

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

THE LEGAL POSITION

The Bridges Federation, in accordance with the 1988 Education Reform Act and the National Curriculum 2014, provides Religious Education for all pupils registered at the school. Religious Education is part of the basic curriculum but not part of the National Curriculum because it is taught in accordance with a locally agreed syllabus (in our case *Southwark*). Religious Education has the same status and importance as any other subject and the same high standards are applied to Religious Education as to all other subjects. It has clear links with other curriculum areas, such as PSHE and also with our SMSC provision. (See our Learning and Teaching policy and Curriculum Framework)

VISION

RE at the Bridges Federation is inquiry based, where deep questions about meaning and purpose in life from beginning to end are tackled. It allows time for individual reflection whilst exploring the principal religions Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and other worldviews such as Humanism. RE learning allows the children to think about how they affect the fabric of personal and social life; it identifies the reality of evil, injustice and suffering and it opens up visions of how life for all the world's citizens may be transformed by honesty and goodness.

RE at the Bridges Federation promotes the values of understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups. We believe it is important for young people to acquire a better understanding of the role that religions play in today's diverse world. The need for such education will continue to grow as different cultures and identities interact with each other through travel, commerce, media or migration.

THE AIMS

The aims of Religious Education are drawn from the 2018 Southwark Agreed Syllabus and promotes the spiritual, moral, social, emotional, cultural and intellectual development of pupils and of society by encouraging an exploration of and response to those aspects of religion and human experience which raise fundamental questions of belief and value. The aim of the syllabus is clear in setting out RE as an educational activity. In a diverse community such as Southwark, in which there are many religious stances, and stances about religion, this aim should be grounded in the following principles:

Learn about and understand a range of religions and worldviews, so that they can:

- describe, explain and analyse beliefs and practices, recognising the diversity which exists within and between communities and amongst individuals;
- identify, investigate and respond to questions posed, and responses offered by some of the sources of wisdom found in religions and worldviews;

- appreciate and appraise the nature, significance and impact of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.

Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews, so that they can:

- explain reasonably their ideas about how beliefs, practices and forms of expression influence individuals and communities;
- express with increasing discernment their personal reflections and critical responses to questions and teachings about identity, diversity, meaning and value, including ethical issues;
- appreciate and appraise varied dimensions of religion or a worldview.

Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews, so that they can:

- find out about and investigate key concepts and questions of belonging, meaning purpose and truth, responding creatively;
- enquire into what enables different individuals and communities to live together respectfully for the wellbeing of all;
- articulate beliefs, values and commitments clearly in order to explain why they may be important in their own and other people's lives.

RE should therefore:

- encourage pupils to have confidence in their own growing sense of identity as well as valuing and respecting diversity in others;
- help pupils in their search for meaning and purpose in life;
- provoke challenging questions about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs, the self, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human;
- teach pupils to develop respect for others, including people of different faiths and beliefs, and helps challenge prejudice;
- neither promote nor undermine any particular religious, spiritual or secular stance;
- be accessible to pupils and teachers of any religious stance or none;
- encourage pupils to be confident and able to safely express their views and opinions. It encourages empathy, generosity and compassion.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Religious Education allows for balance in teaching about different faiths, and between learning about religions and learning from them. It provides pupils with opportunities to explore their own thinking and beliefs, relating those to what they learn about a range of religious perspectives, and reflecting on their learning. Religious education is open to female and male pupils, believers of

principal religious traditions, minority faiths, ethnic, racial or cultural groups, those who are unsure and those who have no faith. Belief on the part of pupils is in no way assumed by the syllabus, nor are pupils penalised if they have no faith. RE is also open to pupils with disabilities, special educational needs, higher and lower achievers and to more able and talented pupils.

Religious education makes a significant contribution to inclusion, particularly in its focus on promoting respect for all. Effective inclusion involves teaching a lively, stimulating RE curriculum that: builds on and is enriched by the differing experiences that pupils bring; and meets all pupils' learning needs including those with learning difficulties, those who are more able and talented, boys and girls, pupils for whom English is an additional language, pupils from all religious and secular communities and pupils from a wide range of ethnic groups and diverse family backgrounds.

