



Introduction

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 major world faiths, and address fundamental questions concerning, 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 to learn from religions as well as about religions.

Religious Education is unique in the school curriculum in that it is neither a core subject nor a foundation subject but 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 pupils'

As a Community school therefore we deliver RE in line with the Locally Agreed Syllabus 'REsearch' (Dorset).

Main Principles

The main principles of religious education within the school are that:

- it makes no assumption about the teacher's, or pupil's, personal faith stance;
- it does not wish to persuade towards, or away from, a particular belief;
- it is available for all pupils regardless of their faith background;
- the planning and organisation takes into account different faith and family background;
- the teacher is an educator to help pupils to evaluate a range of different religious beliefs, experiences and practices.

Aims

In Religious Education at our school we aim that Religious Education will:-

- **provoke challenging questions** about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs, the self, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human. It develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other principal religions, and religious traditions that examine these questions, fostering personal reflection and spiritual development
- **encourage pupils to explore their own beliefs** (whether they are religious or non-religious), in the light of what they learn, as they examine issues of religious belief and faith and how these impact on personal, institutional and social ethics; and to express their responses. This also builds resilience to anti-democratic or extremist narratives.
- **enable pupils to build their sense of identity and belonging**, which helps them flourish within their communities and as citizens in a diverse society
- **teach pupils to develop respect for others**, including people with different faiths and beliefs, and helps to challenge prejudice
- **prompt pupils to consider their responsibilities** to themselves and to others, and to explore how they might contribute to their communities and to wider society. It encourages empathy, generosity and compassion.
- **develop a sense of awe and wonder and mystery.**
- **develop specific skills, knowledge and attitudes** reflected in the Locally Agreed Syllabus 'REsearch' (Dorset).

Approaches to, and Organisation of, Religious Education

We base our teaching and learning style 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 to extend their knowledge and understanding of religious traditions. We use their experiences at religious festivals such as Easter, Diwali, Passover, etc. to develop their religious thinking. We organise 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 investigate religious and moral issues either individually or in groups. Sometimes, they prepare presentations on a computer and share these in assemblies.

We recognise the fact that all classes in our school have children of widely differing abilities, 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, e.g. by:

- setting tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses;
- setting tasks of increasing difficulty (we do not expect all children to complete all tasks);
- grouping the children by ability in the room, and setting different tasks for each ability group;
- 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.

Programmes of study – linked to ‘REsearch’ Dorset

FOUNDATION STAGE:

The foundation stage describes the phase of a child’s education from the age of 3 to the end of reception age 5. Religious education is statutory for all registered pupils on the school roll.

During the foundation stage children begin to explore the world of religion in terms of special people, books, times, places and objects and visiting places of worship. Children listen to and talk about stories. They are introduced to specialist words and use their senses in exploring religious beliefs, practices and forms of expression.

They reflect upon their own feelings and experiences. They use their imagination and curiosity to develop their appreciation and wonder of the world in which they live.

KEY STAGE 1: Exploration

During key stage 1 pupils study Christianity and Judaism. They learn about different beliefs about God and the world around them. They encounter and respond to a range of stories, artefacts and other religious materials. They learn to recognise that beliefs are expressed in a variety of ways, and begin to use specialist vocabulary. They begin to understand the importance and value of religion for believers, especially other children. Pupils ask relevant questions and develop a sense of wonder about the world. They talk about what is important to themselves and others, valuing themselves, reflecting on their own feelings and experiences and developing a sense of belonging.

KEY STAGE 2: Connections and Expressions

During key stage 2 pupils learn about Christianity, Hinduism and Islam recognising the impact of religion both locally and globally. They continue to consider aspects of Judaism. They make connections between differing aspects of religion and consider the different forms of religious expression. They consider the beliefs, teachings, practices and ways of life central to religion, learn about sacred texts and other sources and consider their meanings and interpretation. They begin to recognise diversity in religion, learning about similarities and differences both within and between religions and the importance of dialogue between religions. They extend the range and use of specialist vocabulary. They recognise the challenges involved in distinguishing between right and wrong, and in valuing what is good and true. They communicate their ideas clearly, recognising other people’s viewpoints. They evaluate their own beliefs and values and those of others.

