



# St Thomas the Martyr C E Primary School

## Religious Education Policy

St Thomas the Martyr is a Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School and we therefore aim for the Religious Education to be of the highest standard, reflecting the school's values and philosophy.

Our mission statement sets out our key values:

We develop positive relationships that sustain, nurture and encourage our Christian ethos to enhance outcomes as we grow and achieve together, supporting our precious children as they thrive with energy, passion and resilience to be the best they can be.

“May all that we do be done with love.”

I Corinthians 16 v 14

At St Thomas the Martyr we strive to provide a caring Christian community.

We seek to provide a school experience, which is full of creativity, challenge, wonder, and fun where achievement of all kinds is recognised and celebrated.

Through a stimulating, challenging curriculum and working in partnership with parents, Governors, the church and wider community we work hard to ensure our children reach their full potential.

Christian values and spirituality are at the heart of all aspects of school life. Through them children, learn to work well together and develop skills and attitudes to become confident, responsible individuals with a love of learning able to make a positive contribution to the world.

We have worked closely with parents, children, Governors and staff to identify our core Christian values; kindness, service, perseverance, respect, friendship and fellowship, forgiveness and trust.

It is our aim to provide a secure and happy environment where all the children are given full opportunity to develop the abilities they possess, allowing them to fulfil their potential and to make a positive contribution to the world around them. The child's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is key to achieving this aim and the role of Religious Education has a major contribution to make to this development.

The management of Religious Education is a distinctive role of the Governors and Head teacher. It is delivered in accordance with the Trust Deed of the school and the rites, practices and doctrines of the Church of England. The teaching of Religious Education plays a major part in promoting the Christian ethos of the school as expressed in the Mission Statement. Parents are informed in the school prospectus that they have the right to withdraw their children from Religious Education.

Religious Education is at the heart of our curriculum. Collective Worship, although complimenting and enriching the teaching of Religious Education is managed separately (See Collective Worship Policy). Teaching and learning follows the Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education Syllabus for RE which reflects the National Framework for RE, the National Society Statement of Entitlement and the requirements of SIAMS. Through this syllabus half termly schemes of work are developed. (See appendix). The children will receive at least one lesson of Religious Education each week, 75% of which is related to Christianity and 25% to other faiths, namely Judaism and Islam. In addition to these lessons there are opportunities for blocks of work to be completed for example our Easter days across the school. We base our teaching and learning in Religious

Education on the key principle that good teaching maintains a balanced approach of learning *about* religion (Attainment target 1) and also reflecting and learning *from* religion (Attainment target 2).

This can be expressed distinctively as

### Learning about Religion

We learn about

- God who reveals the truth about himself and humanity through creation, the giving of the law, his action in history and through the prophets;
- God who reveals himself ultimately in Jesus his Son, living among us and dying and rising for us;
- God who reveals himself in his Spirit working in the living faith of the Church experienced through scripture, tradition and reason.

### Learning from Religion

We learn from

- an empathetic response to the Christian faith and a critical engagement with it;
- responding personally to the stories and teachings of Jesus Christ;
- examples of Christian living which give priority to the values of unconditional love, forgiveness, reconciliation, justice, compassion and faith.

### Through our RE teaching we aim to help pupils to:

- reflect theologically and explore the ultimate questions and challenges of life in today's society;
- reflect critically on the truth claims of Christian belief;
- see how the truth of Christianity is relevant today;
- understand the challenge faced by Christians in today's pluralist and post-modern society;
- develop the skills to handle the Bible text;
- recognise that faith is based on commitment to a particular way of understanding God and the world;
- begin to develop their own commitments, beliefs and values;
- develop a sense of themselves as significant, unique and precious;
- experience the breadth and variety of the Christian community;
- engage in thoughtful dialogue with other faiths and traditions;
- become active citizens, serving their neighbour;
- find a reason for hope in a troubled world;
- understand how religious faith can sustain believers in difficult circumstances and in the face of opposition.;

### As a Church school our RE Curriculum provides:

- opportunities to explore the experience of the Church's year;
- study of the story of the local Christian community with its saints and martyrs;
- visits to places of worship, especially the local parish Church and a Cathedral, to develop the understanding of the Church as a living community;
- welcoming visitors from the local parish to share their experience of Christian belief and life;
- liaison with the local parish to enable these visits and links to occur;

- skills to confidently use religious language to express knowledge and opinions;
- a well-used set of Bibles in language that can be understood by the learners and examples of Bibles and prayer books from a variety of contexts;
- the facility to listen to Christian 'psalms, hymns and spiritual songs' from a wide variety of traditions;
- access to Christian artefacts that are used with care, respect and confidence;
- a sacred space that can be used as a focus for prayer and silent reflection;

It is entirely appropriate and necessary in today's world that children should be encouraged to foster a respect for the followers of the other world faiths. It is essential that this respect is based on an accurate and sympathetic understanding of those faiths.

