



St Mary's C of E School
LEARNING WITH HOPE

Religious
Education Policy
2023

Date agreed:	November 2023
Signed:	Headteacher:
Signed	Chair of governors:
Date for review:	November 2025

Religious Education Policy

1. Rationale

As a Church of England School in Penzance, we aim to provide children with a thorough understanding of the life and work of Christ and His place in our daily lives. We realise that the pupils are not immune to developments in the wider world so through the adoption of the Cornwall Agreed Syllabus 2020, we deliver a broad R.E. curriculum that also develops a knowledge and understanding of three other principal religions in Great Britain. All children at St. Mary's have equal access to the R.E. curriculum irrespective of age, gender, race, ability, creed and culture.

Religious Education at St Mary's underpins our school mission statement and aims which is to educate children for "life in its fullness" by educating pupils spiritually, intellectually, socially, morally, aesthetically and physically based on Christian principles and on the examples of Jesus in the gospels. We aim to do this by:

- **Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills** by following a broad and balanced curriculum that stimulates a sense of curiosity and excitement about the world whilst developing the full potential of all children.
- **Educating for Hope and Aspiration** by providing a safe, nurturing and caring environment where all children can take risks, build resilience, flourish and demonstrate courageous advocacy in action.
- **Educating for Community and Living well together** by building positive relationships with our local, national and international communities and for the schools to be hubs of learning in the community.
- **Educating for Dignity and Respect** by promoting the character virtues of perseverance, generosity, respect and responsibility so that children leave the school resilient and trustworthy whilst displaying good manners and empathy for others.

2. Purpose of RE

The Cornwall Agreed Syllabus 2020 asserts the importance and value of religious education (RE) for all pupils, with on-going benefits for an open, articulate and understanding society. The following purpose statements underpin the syllabus, which is constructed to support pupils and teachers in fulfilling them:

- Religious education contributes dynamically to children and young people's education in schools by provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose in life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human.
- In RE pupils learn about religions and beliefs in local, national and global contexts, to discover, explore and consider different answers to these questions.

- Pupils learn to weigh up the value of wisdom from different sources, to develop and express their insights in response and to agree or disagree respectfully.
- Teaching therefore should equip pupils with systematic knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and beliefs, enabling them to develop their ideas, values and identities.
- RE should develop in pupils an aptitude for dialogue so that they can participate positively in our society, with its diverse religions and beliefs.
- Pupils should gain and deploy the skills needed to understand, interpret and evaluate texts, sources of wisdom and authority and other evidence. They should learn to articulate clearly and coherently their personal beliefs, ideas, values and experiences while respecting the right of others to differ.

3. Intent

Our school vision of “Learning with Hope” is at the heart of our Religious Education provision. We have adapted the Cornwall Agreed Syllabus to meet the needs of our children in our school. The principal aim of Religious Education at St Mary’s is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living. This RE intent is stuck in the front of the children’s RE books from Year Two upwards.

This principal aim is elaborated further in three further aims. These form the three core elements to our teaching and learning approach which allows for open exploration of religion and belief. It ensure that children can:

1. Make sense of a range of religious and non-religious beliefs, so that they can:
 - identify, describe, explain and analyse beliefs and concepts in the context of living religions, using appropriate vocabulary
 - explain how and why these beliefs are understood in different ways, by individuals and within communities
 - recognise how and why sources of authority (e.g. texts, teachings, traditions, leaders) are used, expressed and interpreted in different ways, developing skills of interpretation.
2. Understand the impact and significance of religious and non-religious beliefs, so that they can:
 - examine and explain how and why people express their beliefs in diverse ways
 - recognise and account for ways in which people put their beliefs into action in

diverse ways, in their everyday lives, within their communities and in the wider world

- appreciate and appraise the significance of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.

3. Make connections between religious and non-religious beliefs, concepts, practices and ideas studied, so that they can:
 - evaluate, reflect on and enquire into key concepts and questions studied, responding thoughtfully and creatively, giving good reasons for their responses
 - challenge the ideas studied, and allow the ideas studied to challenge their own thinking, articulating beliefs, values and commitments clearly in response
 - discern possible connections between the ideas studied and their own ways of understanding the world, expressing their critical responses and personal reflections with increasing clarity and understanding.

These aims are achieved at St Mary’s by adopting the Cornwall Agreed Syllabus and the three core elements of the teaching approach namely Making sense of belief, Understanding the Impact and Making Connections.

4. Responsibilities

Every class teacher plans their own RE lessons according to the long-term plan devised by the RE Lead. This ensures that the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are fully met across the school. In the Foundation Stage the RE is taught in topics and links with the Early Learning Outcomes. Although RE is not taught in our Pre-school children in the Pre-school do join in with some RE activities with the Reception class when appropriate. See Appendix A for further details.

Specific responsibilities	Who – role?
Leading the Religious Education provision and curriculum	NB
Assessing and coordinating training and support for staff	HT and NB
Policy development and review	HT, NB and DD

5. Implementation

RE is taught at St. Mary’s for one and a half hours per week across the school. The long-term plan for RE details the units of work to be covered by each class. The Cornwall Agreed Syllabus 2020 involves the teaching of core concepts being delivered in a spiral curriculum. Each unit of work has clear learning outcomes to

ensure continuity and progression in the teaching and learning of Religious Education across the school. The Understanding Christianity resource is used to support the teaching of Christianity which forms around 50% of the units of work. A quarter are separate Multi-Faith units (Muslim, Jewish, Hindu) and the other quarter are made up of thematic units (where religion and non-religious views are compared) together with Curriculum Kernewek units (religion and belief in Cornwall). Additional planning from RE Today are used to support these units. Knowledge Organisers for each unit of work are devised by teachers to emphasise key knowledge and vocabulary.