Assessment for learning

Children demonstrate their ability in RE through a variety of different ways. Younger children might, for example, act out a famous story from the Bible, whilst older pupils might produce a PowerPoint presentation based on their investigation of sacred texts. Teachers will assess children's work in RE by making informal judgements as we observe them during lessons. On completion of a piece of work, the teacher assesses the work and gives the child written or verbal feedback to help guide progress. Older children are encouraged to make judgements about how they might improve their work in the future. The teacher will record the attainment grades awarded at the end of a unit of work in his or her mark book. This information is used to assess the progress of each child, for setting new goals, and for passing information on to the next teacher at the end of the year.

We follow the assessment approach in the locally agreed syllabus 'Research' Dorset. This sets out the expected level of attainment for pupils at the end of each Key Stage. At the end of a whole unit of work, the teacher makes a summary judgement about the work of each pupil in relation to his or her expected level of attainment. We use these judgements as a basis for assessing the progress of the child, and we pass this information on to the next teacher at the end of the year and to the parents in our annual reports.

Resources

We have sufficient resources in our school to be able to teach all our RE teaching units. We keep resources for RE in a central store, where there is a box of equipment for each unit of work. There is a set of Bibles for both Key Stages, and a collection of religious artefacts which we use to enrich teaching in RE. The school library has a good supply of RE topic books and computer software to support the children's individual research.

The contribution RE makes to other curriculum aims in particular to community cohesion

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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

Personal development and well-being

RE plays an important role in preparing pupils 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.

Community cohesion

RE makes an important contribution to a school's duty to promote community cohesion. It 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 community cohesion at Each of the four levels outlined in DCSF guidance.

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.

RE 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. RE is an important subject in contribution to the schools development as a UNICEF Level 1 Rights Respecting School.

Monitoring standards of teaching and learning in RE

The co-ordinator will monitor RE within the school through pupil discussion, class visits, observation of assemblies and looking at pupil's work and displays. The RE subject leader keeps samples of children's work in a portfolio. This demonstrates the expected level of achievement in RE in each year of the school.

Responsibilities for RE within the school, (Head teachers and Governors)

As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, the governing body and head teacher should also make sure that:

- all pupils make progress in achieving the learning objectives of the RE curriculum
- the subject is well led and effectively managed and that standards and achievement in RE and the quality of the provision are subject to regular and effective self-evaluation
- those teaching RE are suitably qualified and trained in the subject and have regular and effective opportunities for CPD
- teachers are aware of RE's contribution in developing pupils' 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 RE curriculum and the right to withdraw
- teachers are aware that they do not have to teach RE unless specifically appointed to do so
- RE is resourced, staffed and timetabled so that the school can fulfil its legal obligations on RE and pupils can make good progress
- where there are insufficient teachers in a school who are prepared to teach RE, the head teacher ensures that pupils receive their entitlement to RE.

Right of Withdrawal

We wish to be an inclusive community but recognise that parents, of course, have the legal right to withdraw their children religious education on the grounds of conscience. However, 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 pupils or there are issues related to religion that arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship.

We would ask any parent considering this to contact the head teacher to discuss any concerns or anxieties about the policy, provision and practice of religious education

We ensure that parents who want to withdraw their children from RE are aware of the RE syllabus and that it is relevant to all pupils and respects their own personal beliefs. If pupils are withdrawn from RE we supervise them on the school premises.

Where a pupil has been withdrawn, we make alternative arrangements for RE of the kind the parent wants the pupil to receive.

Summary

We hope that Religious Education at Bincombe Valley is an exciting, relevant activity for our children. We regard it as a particular area of the curriculum where values and school ethos 'come alive' in the classroom. We are aiming to help children develop respect and sensitivity for all people and to understand more of the importance of religion in today's world.

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