Religious Education in Cheshire East

Section 1

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Introduction to the Cheshire East Religious Education Syllabus

The purpose of this Agreed Syllabus is to set a framework to support those who are responsible for the provision and quality of Religious Education in community, foundation and voluntary controlled schools in Cheshire East. Religious Education in voluntary aided schools and academies with a religious designation will be determined by governors in accordance with their trust deed. Academies and Free Schools without a religious character may choose to provide religious education in accordance with the requirements of this syllabus.

This syllabus aims to be fully inclusive, exploring the beliefs, ethics, philosophy and lifestyles that Religious Education encompasses. It seeks to promote high levels of consistency in teaching and learning, while giving teachers freedom to find the best ways to help pupils engage with challenging spiritual, moral, social and cultural questions that arise in their lives and in their community.

Purpose of study: the importance of Religious Education

Religious education contributes dynamically to children and young people’s education in schools by provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose in life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of life and death and issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human. In RE they learn about and from religions and worldviews in local, national and global contexts, to discover, explore and consider different answers to these questions. They learn to weigh up the value of wisdom from different sources, to develop and express their insights in response, and to agree or disagree respectfully.

Every pupil has a statutory entitlement to Religious Education as it makes a distinctive contribution to a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils should be given the opportunity to explore the role and significance of religion in society and the important beliefs and values that shape the world today. Religious Education helps pupils understand the religious experience of others and the ways in which it gives adherents a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives. The exploration:

- supports pupils in their own search for meaning and purpose in life
- helps pupils develop their own beliefs, values and ideals
- provides a safe and secure environment for pupils to challenge prejudices and misconceptions
- encourages tolerance and respect for themselves and for other people
- enables pupils to be discerning so that they can make informed choices about systems of belief whether faith based or secular
- encourages pupils to recognise and celebrate diversity in society
- enhances pupils’ understanding of history, art, music, literature and the media.

NB It is not the intention of Religious Education in maintained schools to promote the beliefs of any one religion/religious denomination or worldview.

(Adapted from ‘A review of Religious Education in England’ Pg. 14 Religious Education Council 2013)
Aims

Teaching should equip pupils with systematic knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews, enabling them to develop their ideas, values and identities. It should develop in pupils an aptitude for dialogue so that they can participate positively in society with its diverse religions and secular worldviews. Pupils should gain and deploy the skills needed to understand, interpret and evaluate texts, sources of wisdom and authority and other evidence. They should learn to articulate clearly and coherently their personal beliefs, ideas, values and experiences while respecting the right of others to differ.

The curriculum for RE should aim to ensure that all pupils:

A. Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews, so that they can:

- describe, explain, evaluate and analyse beliefs and practices, recognising the diversity which exists within and between communities and amongst individuals;
- identify, investigate and respond to questions posed, and responses offered by some of the sources of wisdom found in religions and worldviews;
- appreciate and appraise the nature, significance and impact of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.

B. Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews, so that they can:

- explain reasonably their ideas about how beliefs, practices and forms of expression influence individuals and communities;
- express with increasing discernment their personal reflections and critical responses to questions and teachings about identity, diversity, meaning and value, including ethical issues;
- appreciate and appraise varied dimensions of religion or a worldview.

C. Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews, so that they can:

- find out about and investigate key concepts and questions of belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, responding creatively;
- enquire into what enables different individuals and communities to live together respectfully for the wellbeing of all;
- articulate beliefs, values and commitments clearly in order to explain why they may be important in their own and other people’s lives.

(Adapted from ‘A review of Religious Education in England’ Pages 12-14 Religious Education Council 2013)
The Legal Framework

Since 1944, all maintained schools have been required to teach RE to all registered pupils (with the exception that parents have the right to withdraw their children from the subject and pupils of 18 years of age can withdraw themselves). Religious education is a component of the basic curriculum, to be taught alongside the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum states the legal requirement that:

- Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based, and which: promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils,
  And
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

The National Curriculum (2013) reiterates that all state schools must teach Religious Education and publish their curriculum by subject and academic year online.

(National Curriculum Framework Sept.2013 Pg. 4)

Religious Education must ‘reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain’ (1).


Local Authorities (LA) must ensure that the agreed syllabus for their area is consistent with the Education Act of 1996 in order to produce a syllabus. The statutory document in determining the teaching of RE is the locally agreed syllabus within the LA concerned.

Religious Education in Voluntary Aided schools

Religious Education in Voluntary Aided schools with a religious character will be determined by governors in accordance with their trust deed and will reflect the religious foundation of the school.

Academies & Free Schools

Academies and free schools who are academies in law must provide religious education in accordance with their Funding Agreements. The policy is for the model Funding Agreements to broadly reflect the provisions that apply to local authorities and schools in the maintained sector.

Academies that do not have a religious designation must arrange for religious education to be given to all pupils in accordance with the requirements laid out for agreed syllabuses. In other words, a curriculum which reflects that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. Academies may decide to adopt the locally agreed syllabus.

