



**Villa Real School**  
*together we achieve*

# Religious Education Policy

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **The Purpose of Religious Education**

Religious Education (RE) is a subject that offers a rigorous academic experience and contributes significantly to pupils/students' overall knowledge. It also provides opportunities for external accreditation, such as the ASDAN Towards Independence, ASDAN Short Courses or NOCN Entry Level Award in General Religious Education (Entry Level 3). RE is an essential part of pupils/students' education as it encourages critical thinking by asking challenging questions about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human.

In Religious Education, pupils/students are taught about both religious and non-religious worldviews, with the aim of exploring and considering different answers to life's big questions. They develop skills in interpreting, analysing, evaluating, and responding to the claims made by these worldviews. Pupils/students also learn how to express their own insights in a respectful manner, whether they agree or disagree with others. Through this teaching, pupils gain knowledge and understanding of the terms 'religion' and 'worldview', as well as systematic knowledge of a variety of religious and non-religious worldviews. They come to appreciate that worldviews are complex and diverse and have a significant impact on individuals, communities, societies, and cultures.

Religious Education (RE) provides chances for self-reflection and encourages the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural growth of pupils/students. By examining the relevance of their learning to themselves and others, pupils/students become more self-aware. They can explore their own beliefs, ideas, feelings, experiences, and values in the context of what they have learned. RE also fosters empathy and respect, helping pupils/students develop a sense of identity and belonging. It also promotes respect for diversity, allowing pupils/students to appreciate the right of others to hold different beliefs, values, and ideas.

It is important for pupils/students to develop a skill for engaging in constructive dialogue, which will enable them to participate positively in our diverse society with its varying religious and non-religious views. This skill will equip them to handle controversial topics with a positive approach, manage differences of belief and challenge stereotypes and prejudices.

Religious Education (RE) plays a crucial role in promoting good citizenship at the local, national, and global levels. It helps foster mutual respect and tolerance towards different faiths and beliefs, which are fundamental values of British society. Additionally, it equips pupils/students with the skills they need to thrive in modern Britain.

### **Aims of Religious Education**

The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education aims to ensure that pupils/students:

- Develop deepening knowledge and understanding about a range of religious and nonreligious worldviews so that they can: -
  - Describe and explain beliefs and theological concepts
  - Describe and explain some sources of authority and teachings within and across religious and non-religious traditions
  - Describe and explain ways in which beliefs are expressed
  - Know and understand the significance and impact of beliefs and practices on individuals, communities and societies
  - Connect these into a coherent framework of beliefs and practices
- Gain and deploy a deepening understanding of specialist vocabulary and terms
- Know and understand about religious diversity within the region, as well as nationally and globally
- Know and understand how religion can be defined and what is meant by the term “religious and non-religious worldviews”, and with increasing clarity, know that these worldviews are complex, diverse and plural
- Gain and deploy skills that enable critical thinking and enquiry in relation to the material they study
- Reflect on their own thoughts, feelings, experiences, ideas, values and beliefs with increasing discernment

The Agreed Syllabus is designed to ensure that pupils/students learn about a range of religious and nonreligious worldviews throughout their school life. The word ‘worldview’ refers to the philosophy of life or approach to life, which structures how an individual understands truth and the nature of reality, the meaning and purpose of life and his or her own place in the world.

The Agreed Syllabus explores the idea of 'worldview' to help us understand how institutions create meaning and influence people's perceptions of the world and their position in it. It covers a range of belief systems, such as Christianity, Hinduism, and Judaism, as well as non-religious worldviews like Humanism.

## **The legal requirements for Religious Education**

All pupils and students registered in maintained schools, including those in Reception classes and the Sixth Form, are required to receive Religious Education (RE). RE is part of the basic curriculum and must be taught alongside the National Curriculum in all maintained schools. Except for voluntary aided schools with a religious character, all maintained schools must teach RE according to a locally agreed syllabus, which is a statutory requirement.

