Beacon Federation

Religious Education & Worldviews Policy

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Our Christian Ethos and Values

Our academies are open to all and accepting of all regardless of faith. Our passion and ambition are to see children and young people in all our academies achieve excellent educational outcomes alongside developing and growing into their potential as individuals made in the image of God.

Our culture is one of high aspiration for all. This is rooted in our Christian values as demonstrated in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. We have a desire to see our academies acknowledged as places of aspiration, high quality learning, achievement and hope making a significant contribution to the communities they serve.

All policies within St Benet's Multi Academy Trust (hereafter referred to as "the Trust"), whether relating to an individual academy or the whole Trust, will be written and implemented in line with our Christian ethos and values.

Overall accountabilities and roles

The Trust has overall accountability for all its academies and staff. Through a Scheme of Delegation for each academy it sets out the responsibilities of the Trust, its Executive Officers, the Local Governance Committee and the Headteacher. The Headteacher of each academy is responsible for the implementation of all policies of the Trust.

All employees of the Trust are subject to the Trust's policies.

Contents

Academy Mission Statement 4
RE Policy Statement 4
Aims 4
Curriculum 5
Teaching RE 6
Assessment 6
Monitoring & Evaluation 7
Responsibilities for RE within each academy (Headteacher) 7
The Right of Withdrawal From RE 8
Managing the right of withdrawal 8
Role of the RE Leader 9
Entitlement and Inclusion - EAL, SEN, More Able 10
Resources 10
Parental and Community Involvement 10
Professional Development 10
The academy community 11
The community within which the academy is located 11
The UK community 11
The global community 11
Monitoring & Review 11
Links to Other Policies 11

Academy Mission Statement
Our aspiration is that all our academies are beacons of excellence for RE provision. Each academy will receive training and development for the Religious Education Quality Mark (REQM) to either its bronze, silver or gold standard (depending upon from where an academy starts and its current provision). The REQM offers general school improvement delivered through specific aspects of Religious Education.

RE Policy Statement
Religious education is unique in the academy curriculum in that it is neither a core subject nor a foundation subject but the 1988 Education Act states that 'Religious Education has equal standing in relation to core subjects of the National Curriculum in that it is compulsory for all registered pupils'.

Provision of RE must be in accordance with the Trust Deed of each the Academies. The Trustees have decided, following advice from the diocese, to adopt the principles of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (*Norfolk/Suffolk*) and supplement this with material from the Diocese.

Each academy is inspected under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005, and it will be inspected under its previous designation as a Voluntary Controlled or Voluntary Aided school. Religious education is reported on through this inspection. It is based upon the National Statement for Entitlement of Religious Education, published by the Church of England Education Office.

Aims
The broad aims of religious education (RE) are set out within the locally agreed syllabus and the Church of England Education Office Statement of Entitlement. The purpose of religious education in all academies is to promote religious literacy. By this we mean that pupils are able to hold balanced and well-informed conversations about religion, worldviews and belief.

The aims of religious education are to enable pupils to:

- Know about and understand Christianity as a living faith that influences the lives of people worldwide and as the religion that has most shaped British Culture and heritage.
- Give a theologically informed and thoughtful account of Christianity as a living and diverse faith.
- Know about and understand other major world religions and world views, their impact on society, culture and the wider world, enabling pupils to express ideas and insights.
- Show a well-informed, balanced and respectful attitude to religions and worldviews.
- Engage in meaningful and well-informed dialogue with those of other faiths and none.
- Reflect critically and responsibly on their own spiritual, philosophical and ethical convictions, exploring and enriching their own beliefs and values.

Curriculum
The curriculum for RE is designed to ensure religious literacy lies at the heart. A multi-disciplinary approach to curriculum design provides a balance between theology, philosophy and the human/social sciences.

Theology (Believing):	This examines where beliefs come from, how they have changed over time, how they are applied differently in different contexts and how they relate to each other. For pupils we may describe this as *thinking through believing.*
Philosophy (Thinking & Knowing):	This is about finding out how and whether things make sense. It deals with questions of morality and ethics. It takes seriously questions about reality, knowledge and existence. For pupils we may describe this as *thinking through thinking.*
Human/Social sciences: (Living)	This explores the diverse ways in which people practice their beliefs, both now and in the past. It engages with the impact of beliefs on individuals, communities and societies. For pupils we may describe this as *thinking through living.*

These three disciplines provide lenses through which each enquiry question is approached.