This means that the RE taught at St Mary's is both systematic and thematic, developing the children's religious literacy. As well as Christianity, our pupils encounter diverse religious traditions alongside non-religious world views. Our teachers adopt a world-view approach when studying religions.

At times, RE themed days are held across the school. The aim of this is to provide the children with an in-depth study of a certain festival or theme at a given time. The use of ICT is encouraged to enrich RE lessons especially the internet, I-pads and E-mail. Interviews with people of faith and virtual tours of places of worship are often used. We also hold special assemblies throughout the year which provide an opportunity for classes to share RE work with parents. In addition, the children often work together with Penlee Cluster on specific projects in the community. Often these are online such as Reflection for the Day, the animated Advent Calendar and the Daily Lent Shout. These are shared with the whole school so bring an extra dimension to the subject of RE.

6. Impact

The long-term plan based on the Cornwall Agreed Syllabus ensures that RE at St Mary's is coherent, progressive and identifies what pupils should know and understand by the end of each unit in the form of learning outcomes. End of phase outcomes gives clear knowledge that the children should know. This has been broken down further into end of year outcomes. It is clearly stated what a child should know and understand by the end of each year group. In this way a child can be assessed as being "working towards expected", "expected" or "working at a greater depth" within RE. The learning is built upon each year to ensure continuity and progression. The five-step planning process is used when planning each unit of RE at St Mary's. This turns the outcomes into clear I can statements which the children use to assess their own understanding at the end of each unit of work. After the class teacher has also assessed the children's learning at the end of each term, they record their child's progress on INSIGHT tracking by indicating whether the child is working below, working at or exceeding the expected level.

7. Equal Opportunities and Special Needs

Ethnicity, religion and cultural diversity:

Our policy values the different backgrounds of all pupils in school and, in acknowledging and exploring different views and beliefs, seeks to promote respect and understanding. We encourage respect for all religions and cultures.

Special educational needs and learning difficulties:

It is up to the class teacher to ensure that they have supported the less able children in their class. In line with our SEN and Inclusion policy, appropriate provision is provided in RE for children who need additional support. This could be provided in various forms including extra resources, adult support or the use of ICT. At St Mary's the RE taught builds on and is enriched by the different experiences that our pupils bring in to school. It meets all pupils' learning needs including those with learning difficulties or who are gifted and talented, boys and girls, EAL children, pupils from all religious communities and pupils from all ethnic groups and diverse family backgrounds.

8. Health and Safety

All religious artefacts are handled respectfully and safely. All relevant risk assessments are carried out in line with school policy when handling artefacts and visiting places of worship. All websites are checked before use with the children to ensure they are appropriate. Any visitors to RE lessons are briefed fully by the class teacher prior to their visit so that the learning objectives are clear and fully understood. This ensures against religious indoctrination.

9. Parental involvement

Parents are informed each term of the RE topic being studied by information placed on the school website and through topic leaflets that are sent home. Parents do have the right to withdraw their children from Religious Education and worship. However, as a Church School, we do hope all children will participate in such activities. We strongly encourage parents to contact the Head teacher or R.E. Lead if they have any concerns and anxieties about the policy, provision and practice of R.E. at our school.

10. Governor involvement

The SIAMS toolkit is updated every year by the Head teacher, the RE Lead and the RE/SMSC Governor. Parental questionnaires are sent home every two years about RE and Collective Worship at St. Mary's. These are both prime opportunities to monitor and review the RE provision across the school. In addition to this, the role of RE in

the school is reviewed by the RE/SMSC Governor in pupil-conferencing in the Summer Term. This is then fed back to the Governing body annually.

Appendix A Religious Education with our EYFS Childr

Our young EYFS children are inquisitive and are at the age where they ask questions about themselves and others. Such as:

- What is important to me?
- Why do people do things differently? Why does my family/community celebrate events like this and your family/community celebrate events differently or not at all? Which is the 'right' way?
- What do I believe? Why do people have different opinions and views to me?
- What happens to people when they die?
- Where was I before I was born?
- What is right and what is wrong?

It is therefore, we believe, important to encourage our children to ask questions and explore answers which:

- support children to develop emotionally, spiritually and morally
- support their developing thinking skills, both abstract and imaginative
- help them find out about themselves, their family and community
- help them to develop a sense of place in their family and community, in the world and in the universe
- help them learn about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities and traditions

RE also contributes to children's development of Characteristics of Effective Learning and Teaching in particular with regard to:

- Making links and noticing patterns in their experience (Creating and Thinking Critically - Making links)
- Showing curiosity about objects, events and people (Playing and Exploring – Finding out and exploring)
- Using senses to explore the world around them (Playing and Exploring – Finding out and exploring)
- Representing their experiences in play (Playing and Exploring – Playing with what they know)
- Acting out experiences with other people (Playing and Exploring – Playing with what they know)

The processes of **exploration** and **reflection** are important for the child. Through RE lessons, the children begin to make sense of other people's views, cultures and beliefs. They begin to understand how people put beliefs in action and they develop a positive attitude towards them. The children can also begin to make sense of their own views and beliefs.

The EYFS refers to **spiritual wellbeing**, acknowledging the fact that children have experiences beyond the purely emotional. Their spiritual wellbeing is enhanced by recognising that children develop spiritually by exploring answers to their questions, developing their sense of place in the world and beyond.

In finding out about others, young children start reflecting on **belief, culture** and **practice** and explore **faith** through:

- stories
- visuals - photos, pictures

- toys and puppets
- handling real artefacts
- roleplay
- creativity – dance, drama, art and design
- non-fiction books
- Discussion