



'Let your Light Shine'



**The Diocese of Coventry
Multi Academy Trust**
Together, pursuing life in all its fullness

Religious Education Curriculum Policy

'Together, pursuing life in all its fullness' (based on John 10:10)

Vision for R.E. at Stretton

As a member of the Coventry Diocese Multi-Academy Trust, Stretton maintains a distinctive and inclusive Christian character and shares the vision and ethos of the Trust. Our vision for each child at Stretton is firmly rooted in our Christian principles, recognising the uniqueness of every individual and the value of their contribution. Our approach to learning is founded on the Christian principles of empathy and challenge: we seek to provide a positive, respectful, and inspiring environment in which children are encouraged to be open, honest and kind. We aim to provide a curriculum which respects and validates children's diverse experiences and broadens their horizons. We support each other to work hard and embrace new opportunities and challenges with confidence so that we can all achieve our best.

We want our children to be well-informed, reflective, and critical thinkers with the self-confidence to form and pursue their own valuable goals in life. They will be equipped to be ambitious, compassionate members of society who have the courage to challenge injustice and become responsible and empathetic leaders in their chosen fields. Our aim is for all our children to believe that there are no limits to what they can achieve and to equip them with the skills, personal qualities and understanding to nurture their own spiritual growth and to make their dreams a reality.

Religious education has a pivotal role in developing the foundations for reflection, empathy and challenge that will enable children to flourish and to live life in all its fullness. By developing their appreciation of the fundamental principles of Christianity and its expression as a living faith, as well as their understanding of the major religions and worldviews, they will be able to engage respectfully with people from all faiths as well as those who have no faith. They will also develop an appreciation of common values between faiths and worldviews, and an understanding of what it means to make a religious commitment. They will recognise the diversity and dynamism of religious expression between, and within, faiths. As they engage with the core principles and challenges facing religion, they will nurture their own spiritual growth and be able to express their own religious identity and beliefs confidently, whether they practice a faith or not.

Religious education at Stretton offers a broad curriculum to allow pupils to

- explore a wide range of religions, allowing for breadth of study, as well as depth of study in Christianity.
- engage critically with significant questions that religions and worldviews address about life and how to lead it well, developing the understanding and skills needed to appreciate and evaluate varied responses to these questions, and formulate their own ideas.
- develop an awareness of the plurality of British life and global religious concerns, promoting community understanding and engagement, and supporting cohesion
- nurture their own personal spiritual growth, philosophical outlook, and psychological well-being in a variety of ways
- engage with the relevance of religion and world views in the modern world and how it affects people's lives locally, nationally and globally today.

R.E. is a fascinating, multi-disciplinary subject with particularly strong links to theology and philosophy, but with opportunities to draw on knowledge and critical skills from a number of disciplines (e.g. including science, history, art, literature and the social sciences).

The aim of the R.E. curriculum at Stretton is that all children will:

- **know** and **understand** the key teachings from a range of religions
- **reflect** on the teachings of different religions and worldviews
- **explain** their ideas with reference to their knowledge and understanding
- **evaluate** other people's opinions and ideas
- **make links** and **compare** different ideas about faith and beliefs
- **identify** and **reflect on** their own worldview and the principles guiding their life.

As a Church of England academy, the study of Christianity is a core part of our curriculum. The study of Christianity is supported by units of work from *Understanding Christianity*. Children also access teaching on all the major religions of the world, and examine spirituality and other world views, following the *Coventry and Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education*.

Understanding Christianity gives pupils a deep knowledge of Christian practice and belief, including ways in which it is unique and diverse. It offers a programme of teaching that engages with biblical texts and theological ideas; it is rigorous and challenging, presenting ideas and debates in engaging and thought-provoking, age-appropriate ways. The aims of *Understanding Christianity* are to:

- enable children to know about and understand Christianity as a living world faith, by exploring core theological concepts;
- enable children to develop knowledge and skills in making sense of biblical texts and in understanding their impact on the lives of Christians;
- develop pupils' abilities to connect, critically reflect upon, evaluate and apply their learning to their own growing understanding of religion and belief of themselves, the world and human experience.

Advocacy - Actively promoting values, including British values

Stretton participated in the Diocesan Board of Education *Christian Worldviews and Advocacy Project* in 2021/22 and Stretton's RE lead collaborated in writing resources for this project. This project explored 'big questions' including contemporary issues such as climate change, human relationships, the digital world, and politics. Learning resources for these topics have been developed and teachers are beginning to incorporate some of these into their teaching where appropriate (e.g. to support children in Year 6 to develop and reflect on their personal worldview).