In accordance with the structure of the locally agreed syllabus we have agreed that:

- Whilst EYFS does not need to provide RE as a subject, as we have chosen to adopt the local agreed syllabus, there is an expectation that RE is encountered in EYFS through continuous provision. The multi-disciplines will be introduced, and Christianity will primarily be studied, some academies may choose to also include festivals from other major religions e.g. Diwali.

- At KS1 pupils study primarily Christianity and Judaism, with reference made to other principal religions, beliefs and worldviews reflected in the local context.

- At KS2 pupils study primarily Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, with reference made to other principal religions, beliefs and worldview.

- At KS3 pupils study Christianity with at least one other principal religion, religious belief or worldview

In accordance with the Statement of Entitlement at least 51% of curriculum time (the majority) of curriculum time is allocated to the teaching of Christianity. This entitlement is met both through the weekly or blocked teaching of RE, and through additional RE days which focus on an aspect of the Christian Faith.

The use of the resource *Understanding Christianity* particularly supports the development of the theological perspective. From September 2025 schools will also utilise the new Church of England resource: Christianity as a Global World Faith to explore Christianity in its global and diverse contexts.

It is expected that each academy has developed a clear curriculum map for Religious education that identifies the multi-disciplines, the enquiry big questions and plots the substantive and disciplinary knowledge and ways of knowing. This will provide a systematic and progressive curriculum that develop in complexity and builds on prior learning experiences in a meaningful way. It will provide deeper learning rather than excessive subject content.

Teaching RE

Religious education uses an enquiry-based approach to learning. This is based on the best practice framework in the Norfolk/Suffolk agreed syllabus. This approach enables pupils to focus on an enquiry question which explores aspects of the theological, philosophical and human/social sciences. A range of teaching strategies are used to ensure learning is challenging and relevant including the use of art, music, thinking skills, artefacts and stories.

Where possible we want our pupils to have opportunities to encounter local faith communities through visits to local places of worship or visit from members of local faith communities. Providing pupils will authentic lived experiences of religion and worldviews is an essential part on supporting them to respect a range of beliefs within their local and wider context. Remote Learning will utilise online resources to facilitate virtual visits or visitors to ensure high quality RE is still being delivered.

Pupils may record their learning in a variety of ways – creative response sin RE are encouraged as much as written response (where applicable). Academies may choose to record learning in individual pupil books or collectively in class RE Floor Books, or a combination of both. Whatever means is chosen by the academy – the record will provide a comprehensive and compelling evidence base to tell the story of RE learning for pupils in the academy.

Assessment

Pupils are assessed in terms of how they are making progress in relation to the theological, philosophical and human/social sciences disciplines within RE. In broad terms the following principles have been applied to each aspect in terms of what it means to become more religiously literate:

- Extending knowledge and understanding from the concrete and familiar to the abstract and complex
- Moving from simple ideas and beliefs/concepts to making connections between them and placing these within a bigger picture or meta-narrative
- Demonstrating increasing layers of interpretation of religion, religions, beliefs and worldviews through engagement with a broadening and increasingly complex range of information
- Showing an increasing ability to critically question and form coherent, logical arguments, including increasing recognition of divergences of opinion about and the controversial nature of religion and belief

- Expressing a broadening understanding of diversity in terms of the nature of religion, religions and worldviews

Pupils are assessed in two ways within RE. Firstly using agreed benchmarks against the methodologies for the ways of knowing (Theology- Believing, Philosophy – Thinking & Knowing, Social Human Sciences – Living). These match the National Content Standard for RE (REC 2024). This is done in a variety of ways e.g. through written activities, role play, artwork, discussion etc. outcomes may be tracked on the academy's data tracking system.

Secondly, pupils substantive and disciplinary knowledge will be assessed using assessment suite resources from the Diocese of Norwich. This provides a comprehensive set of retrieval questions academies can use to check out retention, recall and application of knowledge in RE.

