

Section 1

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Introduction to Cheshire East Religious Education Agreed Syllabus

The focus of this Agreed Syllabus is to set a framework to support those who are responsible for the provision and quality of Religious Education in maintained schools in Cheshire East. It aims to be fully inclusive, exploring the beliefs, ethics 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.

The Importance of Religious Education

Every pupil has a statutory entitlement to Religious Education as it makes a distinctive contribution to a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils should be 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 or secular
- encourages pupils to recognise and celebrate diversity in society
- enhances pupils' understanding of history, art, music, literature and the media.

It is not the intention of religious education in maintained schools to promote the beliefs or practices of any one religion or denomination.

The Legal Framework

Every maintained school in England must provide a basic curriculum (Religious Education, sex education and the National Curriculum). This includes provision for RE for all registered pupils at the school (including those in the sixth form), except for those withdrawn by their parents (or withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 or over) in accordance with Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. (For further information on the right to withdrawal see HANDBOOK Part 1)

The statutory document in determining the teaching of RE is the locally agreed syllabus within the LA concerned.

Schools designated as having a religious character are free to make their own decisions in preparing their syllabuses. LAs must, however, ensure that the agreed syllabus for their area is consistent with Section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996, which requires the syllabus to reflect that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. (1)

Schools are not obliged to provide Religious Education to pupils who are under compulsory school age (section 80(2)(a) of the Education Act 2002), although there are many instances of good practice where RE is taught to these pupils. Separate legislative provision on RE is made for maintained special schools. Regulations covering maintained special schools require them to ensure that, as far as practicable, a pupil receives Religious Education.

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

For further guidance see- 'Religious Education in English Schools; Non Statutory Guidance 2010' www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications DCSF-00114-2010

Access and Entitlement

All pupils, including those with any special educational needs including those are 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 two Attainment Targets, "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 Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study 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 national framework for Religious Education, (QCA 2004), contains many references to the role of Religious Education in challenging stereotypical views and appreciating, positively, differences in others. The national framework enables all pupils to consider the impact of people's beliefs on their own actions and lifestyle. The national framework also highlights the importance of religions and beliefs and how Religious Education 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 tapes, 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.

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

Gifted and Talented Pupils

Teachers are responsible for the majority of the provision for more able pupils. 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
- 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 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-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 through Religious Education

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.

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.
- studying a range of ethical issues, including those that focus on justice, to promote racial and religious respect and personal integrity.
- 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.

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 & Integrated Communities

RE makes an important contribution to a school's duty to promote integrated communities, (formerly referred to as community cohesion). Religious Education can contribute to promoting a positive and inclusive whole school ethos that champions democratic values and human rights.

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 integrated communities at each of the four levels outlined in DCSF guidance on community cohesion*.

- **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**.

* <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=11635>