

Religious Education (RE) Policy

Loving, learning and flourishing in community

Everyone is welcomed unconditionally into our Christ-centred community and treated with dignity and respect.

The generous relationships, rich curriculum and breadth of opportunity ensure all flourish.

Through learning, persevering and experiencing success, children are encouraged and equipped to engage with, and positively influence, the school, the community and the world.

Jesus said "I have come that they may have life - life in all its fullness"

John 10 verse 10

Rationale

The Blake School is a Church of England Primary School and so, within this Christian environment, Religious Education (RE) is delivered in accordance with the Trust Deed of the school. In the light of this foundation, children are enabled to develop spiritual understanding, to begin to comprehend what it means to be a person of faith, and to accept and value those whose commitments, values and ways of life are different from their own. The importance that is placed on the development of the whole child at The Blake School is reflected in the RE curriculum.

In accordance with the school's vision statement, children of any faith and none are encouraged to express their views openly and can expect to be treated with respect by all members of the school community.

As a Church of England School RE has a high profile within the curriculum and is a priority for senior leaders. The RE curriculum is intrinsic to the outworking of a Church school's Christian vision in enabling all pupils to flourish. Open and honest relationships ensure that children are free to ask questions and to explore religious knowledge and ideas in an academically rigorous and yet respectful way.

The Blake School RE aims are based on this rationale and upon the aims set out in "*Religious Education in Church of England Schools: A Statement of Entitlement*" (February 2019)

Aims

1. To provide high quality engaging RE which fully addresses both **learning about** and **learning from** religion.
2. To contribute significantly to the **distinctively Christian vision** of the school and the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
3. To provide opportunities for the children to engage seriously with and develop their knowledge and understanding of the **person and teachings of Jesus Christ**, the Christian faith as a diverse global living faith and key theological concepts.
4. To gain knowledge and understanding of **different religions and world views**, including different beliefs, values and traditions, while appreciating diversity within these.

5. To understand continuing **influence of religion** on Britain’s cultural heritage, as well as in the lives of individuals and societies in different times, cultures and places.
6. To engage with challenging questions of **meaning and purpose**, while exploring and learning how to express their own beliefs, identity and sense of belonging.

Objectives

1. To provide a broad and balanced RE curriculum.
2. To present high quality RE in enjoyable ways, which excite the children’s curiosity, imagination and involvement and which engage them in meaningful discussion, debate and questioning.
3. To promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and make links with the Christian values of the school through a wide variety of means including the creative arts and other appropriate areas of the curriculum.
4. To encourage a reflective approach to life and enable children to appreciate the contribution that religious and spiritual ideas and concepts can make to their personal search for meaning and purpose in life.
5. To help children understand the importance of religious experience and recognise ways in which these experiences have been interpreted and expressed through a variety of religious traditions.
6. To actively promote respect for all so that children recognise people’s freedom to hold beliefs other than their own and are therefore able to combat prejudice and intolerance.
7. To encourage responsibility for themselves, for others and for the world in which they live, including care for the environment and the importance of making a difference to their community and the wider world.
8. To study and develop a depth of knowledge and understanding of the life and work of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith and its relevance today.
9. To study aspects of Judaism, Islam and Hinduism and develop an awareness of some other major world religions.
10. To encourage the understanding of and respect for diversity and difference within the Christian Church and other faith communities.

Learning and Teaching

An enquiry-based approach to learning is used in RE at the Blake School. Each unit begins with a ‘Big Question’ which the children can instantly engage with, regardless of their own beliefs and worldviews. Throughout the course of the unit, an enquiry takes place as a class to explore the ‘Big Question’, in which the children are co-travellers on the journey rather than followers. Each RE lesson will provide an opportunity to explore, build knowledge or understanding, and reflect on the subject of the enquiry. At the end of each unit, children reflect on what they have learned throughout the enquiry to reach their own conclusion based on evidence.

Throughout the unit or enquiry, children will have the opportunity to explore the ‘Big Question’ using four main elements:

1. Stories.

This includes stories both from a range of religious texts and from ‘life stories’, including those of people of faith from the past, the present and in our community. Exploration of these accounts and stories will enable children to gain understanding of how identity and actions have been shaped by them. Children go on to interpret what they have heard for themselves, analysing how they may be interpreted differently by different people or groups. Ultimately, they will have the opportunity to evaluate and reflect on how what they have explored contributes to their own understanding and beliefs.

2. Questioning

Through asking questions, the children can develop a better understanding of both themselves and others. Questioning may take on the form of interviewing, writing letters or emails, or constructing questionnaires. By asking questions of believers, children are encouraged to empathise, understand the worldviews and beliefs of others, develop accurate representation of religions and make comparisons between religions. Children will have the opportunity to evaluate and reflect on what they have learned through questioning and to consider how this contributes to their own understanding, beliefs and their enquiry.