Through their work in R.E., the aim is that pupils will learn that religions have a commitment to morality and social justice, to protecting our environment, and to deepening the experience of being human, understanding and reflecting on what it means to lead a 'good life'.

R.E. makes a significant contribution to the promotion of community cohesion and an awareness of British values is important within this. By studying different faiths, visiting places of worship, and meeting people from religious and belief communities, the aim is that children will have an informed and empathetic understanding of the variety of faiths and worldviews followed in Britain. Our curriculum has been designed with breadth and balance to help promote respectful and tolerant flourishing for all.

R.E. is vital to ensure that children are equipped to understand and engage critically with religions and beliefs, and their representation in the media, since religion remains a significant and very influential public institution affecting cultural, social and political life.

In providing a rigorous approach to R.E., children will be supported to engage with complex and controversial topics which will challenge their preconceptions and require them to justify, evaluate and reappraise their views, recognising the legitimacy of changing personal opinions in response to informed debate.

Curriculum knowledge domains, key concepts, and progression

The **Warwickshire and Coventry R.E. syllabus** enables pupils to explore Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, as well as Christianity. It also encourages the consideration of secular world views.

During the EYFS, Reception children will encounter Christianity and other faiths, contributing to their growing sense of self, their understanding of their own community and their place within it. Learning opportunities contribute clearly to the Early Learning Goals, especially to communication and language development; personal, social and emotional development; literacy; understanding of the world and expressive arts and design. Teachers seek out creative and inspiring ways of making links between the *Understanding Christianity* concepts, and the Agreed Syllabus units covering other faiths, to the ELG using stories, art, drama and music, both in teacher-led activities and continuous provision. The EYFS content helps children understand the core concepts of Creation (God) Incarnation and Salvation.

During Key Stage 1, children will be introduced to all the six principal religions and will also recognise that many people hold secular (non-religious) views. At this stage of their learning, they will focus on developing their understanding of Christianity and will also study Islam and Judaism. They will focus on the principles of forgiveness and reconciliation in religious teaching.

During Key Stage 2, children will develop a deeper understanding of all the six principal religions and appreciate that many people hold secular (non-religious) views. More detailed attention will be devoted to Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism as well as to Islam and Christianity (as Judaism was a core focus for Year 2). All children will have the opportunity to understand the particular contribution that Coventry Cathedral makes in the promotion of Christian reconciliation and appreciate the significance of the Cross of Nails.

Understanding Christianity provides a plan for progression and a long-term plan focusing on **three key elements**, giving structure and consistency to lesson planning and to knowledge and across the school:

- Making sense of the biblical text
- Understanding the impact of these teachings on Christians
- Making connections between ideas and the wider world, including opportunities to examine and evaluate their own way of living.

The study of Christianity focuses on **eight core concepts** expressed in the Bible and lived out in the lives of Christians today: God, Creation, The Fall, People of God, Incarnation, Good News, Salvation, Kingdom of God. These core concepts reflect a view that the Bible tells a 'big story' of salvation. Children revisit these concepts in different ways and in greater depth as they progress through school, supporting them in developing their understanding of the world

The **eight core concepts** explored in *Understanding Christianity* are:

- **God** – the existence of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is fundamental to Christian belief.
- **Creation** – The universe and human life are God’s creation. Humans are made in the image of God.
- **Fall** – Humans have a tendency to make their own choices which challenges God’s plan, and this is known as ‘sin’. Genesis tells the story of Adam and Eve’s rebellion, popularly called ‘the Fall’. This describes the separation between God and humans, between humans and each other, and between humans and the environment. The idea that humans are ‘fallen’ and in need of rescue (or salvation) establishes the root cause of many problems for humanity.
- **People of God** – The Old Testament tells the story of God’s plan to reverse the impact of the Fall, to save humanity. It involves choosing a people who will model a restored relationship with God, who will attract all other people back to God. The Bible narrates the pursuit of this plan and the teachings of the prophets, ultimately leading to apparent failure as God’s people are exiled and then return to await a ‘messiah’ to save them.
- **Incarnation** – the New Testament presents Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour who will repair the effects of sin and the Fall and offer a way for humans to be at one with God again. Incarnation means that Jesus is God in the flesh, and that God came to live among humans as Jesus.
- **Gospel** – Jesus’ incarnation is ‘good news’ (‘Gospel’) for all people. His life and teaching embody how God wants us to live. He emphasises the core principle of loving one’s neighbour – particularly the weak and vulnerable – as part of a loving God.
- **Salvation** – Jesus’ death and resurrection save humans and opens the way back to God with the forgiveness of sin.
- **Kingdom of God** – This reflects God’s ideal for humans to lead their lives. Christians seek to follow Jesus’ example, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and live this life following God’s will.

