

St Michael's Religious Education Purpose and Rationale Document



St Michael's
C.E. Primary School

Purpose of Religious Education (RE) at St Michael's

Religious Education at St Michael's C.E. Primary School aims to foster an understanding of and respect for diverse religious beliefs, practices, and values. Our RE curriculum is designed to support students in exploring their own beliefs and values, while also gaining a deep and respectful understanding of those held by others. By following the Sandwell Agreed Syllabus and the Understanding Christianity program, we ensure that students receive a comprehensive education that is inclusive, reflective, and spiritually enriching.

Our school vision,

"Courage to Flourish in the Love of God,"

is underpinned by two key scriptures:

"I have come that [you] may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10)

[Therefore],

"Be strong and courageous... the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

These scriptures form the foundation of our Religious Education curriculum at St Michael's. The words of Jesus in John 10:10 remind us that our ultimate goal is to help our pupils experience life in all its fullness. This fullness encompasses not just academic knowledge, but also spiritual growth, emotional well-being, and a deep understanding of the world around them. In light of this promise of abundant life, we are encouraged to be strong and courageous, as stated in Joshua 1:9. This courage is essential in exploring diverse beliefs, asking challenging questions, and growing in faith and understanding.

1. Strength and Courage in Understanding and Respect:

- The RE curriculum encourages students to be strong and courageous in their pursuit of understanding and respecting diverse religious beliefs and practices. This aligns with our vision and scripture, reminding students that with God's presence, they can confidently embrace and appreciate the diversity around them.

2. Guidance and Support in Personal Reflection and Spiritual Growth:

- Our scripture reassures students that God's presence is constant, supporting them in their personal and spiritual journeys. Through RE, students are encouraged to explore their own beliefs and values, knowing they are guided and supported by God.

3. Encouragement in Critical Thinking and Enquiry:

- With the assurance of God's presence, students are emboldened to ask questions, seek knowledge, and engage in critical thinking. This courage in enquiry aligns with our aim to develop students' analytical skills and foster a spirit of curiosity and dialogue.

4. Confidence in Academic Achievement and Skills:

- The promise of God's accompaniment gives students the confidence to strive for academic excellence in RE. They can approach their studies with the knowledge that they are never alone, empowering them to achieve their fullest potential.

By aligning our RE curriculum with our school vision, scripture and values, we aim to provide an education that not only informs but also transforms, enabling our pupils to courageously flourish in the love of God and become compassionate, knowledgeable, and respectful members of society. Our RE curriculum thus becomes a vital tool in realising our vision, helping each pupil find the courage to flourish in all aspects of their lives, grounded in the unwavering love of God.

Rationale

1. Promoting Understanding and Respect

- **Diversity and Inclusivity:** Our curriculum celebrates the rich tapestry of religious traditions and worldviews, promoting an ethos of respect and inclusion.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Students develop an appreciation for the cultural and historical contexts of different religions, fostering a global perspective.

2. Developing Personal Reflection and Spiritual Growth

- **Self-Reflection:** Encourages students to reflect on their own beliefs and values, enhancing their personal and spiritual development.
- **Moral Development:** Provides opportunities for students to engage with moral and ethical questions, aiding their understanding of right and wrong.

3. Encouraging Critical Thinking and Enquiry

- **Analytical Skills:** Develops students' abilities to think critically about religious texts, teachings, and practices.
- **Enquiry-Based Learning:** Promotes enquiry and dialogue, encouraging students to ask questions and explore different viewpoints.

4. Supporting Academic Achievement and Skills

- **Knowledge and Understanding:** Ensures students acquire a broad and balanced knowledge of major world religions and non-religious worldviews.
- **Communication Skills:** Enhances students' ability to articulate their understanding and engage in informed discussions.

Aims of the RE Curriculum

- 1. To Know About and Understand a Range of Religions and Worldviews:**
 - Provide a detailed understanding of a variety of religious traditions, beliefs, and practices.

- Enable students to understand the nature of religion and its role in people's lives.
- 2. **To Express Ideas and Insights About the Nature, Significance, and Impact of Religions and Worldviews:**
 - Encourage students to articulate their thoughts and reflections on the impact of religion on individuals and communities.
 - Foster the ability to engage in thoughtful dialogue and respectful debate.
- 3. **To Gain and Deploy the Skills Needed to Engage Seriously with Religions and Worldviews:**
 - Equip students with the skills to critically evaluate religious texts and teachings.
 - Develop students' abilities to reflect on their own beliefs and values in light of their learning.

Understanding Christianity Syllabus

The Understanding Christianity program is a structured and systematic approach to teaching about Christianity, focusing on the following core concepts:

1. **God:**
 - Understanding the nature of God as depicted in Christian teachings.
 - Exploration of the Trinity and the concept of God as Creator.
2. **Creation:**
 - Study of the biblical creation narratives.
 - Reflection on the relationship between humanity and the environment.
3. **The Fall:**
 - Examination of the concept of sin and its implications.
 - Understanding the narrative of the Fall and its significance in Christian theology.
4. **People of God:**
 - Study of key figures in the Bible and their roles in God's plan.
 - Exploration of the covenant relationship between God and His people.
5. **Incarnation:**
 - Understanding the significance of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.
 - Study of the events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.
6. **Salvation:**
 - Exploration of the concept of salvation and its importance in Christian belief.
 - Understanding the role of Jesus' sacrifice in achieving salvation for humanity.
7. **Kingdom of God:**
 - Examination of the teachings of Jesus about the Kingdom of God.
 - Reflection on the implications of living according to the values of the Kingdom.

The pedagogical approach for teaching Understanding Christianity units is divided into three components: comprehending the text, recognising its impact, and making meaningful connections.