The Funding Agreement requires that Academies with a religious designation provide religious education in accordance with the religious foundation of the school.

(1) The major world religions referred to in this syllabus are Buddhism; Christianity; Hinduism; Islam; Judaism and Sikhism. Some study of secular worldviews and a religious community with a significant local presence may be appropriate.
RE and the Right of Withdrawal

Parents may withdraw their children from RE lessons and the school has a duty to supervise them, however schools do not have to provide additional teaching which may incur extra cost. Where the pupils have been withdrawn, the law does say alternative arrangements can be made for RE based on the kind of Religious Education the parents want the pupil to receive. If practical, RE should be provided at the pupil’s own school; a cluster school or in another nearby school in the same area. If neither option is available a pupil may receive external RE teaching as long as the withdrawal does not significantly impact on the child’s attendance. All schools should have a policy and approach to provision and withdrawal which may be laid out in the school’s RE policy.

Access and Entitlement

All pupils, including those with any special educational needs and those who are more able and gifted and talented, have an entitlement of full access to the Religious Education curriculum.

This entitlement will need to take account of the physical, sensory, academic, emotional and learning needs of individual pupils in ways which acknowledge the value of their responses, contributions and achievements.

A wide range of approaches to the "Engaging Encounter with Religion" and "Reasoned Response to Religion" should be encouraged through any medium suited to the experience and ability of individual pupils.

Evidence of pupil responses to the work provided may take a variety of forms including aural, oral, visual and written.

Teachers must take account of the requirements and make provision, where necessary, to support individuals or groups of pupils to enable them to realise their full potential and participate effectively in Religious Education and assessment activities.
Religious Education and Inclusion

Religious Education can make a significant contribution to inclusion, particularly in its focus on promoting respect for all.

The ‘Non-Statutory Guidance for Religious Education’, (DCSF 2004) and ‘RE in English Schools’ (2010) reports contained many references to the role of Religious Education in challenging stereotypical views and appreciating, positively, differences in others. Religious Education enables all pupils to consider the impact of people’s beliefs on their own actions and lifestyle and can develop pupils’ self-esteem.

Effective inclusion involves teaching a lively, stimulating Religious Education curriculum that:

- builds on and is enriched by the differing experiences pupils bring to Religious Education.

- meets all pupils’ learning needs including those with learning difficulties or who are gifted and talented, boys and girls, pupils for whom English is an additional language, pupils from all religious communities and pupils from a wide range of ethnic groups and diverse family backgrounds.

To overcome any potential barriers to learning in Religious Education, some pupils may require:

- support to access text, such as through prepared recordings, particularly when working with significant quantities of written materials or at speed.

- help to communicate their ideas through methods other than extended writing, where this is a requirement. For example, pupils may demonstrate their understanding through speech or the use of ICT.

- a non-visual way of accessing sources of information when undertaking research in aspects of Religious Education, for example using audio materials.

(Adapted from Non-Statutory National RE Framework DCFS 2004 & RE in English Schools DCFS 2010)
More Able, Gifted and Talented Pupils

Teachers are responsible for the majority of the provision for more able pupils and gifted and talented. Therefore, the role of the teacher is crucial in helping these pupils to reach their potential.

1 Differentiation

Differentiation takes many forms. Some of the major differentiation strategies are:

- Differentiation by task
- Differentiation by time
- Differentiation by outcome
- Differentiation by resources and opportunities
- Differentiation by dialogue/questioning

2 Assessment

The principles that underpin effective class-based assessment, apply equally to the assessment of more able pupils. The same quality feedback is required to indicate both what the child has done well and what the next step in the learning needs to be. In a number of instances, particularly at the end of a key stage, it is important for teachers to be aware of the next developmental stages in a child's learning which may be beyond those key stage specific expectations.

3 The learning needs of more able and gifted and talented pupils

More able pupils need the opportunity to move rapidly through elementary stages and progress quickly to enriched, enhanced and advanced resources. They need the opportunity to work independently, make choices and develop skills in investigation and research.

- Individualisation

Individualisation gives the pupil greater responsibility for the content and pace of their own educational progress. In this, pupils would be required to monitor their own learning.

- Co-operative learning

The pupils explain their reasoning to each other. Co-operative teaching and learning interactions in the classroom are also ideal for helping pupils progress to higher levels of understanding.
Religious Education and the pupil with Special Educational Needs

Religious Education, of the explicit and implicit type, provides important learning opportunities for pupils with special educational needs, which are unique to the curriculum. Each pupil is entitled to access the Religious Education curriculum with regard to his/her needs, and equal to that of every other individual of the same age.

When looking at the syllabus, the aspects of different faiths may appear to be difficult to communicate with SEN pupils, however the material contained within the syllabus is a rich source of stimuli.