How R.E. is taught at Stretton

We want children to enjoy and appreciate the importance of religious thinking and debate, and to develop an understanding of the core beliefs that underpin each of the main faiths studied. They will also learn that there are a variety of ways within each faith of expressing that belief and not all adherents to any particular view express their beliefs in the same way.

In each class, displays will support children's learning about the faiths or issues/themes they are studying, presenting key vocabulary, concepts and questions to be studied. These displays will provide a reference point for children and will also develop with them as they progress through each unit. In addition, all classes will include a reflection area where children can take time to share their responses and thoughts about issues discussed.

Lessons will begin with a brief opportunity for retrieval practice, taking a variety of forms, to embed prior learning of knowledge and concepts.

For units focusing on Christianity, In Key Stages 1 and 2, lessons are then structured using the three elements identified in *Understanding Christianity*:

Making sense of the text

Children will read and analyse sources of Christianity including texts, art and architecture, and music. Children explore the context (*Where does this fit into the 'big story'?*) and any interpretations of the sources (*What do different people think about this?*) and the purpose of them (*How do Christians use this source?*). They will examine the significance of the text or source, unveil the concept underpinning it which contributes to understanding key Christian ideas and consider the issues behind, within and in front of the text or source.

Understanding the impact

Children then move on to examining how Christians live both in the Christian community and in their everyday living, what impact Christianity and Christians have on the world, and how this has had an impact on how people see the world.

Making connections

Finally, children begin to connect texts, concepts and ideas about Christian living, using ideas to reflect on matters of personal concern, challenging ideas and allowing ideas to challenge their own thinking, and considering where there might be value in further study.

The three elements will be covered in each lesson through a wide range of activities and learning opportunities.

When studying non-Christian faiths, teachers will also ensure that children have the opportunity to learn about core principles, practices and stories for each faith and that they make connections between these teachings and the impact these have on the lives of people who share that faith. Units from the ***Coventry and Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education*** focus on three strands:

- Believing
- Expressing
- Living

Children have the opportunity to explore religious texts and stories to understand what different faiths believe. They also learn about the expression of faith through institutions, practices (including understanding how religious festivals and artefacts contribute to an expression of faith). As children progress through the R.E. curriculum, they will become increasingly aware of the plurality of religious expression and the diversity within faiths (as well as between faiths), understanding that religious denominations can define quite distinct commitments and practices (as well as commonalities) within a broader faith. Children also learn about what it means to live a life of religious commitment, and the way in which religious principles guide human experience and interactions. Throughout these units, children are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned and relate this to their own lives, developing a strong appreciation of what it means to lead 'a good life'; they will appreciate that there are many different ways to lead a good life and have opportunities to reflect with increasing sophistication on what guides them, and to review and construct their own principles.

R.E. lessons are conducted within a "safe environment", in which children and adults can respectfully and sensitively explore concepts, ask questions, and debate ideas. They are engaging, challenging and relevant in tackling contemporary topics of interest in the world, making use of a variety of sources, images (including art and architecture from all faiths), music and texts to support children to think deeply about the ideas they encounter, and the religious texts studied.

Supporting children with SEND

Children with SEND will have access to a broad and balanced curriculum where they are exposed to the experiences and opportunities available to all children. At all times, appropriate steps will be taken to respond to children's specific needs to enable them to access and progress effectively in R.E. This may include provision of specific support such as writing frames and visual and question prompts as well as display of key vocabulary to enable children to access learning and to share and present their ideas as well as they can. In addition, teachers will make use of their standard strategies and provision to support SEND such as personal behaviour charts and reward systems, 'now and next' boards, individual workstations, supportive peers/adults, meeting sensory needs (e.g. visual enhancement, ear defenders, oral sensory support). Pre-teach may also be used to reduce anxiety and to set out expectations and routine for the session. Additional processing time and supportive use of technology will also be used where appropriate to enable all children to succeed.

Cross-curricular links

Where relevant, cross-curricular links are cultivated and understanding of RE is supported by learning in Science, History, Geography, Art and PSHE. Similarly, children's study in other areas of the curriculum has been sequenced to ensure children have opportunities to build on and embed what they have learned in R.E. and to provide context, in some cases (e.g. when studying the history of Baghdad in year five). Where appropriate, teachers may make use of picture book texts to support development and application of principles learned in R.E.

Enrichment

As a Church of England academy, Stretton provides many opportunities to reflect on and apply our core Christian values and build an understanding of Christianity, and other faiths.

