

St John's Church of England Primary School

Religious Education Policy



Gather, Grow, Go

The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13: 31-32)

Date agreed and ratified by Governing Body: September 2026

Date of next review: September 2027

**This policy is based on the RE policy from the Board of Education for the
Diocese of Canterbury.**

This RE policy is a reflection of the school's distinctive Christian vision to **gather, grow** and **go**, rooted in Jesus' parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13v31-32). The parable describes God's Kingdom growing from small beginnings into something flourishing and life-giving for others. We believe our school community mirrors this vision: we **gather** together as a community of learners, **grow** in knowledge, wisdom, faith and character, and are equipped to **go** into the world as compassionate, courageous and responsible citizens who make a positive difference.

Through Religious Education (RE) at St John's, pupils are encouraged to explore life's big questions, engage deeply with Christianity as a living faith and develop understanding of a range of religious and non-religious worldviews. The intent of our RE curriculum is to develop religious literacy and enable pupils to make sense of the diverse world in which they live. Through high-quality teaching, enquiry, discussion and reflection, we implement a curriculum that nurtures curiosity, critical thinking, spiritual development and generous hospitality towards the views of others. As pupils **gather** to learn together, they **grow** in their understanding of belief, meaning and purpose, developing respect for the dignity and experiences of all people. The impact is seen in pupils who are confident in expressing their own views, respectful of the beliefs of others, and equipped to **go** and flourish as informed, compassionate and thoughtful citizens, continuing to develop their own worldview while contributing positively to God's world.

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Introduction

At St John's Church of England Primary School, pupils and their families can expect a high-quality religious education (RE) curriculum that is rich and varied, enabling learners to acquire a thorough knowledge and understanding of a range of faiths and world views. As a church school, the teaching of Christianity is at the heart of our RE curriculum. Through the Understanding Christianity resource, the use of an enquiry approach engages with significant theological concepts and the pupil's own understanding of the world as part of their wider religious literacy. Using the Kent Agreed Syllabus, we learn about other religions and world views, fostering respect for them. Links with our Christian values and vision, and support for pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development are intrinsic to our RE curriculum and have a significant impact on learners. We provide a wide range of opportunities for learners to understand and to make links between the beliefs, practices and value systems of the range of faiths and world views studied.

Aims and Objectives

As stated in the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education, our school aims for all pupils:

- Engage meaningfully and critically with learning which helps them to make sense of the multi-religious and multi-secular world in which they live.
- Know about and understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith through the exploration of beliefs and practices, using approaches which engage with biblical text and key sources of authority.
- Gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religious and non-religious worldviews, appreciating the complexity, diversity, continuity and change that exists within those worldviews being studied.
- Grapple with questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence and experience.
- Understand the concept of religion and recognise its continuing influence on Britain's cultural heritage and in the lives of individuals, communities and societies in different times, cultures and places.
- Develop disciplinary knowledge which equips pupils to be religiously literate.
- Explore their personal worldviews; their own religious or non-religious, spiritual and philosophical ways of living, believing and thinking.

Curriculum for Religious Education

RE is an academic subject that has a high profile in our school curriculum. It is a priority for senior leaders, who ensure that the teaching, learning and resourcing of RE is comparable with other curriculum subjects.

This means that the RE curriculum:

- is intrinsic to the outworking of our distinctive Christian vision in enabling all pupils to flourish. In addition, it contributes to British values and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- is delivered in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner to engage and challenge all pupils through an exploration of core concepts and questions. Lessons provide meaningful and informed dialogue with a range of religions and worldviews.
- reflects a good balance between the disciplines of theology, philosophy and human science, to enable pupils to develop their religious literacy*
*Religious Literacy: Helping children and young people hold balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief. ([Key Principles of a balanced curriculum in RE.](#))
- enables pupils to acquire a rich, deep knowledge and understanding of Christian belief and practice, including the ways in which it is unique and diverse, whilst engaging with biblical texts and theological ideas.
- provides opportunities for pupils to understand the role of foundational texts, beliefs, rituals, and practices and how they help to form identity in a range of religions and worldviews.
- supports the development of other curriculum areas and other general educational abilities such as literacy, empathy and the ability to express thoughts, feelings and personal beliefs.
- encompasses the full range of abilities to ensure that all flourish academically, using a wide range of teaching and learning strategies which consider the task, outcome, resource, support and pupil grouping as appropriate to pupils' needs
- offers tasks that are age appropriate, challenging and sufficiently demanding to stimulate and engage all pupils, whilst extending the most able and providing support for those who need it.
- ensures that all pupils' contributions are valued in RE as they draw on their own experiences and beliefs

Curriculum Balance and Time

Reflecting the school's trust deed, pupils and parents are entitled to expect that, in Church schools, Christianity should be the majority religion studied in each year group and should be at least 50% of curriculum time. Sufficient dedicated curriculum time, meeting explicitly RE objectives, however organised, should be committed to the delivery of RE. This should aim to be close to 10% but must be no less than 5% in key stages 1-4.