Every Local Authority (LA) is required to have a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) that provides advice on RE-related matters. The SACRE has the authority to request a review of the Agreed Syllabus whenever necessary. Moreover, LAs are mandated to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) every five years to re-examine the Agreed Syllabus.

According to the Education Act of 1996, the Agreed Syllabus should acknowledge that the majority of religious traditions in Great Britain are Christian while also considering the teachings and practices of other major religions represented in the country. The syllabus should be impartial and not aimed at persuading pupils/students to adopt a particular religion or belief. It is acceptable to teach about different denominations. The Agreed Syllabus outlines the topics that students should learn, and the benchmark expectations define the level of performance that is expected at different ages.

It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to make sure that Religious Education (RE) is provided in compliance with the Agreed Syllabus. The school should allocate enough time and resources to RE to meet the legal requirements. In the case of Local Authority (LA) maintained schools, both the governing body and the LA must fulfil their duties to ensure the provision of RE.

Community and foundation Special Schools must follow the legal requirements to provide RE for every pupil, as far as practicable. Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 Section 71 (7). Regulation 5A, Education (Special Educational Needs), Regulation 20101, SI 2001/3455

## **Withdrawal from Religious Education – Parents**

Parents can withdraw their child from RE by scheduling an appointment with the Head Teacher or RE coordinator.

### **Withdrawal from Religious Education – Teachers**

*'Teachers have the right to withdraw from the teaching of RE. However, this does not apply to teachers who have been specifically employed to teach or lead RE. If a teacher wishes to withdraw from the teaching of RE, a letter requesting this must be submitted to the Head Teacher and its chair of governors. If a teacher withdraws from the teaching of RE, the school must still make provisions for the pupils to receive their entitlement to RE.'* (Guidance dealing with withdrawal from RE, NATRE p3 2020)

### **Planning Guidance for Special Schools**

Religious Education can be delivered in a variety of ways, for example, a weekly lesson, an afternoon of Religious Education every few weeks, or a full day of Religious Education (this enables a visit to take place or faith members to visit school). Villa Real School plans Religious Education, which allows for continuity and progression as appropriate. Units of work may appear more than once in order to allow for consolidation of learning. Exemplar plans in the Agreed Syllabus may be used and adapted to meet the needs of pupils/students. Religious Education is a discrete subject area within the formal curriculum. Whilst it supports other areas of the formal and broader curriculum, Villa Real School is aware of its distinctive nature.

### **Religious Education and the Promotion of British Values**

At Villa Real School, the promotion of fundamental British Values is a key aspect of pupils/students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Religious Education plays a significant role in this by providing opportunities for pupils/students to explore the individual's right to freedom of belief and expression. Visits to places of worship and interactions with visitors from various religious and non-religious backgrounds further facilitate a diverse and inclusive learning environment.

### **The Contribution of Religious Education to Literacy**

Religious Education makes a significant contribution to pupils'/students' wider literacy. In Villa Real School, teachers plan opportunities which lead to discussion, debate and critical evaluation; they model and encourage the use of complex specialist vocabulary and terms appropriate for the age and ability of pupils/students.

## **Religious Education and the whole school curriculum**

Religious education (RE) is a crucial component of the school curriculum and plays an important role in providing a well-rounded and comprehensive education for all pupils/students. It fosters a positive attitude towards diverse beliefs, ideas, experiences, feelings, and values, creating a classroom environment that acknowledges and honours differences. All students are entitled to this inclusive and respectful curriculum.

RE, therefore, contributes to the development of the following:

- Economic – as pupils/students develop skills in RE for adult life, employment and lifelong learning.
- Cultural – as pupils/students develop an understanding of how religious traditions contribute to the cultural heritage in all its diversity.
- Social – as pupils/students develop an understanding of how religious identity and belonging are expressed and consider their own participation in groups and communities.
- Personal – as pupils/students reflect on their own spiritual and moral ideas and those of others.

Villa Real School is implementing the SAPERE program, "Thinking Together in Science and RE". This program aims to assist Religious Education pupils/students and teachers in using Philosophy for Children (P4C) as a pedagogical tool to explore the philosophical aspects of RE.

