



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Intent of the Religious Education Curriculum

AFJS aims

At Abbots Farm Junior School, our Religious Education lessons provide a means of exploring, appreciating and understanding the world in which we live and how religion has evolved and changed. Religious Education at our school contributes to the cultural, social, spiritual and moral life of our children as they acquire knowledge of a range of different cultures and traditions, and learn tolerance and understanding of other people and different environments. Children will be supported to engage and think rigorously and creatively in order to make informed judgements; they will come to understand that it is acceptable to have doubts and to disagree in a reasoned and sensitive way. We want them to know that religious education promotes discernment and enables pupils to combat prejudice therefore preparing them to be thoughtful members of our diverse and multi-cultural society.

We endeavour to:

- to help our children develop respect and sensitivity for all people;
- to help our children understand faith and moral codes to guide them and develop informed opinions;
- to help our children develop an understanding of modern multi-cultural Britain and how this is reflected in their lives and local community;
- to help our children understand more about the importance of religion in today's world.

RE integrally links with our school's values of being reflective, resilient, ambitious and having a healthy body and mind. We aim for our children to reflect on their own beliefs before bridging into the community and other cultures. Resilience and ambition are modelled throughout all religious stories and having a healthy mind is shown through philosophical discussions and debates with their peers and within themselves.

RE 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.

National Curriculum

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 it is a necessary part of a broad and balanced curriculum. Parents have the right to withdraw their child on the grounds that they wish to provide their own Religious Education (section 71 of the School Standards Framework Act, 1998). Our R.E. curriculum forms an important part of our school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural teaching. It also promotes education for citizenship and British Values. It is our practice to talk with parents to ensure that they fully understand the aims and value of R.E. to enable them to make an informed decision, before we honour the right of withdrawal. Any parent wishing to withdraw their child should consult the Head Teacher. Teachers may also withdraw from the teaching of R.E. but only after they have given due notice of their intention to the Governing Body.

By law, each Local Authority is required to have a Locally Agreed Religious Education Syllabus with the establishment of a Statutory Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). Currently, Coventry and Warwickshire SACREs work together in creating an R.E. curriculum that will promote 'good, effective and thought provoking R.E. across the city and county.' (2017-2022). We use the Discovery RE programme as our scheme of work.

Discovery RE meets the requirements of our locally agreed syllabus and is aligned to the non- statutory guidance described above. By following Discovery RE at Abbots Farm Junior School we intend that Religious Education will:

- Adopt an enquiry- based approach as recommended by Ofsted, beginning with the children's own life experience before moving into learning about and from religion.
- Provoke challenging questions about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs, the self, and issues of right and wrong, commitment and belonging. 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 (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.
- 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, wonder and mystery.
- Nurture children's own spiritual development.

Withdrawal from RE lessons

Parents/carers have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of the Religious Education. Those parents/carers wishing to exercise this right are invited in to see the head teacher and/or RE Leader who will explore any concerns and discuss any impact that withdrawal may have on the child. The school will 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. Parents will be made aware of the learning objectives and what is covered in the RE curriculum and should be given the opportunity to discuss this, if they wish. The school may also wish to review such a request each year, in discussion with the parents.

The use of the right to withdraw should be at the instigation of parents and it should be made clear whether it is from the whole of the subject or specific parts of it. No reasons need be given. Where parents have requested that their child is withdrawn, their right must be respected, and where RE is integrated in the curriculum, the school will need to discuss the arrangements with the parents or carers to explore how the child's withdrawal can be best accommodated. Once a child has been withdrawn they cannot take part in the RE programme until the request for withdrawal has been removed.

As a school it is our duty to inform our local Standing Advisory Council on RE regarding the numbers of children being withdrawn.

Roles and responsibilities

The RE leader is responsible for providing medium-term planning using the Discovery RE scheme. They also monitor the delivery of the programme through observation and discussion with teaching staff, as well as discussions with children and scrutiny of their work to ensure consistent and coherent curriculum provision.

Evaluation of the programme's effectiveness is conducted on the basis of:

- Pupil and teacher evaluation of the content and learning processes
- Staff meetings to review and share experience
- Monitoring of assessment to ensure progression throughout the school.

Year group teams are responsible for agreeing the order in which activities will take place. This should be recorded on the termly overview chart which is also published on the school website. Teachers are responsible for presenting topics using a variety of views and beliefs so that pupils are able to form their own, informed opinions but also respect that others have the right to different opinions. Teachers should never feel obliged to discuss their own beliefs unless they feel comfortable doing so and can ensure that this will not influence or restrict the children's own expression.

The governors are responsible for meeting at least once a year with the RE leader, for discussing subject strengths and areas for development, and for reporting these to the governing body.

Implementation of the RE Curriculum

Planning

At Abbots Farm Junior School, we use the Discovery RE programme as our scheme of work, which is aligned to the Locally Agreed Religious Education Syllabus produced by the Statutory Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Discovery RE brings together learning about and from religion, questioning and spiritual development in a comprehensive scheme of learning. Teaching strategies are varied and are mindful of preferred learning styles and the need for differentiation. Each enquiry starts from the children's own life experiences using these as a bridge into the investigation of the religion being studied. Children have the opportunity to express their own thoughts and beliefs and empathise with believers of that religion or belief position.