Schools must take note that the RE entitlement is totally separate from requirements for collective worship. Collective worship must not be considered curriculum time for RE or the teaching of RE.

A sequential curriculum map has been designed in order to allow pupils to become religiously literate through developing, year on year, their knowledge and skills.

- In EYFS, pupils study primarily Christianity and stories from Islam, Hindu Dharma, Judaism and Sikhi.
- At Key Stage One, pupils study Christianity, Judaism, Humanism and Islam.
- At Key Stage Two pupils study Christianity, Islam, Hindu Dharma, Sikhi, Humanism and Judaism.

The curriculum for religious education is designed to ensure religious literacy lies at the heart. A multidisciplinary approach to curriculum design provides a balance between

theology, philosophy and the human/social sciences.

Theology: 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.

Philosophy: 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.

Human/Social Sciences: 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. [Appendix 1]

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning will:

- Critically engage with a range of religious and non-religious source materials, including biblical texts.
- Utilise different disciplinary lenses, including theology, philosophy and the human and social sciences.
- Provide opportunities to understand the roles of texts, beliefs, rituals and practices and how they help form identity in a range of religious and non-religious worldviews. Pupils should explore how beliefs, rituals and practices may change in different times, places, communities and cultures.
- Develop confident religious literacy, including the explicit teaching and development of disciplinary knowledge.
- Generate meaningful and informed dialogue around a range of religious and non-religious worldviews.
- Recognise that students bring personal knowledge to the RE classroom and enable them to navigate and develop this.
- Practise a wide range of skills including enquiry, analysis, interpretation, evaluation and reflection.
- Provide for the needs of all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Be based upon accurate and inclusive assessment of the different forms of knowledge, which enables pupils to make progress in their learning.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Pupils are assessed in terms of how they are making progress in relation to the theological, philosophical and human/social sciences disciplines within religious education.

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

Pupils are assessed using age-related expectations. This is done in a variety of ways e.g. through written activities, role play, art work, discussion. Similar to other core subjects, progress is tracked using Arbor.

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 make good progress in this subject and to plan future learning.

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.

Leadership of RE

Senior leaders in school and the RE Leader will ensure that:

- RE's high priority within the curriculum and status as an academic subject are clearly articulated. The RE entitlement is entirely separate from collective worship.
- RE provision reflects the school's trust deed.
- The RE curriculum is well-balanced, well-sequenced and reflects the school's specific context. Sufficient dedicated curriculum time, meeting explicitly RE objectives, is committed to the delivery of RE. This should aim to be close to 10% but must be no less than 5% in key stages 1-2
- All teaching staff and those responsible for governance understand the distinctive role and purpose of RE within a Church school.
- An effective system is in place for those responsible for governance to monitor and evaluate standards in RE.
- Priority is given to building up staff expertise through professional development and resourcing, particularly where teachers with specialisms in other areas are delivering RE.
- They engage with their diocese when developing the school's RE curriculum and adapting schemes and frameworks, such as a locally agreed syllabus, to the school's context.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The RE Leader will monitor provision and standards within the school through observation, looking at work, reviewing data, talking to children and reviewing the curriculum with staff.

The RE Leader is responsible for contributing to the school's self-evaluation process. In addition, the governing body monitor the role of religious education in upholding the trust deed of the school and its contribution to the Christian vision of the school.

Resources

Religious education will be funded to enable a range of resources for different religions and worldviews to be purchased. School makes use of guidance material produced by the Diocese. Funding will also allow, where possible, visits to different places of worship and provide INSET for staff. All resources will be listed, stored, be easily accessible and kept in good condition. Resource banks will be available for both staff and pupils on all major religions and world views as appropriate.

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 religious education, 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

Religious education 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

Religious education 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 religious education will promote community cohesion at each of these four levels.

Legal Requirements

Religious Education must be provided for all registered pupils in full time education except those withdrawn at their parents' request (or their own request if aged 18 or over). (DfE Circular 1 / 94, paragraphs 44 & 49, and Non-Statutory Guidance 2010 page 28) The law

relating to Religious Education for pupils who are not yet in key stage 1 is different from that relating to subjects of the National Curriculum. As Religious Education must be taught to 'all registered pupils at the school', it includes pupils in reception classes, but not those in nursery classes or play groups.

Withdrawal from RE

Parents have the legal right to withdraw their child, either wholly or partly, from Religious Education (RE). Requests for withdrawal should be made in writing to the Headteacher using the school's Withdrawal from RE Notification Form. (Appendix 2)

The school is committed to ensuring that parents and carers are informed about the aims, content and educational value of Religious Education. Information about the RE curriculum is available through the school website, curriculum information and discussions with school staff. The RE lead and member of the school's Senior Leadership Team will offer to meet with parents or carers to discuss the request and explain the nature and purpose of Religious Education within the school. While the school welcomes opportunities to discuss any concerns and explain the RE curriculum, the decision to withdraw a pupil from RE rests with the parent or eligible pupil and will be respected.