Therefore through RE we aim to help pupils to:

- learn about other faiths, their beliefs, traditions and practices and from them through encounter and dialogue;
- recognise and respect those of all faiths in their search for God;
- recognise areas of common belief and practice between different faiths;
- enrich and expand their understanding of truth while remaining faithful to their own tradition;
- enrich their own faith through examples of holy living in other traditions.

Through our RE we enable:

- pupils and teachers to talk openly and freely about their own personal beliefs and practice without fear of ridicule;
- pupils to make excellent and appropriate progress in their knowledge and understanding of Christianity;
- pupils from Christian families to talk openly about their beliefs and values in lessons and to grow in their faith;
- pupils from other faith backgrounds to understand and be encouraged in their faith;
- pupils with no religious background to be given an insight into what it means to be a person of faith;
- pupils of all backgrounds to have a safe place to explore the ultimate questions and challenges of life in today's society.

### Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development within RE

Through our RE teaching we aim to enrich and encourage the pupils' discovery of God the creator, of their 'inmost being' and of the wonder of the environment. Moral development is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, which offer pupils a secure foundation stone on which to make decisions and build their lives.

Social development enriches pupils' understanding of what it means to live in a Christian community where Jesus' command to love one another is put into practice. Cultural development 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. 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.

## Teaching Religious Education to Children with Special Needs

In our school we teach Religious Education to all children, whatever their ability. The teaching of Religious Education 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 Religious Education 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 the Individual Education Plans (IEP's)

### Resources

We continue to develop and review the resources in our school to be able to teach all our Religious Education teaching units. Resources for Religious Education are listed and kept in classrooms. There are several sets of Bibles to address the needs and abilities of children across the school and a collection of religious artefacts which we use to enrich teaching in Religious Education. The school library has a good supply of Religious Education topic books and computer software to support the children's individual research. The Parish Community and actual Church building is a major resource for the school along with the Clergy and those who visit from other denominations to assist in the teaching of Religious Education and also to lead Collective Worship.

### Planning and Assessment

The class teacher writes the plans for each lesson and lists the specific learning objectives for that lesson. S/he keeps these individual plans and they are monitored by the Head teacher on a weekly basis. Teachers follow the assessment guidance given within the syllabus, feeding back to children orally and through marking. The 'I can' statements within the syllabus are used to record and report on the children's progress. The Head teacher, as Religious Education Co-ordinator, leads staff meetings to level children's work against the attainment levels and keeps a portfolio of pieces of work which illustrate levels achieved.

### Monitoring and Review.

The Religious Education subject leader, the Head teacher, is responsible for monitoring the standards of the children's work and the quality of the teaching in Religious Education. To this end staff complete half termly evaluations to highlight any needs in resources or training. A book scrutiny is carried out each term to ensure continuity and progress. The head teacher is also responsible for supporting colleagues in the teaching of Religious Education, for being informed about current developments in the subject through attending cluster meeting and other training and for providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school.

Following the recent SIAMs inspection (March 2020) the following was written in the report:

#### **Key findings**

- The relationships between all the school's stakeholders are particularly strong and nurturing; creating a learning environment that is caring and supportive and based on mutual respect.

- The very strong and supportive governing body access diocesan training wherever possible ensuring that they have a good understanding of current thinking in church school education.
- Collective worship is rooted in the Bible and Anglican practices that allow pupils and adults alike to undertake a spiritual journey that includes personal prayer and reflection.
- Religious education (RE) allows pupils to develop their skills of enquiry and interpretation with the use of 'Big Questions'. However, opportunities for pupils to develop spirituality and a deeper understanding of the awe and wonder of God need to be more evident.

#### **Areas for development**

- To provide pupils with opportunities to develop spirituality and awe and wonder by including the development of spiritual and ethical dimensions in all subjects as well as in RE.
- To inspire pupils to engage in social action projects that they themselves feel passionate about and have identified to address issues of disadvantage, deprivation and exploitation of the natural world.

Areas for development to be a focus for the academic year 2020/21 where we will strive to promote spirituality and individual social action projects that the children themselves feel passionate about. There is evidence of this in our school - we just need to recognise and record each and every occasion that a pupil within our year group engages in such a bespoke project. Perhaps a centrally located display board to evidence this may be the right step forward.

Mrs Caroline Aydin  
RE Lead - St Thomas the Martyr Primary School