

Religious Education Policy

Review date March 2017

The Dayspring Trust aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian faith and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith, and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils. We believe that our Christian values spring from the two great commandments, 'Love God and love your neighbour'. We seek to live this out through the power of the Holy Spirit. St Paul reminds us in Galatians 5.22-23 that the fruit of the Spirit is "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control". These are also underpinned by the Old Testament injunction to "Do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God" Micah 6.8. These values rooted in the Christian Faith come as a package and we aim to embed them in the life of our academies in a worked out way. We recognise that at times we may highlight particular values to bring them into greater prominence within our academies and these are currently the five values of Forgiveness, Hope, Joy, Perseverance and Wisdom. We believe these values to be in accordance with British values springing from our Judeo-Christian roots. Collective worship will play a major and vital part in assisting with this process of embedding these values in the life our academies.

The Multi Academy Trust Members and Directors are aware of their responsibilities in law and are committed to the provision of an excellent education within its academies in accordance with our Anglican foundation. This is embraced in our Dayspring Trust vision statement:

- Forge a supportive and challenging family of academies
- Provide excellent education within a strong Christian community
- **Resource our pupils for wise and generous living**

In addition, each academy also has its own distinctive mission statement, flowing out from the vision statement of the Dayspring Trust.

At Ian Ramsey CE Academy:

"Together to learn, to grow, to serve."

This is embodied in scripture:

'Each of you should use whatever gifts you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in various forms.' 1. Peter 4.10

At Venerable Bede CE Academy:

"Soar to the heights together"

This is embodied in scripture:

'But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.' Isaiah 40:31

This policy has been developed to take into consideration our ethos as well as local and national policy and guidance.

Aims for RE

This policy fully incorporates the advice given by the Diocese of Durham, Board of Education RE Syllabus (Illuminating Pathways) as revised in 2013.

Therefore, this policy is committed to:

The aims of Religious Education in church schools are:

- To enable students to encounter Christianity as the religion that shaped British culture and heritage and influences the lives of millions of people today
- To enable students to learn about other major religions, their impact on culture and politics, art and history, and on the lives of their followers
- To develop understanding of religious faith as the search for and expression of truth
- To contribute to the development of students own spiritual / philosophical convictions, exploring and enriching their own faith and beliefs
- To add to pupils' understanding of British values

Aims for RE at the Venerable Bede CE Academy:

- Help students to develop knowledge and understanding of religion and faith
- Further students' personal growth and development through the study of the beliefs and values of Christianity and other faiths
- Contribute towards students' experiences of Christianity as a living faith
- Make the study of RE relevant, up to date and interesting

Therefore, the five broad aims of RE at the Venerable Bede CE Academy will offer students the opportunity to:

- take Christianity and religion seriously
- see the importance of religion in everyday life
- develop spiritually
- take part in the questions religion raises about life
- develop their own values and standards of behaviour

As a school we will offer the students access to RE through;

- creative learning experiences
- exploring their spirituality
- experiencing and discussing awe, wonder and mystery
- discussing and reflecting on their feelings, beliefs and opinions
- critically analysing the joys and pains of life
- listening to 'student voice' regarding how to improve RE
- developing an understanding of each student's ability and understanding

Distinctiveness of RE in a Church of England School

On one hand RE is about fulfilling the general aims set out above; helping students to develop their knowledge and understanding of religion and faith and furthering students' personal growth and development. This allows students to gain an understanding of themselves and the world and helps prepare them for adult life and responsibilities. This fits in with the school's aims of producing confident, well-adjusted members of the community, with a clear sense of right and wrong and to help students develop the spiritual, emotional, imaginative, intellectual and physical aspects of their lives.