Adaptations will be made to enable all pupils to access the RE curriculum (see Inclusion policy). This includes provision for those with special educational needs and for those identified as more able in this area.

APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

The 2018 Southwark Agreed Syllabus is used as a basis for the teaching of RE. Teachers adapt the scheme of work for the needs and experiences of the children in their class.

Good RE teaching and learning brings together the processes of ***learning about*** and ***expressing*** and ***deploying skills*** around the study of religion and worldviews. Skills are explicitly taught and used to deepen the knowledge and understanding of religion and worldviews.

The process of knowing about and understanding religion and worldviews:

- focuses on those strands or aspects of religion and human experience that seeks to understand beliefs, teaching and sources, practices and ways of life and forms of expression;
- consists of more than information-gathering in that it includes identifying the underlying concepts and themes; and
- enables pupils to engage with the material through developing a range of identifiable skills.

The process of expressing and communicating ideas about religion and worldviews:

- encourages pupils to make links between their learning about and their own personal experiences through identity and belonging, meaning, purpose and truth and values and commitments;
- enables pupils to develop their thinking about their own and others' experiences so that they are enabled to develop in their thinking about their own experiences in life, as they compare their experiences with those of others;

- encourages pupils to express their responses in a range of forms and styles (representational, symbolic, etc.); and
- encourages pupils to be sensitive to a range of human responses that might differ from their own.

The process of gaining and deploying skills needed for the study of religion and worldviews:

- encourages pupils to use higher order skills in their work and think creatively and deeply about religion and world views; and
- enables pupils to make links between other areas of the curriculum.

<u>Attitudes and qualities that successful RE teaching and learning should encourage and foster in both teachers and pupils:</u>	<u>Such attitudes and qualities will be expressed in a range of ways including:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-awareness; • curiosity; • respect for all; • sensitivity towards and understanding of others; • open-mindedness; • trust; • community; and • appreciation and wonder. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an awareness of one's own developing views and perceptions; • a curiosity about the world of other people and an active interest in how they communicate their beliefs and values; • a willingness to respect the values and beliefs of others; • a willingness to take part in the human search for truth, purpose and meaning; and • a fascination with how people respond to those deep questions which affect the way in which they approach and influence their lives. • the promotion of lifelong learning.

Throughout the year children will be made aware of significant religious festivals. Some of these will be celebrated in school. Sometimes these will be shared in phase assemblies or speciality weeks.

In each year group, units of work that focus on Christianity (no more than two per year) will be delivered by a trained educator from 'London City Mission' who we work in partnership with. Class teachers are present and involved in each lesson. The units covered come from the 2018 Southwark Agreed Syllabus.

We encourage using the opportunity to visit different religious places of worship to enhance learning and understanding of the main religions. This gives the children the chance to see inside places of worship; learn about collective worship of different kinds; draw upon similarities and differences within religions and worldviews; and ask direct questions to religious leaders.

Each class will have an RE display, showcasing the big overarching question of the year and the unit of learning that the class is studying. This may include key vocabulary, books, images, photographs, artefacts and children's work.

ASSESSMENT, RECORDING AND REPORTING

Reporting takes place annually to parents. This includes statements about what areas have been covered, both content and concepts, through the termly topic plan. It is important to be aware of a child's developing confidence in discussing areas of personal concern or belief. Teachers record children who are exceeding or not yet meeting the expectations for each unit of work. The syllabus used includes assessment criteria.

WITHDRAWAL FROM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Parents have the statutory right to withdraw their child from Religious Education provided they give written notification to the school. The 2018 Southwark Agreed Syllabus has been constructed in the hope that parents will rarely, if ever, wish to exercise their right of withdrawal, and will be prepared to explore with the school ways in which their child can receive their RE education. Teachers have a right not to teach the subject but it is hoped that teachers, too, will recognise the educational validity of RE and will feel drawn to meet its professional challenges.