Whole-school worship is led jointly by senior leaders and Worship leaders from across the school, and all pupils in school are encouraged to contribute. We provide opportunities to express our ideas in music, stories, images and drama, as well as providing time for personal and shared reflection. Families are invited to weekly celebration worships (as well as visits to church). Worship may be delivered on a theme of one of school's Christian values (Truth, Love, Hope, Fairness, Peace & Reconciliation and Perseverance) which are widely discussed with and between children as part of learning, assessment and personal development/behaviour for learning. Worship will also give us opportunities to share and reflect on stories (including Bible stories) and on examples of people who represent a principle of faith in their actions.

We encourage all children to reflect on the key messages they have reflected on in worship (and how these link to our core values), what it made them think about, and how they think it may affect the way they lead their life. These reflections are recorded in a class worship journal which is maintained throughout the year. We also encourage children to record prayers that they have written in response to the worship theme. In this way our approach to curriculum learning in R.E. (developing understanding, exploring, expressing and living religious principles) is mirrored in the way that we conduct our worship in school.

Coventry Cathedral is a vital part of our community and children will have the opportunity to visit at least once while at Stretton. In History, Year 6 children also study the bombing and reconstruction of the cathedral, exploring the origins of the peace and reconciliation movement that emerged from Coventry. In Art, children will investigate the stained-glass windows and explore the imagery of faith and Christian life in the cathedral. As an Icon school, Stretton is proud to take part in Coventry Cathedral's Cross of Nails programme and we are keen to express this commitment within and beyond the classroom.

We are seeking to develop links with faith communities, increasing opportunities to welcome visitors into school and supporting children to visit places of worship. Each year, we run a faith day to enable children to explore one of the religions in more depth and develop their response in different ways. We are also encouraging children to present their reflections on R.E. creatively by beginning to participate in the Spirited Arts challenge.

Throughout the year, we encourage children to participate in charitable events (e.g. Macmillan Coffee morning, Red Nose day, Children in Need, etc.) and develop environmental awareness (e.g. via Eco-Ambassadors) to develop our understanding of, and opportunities to practice, Christian responsibility and stewardship.

Assessment

Children are assessed in RE by:

- Teacher questioning planned to elicit and check children's grasp of the conceptual "building blocks" relevant to each key stage. Key questions are identified in the Curriculum map (above). For example, *What is the Good News that Jesus brings? Or What does it mean to be Hindu in Britain today?* Teachers also monitor the retrieval practice activities at the start of each lesson to ensure that children can retrieve key facts and discuss core concepts confidently.
- Questions interleaved throughout the 3 elements of Understanding Christianity and in the teaching of non-Christian units. In the *Making Sense of the Text* element of a lesson, questions may include Where does this fit into the big story of the Bible? How do Christians use this text? How does this contribute to our understanding of key Christian ideas? (Similarly, when exploring other faiths, children will be asked to think how the principles and practices they are discussing fit into a wider picture of that faith.) In *Making Connections*, a teacher might ask, 'How do think this might affect your own life?' Finally, in the *Understanding the Impact* element, children might be asked, 'How does this make a difference to the way Christians live today?' These questions can also be used in learning walks, pupil voice, progress discussions and governor monitoring for consistency.
- Providing feedback on independent written work against success criteria to ensure that children develop a deep understanding of, and meaningful engagement with, the world around them.

Monitoring the provision and impact of the RE curriculum at Stretton:

Monitoring at Stretton is carried out with staff, using a collaborative and developmental approach.

-Learning walks/pop-ins – The teaching and learning is captured through listening to children’s discussions in class, seeing their independent written work, and gathering their answers when questioned about their learning in a particular session. Learning walks involve a learning conversation where staff have an opportunity to share their intended outcomes, scaffolding, and assessment strategies.

-Pupil voice/work scrutiny – Leaders, teachers and children work collaboratively to carry out pupil voice and work scrutiny. “Book Looks” are carried out with children so that the evidence is triangulated and captures the process and the outcomes as completely as possible. Children participate in pupil-voice discussions with the subject leader, senior leaders and governors, responding to questions linked to core concepts of Christianity and other faiths studied; they also explain what helps them to remember what they have learned, discuss how they evaluate their work and comment on their enjoyment. We focus on the 3 Elements of *Understanding Christianity* (see above) and the built-in assessment questions to ensure consistency in quality and expectations across the curriculum.

-Progress and attainment – staff record coverage of core objectives on *Insight* to maintain a record of pupil progress and support discussions to support children further where needed, or to provide additional opportunities for challenge.