On the other hand, Church Schools are different and should allow students to experience the faith and values central to the Church of England. Wherever possible, therefore, students will be given the opportunity to take part in the experience of the Church of England as a living faith; following Morning Prayer and worship, receiving Eucharist, speaking to the local vicar and visiting local churches and Durham Cathedral. This allows us to provide a distinctive Church of England Religious Education to the students whilst not alienating those students within different faith sets. Similarly, the curriculum at both Key Stages 3 and 4 will provide opportunities to look in depth at Christianity from an Anglican perspective. For example, in Year 7 during the line of enquiry 'Where do people go to find affirmation of their faith?' students will consider an Anglican dimension and in Year 10 students will study the Church of England view point on marriage and divorce for the topic of Relationships.

Aims of Religious Education

The aims of Religious Education in church schools are:

- To enable students to encounter Christianity as the religion that shaped British culture and heritage and influences the lives of millions of people today
- To enable students to learn about other major religions, their impact on culture and politics, art and history, and on the lives of their followers
- To develop understanding of religious faith as the search for and expression of truth
- To contribute to the development of students own spiritual / philosophical convictions, exploring and enriching their own faith and beliefs

The outcomes for students at the end of their education in church schools are that they are able to:

- Think theologically and explore ultimate questions
- Reflect critically on the truth claims of Christian belief
- Develop the skills to analyse, interpret and apply Biblical texts
- Recognise that faith is a particular way of understanding and responding to God and the world
- Analyse and explain the varied nature and traditions of the Christian community
- Make a well-informed response to Christianity
- Respect those of all faiths in their search for God
- Reflect critically on areas of shared belief and practice between different faiths
- Enrich and expand their understanding of truth
- Reflect critically and express their views on the human quest and destiny¹

¹ Adapted from Statement of Entitlement, National Society Council, 2011

RE – LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The Provision of Religious Education

Religious Education in Church Schools is governed by both the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts as well as by the Trust Deed. Religious Education must be provided for all students; it is therefore a compulsory subject at both Key Stage 3 and 4.

The Denominational Character of Religious Education

At Venerable Bede CE Academy, Religious Education has to be in accordance with the beliefs and traditions of the Church of England. The section of the 1988 Education Act which refers to the need for Religious Education to 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' or for Religious Education to be 'non-denominational' **do not apply** to Aided Schools. Therefore, at Venerable Bede CE Academy Religious Education will be taught with a distinctively Church of England flavour. However, at Key Stage 3 and 4 students will still learn about and learn from a range of principal world religions.

Parental Rights

Parents can withdraw their children from Religious Education as they can in any school and this provision is highlighted in the school prospectus. However, directors at Venerable Bede CE Academy have made it clear in their expectations that parents are committing themselves to their child's full participation in the Christian life of the school, including Religious Education and Worship. If a request is made for a student to be withdrawn from Religious Education or worship it must be made in writing, the Head of School will explore the reasons for the request and will seek to arrive at a suitable outcome for all.

It is important to note that at no time will any student be forced into accepting a belief system that they do not agree with. Students will be given the opportunity to reflect on their own faith, creating and developing their own belief system. Students will never be made to worship because it is an attitude of the heart focused on God. At Venerable Bede CE Academy students will be provided with a setting where they may worship God if they so wish.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Role of the Diocesan Board of Education

The Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 1991 (Section 2(1)(b)) lays down that one of the functions of a Diocesan Education Board shall be:

‘To promote or assist in the promotion of Religious Education and religious worship in schools in the Diocese’.

To this end the officers of the Board, the Director of Education and the Religious Education Adviser are happy to provide advice and guidance and generally to assist schools in this important area of their life.

Director’s Responsibilities

The Venerable Bede CE Academy Governing Body is responsible for determining the nature of Religious Education provided in its school, though it has to be in accordance with the Trust Deed. Therefore, this Diocesan Syllabus can only be advisory until a Governing Body adopts it, either in whole or in part. Governing Bodies are, of course, free to adopt another syllabus or to draw up their own.