A minority of children will have particular teaching and learning requirements which go beyond the provision for that age range and if not addressed, could create barriers to learning. This could include G&T children, those with SEN or those who have EAL. Teachers will take account of these requirements and plan, where necessary, to support individuals or groups of pupils to enable them to participate effectively in the curriculum.

Progression

Discovery RE uses a 4 Step Enquiry method to explore RE. The key question for the enquiry is such that it demands an answer that weighs up 'evidence' and reaches a conclusion based on this. This necessitates children using their subject knowledge and applying it to the enquiry question, rather than this knowledge being an end in itself. Discovery RE focuses on critical thinking skills, on personal reflection into the child's own thoughts and feelings, on growing subject knowledge and nurturing spiritual development.

Step 1-Engagement

The human experience underpinning the key question is explored here within the children's own experience, whether that includes religion or not e.g. a human experience underpinning the question, 'What is the best way for a Sikh to show commitment to God?' is 'commitment', so lesson 1 aims to help all children resonate with the experience of 'commitment' in their own lives. If they can relate to this human experience they will be better able to understand the world of religion into which the enquiry takes them. Their personal resonance with this underpinning human experience acts as the BRIDGE into the world of religion (which may be very much outside of their experience).

Step 2- Investigation

The teacher guides the children through the enquiry, children gaining subject knowledge carefully selected to assist their thinking about the key question. Some of the enquiries have a lot of relevant content so teachers do need to be selective and not try to cover too much. Depth is more important. The acquisition of the factual information about the religion /belief system being studied is important, but not as an end in itself.

Step 3- Evaluation

This lesson draws together the children's learning and their conclusions about the key question of that enquiry. The expectations may well lend themselves to meaningful and less onerous report writing, providing evidence in children's books for their learning in each enquiry. The expectation is that the assessment activity sheets will be seen in conjunction with teacher observations of the children's work and responses throughout the enquiry. We believe that RE insights are not bound by literacy skills.

Step 4- Expression

Children are taken back to Step 1, their own experience, to reflect on how this enquiry might have influenced their own starting points and beliefs.

Throughout their years at Abbots Farm, children should build on their theology, philosophy and human and social science skills as guided by the Warwickshire SACRE in conjunction with adding to their knowledge every year about the main religions.

Teaching and Learning

Discovery RE brings together learning about and from religion, questioning and spiritual development in a comprehensive scheme of learning. Teaching strategies are varied and are mindful of preferred learning styles and the need for differentiation. Each enquiry starts from the children's own life experiences using these as a bridge into the investigation of the religion being studied.

Learning is assessed and children have opportunity to express their own thoughts and beliefs and empathise with believers of that religion or belief position.

Teaching and learning of RE should follow the Teaching and Learning policy i.e retrieval practice.

Cross-curricular links

RE links with many subjects through the development of their questioning and discussion skills. RE allows children to express themselves in many ways utilising lots of different subject skills.

English

Children use their English skills in RE for performances and for different ways of recording and sharing their ideas. Children can apply their reading and writing skills as well as their discussion skills.

Art

Art is used in RE lessons as a way for pupils to express themselves, their thoughts and feelings. Art is also shared with pupils in some lessons as it was often, and still is, used as a way to portray religion and religious beliefs and is therefore an excellent way to share learning and promote discussion.

PSHE

Pupils use skills developed through PSHE lessons in their RE lessons as they further develop empathy, a wider understanding of the world and an understanding and celebration of those different for themselves as well as the commonalities that exist. Children use the language learnt in PSHE lessons to enable them to share their thoughts, views and questions about the world.

Wider opportunities/enrichment opportunities in RE

During wider school RE events such as nationwide celebrations and festivals, we endeavour to invite local religious leaders and practitioners to lead assemblies or workshops. At key Christian festivals, children visit some of the local churches to celebrate and learn about the celebration.

Local links

One of our whole school curriculum aims is to ensure that children engage with and learn about their local community and the importance of places and people around them both today and in the past. In RE, this is promoted through links with local religious communities via visitors coming in to school and class visits to local places of worship.

Impact of the RE Curriculum

Assessment and Recording

Children record their learning in their RE books, which move through the school with them. Assessment of children's learning and acquisition of knowledge in RE is closely linked to the principles of our Assessment and Feedback policy and has strong formative teacher assessment in the classroom at its heart. Teachers constantly assess children's progress throughout lessons and intervene with appropriate feedback at the point of learning wherever possible to ensure the child can make progress within a sequence of lessons.

Monitoring and Review

The RE subject leader creates an annual action plan for the development of the subject and provide a review of the subject to the headteacher annually. They review the curriculum through pupil interviews to determine knowledge acquisition and provision for this as well as conducting lesson drop-ins when necessary. They may also review any saved evidence of work completed where possible.

Date last reviewed:

Reviewed and updated: March 2023 by J. Hartwell

Next review: March 2026