therefore will teach RE to all EYFS pupils.

RE in the Early Years Foundation Stage, should be taught in a developmentally appropriate way. It should be well thought through and it should adhere to the themes, principles and commitments enshrined in the EYFS.

Religious Education in the Early Years Foundation stage should help pupils to develop empathy, values, and a capacity to make healthy choices. It should also help pupils to develop an understanding of their own culture and the culture of others.

Religious Education should also help pupils to understand cultural diversity, well-being and community cohesion and so contribute to the preparation of pupils for adult life.

Religious Education during the Foundation Stage should be planned using where possible the three prime areas and the four specific areas of learning and development identified in the EYFS. Expressive arts and design; Religious Education can make a valuable contribution to many of these areas particularly, personal, social and emotional development, communication and language, literacy, understanding the world and expressive arts and design.

### **Key stage one, two and three**

In KS1, KS2 and KS3 RE may be taught either discreetly or as part of a wider curriculum approach e.g. through PSHERE, history, geography, art or as part of a focus day or period of time e.g. Christmas and Easter

Throughout KS1/2/3 pupils should learn about religious stories, artefacts, places of worship, holy books, beliefs and principles in both Christianity and other religious traditions as set out in the Middlesbrough Syllabus. They should enquire into what values, beliefs or meaning these religions may be expressing. Pupils should be encouraged to share their views and thoughts in response to any message or moral these stories may give expression to and begin to make the attempt to explain or support their views making use of simple reasons.

### **Enquiry based approach**

Examples of possible areas of enquiry are:

Harvest – why do people give thanks?

Why is Christmas celebrated?

Why is Purim celebrated?

Are there signs of God?

What is a good friend?

What was Muhammad like?

Who are Rama and Sita?

Why did Jesus tell these stories?

Why is Easter so important?

Why do people pray?

What did Jesus teach?

Why are babies baptised?

These enquiry approaches are not a list of 'topics' that must be taught. They are examples that teachers may find helpful. Some of these areas clearly concentrate on only one religion. For example, 'Why did Jesus tell these stories?' is clearly focussed on Christianity. Other areas however may involve an enquiry into two religions. For example, 'Are there signs of God?' and 'Why do people pray?' may involve the pupils enquiring into two religions like Christianity and Islam.

For all key objectives relevant to stages of development, the Middlesbrough SACRE Agreed Syllabus will be used. Objectives will be planned into the academy's overarching schemes of work and activities, visits to and trips from the academy should be planned each half term by teachers.

## **Delivery**

A variety of teaching methods should be used to teach RE, such as role play/drama, stories and music. Visitors to the academy should also be encouraged to give pupils the opportunity to listen to and ask questions about another person's experiences of living/celebrating through different faiths.

The Foundation Stage and KS1 forms the basis of pupils' future understanding and therefore should begin with the pupil's own experiences and feelings, particularly around 'special times, people, places and objects/symbols. Many opportunities should be given for thinking, talking, listening and responding to others respectfully. Much emphasis should be placed on valuing and caring for other people in our local community and also for pupils to relate their understanding to a wider/global community.

In KS2 and KS3, similar opportunities should be offered and pupils should be encouraged to openly discuss their understanding, opinions and attitudes about religion. They should be given time to reflect on what the religious ideas and concepts mean to them and promote their own spiritual growth and development.

It is likely that a teacher may have their own religious beliefs/faith. The teaching of RE must not be used to indoctrinate or challenge pupils' faiths/beliefs which may be different from their own. Teachers must be sensitive about the language that they use, for instance swapping, 'I go to church on Sundays' to, 'Christians go to church on Sundays'.

## **Resources**

The coordinator is responsible for ordering resources, in consultation with other academy staff.

The coordinator will inform staff of new resources that have been purchased and offer advice on their appropriate use. The coordinator will also monitor and evaluate the use of RE resources within the academy.

Resources include books, pictures, artefacts, posters. All materials should be handled very sensitively and with respect.

## **Assessment, recording and reporting**

As RE involves a process of personal development and emerging/changing views, it is difficult to formally assess all but the ability of pupils to recall facts and to be able to express a view about religions.

The Middlesbrough Agreed Syllabus states that the assessment of pupil's learning across both attainment targets will include making judgements about the extent to which pupils have

- selected and applied appropriate knowledge;
- understood required concepts and ideas;
- accurately and appropriately used religious terminology;
- demonstrated the ability to use religious and metaphorical language and applied it to their own experience;
- developed an interest in, and positive attitudes towards, religious and faith issues;
- evaluated opinions based on evidence and argument; and
- demonstrated an ability to show empathy and sensitivity towards the needs of others or to their point of view.

It is not necessary or appropriate to assess every aspect of learning in Religious Education. On some occasions, the experience itself will be important rather than an attempt to assess what a pupil learned from it. For example, experiences of beauty, wonder or transcendence might be intensely private to a pupil; similarly, asking pupils to comment on a meditative experience or a period of reflective silence might involve the invasion of a pupils' privacy. As part of their learning in Religious Education and particularly in relation to Learning from Religion (AT2), pupils will be invited to share personal reflections and responses but may choose not to do so.

*There are some things that pupils will wish to keep to themselves.*

It is not appropriate to assess whether pupils' personal beliefs and values are right or wrong. Religious Education is properly concerned with enabling pupils to think for themselves about religion and faith and not with ensuring that pupils come to a particular belief or viewpoint.

Although there are areas of sensitivity in assessing Religious Education, this must not lead to the conclusion that it is impossible to assess learning in Religious Education. A range of methods, including class learning journals, have been produced to record pupils' responses and development within each area, over each half term. Photographs and pupil statements will reinforce these where possible. These will be shared with parents at open afternoons and as part of parent's evenings. As part of the child's annual report the activities covered and progress made in RE are reported to parents.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

In order to ensure continuity and progression, it will be necessary to monitor the teaching of

RE across the academy. This should be done through liaison with staff to be able to observe lessons, through INSET sessions, monitoring planning and coverage, carrying out pupil interviews.

The result of any monitoring should be discussed with the Headteacher/SLT and any actions resulting from this should be acted upon within a given time frame.

### **Staff Development:**

The coordinator, along with the senior leadership team, will identify staff development needs and arrange whole academy and individual staff training opportunities as required. The outcomes of training are disseminated during staff meetings.

### **Additional information relevant to the RE policy**

#### **Health, Safety and Well-Being**

Visits to places of worship and other RE related venues are encouraged as an important part of developing a child's understanding of the role religion plays in communities. Prior to all visits, staff will carry out a formal risk assessment, if necessary, visiting the venue prior to creating the risk assessment.

Staff will ensure that the context of the learning that will take place during the visit, will not undermine a child's own faith or challenge their belief and will only be presenting a knowledge base about a faith.

Permission will be sought from parents/carers for each child to attend the visit. We acknowledge the sensitivity that some families may have with regard to their child visiting another place of worship, staff must ensure that they do all they can to assure parents and encourage pupil participation.

## **Equal Opportunities**

All children have equal access to the curriculum regardless of their gender, ethnicity or learning difficulty. This is monitored by analysing pupil performance throughout the school to ensure that there is no significant disparity between groups.

## **Links to other relevant policies**

The RE policy links to the following academy policies:

- Equality
- PHSE
- Safeguarding (including Child Protection)