Director’s should:

- Familiarise themselves with the trust deed and ensure its requirements are implemented; Appoint staff who are in sympathy with the aims and ethos of a church school; Develop, approve and implement a religious education policy; Ensure that religious education plays an important part in the life of the school; Secure adequate time allocation for the subject Monitor the provision for denominational education within the school’s budget so that sufficient resources are available for the provision of excellent religious education which is both challenging and exciting for all pupils.

The Executive Head Teacher and the Head of School, in conjunction with the Director’s should: Appoint a Head of RE and provide a job description; Allocate appropriate time for RE; Allocate an appropriate budget for RE; Monitor overall quality of provision for RE; Enable the Head of RE’s attendance at appropriate inset sessions; Allow, where possible, the Head of RE some non-teaching time for planning, monitoring and observing;

Senior Leadership RE Link should: -

- Monitor the overall effectiveness of RE within the school –
- Hold regular meetings with the Head of RE to discuss departmental and whole school issues
- Work with the Head of RE to ensure that the RE policy and schemes of work are relevant, up to date and effective

Head of RE, in conjunction with the Director's, Executive Head Teacher and the Head of School:

- Draw up an RE policy;
- Draw up schemes of work and support staff in their medium and short-term planning;
- Audit resources and manage their availability both in the school and further afield;
- Manage the RE budget;
- Attend appropriate inset sessions and disseminate information to colleagues;
- Provide/organise staff development sessions in this subject;
- Make connections between religious education and other areas of the curriculum;
- Ensure differentiation;
- Monitor, review and evaluate effectiveness of provision;

Teachers of RE should:

- Promote the Church of England ethos of the school
- Follow the aims for RE as set out in the RE policy
- Use schemes of work as drawn up by the Head of RE and department
- Utilise information and training given by the Head of RE and other colleagues

THE CONTRIBUTION OF RE TO THE SPIRITUAL. MORAL. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a church school is distinctive because these four aspects of the school curriculum are inextricably rooted in the reality of God the Holy Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Religious Education curriculum in a church school is the place where excellent and distinctive SMSC is seen most clearly.

Spiritual development

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful. Psalm 139.13-14

Spiritual development within RE at Venerable Bede CE Academy enriches and encourages the students' discovery of God the creator, of their 'inmost being' and of the wonder of the environment.

This is promoted through:

exploring their relationship with God and the sense that they are his children, unique and loved by him;

- exploring and experiencing prayer and worship from a variety of Christian traditions;
- giving thanks to God for all aspects of school life;
- discussing and reflecting upon key questions of meaning and truth such as the existence of God, the origins and purpose of the universe, good and evil, life after death;
- considering the value of human beings and their relationship with God, with one another and with the natural world;
- discovering how the creative and expressive arts enable spiritual development; • opportunities to discuss feelings and emotions openly;
- recognising and encouraging the use of personal and group gifts and talents;
- Opportunities to develop their gift of imagination and creativity;
- encouraging curiosity and questioning so that their own views and ideas on religious and spiritual issues can be developed within a secure environment where faith is valued;
- developing a sense of personal significance and belonging;
- encountering Christian fellowship.

Moral development

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12.2

Moral development in RE at Venerable Bede School is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, which offer students a secure foundation stone on which to make decisions and build their lives.

This is promoted through:

- developing a sense of right and wrong based on the teaching of Jesus Christ;
- recognising the values identified within the Bible: truth, justice, trust, love, peace, compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption;
- learning to follow a path through the conflicting demands of faith, family, peers, society, the media and the world of ideas;
- recognising the importance of personal integrity;
- developing mutual respect across racial and religious divides;
- recognising that people's rights also imply responsibilities;
- developing a sensitive conscience.

Social development

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples. John 13.34-35

Social development in RE at Venerable Bede CE Academy develops students' understanding of what it means to live in a Christian community where Jesus' command to love one another is put into practice.

This is promoted through:

- developing a sense of empathy, compassion and concern for others;
- building relationships within the school and between the school, the parish and the local community;
- considering how Christian beliefs affect decisions at local and national level;
- investigating social issues from the perspective of Christianity and of other faiths, recognising the common ground and diversity that exists between them;
- providing opportunities for pupils to articulate their own views on a range of current issues and to show respect for the opinions of others and a willingness to learn from their insights.