In the subject of RE, pupils/students will develop the skills to generate and analyse thought-provoking questions and discover the essential connections between related concepts. Through consistent practice in P4C, pupils/students will be able to confidently initiate and engage in intellectually stimulating conversations, leading to a more profound understanding of the world around them.

## **The Fundamentals of Religious Education**

RE is based on three elements:

1. Knowledge and understanding – is about what religion is and the impact it has on individuals and communities. It involves investigation of and enquiry into the nature of religion and beliefs through the four RE concepts. Belief, Authority, Expression of Belief and Impact of Belief.
2. Critical thinking – requires pupils/students to use reason to analyse and evaluate the claims that religions make. Critical thinking in RE is

accessible and can be formally assessed by the quality of their ability to analyse various viewpoints, explain or justify their opinion and evaluate the opinions of others.

3. Personal reflection – this develops pupils'/students' ability to reflect on religion in relation to their own beliefs, values and experiences and the influence of these on their daily life, attitudes and actions. Pupils/students can make personal progress through reflection but this should not be assessed.

Four concepts:

1. Belief – What do people believe? Questions of meaning, purpose and truth. Key beliefs of individuals and religious communities.
2. Authority – How do people know what to believe and how to act? Questions about the importance of holy books, founders, leaders, teachings, tradition, and spiritual encounters as sources of authority.
3. Expression of belief – How do people express beliefs, feelings and commitment through worship? What beliefs do they express? Differing forms of expression, how identity belonging and commitment are expressed through ceremonies, rituals and symbols.
4. Impact of belief – How do belief and worship affect what people feel and think and how they act and behave? Identity, belonging, and commitment expressed. Values, attitudes and actions are affected by beliefs. Differing views on the impact of faith. Controversial issues affecting individuals, local and global communities.

Each concept conveys a fundamental idea for understanding how religion works as well as being distinctive, also relates to other concepts and is capable of exploration at different levels and depths.

Five types of enquiry questions:

1. Philosophical questions – These are ultimate questions of meaning, purpose and truth.
2. Theological questions – These questions are about the particular belief of faith traditions.
3. Ethical questions – These are the questions about people's values and actions and how many moral decisions are made as a result of religious beliefs. Ethical questions may focus on particular moral issues and the religious and non-religious responses to these.
4. Sociological questions – These are questions about the impact of religion on society and the role of religion in communities, both locally and globally.

5. Phenomenological questions – These are questions that focus on how the beliefs of a religion are expressed in practice and ways in which the beliefs make a difference in the lives of individuals and communities.

## **Curriculum**

Religious Education at Villa Real School is taught using a modular approach, following the New Durham Agreed Syllabus 2020. Christianity is studied in Key Stage 1, while Christianity and Hinduism are studied in Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 3, Christianity and Judaism are studied to promote breadth in topics. Villa Real has developed a unique personalised curriculum to provide individualised learning based on the National Curriculum and accreditation, ensuring all students benefit.

This covers the 4 areas of REAL –

R- Regulation

E- Emotional Well-being

A-Access to the World

L- Learning

This ensures pupils/students are challenged to be as prepared as they can be to access the real World. Villa Real's curriculum is designed around four interlinking pathways.

Pathway 1 is a play-based and sensory curriculum for Early Years Foundation Stage learners. Progress is assessed using Development Matters advice and the reformed Statutory Framework for the EYFS.

Pathway 2 involves transitioning to a curriculum that emphasises exploration and engagement. Pupils/students will be evaluated based on actual progress and learning achieved through Engagement Steps or Progression Steps. This curriculum is available to students in years 1-9. Those evaluated using Engagement Steps will also make use of the Engagement Model.

Pathway 3 is called "Moving Up" and offers an academic curriculum that supports lifelong learning and addresses the specific needs of pupils/students. Progress and learning will be assessed using Progression Steps, ensuring accurate evaluation. This curriculum is available to pupils/students in year 1 through year 9.

