

Stanford Infant School Religious Education Policy

Aims and objectives

Religious education enables children to investigate and reflect on some of the most fundamental questions asked by people. At Stanford Infant School we develop the children's knowledge and understanding of some of the major world faiths, and we address the fundamental questions in life, for example, the meaning of life and the existence of a divine spirit. Children reflect on what it means to have a faith and to develop their own spiritual knowledge and understanding. We help the children learn *from* religions as well as *about* religions.

The aims of religious education are to help children:

- develop an awareness of spiritual and moral issues in life experiences;
- develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world religions and value systems found in Britain;
- develop an understanding of what it means to be committed to a religious tradition;
- be able to reflect on their own experiences and to develop a personal response to the fundamental questions of life;
- develop an understanding of religious traditions and to appreciate the cultural differences in Britain today;
- develop investigative and research skills and to enable them to make reasoned judgements about religious issues;
- have respect for other peoples' views and to celebrate the diversity in society.

The legal position of religious education

Our school curriculum for religious education meets the requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). 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 important part of our school's spiritual, moral and social teaching. It also promotes education for citizenship. Our school RE curriculum is based on the Brighton and Hove LEA's Agreed Syllabus. 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.

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.

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 Christmas, Divali, Hanukah and Eid ul Fitr etc to develop their religious thinking.

Children carry out research into religious topics. They study particular religious faiths and also compare the religious views of different faith groups on topics such as naming ceremonies or festivals. Children discuss religious and moral issues and work individually or in groups.

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

- setting common tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses;
- providing resources of different complexity, adapted to the ability of the child;
- using classroom assistants and other adults as available to support the work of individuals or groups of children.

Curriculum planning in religious education

We plan our religious education curriculum in accordance with the Brighton and Hove LEA's Agreed Syllabus. Some of the QCA units of work will be incorporated into the revised scheme of work. 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 progression built into the scheme of work offers the children an increasing challenge as they move through the school.

Our medium-term plans give details of each unit of work for each term. The RE subject leader keeps and reviews these plans on a regular basis.

The year group teams write the plans for each lesson and list the specific learning objectives for that lesson. They keep these individual plans and discuss them on an informal basis with the RE subject leader.

Foundation Stage

We teach religious education to all children in the school, including those in the reception class.

In reception classes, religious education is an integral part of the topic work covered during the year. As the reception class is part of the Foundation Stage of the National Curriculum, 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.

Contribution of religious education to the teaching of other subjects

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 the Literacy Hour have religious themes or content, which encourages discussion and this, is our way of promoting the skills of speaking and listening. We also encourage the children to write letters and record information in order to develop their writing ability.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

ICT can be used where appropriate in religious education. The children can use ICT to present a range of different pieces of information, for example using a digital camera, word processing and using the Internet.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship

Through our religious education 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, drugs, smoking 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 pluralistic society.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Through teaching religious education in our school, we provide opportunities for spiritual development. Children consider and respond to questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life. We help them to recognise the difference between right and wrong through the study of moral and ethical questions. We enhance their social development by helping them to build a sense of identity in a multicultural society. Children explore issues of religious faith and values and, in so doing; they develop their knowledge and understanding of the cultural context of their own lives.

Teaching religious education to children with special needs

In our school we teach RE to all children, whatever their ability. The teaching of RE is a vital part of our school curriculum policy, which states that we provide a broad and balanced education for all our children. When teaching RE we ensure that we provide learning opportunities matched to the needs of children with learning difficulties. We take into account the targets set for individual children in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Assessment and recording

At present we assess children's work in religious education by making informal judgements as we observe them during lessons. We mark a piece of work once it has been completed and comment as necessary. On completion of a unit of work, a summary judgement about the work of the class in relation to the outcomes of this unit should be made. If a child's progress differs markedly from that of the rest of the class, teachers should make a note of this, and of the reasons for the difference.

The RE subject leader is building up a portfolio of children's work. This will demonstrate the expected level of achievement in RE in each year of the school.

Resources

We have resources in our school to be able to teach all our religious education teaching units. Year groups have resources for teaching each unit of work. We have collections of religious artefacts, which we use to enrich teaching in religious education. We have a supply of RE topic books. Each class has a copy of 'What I believe' in their class collection to use as starting points for RE work. We have video and DVD resources, and access to Espresso to resource RE teaching.

Resources are in two main areas – labelled drawers in the Resource room, that are topic specific, and more generic resources in the cupboard in the Year two activity area.

Monitoring and review

The RE subject manager is responsible for monitoring the standards of the children's work and the quality of the teaching in religious education. The subject manger is also responsible for supporting colleagues in the teaching of religious education, for being informed about current developments in the subject, and for providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school. Strengths and weaknesses in the subject and areas for further improvement are discussed in curriculum and performance management meetings with the SLT.

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