

## **Developing an approach to teaching and learning in Religious Education**

*Religion and beliefs inform our values and are reflected in what we say and how we behave. RE is an important subject in itself, developing an individual's knowledge and understanding of the religions and beliefs which form part of contemporary society. Religious education provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human. It can develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, of other principal religions, other religious traditions and worldviews that offer answers to questions such as these. RE also contributes to pupils' personal development and well-being and to community cohesion by promoting mutual respect and tolerance in a diverse society. RE can also make important contributions to other parts of the school curriculum such as citizenship, personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE education), the humanities, education for sustainable development and others. It offers opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development, deepening the understanding of the significance of religion in the lives of others - individually, communally and cross-culturally.*

DCSF 2010

Teaching and learning at Wormley Primary School aims to encourage children to question and reflect upon their beliefs and those of others, sparked through activities, experiences and authentic and replica artefacts, within an ethos of respect

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

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' (Education Act 2002). Learning about and from religions and beliefs, through the distinct knowledge, understanding and skills contained in RE within a broad-based curriculum, 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 to a school's duty to promote community cohesion. It provides a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of

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

- The school community within which the school 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 - a 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 school ethos that champions democratic values and human rights.

In summary, there are 5 key concepts in religious education for our children:

<b>QUESTIONING</b> - provoking challenging questions about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs, the self, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human. It develops knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other principal religions, and religious traditions that examine these questions, fostering personal reflection and spiritual development
<b>BELIEF</b> - encouraging pupils to explore their own beliefs (whether they are religious or non-religious), in the light of what they learn, as they examine issues of religious belief and faith and how these impact on personal, institutional and social ethics; and to express their responses. This also builds resilience to anti-democratic or extremist narratives
<b>IDENTITY</b> - enabling pupils to build their sense of identity and belonging, which helps them flourish within their communities and as citizens in a diverse society
<b>RESPECT</b> - teaching pupils to develop respect for others, including people with different faiths and beliefs, and helps to challenge prejudice
<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> - prompting pupils to consider their responsibilities to themselves and to others, and to explore how they might contribute to their communities and to wider society. It encourages empathy, generosity and compassion

We encourage children to notice carefully and deeply, ask questions, wonder and demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways: reports, models, drawings, presentations, displays etc.

Learning can be recorded in the children's artistic logs, reflective logs, RE books, a class folder etc. At least one piece of quality writing from the RE topic should be recorded.

### Developing skills (links to WS Learning Attributes and tools)

We share some key skills with children.

Curiosity	Be curious about the world. Ask questions and wonder why
Active Listening	Give your full attention to what different people say, taking time to understand the points being made and asking questions as appropriate
Critical Thinking	Use logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative ideas, conclusions or approaches to problems
Active Learning	Investigate ways to find out information from different sources to help with problem-solving and decision-making
Judgment and Decision Making	Consider the rights and wrongs of actions to choose the most appropriate one. Have respect for alternative perspectives that may be different from our own
Collaboration	Work with others to achieve more
Writing	Communicate effectively in writing for the needs of the audience.
Speaking	Talk clearly to others to convey information effectively.
Social Awareness	Be aware of others' reactions and understand why they react as they do. Recognise that people see things in different ways.
Persuasion	Persuade others to change their minds or behaviour based on your evidence

### Teaching Christianity

The teaching staff have all completed training for the new 'Understanding Christianity' programme of learning.

There are 10 core theological concepts and key questions:

<b>GOD</b> - What do Christians believe God is like? (Y1/2) What does it mean if God is holy and loving? (Y5/6)
<b>CREATION</b> - Why is the word God so important to Christians? (EY) Who made the world? (Y1/2) What do Christians learn from the creation story? (Y3/4) Creation and Science: conflicting or complementary? (Y5/6)
<b>THE FALL</b> - How can following God bring freedom and justice?
<b>PEOPLE OF GOD</b> - What is it like to follow God? (Y3/4)
<b>PROPHECY</b>
<b>WISDOM</b> - Was Jesus the Messiah? (Y5/6)
<b>INCARNATION</b> - Why do Christians perform nativity plays at Christmas? (EY) Why does Christmas matter to Christians? (Y1/2) What is the Trinity? (Y3/4) What would Jesus do? (Y5/6)
<b>GOSPEL</b> - What is the good news Jesus brings? (Y1/2) What kind of world did Jesus want? (Y3/4) What did Jesus do to save Human Beings? (Y5/6)

