Elsenham C. of E. Primary School

Religious Education Policy

Adopted by Governors **September 2026**

Next review due by: **September 2027**

Produced in consultation with Diocese of Chelmsford

Aims

Our aim is to provide children with a balance between theology, philosophy and human & social sciences. Following the Essex Agreed Syllabus (2022), children are taught a rich curriculum that prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in the modern world. Learners will be able to acquire a deep understanding of Christian belief and practice through critically engaging with biblical text as well as theological ideas. Furthermore, learners will develop their knowledge of the major world religions and explore a diverse range of worldviews. It is our aim that religious education encompasses the very essence of our school with a high profile across the breadth of the curriculum.

The legalities

Our school curriculum for religious education meets the requirements of the 1996 Education Act and the School standards and Framework Act 1998. The ERA stipulates that religious education is compulsory for all children, including those in the reception class who are less than five years old. The ERA allows parents to withdraw their child from religious education classes if they so wish, although this should only be done once the parents have given written notice to the school governors. The ERA also allows teachers to refuse to teach religious education, but only after they have given due notice of their intention to the school governors. The religious education curriculum forms an integral part of our school's spiritual, moral and social teaching. It also promotes education for citizenship. Our school RE curriculum uses The Essex agreed syllabus (2022) and it meets all the requirements set out in that document. The ERA states that the RE syllabus should reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian and that it should, at the same time, take account of the teachings and practices of other major religions. Owing to this, our learners will be predominantly taught Christian content. RE must be commented on within our annual school reports in addition to featuring in the school prospectus.

Delivery of the RE Curriculum

RE is delivered through these three strands:

- **<u>Theology</u> will enable learners to:**
  - Investigate key texts and traditions within the six major world religions.
  - Explore the ways that beliefs have changed over time and vary dependent on culture, including its influence on Britain's cultural heritage.
  - Use reasoning skills to tackle the 'big' questions raised by religion.
- **<u>Philosophy</u> will empower learners to:**
  - Reflect on their own experiences in response to fundamental questions of morals and ethics.
  - Consider the nature of good and evil in a safe environment.
  - Investigate the process of deep thinking into human existence and experience.
  - Develop a mature awareness of spiritual and moral issues in the present day and over time.
  - Explore and debate their own personal beliefs and ways of thinking to incite fascination.
- **<u>Human/Social Sciences</u> will teach learners to:**
  - Investigate the way in which religions continue to shape societies around Britain and the world.

- Explore the diverse ways that believers practice religion and tradition.
- Engage with the impact of beliefs on individuals and communities.
- Develop their respect of differing viewpoints and beliefs and to recognise that they are continually evolving.

Teaching and learning style

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. Lessons should spark fascination in learning about their own beliefs together with those of others. Teachers should strive to deliver the RE curriculum in a creative, engaging manner that allows for flexibility of imaginative ideas.

Our teaching and learning styles in RE enable children to build on their own experiences and 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 hold services three times a year at Harvest, Christmas and Easter led by the local church. 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 compare the religious views of different faith groups on topics such as rites of passage or festivals. Children discuss religious and moral issues using computers and working individually or in groups. Sometimes they prepare presentations and share these with other members of the school in assemblies.

We recognise the fact that all classes in our school have children of widely differing levels of achievement and need, and so we provide suitable learning opportunities for all children by matching the challenge of the task to the child. We achieve this in a variety of ways, for example, by:

- Setting common tasks, which are open-ended, and differentiation is by outcome.
- Setting tasks of increasing complexity and depth (without the expectation of all children to complete all tasks).
- Facilitating focus groups within a lesson so that learners can be challenged and supported at an appropriate level.
- Providing resources of different complexity, adapted to the needs of the learners.
- Utilising teaching assistants effectively to individuals or groups of children.

Curriculum planning

We follow the Essex Agreed Syllabus (2022). Complementing this syllabus, we are using the ‘Understanding Christianity’ scheme of work for lessons with Christian content and enquiry based learning from the syllabus and the Diocese of Norwich as well as resources from the Saffron Academy Trust. We ensure that the topics studied in religious education build upon prior learning. We offer opportunities for children of all abilities to develop their skills and knowledge in each unit and we ensure that the planned, cohesive progression built into the scheme of work offers the children increasing challenge as they move through the school.