Starting from September 2020, the Engagement Model is mandatory for all pupils and students who are working below the Pre-Key Stage Standards. At



Villa Real School, the B-Squared assessment tool is used to track attainment and progress, in addition to Engagement Model observations.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage**

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), religion is taught as part of class topics or themes. The students are introduced to the concept of belonging, special people, books, times, places, and objects that are related to different religions. They also visit places of worship to learn more about them. The pupils/students are encouraged to ask questions, use their imagination, and be curious about the world around them. The progress of their work is recorded, monitored, and assessed in Early Years Journals and on Earwig.

### **Key Stage 1**

Pupils/students will learn about the beliefs and practices of a particular religion, with a focus on Christianity. Throughout this learning process, they will have opportunities to share their own thoughts and feelings. Religious education (RE) is taught every year of Key Stage 1, with a recommended 36 hours per year.

### **Key Stage 2**

Pupils/students will deepen their factual knowledge of Christian and Hindu beliefs and practices, building on prior learning. Approximately 45 hours per year are recommended.

### **Key Stage 3**

As pupils/students' progress, they may start to question the significance of religion and approach it with more scrutiny. In KS3, they will expand upon what they learned in KS2 and gain a deeper understanding of the beliefs and characteristics of Christianity and Judaism. It is suggested that approximately 45 hours per year is dedicated to this subject.

### **14-19**

During this stage of education, pupils and students are taught Religious Education (RE) using accredited qualifications such as ASDAN Towards Independence, ASDAN Short Courses in Beliefs and Values, and/or the NOCN

Entry Level Award in General Religious Education (Entry Level 3). They are given enough time in the curriculum to cover the accreditation requirements so that they can make progress in line with their age and ability. It is important to note that RE is a compulsory subject for all pupils and students in school Sixth Forms. In SEND Schools, the ideal time to teach RE may vary depending on the professional judgement of the class teachers. They aim to plan RE lessons that promote continuity, progression, accessibility, and relevance for all pupils/students regardless of age or ability. Some pupils/students may be on a sensory-based RE program, which covers the major religions. At Villa Real School, teachers use the B-squared assessment method.

### **Development**

Our policy undergoes annual review through discussions with the Senior Leadership Team, RE co-ordinator, teaching and teaching support staff, pupils/students, parents, carers, governors, advisory staff, and external partners, including the Local Authority and National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE).

### **Implementation - Management**

The RE coordinator will oversee the delivery of Religious Education in all Key Stages along with the Senior Leadership Team.

### **Staffing**

All staff, including class teachers, curriculum subject teachers, and support staff, will contribute to the Religious Education (RE) program. The RE Coordinator will plan, monitor, and evaluate the program in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team.

### **Partnerships**

The School has partnerships with the following venues and or learning providers:

Newton Hall Baptist Church  
Blackhill Baptist Church  
Food Bank Consett  
Consett Christ Church  
Jesmond Synagogue  
Saint Patricks Church  
Durham Cathedral

Hexham Abbey  
Salvation Army  
St. Ives Church Leadgate  
Hindu Temple Newcastle  
Bede's World Jarrow  
Newcastle Reform Synagogue  
Gateshead Hebrew Congregation  
County Durham Christian Life Centre

### **Resources**

Funding for Religious Education is allocated annually based on school priorities and needs, with responsibility for resource deployment falling to the Co-ordinator.

### **Professional development**

The coordinator in charge of Religious Education has completed appropriate training and professional development to effectively handle their responsibilities. They will participate in all relevant training opportunities and network meetings to stay up-to-date with knowledge and skills and share information regarding Religious Education with the school through meetings, briefings, and staff training.

Every year, school staff members have access to updated information and training opportunities. The school frequently assesses the training needs of all staff members, and particularly for Religious Education (RE) related topics, the Deputy Head or Head Teacher identifies the necessary training. The school makes every effort to provide training within a reasonable time frame.

### **Monitoring, review and evaluation**

The school gathers information on the destinations of its pupils/students and seeks feedback from both students and parents/carers to inform its program. External providers are reviewed by the Local Authority, and the RE program of the school is reviewed annually. A report on the review is submitted to the Head Teacher and Governors.