Moderation of pupils RE work is a core requirement of all St Benet's MAT academies. Annual moderation of pupil outcomes determines a robust system for benchmarking and exemplifying standards in RE across the trust. It allows academies to collaborate, evaluate and develop practice in a supportive manner.

Assessment is regarded as an integral part of teaching and learning and is a continuous process. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to assess all pupils in their class. We assess the children in order to ensure that they primarily get better at RE, we also want to ensure they are making good progress in this subject and use it to plan future work.

In addition, pupils are encouraged to use self-assessment to evaluate their own knowledge and understanding. A comment about their progress is made in the annual report to parents. This may also be linked to the development of pupils Personal Knowledge in RE and how this evolves and grows over time.

Monitoring & Evaluation
The co-ordinator will monitor RE provision and standards within the academy through observation, looking at work, talking to children and reviewing the curriculum with staff.

The co-ordinator will consider the professional development needs of the academy's staff through informal discussion, staff surveys and performance management (where appropriate). This is to ensure staff feel they hold a good subject knowledge and are confident to deliver the content and concepts of the RE curriculum in their academy.

The co-ordinator is responsible for contributing to the academy's self-evaluation process. In addition, the governing body monitor the role of religious education in upholding the Trust Deed of the Academy and its contribution to the Christian ethos of the school.

Responsibilities for RE within each academy (Headteacher)
As well as fulfilling their legal obligations the Headteacher should also make sure that:

- all pupils make progress in achieving the aims of the RE curriculum

- the RE curriculum is taught in a balanced way – ensuring the disciplines of Theology (believing), Philosophy (Thinking & Knowing) and Social Human Sciences (Living) are taught evenly
- that Christianity is taught as the majority religion (51% or higher).

- the subject is well led and effectively managed

- standards and achievement in RE and the quality of the provision are subject to regular and effective self-evaluation

- those teaching RE are suitably qualified and trained in the subject and have regular and effective opportunities for CPD

- where appropriate, pupils have opportunities to take courses leading to an accredited qualification in the subject

- clear information is provided on the school website about the RE curriculum

- RE is resourced, staffed and timetabled so that the academy can fulfil its legal obligations on RE and pupils can make good progress

- where there are insufficient teachers in an academy who are prepared to teach RE, the principal/ head teacher ensures that pupils receive their entitlement to RE. In these circumstances, headteachers might wish to seek advice from the Diocese.

The Right of Withdrawal From RE

The Trust's academies are inclusive communities but recognise that parents have the legal right to withdraw their children from religious education on the grounds of conscience. However, the right of withdrawal does not extend to other areas of the curriculum when, as may happen on occasion, spontaneous questions on religious matters are raised by pupils or there are issues related to religion that arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship.

We would ask any parent considering this to contact the principal/head teacher of their academy to discuss any concerns or anxieties about the policy, provision and practice of religious education.

St Benet's Academies will record any requests of withdrawal from RE and the reasons for this as they are required to report this as part of the Section 48 inspection process.

Managing the right of withdrawal

- Each academy will ensure that parents who want to withdraw their children from RE are aware of the RE syllabus and that it is relevant to all pupils and respects their own personal beliefs.
- Parents should be made aware of its learning objectives and what is covered in the RE curriculum and should be given the opportunity to discuss this if they wish.
- Each academy may also wish to review such a request each year, in discussion with the parents.

- The use of the right to withdraw should be at the instigation of parents, and it should be made clear whether it is from the whole of the subject or specific parts of it. No reasons need be given.
- Parents have the right to choose whether or not to withdraw their child from RE without influence from the academy, although an academy should ensure that parents or carers are informed of this right and are aware of the educational objectives and content of the RE syllabus. In this way, parents can make an informed decision.
- Where parents have requested that their child is withdrawn, their right must be respected, and where RE is integrated in the curriculum, the academy will need to discuss the arrangements with the parents or carers to explore how the child's withdrawal can be best accommodated.
- If pupils are withdrawn from RE, academies have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost. Pupils will usually remain on academy premises.
- Where a pupil has been withdrawn, the law provides for alternative arrangements to be made for RE of the kind the parent wants the pupil to receive. This RE could be provided at the academy in question, or the pupil could be sent to another academy where suitable RE is provided if this is reasonably convenient.
- If neither approach is practicable, outside arrangements can be made to provide the pupil with the kind of RE that the parent wants, and the pupil may be withdrawn from academy for a reasonable period of time to allow them to attend this external RE.
- Outside arrangements for RE are allowed as long as the LA is satisfied that any interference with the pupil's attendance at academy resulting from the withdrawal will affect only the start or end of an academy session.