**SALVATION** - Why do Christians put a cross in an Easter garden? (EY) Why does Easter matter to Christians? (Y1/2) Why do Christians call the day Jesus died 'Good Friday'? (Y3/4) What difference does the resurrection make for Christians? (Y5)

**KINGDOM OF GOD** - When Jesus left what was the impact of Pentecost? (Y3/4) What kind of king is Jesus? (Y5/6)

Questions are explored in relation to the Bible, the Christian community and wider Christian living. Units of work comprise a 'core learning' section, 6-8 hours of teaching and learning, and an optional 'digging deeper' section with ideas and resources for another 4-6 hours (see SoL).

### Godly Play

We have begun working with 'Godly Play', an alternative, imaginative approach to RE. It has its roots in Montessori education and uses religious artefacts and models so that children can enter religious stories and imagery using their innate spirituality. A teacher must be open to the unexpected and prepared to learn with the children as well as teach them. The Godly Play approach allows for reflection and slows down the pace of delivery but it doesn't mean the rate of learning is slow. Time is set aside in a Godly Play session for reflection and response. It creates a safe space where children can explore their ideas more deeply and make meanings for themselves. It allows them to 'think big'. Godly Play enables teachers to build a community where children are free to wonder, explore possibilities and learn more about themselves in relation to others. It evokes qualities of reflection, calm and order, approachability and focus. 'Reading' the story through the material presented, promotes sensitivity and respect for the stories and objects of religion.

### Format of the lesson

The lesson follows a regular format, familiar to those who may be involved in worship.

**A GATHERING** - The children gather in a circle round the material that will tell the story. Entering into the story. The story teller unfolds the story using the objects in the circle. He/she takes plenty of time and focuses on the material.

**A TIME OF REFLECTION** - The story teller asks wondering questions about the story. For example I wonder which is your favourite part of the story? I wonder which is the most important part of the story? I wonder if we could leave anything out and still have the story we need? I wonder where you are in the story? Which part of the story is about you?

**CREATIVE WORK BASED ON THE STORY** - Children then have a time to explore their ideas through creative work.

**THINKING TIME** - Pupils may leave the circle and create a personal response. Pupils choose using for example, paint, clay, papier mache, construction materials, (Lego), collage, junk modelling, poetry, music etc.

**PLENARY** - A sharing of children's ideas Sending out The children are sent out (to play/lunch/home)

**Persona Dolls** - A Persona doll is a 'child visitor' to the setting usually at circle time.

A Persona doll:

Has a story to tell to the children

Is a friend with whom the children in the setting can bond with

Can help children to explore a range of big issues such as prejudice, discrimination and racism in a non-threatening way

Can help with a resolution to a problem encountered by the children and practitioners in a setting

Help children celebrate positive events for example, birthdays, weddings, festivals, new baby and moving to a new home. What does a Persona doll look like?

Is not a puppet and does not have its own voice. The practitioner does not become a ventriloquist. The practitioner speaks on behalf of the doll to the children

In addition to the Herts Agreed Syllabus, Wormley has created a scheme of learning for Christmas and Easter (see SoL).

Teachers may teach RE weekly or in blocks. In addition there are whole school RE weeks. They should aim to make learning 'real' through visits, visitors, authentic resources and activities. Philosophy for Children (P4C) is a strategy we use particularly in RE to prompt thinking, questioning and discussion.

Teachers assess pupil progress against the school's assessment criteria at the end of a unit or the end of an RE week.

A time I learned from listening to others; A time when I learned collaboratively; A time when I put myself in another person's shoes.

A time when I learned collaboratively .....

At first...	Then.....	After....