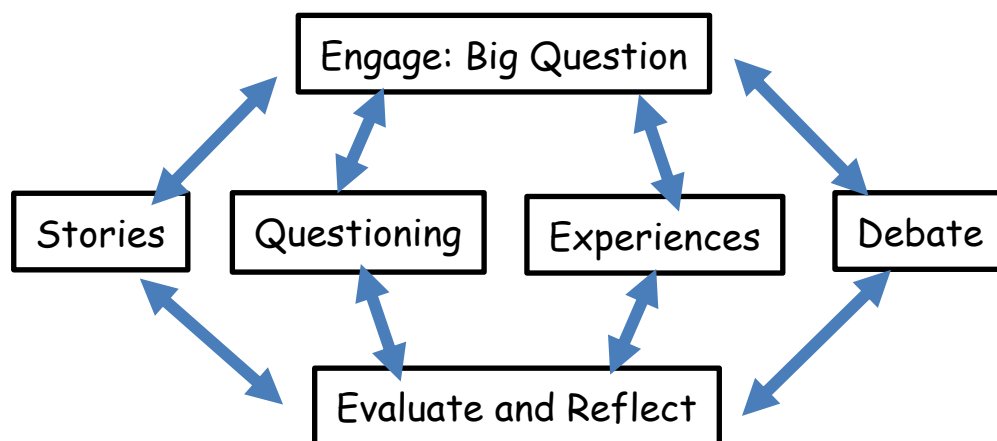
3. Experiences

Where appropriate, children are given the opportunity to take part in religious practices and experiences in order to gain understanding of the feelings and emotions of participants. This encourages empathy and deeper understanding of others by experiencing an insider's perspective. As before, children will have the opportunity to reflect and evaluate on how the experience contributes to their own understanding or beliefs and on their enquiry.

Where possible children are given opportunities to encounter people of other faiths and world views. Children will also be encouraged to share their experiences, knowledge and traditions, whatever their faith background or world view.

4. Debate

By giving children the opportunity to debate in a safe and structured environment, they are encouraged to further explore their own beliefs and the beliefs of others. Children will learn to give evidence and reasons for their opinions and beliefs, as well as critically evaluating and responding to those of others in a respectful manner.



This approach has been based on and adapted from *The RE-Searchers: A New Approach to Religious Education in Primary Schools* (2015) Freathy, G. et al.

Promoting Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Religious Education at The Blake School provides opportunities for:

- *spiritual development* through enriching and encouraging pupils' discovery of faith and belief and providing opportunities for them to explore fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of life;

- *moral development* through helping pupils consider, respond and make reasoned and informed choices relating to areas of right and wrong, moral conflict, concern for others and the will to do what is right;
- *social development* through helping pupils develop their sense of identity and belonging;
- *cultural development* through fostering pupils' awareness and understanding of beliefs, worldviews, practices, lifestyles and values in their own society and in the wider world.

Progress and Assessment

- At the beginning of each unit, children give an initial response to the 'Big Question' before any learning has taken place. At the end of the unit, once the enquiry has been completed, children reflect on and evaluate what they have learned in order to give a final response, with reasons and evidence, to the 'Big Question'. The children are able to see how their thinking and understanding has developed by comparing these two responses, while teachers are also able to see the level of knowledge and understanding achieved by an individual at the end of a unit.
- Assessment for Learning strategies are used to move children's learning on both within a lesson and to inform future lessons.
- It is important to note that assessment in RE is not the assessment of children's beliefs.
- We track the children's progress using Target Tracker.

Rights of Withdrawal

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of the RE curriculum. We endeavour through our inclusive policy to ensure that parents would not find it necessary to exercise their right to withdraw their child from RE. The school will ensure that appropriate provision is made for children who are withdrawn from RE with particular emphasis placed on preserving the child's dignity.

Attainment Targets

There are 2 Attainment Targets:

AT 1 - Learning about religion includes enquiry into, and the investigation of, the nature of religion. It focuses on:

- (i) beliefs, teachings and sources;
- (ii) practices and ways of life and
- (iii) experience and expression.

It includes the skills of interpretation, analysis and explanation. Pupils learn to communicate their knowledge and understanding using specialist vocabulary. It includes identifying and developing an understanding of ultimate questions and ethical issues.

AT 2 - Learning from religion is concerned with developing pupils' critical reflection on, and personal response to, their own experiences and their learning in RE. It develops pupils' skills of application, interpretation and evaluation of what they learn about religion, particularly questions of

- (i) identity and belonging;
- (ii) meaning, purpose, truth and
- (iii) values and commitments and communicating their responses.

Foundation Stage

Although RE is not explicitly mentioned as part of the Goals in the Foundation Stage, teachers are required to deliver RE specific to the local Agreed Syllabus. In Oxfordshire, this means that children receive their entitlement in RE through a range of activities with a specific RE focus relating to the Early Learning Goals. The breadth of study includes Religions and beliefs, Themes and Experiences & Opportunities. Religious content is drawn primarily from Christianity and then from other religions represented by the pupils. In particular, the children explore the Christian festivals of Harvest, Christmas and Easter.

Key Stages 1 and 2

The Blake School long term plans fulfil the statutory guidelines as follows:

- In line with the National Society Statement of Entitlement for R.E., Christianity has a central role in the RE curriculum, taking up approximately 2/3 of the time available;
- As required by the Agreed Syllabus for Oxfordshire, long term plans for Key Stages 1 and 2 are based on the framework questions.