We carry out the curriculum planning in RE in three phases (long-term, medium-term and short term).The long-term plan maps the RE topics studied in each term during each key stage. The RE subject leader devises this plan in collaboration with teaching colleagues in each year group.

The class teacher creates lessons with the flexibility of using the scheme of work and their own creative ideas. Lessons are primarily on Notebook or PowerPoint, whereas others are verbal, and are

stored on the Staff Shared drive. The teacher keeps these individual lessons and often discusses them on an informal basis with the RE subject leader. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate RE lesson/worship ideas with their year partner and other colleagues with the aim of broadening the depth of the RE delivery with a plethora of engaging ideas. Lessons are recorded primarily in dedicated R.E. books unless they are discussion-based lessons (particularly in philosophy).

Foundation Stage

We teach religious education to all children in the school, including those in EYFS. Religious education is an integral part of the topic work covered during the year. We relate the religious education aspects of the children's work to the objectives set out in the Early Learning Goals, which underpin the curriculum planning for children aged three to five. EYFS learners also enjoy exploring many traditions and celebrations throughout the year. Children are given the opportunity to learn about other cultures through role-play, crafting, specific focus activities and outdoor play, to name but a few.

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.

Assessment for learning

Learners demonstrate their achievement in RE through a variety of different ways. Teachers will assess children's work in RE by making informal judgements as we observe them during lessons. We mark a piece of work once it has been completed and we comment as necessary; providing constructive feedback and targets for improvement (in line with the school's marking policy). On completion of a unit of work, we make a summary judgement about the work of each pupil in relation to the national curriculum levels of attainment. We use this information as a basis for assessing the progress of each child, for setting new goals, and for passing information on to the next teacher at the end of the year. Evidence of work is in children's specific RE books and is evident from pupil voice discussions. This evidence reflects the range of work covered as well as individual achievement.

Religious Education across the curriculum

Religious education underpins everything that we do at Elsenham Church of England Primary School. It is reflected undoubtedly in our ethos and aims, not to mention in the learners themselves. The overriding learning environment in all lessons is one of compassion, dedication, inclusion and respect.

English

Religious education contributes significantly to the teaching of English in our school by actively promoting the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Some of the texts that we use in literacy have religious themes or content, which encourages discussion and debate. Particularly in theology and human science based lessons, students are encouraged to analyse and compare by written means. In philosophy, learners develop their oracy skills through open-ended discussion and sensitively responding to others' viewpoints.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship

Through our RE lessons, we teach the children about the values and moral beliefs that underpin individual choices of behaviour. So, for example, we contribute to the discussion of topics such as smoking, drugs and health education. We also promote the values and attitudes required for citizenship in a democracy by teaching respect for others and the need for personal responsibility. In general, by promoting tolerance and understanding of other people, we enable children to appreciate what it means to be positive members of our society.

Computing

Computing enhances RE, wherever appropriate, in all key stages. The children select and analyse information, using the internet through the interactive Smartboard, ipads or laptops. They also use computing to review, modify and evaluate their work, and to improve its presentation. A variety of apps, programs and websites are used to enrich learning such as, PowerPoint and iMovie, alongside educational clips to enhance understanding in lessons. Photographs and videos often record a visit to a place of worship and pupils can find the various artefacts in churches by doing virtual tours on church websites. School-wide celebrations and festivals are also recorded digitally and are often shared with children to embed learning.

Community

Our learners will develop their sense of appreciation for diversity, which will give them an understanding of discrimination and how to challenge it. RE will provide opportunities for the school to forge links with the community to celebrate and explore beliefs, including a relationship with the local church. Learners are presented with opportunities to study matters of global significance hence making connections with the global community by offering viewpoints on worldwide issues. Where children are to participate in activities outside the classroom, for example, a visit to the local church we carry out a risk assessment prior to the activity, to ensure that the activity is safe and appropriate for all pupils.

Worship Crew

The role of the Worship Crew is to support the delivery of worship and promote the core Christian Values that underpin the school's ethos. The Worship Crew meet the RE subject leader regularly as a group to discuss forthcoming assemblies and themes to celebrate as a school. Worship Crew plan and deliver Harvest festival celebrations, Christmas and Easter services with help from the RE subject leader and the church. The Worship Crew ensure that assemblies have a Christian message and all Worship Crew assemblies ends with a prayer written by the children. These children are also responsible for their own display in the school to help promote Christian values, courageous advocacy, invitation to prayer and collective worship, which they change throughout the year.