RE provides us with specific opportunities for SEN pupils to:

- develop spiritually;
- develop a motive to partake and/or communicate;
- celebrate all that is best within their experience and express satisfaction at their achievements and those of others;
- live purposefully and positively as an individual whatever their physical, sensory or learning disability;
- develop positive attitudes towards their own feelings and the beliefs and practices of others;
- experience feelings such as awe and wonder.

NB Please see Handbook Part 2 for specific examples of sensory planning.
Promoting spiritual, moral, social & cultural development & British values through RE

Religious Education provides opportunities to promote spiritual development through:

• discussing and reflecting on key questions of meaning and truth such as the origins of the universe, life after death, good and evil, beliefs about God and values such as justice, honesty and truth.

• learning about and reflecting on important concepts, experiences and beliefs that are at the heart of religious and other traditions and practices.

• considering how beliefs and concepts in religion may be expressed through the creative and expressive arts and related to the human and natural sciences, thereby contributing to personal and communal identity.

• considering how religions and other world views perceive the value of human beings, and their relationships with one another, with the natural world and with God.

• valuing relationships and developing a sense of belonging.

• developing their own views and ideas on religious and spiritual issues.

• reflecting on personal beliefs which form a perspective of life with respect to different faiths.

Religious Education provides opportunities to promote moral development through:

• enhancing the values identified within the National Curriculum, particularly valuing diversity and engaging in issues of truth, justice and trust.

• exploring the influence of family, friends and media on moral choices and how society is influenced by beliefs, teachings, sacred texts and guidance from religious leaders.

• considering what is of ultimate value to pupils and believers through studying the key beliefs and teachings from religion and philosophy about values and ethical codes of practice and in so doing understanding and appreciating the viewpoints of others.

• studying a range of ethical issues, including those that focus on justice, to promote racial and religious tolerance and personal integrity and in so doing respect the civil and criminal law of England.

• considering the importance of rights and responsibilities and developing a sense of conscience.
Religious Education provides opportunities to promote social development through:

- considering how religious and other beliefs lead to particular actions and concerns.
- investigating social issues from religious perspectives, recognising the diversity of viewpoints within and between religions as well as the common ground between religions.
- articulating pupils’ own and others’ ideas on a range of contemporary social issues.
- acceptance and engagement with the British values of democracy; rule of law; individual liberty; mutual respect and tolerance in relation to those of different faiths and beliefs.

Religious Education provides opportunities to promote cultural development through:

- encountering people, literature, the creative and expressive arts and resources from differing cultures.
- considering the relationship between religion and cultures and how religions and beliefs contribute to cultural identity and practices.
- promoting racial and interfaith harmony and respect for all, combating prejudice and discrimination, contributing positively to community cohesion and promoting awareness of how interfaith cooperation can support the pursuit of the common good.

(Based on Non-Statutory National RE Framework QCA 2004)

Religious Education provides opportunities to promote British values through*:

- an acceptance that other people having different faiths or beliefs to oneself (or having none) should be accepted and respected and should not be the cause of prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour.
- encouraging tolerance, mutual respect and positive attitudes towards diversity.
- exploring different religious codes for human life and comparing these with the rule of British law, e.g. how the Decalogue was the basis for British law.
- develop an understanding of the importance of individual liberty (which is protected in law) to choose and hold a religious or non-religious world view.
- understanding religious teachings on the rights and value of the individual and exploring the importance of fairness and democracy; the rule of law & justice.

(*Based on ‘Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools’ DfE, Nov 2014, pp.5-6
NB See Handbook Part 1 for further guidance)
Religious Education & Good Community Relations

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Religious Education between December 2013 and February 2014 under the guidance of Stephen Lloyd MP examined how Religious Education contributed to good community relations. It recognised that Religious Education makes an important contribution to a school’s duty to promote good community relations and it can contribute to promoting a positive and inclusive whole school ethos that champions democratic values and human rights.

RE can be a strong contributor to good community relations through enabling pupils to:

- acquire systematic knowledge and conceptual understanding of religions and worldviews;
- learn from visits and visitors through personal encounters;
- learn about religion and belief in local, national and global contexts;
- consider a range of viewpoints on religious, ethical and philosophical issues;
- articulate their own opinions while respecting the right of others to differ;
- develop their own beliefs, values and identities;
- participate with confidence and openness in dialogue;
- recognise and challenge ill-informed or prejudiced viewpoints, including those in the media;
- ask questions and address contentious issues in a safe space;
- explore reasons why misconceptions exist about some groups;
- evaluate attitudes and actions and how they impact on the community;
- be informed, active citizens and potential leaders.

The subject 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 good community relations.

Schools can do this by providing safe places in which children can discuss controversial issues and be given the knowledge and confidence to challenge extremist beliefs and ideologies. This can be achieved in the context of:

- **The school 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 school 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.

(Adapted from ‘RE & Good Community Relations’ written by APPG published by REC 2013 & “Prevent duty” DfE June 2015)