Cultural development

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3.28

Cultural development in RE at Venerable Bede CE Academy provides opportunities to develop an understanding of Christianity as a worldwide, multi-cultural faith that has an impact on the lives of millions of people.

This is promoted through:

- promoting an understanding of Christianity from a global perspective through encounters with people, literature and the creative arts from different cultures;
- exploring the diversity of Christianity worldwide with particular reference to the diversity of the Anglican community;
- considering the relationship between British and European culture and Christianity;
- appreciating the diversity of cultures within Britain.
- considering the other major world faiths.

RE AND CITIZENSHIP

Religious education can play a significant part in promoting citizenship at Venerable Bede CE Academy through:

- developing students' knowledge and understanding about the diversity of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding
- enabling students to think about topical spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues including the importance of resolving conflict fairly
- exploring the rights, responsibilities and duties of citizens locally, nationally and globally
- enabling students to justify and defend orally, and in writing, personal opinions about issues, problems and events.

RE AND PERSONAL SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Religious education can play a significant part in promoting personal, social and health education at Venerable Bede CE Academy through students:

- developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities by learning about what is fair and unfair, right and wrong and being encouraged to share their opinions
- developing a healthy, safer lifestyle by learning about religious beliefs and teachings on drug use and misuse, food and drink, leisure, relationships and human sexuality, learning about the purpose and value of religious beliefs and sensitivities in relation to sex education and enabling students to consider and express their own views
- developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people by learning about the diversity of different ethnic and religious groups and the destructive power of prejudice, challenging racism, discrimination, offending behaviour and bullying, being able to talk about relationships and feelings, considering issues of marriage and family life and meeting and encountering people whose beliefs, views and lifestyles are different from their own.

HOW RE CONTRIBUTES TO ENSURING THAT EVERY CHILD MATTERS

Every Child Matters: Change for Children is a strategic approach to the wellbeing of children and young people from birth to age 19. The Government's aim is for every child whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well being

• RE encourages children to be healthy through:

- emphasising the promotion of students' self-worth and the importance of learning about religious beliefs and teachings on drug use and misuse, relationships and sexuality.
- holistic health including a spiritual dimension –through stilling, reflection, understanding prayer and meditation and reasoned debate.

• RE encourages children to stay safe by:

- highlighting the importance of developing good relationships and respecting differences between people.
- encouraging students by learning about the diversity of religious and ethnic groups to talk about relationships and feelings.
- reflecting on the value of security gained from family life, from religious community and ritual, from faith in the transcendent and from other sources.
- enabling students to learn about the destructive power of prejudice, racism, offending behaviour and bullying.
- encouraging students to be increasingly able to take responsibility for who and what they are.
- helping them to consider who it is safe or wise to be influenced by or to follow – who should be their role models?

• RE encourages children to enjoy and achieve by:

- offering opportunities for personal and spiritual development. RE can encourage key attitudes such as self-awareness, respect for all, appreciation and wonder and open mindedness.
- provoking challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God and self, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human.
- encountering living faith (e.g. through visits and visitors) and being given opportunities to ask and develop answers to their own questions of meaning and purpose.
- setting clear and challenging targets and assessment criteria which enables all students to achieve appropriately.
- creating an inclusive curriculum that inspires all students including those with special needs.

- **RE encourages children to make a positive contribution by:**

- promoting racial and interfaith harmony and respect for all, combating prejudice and discrimination, contributing positively to community cohesion and promoting awareness of how inter faith cooperation can support the pursuit of the common good.
- emphasising the importance of students developing the knowledge and understanding of religion in the community, the place of interfaith dialogue, rights and responsibilities, ethics, values and commitments and developing a sense of conscience.
- enabling the students to explore the question of identity, community and belonging in religions and develop positive views of their own.
- encouraging students to evaluate the influence of religious rules and codes for living.
- encouraging open mindedness in handling questions to which people have different answers.

