

RE Rationale

How I created the curriculum for our school

The requirements for RE are set out in the Durham Locally Agreed Syllabus 2020. This document provides the overview of what should be taught in each Key Stage from Early Years to Key Stage 2 within the four defining concepts of belief, authority, expressions of belief and impact of belief.

In Key Stage 1 children are required to study Christianity, Buddhism and religious diversity. In Key Stage 2 they are required to study Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and a small special study of Islam.

The main focus is Christianity. As there are units of study for Christmas and Easter for each year group, the Autumn and Spring Terms focus on Christianity. The only exceptions to this are in Year 6 where children there is a compulsory unit of work in the Summer Term so it was necessary to study a different religion in the Spring Term, and in Year 5 where children undertake a longer study on Judaism over two terms. Children in Early Years also study festivals from other religions, such as Diwali, in line with the calendar.

The units of work have been designed to build on prior knowledge (where applicable) and prepare children for future knowledge.

Every unit has a question for a title. This forms the basis of the assessment for the unit and is asked at the beginning of the unit and again at the end to ascertain how much knowledge children have retained and gained. Each lesson within a unit will begin with a brief recap of the knowledge gained in the previous lesson in order to support children to learn and remember more. The skills progression document for RE provides an overview of the knowledge and understanding and the critical thinking skills children should acquire each year.

Early Years

In Early Years children begin to explore through the two main themes of “special” and “belonging.” Children learn about harvest, Diwali, special/holy books, the Bible, baptism and special buildings. These themes and opportunities to explore different aspects of religion create a foundation for Key Stage 1 by introducing relevant knowledge and vocabulary. This is where the main focus lies in RE in Early Years.

Key Stage 1

In Key Stage 1 children are introduced to the beliefs and practices of Christianity and Buddhism and their impact, as well as religious diversity. They begin to find out about the main features of a church building, God, Jesus, the Bible, St. Cuthbert and belonging in Christianity. These introductory studies are built upon in Key Stage 2.

In Year 1 children explore who Buddha was and in Year 2 they consider Buddhist practices, building on their knowledge from Year 1. In Year 2 children also find out about local faith communities.

Key Stage 2

In Key Stage 2 children are beginning to be more aware of the wider world in which they live. They deepen their factual knowledge of religious beliefs and practices.

In their studies of Christianity, children will be taught about beliefs and practices across denominations and the impact of these for individuals and communities. Once again, they consider the church building, beliefs about Jesus, the Bible, Durham Cathedral and God, building on the knowledge they have gained in Key Stage 1 and studying these aspects of Christianity in greater depth.

They continue to build an understanding of religious diversity in Year 4 by asking how people care for others; in Year 5 through a study about rituals; and a special study about Islam in Year 6.

Other religions are introduced in Key Stage 2. Children study Hinduism in Year 3 and again in Year 4. There is a focus in Year 3 on how Hindus worship and then on what they believe in Year 4, building on knowledge gained the previous year.

In Year 5, children go on to study Judaism for two terms. They look in greater depth at Moses and his life in the Summer Term, which follows on from their study about Jewish worship and then leads into finding out about the synagogue.

Year 6 has a focus on religious diversity with a study building on the Year 4 unit asking how we care for the environment. The study of Islam follows in the Spring Term, followed by the statutory Bridging Unit in the Summer Term which is taught in all schools following the Durham Locally Agreed Syllabus. This asks the question "What do we now know about Christianity?" and explores what children have learned through the four main concepts throughout their primary experience in preparation for their move to secondary education.

SEND and RE

Many elements of RE are taught in the form of stories, through discussion and small group work. The curriculum can be adjusted by staff to ensure all children are able to access it at their own level and stage of development. Written work can be scribed where this is appropriate as literacy skills are not being assessed as part of the RE curriculum.