Making sense of the text

This involves developing skills of reading and interpretation; understanding how Christians interpret, handle and use biblical texts; making sense of the meanings of texts for Christians.

Understanding the impact

This involves examining ways in which Christians respond to biblical texts and teachings, and how they put their beliefs into action in diverse ways within the Christian community and in the world

Making connections

This involves evaluating, reflecting on and connecting the texts and concepts studied, and discerning possible connections between these and pupils' own lives and ways of understanding the world.

(Understanding Christianity, 2019).

Sandwell Agreed Syllabus

The Sandwell Agreed Syllabus provides a comprehensive framework for teaching RE, ensuring coverage of the following key areas:

- 1. Beliefs and Practices:**
 - Understanding the core beliefs, practices, and teachings of major world religions including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Judaism.
 - Exploration of non-religious worldviews such as Humanism.
- 2. Authority and Influence:**
 - Study of sacred texts and their interpretations.
 - Examination of religious leaders and their influence on communities and societies.
- 3. Expressions of Belief:**
 - Exploration of religious rituals, ceremonies, and festivals.
 - Understanding the significance of symbols, art, and architecture in religious expression.
- 4. Ethics and Values:**
 - Discussion of moral and ethical issues from religious perspectives.
 - Understanding the role of religion in shaping ethical behaviour and social responsibility.

The Sandwell Agreed Syllabus adopts the same pedagogical approach as Understanding Christianity. Our choice to implement both was informed by research and best practices from other BDMAT schools. Given our diverse school community, these syllabi were selected for their comprehensive coverage of various religions while also offering an extensive exploration of Christian topics.

Ways of Knowing

Our RE Curriculum is underpinned by three disciplines:

Theology

This is about believing. It looks at 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. (CofE, 2018).

Theology is deeply embedded in St Michael's RE curriculum, providing a robust framework for students to engage with a wide range of religious texts, including stories, poems, and other significant writings. By exploring these texts, children gain insight into key ideas, beliefs, and practices across various religions, allowing them to develop a comprehensive understanding of theological concepts. This engagement encourages them to ask thoughtful questions and participate in meaningful debates, fostering critical thinking and deeper reflection on their own beliefs and values as well as those of others. Through this process, theology becomes a dynamic and integral part of their learning experience, promoting both academic and spiritual growth.

Philosophy

This is about thinking. It is about finding out how and whether things make sense. It deals with questions of morality and ethics. It takes seriously the nature of reality, knowledge and existence. (CofE, 2018).

Our RE curriculum at St Michael's is inherently philosophical, emphasizing the process of exploring difficult questions rather than merely seeking definitive answers. Through dialogue, discussion, and debate, students refine their thinking about the world and their place within it. This approach encourages them to critically examine their beliefs and values, fostering a deeper understanding of themselves and others. By making personal connections to their own lives and expressions of spirituality, children are not only engaged in intellectual inquiry but also in meaningful self-reflection, allowing philosophy to shape their personal and spiritual development profoundly.

Human/Social Services

This is about living. It explores the diverse ways in which people practise their beliefs. It engages with the impact of beliefs on individuals, communities and societies. (CofE, 2018).

At St Michael's, students delve into the profound ways in which religions, beliefs, and religious adherents have historically shaped and continue to influence societies globally. This exploration promotes a nuanced understanding of how religions and beliefs impact perceptions of power, gender, compassion, and more. Our methodology encompasses

listening to the voices and observing the practices of individuals within faith and belief communities. This immersive approach ensures that students appreciate both the strengths and weaknesses of religions and beliefs as they manifest in real-life contexts. Such critical engagement equips our pupils to participate in balanced and informed conversations, fostering a deeper comprehension and respect for the diverse ways in which beliefs shape human experience.

This approach is closely linked to our School Value of Community, as it encourages students to recognise and value the interconnectedness of all people. During Inter-Faith Week, our students undertake visits to various places of worship, enriching their understanding and appreciation of different religious traditions and practices. By understanding the diverse beliefs and practices within various communities, students learn to foster inclusivity, empathy, and mutual respect. This alignment with our School Value of Community underscores the importance of building a cohesive and supportive environment where every individual is valued and understood.

Spirituality

In Religious Education, our pupils are encouraged to explore the term spirituality and what it looks like in different religions. We recognise that developing the spirituality of our pupils and adults is a fundamental aspect of enabling pupils to flourish. Spiritual development differs from person to person and is a very personal experience. Spirituality does not necessarily link to a faith and therefore we encourage our non-faith children to make connections to their own lives and their own spiritual development. At St Michael's, we refer to spirituality as *being linked to big questions about the meaning and purpose of life; it includes ideas relating to oneself, others, the natural world and the transcendent.*

We refer to this as:

The stillness of the mind

The settling of the soul

The uplifting of the spirit

Being at one in the world and finding meaning and purpose in life.

When learning about different religions, we support pupils to consider how spirituality is expressed in many different ways. This includes, but is not limited to, exploring religious texts, artwork, music, poetry and architecture. By doing this, we foster the children's ability to see our world as a mixture of unique and wonderful people, all living and collaborating in the same wonderful world, no matter their religion.

Conclusion

At St Michael's, our Religious Education curriculum is committed to providing a rich, diverse, and engaging learning experience. By following the Sandwell Agreed Syllabus and the Understanding Christianity program, we ensure that our students are well-equipped to understand and respect different religious and non-religious worldviews, while also reflecting on their own beliefs and values. This holistic approach to RE fosters not only

academic excellence but also personal and spiritual growth, preparing our students to be thoughtful, respectful, and informed members of society. The assurance of God's presence, as reflected in our school scripture, empowers students to be strong and courageous in their learning journey, knowing that they are supported and guided every step of the way.

For more information about our RE curriculum including planning, delivery, assessment and monitoring, please refer to our Religious Education Policy.