- **RE encourages children to achieve economic well-being by:**

- emphasising the importance of students' social issues from religious perspectives and considering how religious beliefs might lead to particular actions and concerns.
- emphasising the importance of students learning about how religions and beliefs respond to global issues of human rights, fairness, social justice and the importance of the environment.
- giving opportunities to consider and sometimes challenge the meaning of 'economic well-being' through studying the responses of faith to money, wealth, generosity and responsibility.
- the rising conflicts and tensions in our world raising powerful questions for RE in promoting respect through understanding and combating prejudice.
- developing attitudes such as respect, open mindedness, self-awareness and appreciation/wonder.
- equipping our children to be sensitive, reflective, discerning, knowledgeable and informed citizens in the increasingly complex world in which they live.

RE AND COMMUNITY COHESION

From September 2007 schools have been under the new duty to promote community cohesion, with Ofsted reporting on it from September 2008.

What is community cohesion?

“By community cohesion, we mean working towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people’s backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in wider communities.”

“Cohesion is therefore about how to avoid the corrosive effects of intolerance and harassment; how to build a mutual civility among different groups and to ensure respect for diversity alongside a commitment to common and shared bonds.”

Shalom “a word used again and again in the Bible of God’s intention for a neighbourhood, a community, a society, where each matters, is treasured, belongs and is valued.” Jim Punton (1993) The Messiah People

The skills and values at the heart of the RE curriculum support Community Cohesion.

For example:

- Sense of belonging for all communities
- Diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, faith and cultures values are appreciated and valued
- Similar life opportunities available for all
- Strong positive relationships in schools and the wider community
- Work against poverty and injustice

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND INSPECTION (SIAMS –Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools)

The principal objective of SIAMS inspection is to evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school, and how well the distinctive Christian character and ethos of the school ensure the development and achievement of the whole child or young person.

This is evaluated through four core questions:

- How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?
- What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?
- How effective is the Religious Education? (*in VA schools and academies*)
- How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?

Church schools will employ a variety of strategies and styles appropriate to, and reflective of, their particular context in order to be distinctively and effectively Christian in their character and ethos. SIAMS inspectors therefore do not look for a set template of what a church school should be like, but rather take the particular context of the school into account and base their evaluation on the outcomes rather than the process.

• **How RE contributes to distinctive Christian character of school and honours the Anglican tradition.**

- The management and leadership of the subject
- **Quality of school self-evaluation of subject**

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND SELF EVALUATION IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

As part of their preparation for inspection, heads of department in conjunction with appropriate staff should consider:

- how outcomes/results in religious education compare with national expectations for all schools and for religious education in Anglican schools;
- the effectiveness of the school's strategies for setting appropriate targets for improvement;
- how well the school analyses information about how different groups perform in religious education including gender groups, and those from different ethnic backgrounds and those whose home language is not English;
- the effectiveness of the school's strategies for monitoring progress and standards in relation to diocesan and national requirements and expectations.

In evaluating the school's approach to teaching and learning in Religious Education, consideration should be given to how effectively teachers demonstrate:

- knowledge and understanding of the subject and its particular relationship to the school's Christian foundation;
- effective approaches to planning, structuring and sequencing learning about religions and learning from religion;
- inclusive approaches to learning
- strategies for teaching and learning which challenge, interest, encourage and engage pupils
- an approach to resources which draws on links between school, church and the wider community;
- a thorough and constructive approach to assessment which uses assessment to inform planning and target setting;
- strategies for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Evaluation of the RE policy

It is essential that this RE policy is kept up to date and relevant. When areas within the RE department are changed or improved this policy should be amended accordingly.

Departmental meetings should also be used to assess the effectiveness of the strategies and systems outlined in this policy.

At the end of each academic year this policy should also be evaluated and the policy should be made accurate ready for the next academic year.