Role of the RE Leader

- To ensure that the RE policy is implemented and to keep up to date with reviews.
- To have oversight of the RE curriculum and keep up to date with local and national changes.
- To monitor, review and update resources.
- To monitor pupil progress and achievement.
- To maintain and build priorities set by the academy.
- To develop links with the Church and Diocese.
- To coach, mentor and support teachers in developing their strengths in teaching RE, including planning, arranging and delivering CPD as appropriate.
- To liaise with parents to ensure all children receive their entitlement.
- To undertake the duties and responsibilities set out in the RE Subject Leader Job Description and review this annually with senior leaders as part of their performance management.

Entitlement and Inclusion - EAL, SEN, More Able
All children are entitled to access a broad and balanced curriculum at an appropriate level. Teachers should include a range of teaching styles and groupings to allow all children to make progress. Every child should be given opportunity to develop their skills independently and in groups, enhancing their own confidence and self–esteem.

Resources
There is a wide range of resources to support the teaching of RE in the Trust's academies. Each academy has its own resources, and some are also available centrally at the Diocesan Resource Centre or through the Diocese website.

Parental and Community Involvement
Parents are encouraged to involve themselves in RE within each academy. Parents are invited into the academy to look at their children's work, and a report on their child's standard and progress in RE is given out annually. The community is encouraged to support the teaching of RE through visits and visitors, e.g., the children visit the church to learn about concepts such as salvation.

Professional Development
Whole staff and individual training needs will be identified through the Academy's self-evaluation process and staff appraisal. The aspiration is for every academy to achieve the RE Quality Mark and the Trust's strategic plan and professional development supports this aim.

The contribution RE makes to other curriculum aims:

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Section 78 (1) of the 2002 Education Act states that all pupils should follow a balanced and broadly based curriculum which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, mental and physical development of pupils and of society, and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life'. Examining and exploring religions and beliefs, through the distinct knowledge, understanding and skills contained in RE, is essential to achieving these aims. Exploring the concepts of religion and belief and their roles in the spiritual, moral and cultural lives of people in a diverse society helps individuals develop moral awareness and social understanding.

Personal development and well-being
RE plays an important role in preparing pupils for adult life, employment and lifelong learning. It helps children and young people become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. It gives them the knowledge, skills and understanding to discern and value truth and goodness, strengthening their capacity for making moral judgements and for evaluating different types of commitment to make positive and healthy choices.

Community cohesion
RE makes an important contribution promoting community cohesion. It provides a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism and discrimination. Effective RE will promote community cohesion at each of these four levels.

The academy community
RE provides a positive context within which the diversity of cultures, beliefs and values can be celebrated and explored.

The community within which the academy is located
RE provides opportunities to investigate patterns of diversity of religion and belief and forge links with different groups in the local area.

The UK community
Aa major focus of RE is the study of diversity of religion and belief in the UK and how this influences national life.

The global community
RE involves the study of matters of global significance recognising the diversity of religion and belief and its impact on world issues.

RE subject matter gives particular opportunities to promote an ethos of respect for others, challenge stereotypes and build understanding of other cultures and beliefs. This contributes to promoting a positive and inclusive academy ethos that champions democratic values and human rights**.** RE has a strong link with wider projects such as the Global Neighbours Scheme that St Benet's MAT Academies are encouraged to be engaged with.

Monitoring & Review
The implementation and impact of the policy will be evaluated through the Academy's self-evaluation processes. The policy will be reviewed every three years.

Links to Other Policies

- Teaching & Learning Policy
- Collective Worship
- Spirituality Policy