The school will acknowledge the withdrawal request and confirm the arrangements that will be made for the supervision of the pupil during RE lessons. While the school is responsible for supervising pupils who are withdrawn from RE, it is not required to provide alternative RE teaching or incur additional costs in doing so. The school will maintain appropriate records of all withdrawal requests and the arrangements made in response.

Where a pupil has been withdrawn from RE, parents have the right to request alternative religious education of the kind they wish their child to receive. Where reasonably practicable, such provision may be arranged at the school or at another school where suitable RE is available. If this is not practicable, alternative arrangements may be made outside school. In such cases, pupils may be withdrawn from school for a reasonable period to attend this provision, provided that any impact on school attendance affects only the beginning or end of a school session.

Appendix 1



Suggested Long Term overview for C of E Primary Schools in Kent

Kent Agreed Syllabus incorporating Understanding Christianity



	AUTUMN		SPRING		SUMMER	
EYFS	CREATION Why is the word 'God' so important to Christians?	OLD TESTAMENT STORIES Which stories are special and why? INCARNATION Why do Christians perform Nativity plays at Christmas?	NEW TESTAMENT STORIES Which stories are special and why?	SALVATION Why do Christians put a cross in an Easter garden?	WORLD FAITH STORIES Which stories are special and why?	WORLD FAITH STORIES Which stories are special and why?
Year 1	GOD What do Christians believe that God is like?	INCARNATION Why does Christmas matter to Christians? <i>CORE/ DIGGING DEEPER</i>	GOSPEL What is the good news that Jesus brings? <i>CORE & DIGGING DEEPER</i>	SALVATION Why does Easter matter to Christians? <i>CORE LEARNING</i>	JUDAISM Who is Jewish and what do they believe? (Part 1)	JUDAISM Who is Jewish and what do they believe? (Part 2)
Year 2	CREATION Who made the world?	ISLAM Who is a Muslim and what do they believe? (Part 1)	ISLAM Who is a Muslim and what do they believe? (Part 2)	SALVATION Why does Easter matter to Christians? <i>DIGGING DEEPER</i>	HUMANISM What is Humanism?	UNIVERSAL How should we care for others and the world and why does it matter?
Year 3	PEOPLE OF GOD What is it like to follow God?	INCARNATION What is the Trinity? <i>CORE LEARNING</i>	SIKHI What is important for Sikh people?	SIKHI How do Sikh people worship and celebrate?	KINGDOM OF GOD When Jesus left, what was the impact of Pentecost?	HUMANISM What is Humanism?
Year 4	CREATION What do Christians learn from the Creation story?	INCARNATION What is the Trinity? <i>DIGGING DEEPER</i>	GOSPEL What kind of a world did Jesus want?	SALVATION Why do Christians call the day Jesus died 'Good Friday'? <i>CORE & DIGGING DEEPER</i>	HINDU DHARMA What does it mean to be a Hindu in Britain today? (Part 1)	HINDU DHARMA What does it mean to be a Hindu in Britain today? (Part 2)
Year 5	GOD What does it mean if God is loving and holy?	INCARNATION Was Jesus the Messiah? <i>CORE LEARNING</i>	PEOPLE OF GOD How can following God bring freedom and justice?	SALVATION What did Jesus do to save human beings?	ISLAM What does it mean to be a Muslim in Britain today? (Part 1)	ISLAM What does it mean to be a Muslim in Britain today? (Part 2)
Year 6	CREATION Creation and science: conflicting or complementary?	GOSPEL What would Jesus do?	HUMANISM What is Humanism?	JUDAISM What does it mean to be Jewish in Britain today?	UNIVERSAL What can be done to reduce racism? Can religion help?	KINGDOM OF GOD What kind of king is Jesus?

Appendix 2

St John's CofE Primary School

Withdrawal from Religious Education (RE) Notification Form

Pupil Details

Name of Child: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Class: _____

Name of Parent/Carer: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Request for Withdrawal

I wish to exercise my legal right to withdraw my child from:

☐ All Religious Education (RE) lessons

☐ Part of the Religious Education (RE) curriculum

If requesting a partial withdrawal, please specify which elements of RE you would like your child withdrawn from:

Reason for Withdrawal (Optional)

Parents/carers are not required to give a reason for requesting withdrawal from Religious Education. However, if you wish to do so, please provide details below:

Alternative Arrangements

I understand that the school will make appropriate arrangements for my child during the time they are withdrawn from Religious Education lessons. These arrangements will be discussed and agreed with the school.

Declaration

I confirm that I have discussed this request with the school and understand the implications of withdrawing my child from Religious Education.

Parent/Carer Signature: _____

Date: _____

School Use Only

Date request received: _____

Meeting held with parent/carers: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Date of meeting: _____

Arrangements agreed for withdrawn pupil:

Headteacher Signature: _____

Date: _____

Notes

Under Section 71 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, parents/carers have the right to withdraw their child from Religious Education, either wholly or partly. The school welcomes the opportunity to discuss any concerns and explain the aims and content of the RE curriculum before withdrawal arrangements are finalised.