



Religious Studies Policy

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All Saints Academy, Dunstable
“Living Well Together with Dignity, Faith and Hope”

1. Introduction

Religious Education is unique in the Academy curriculum in that it is neither a core subject nor a foundation subject but the 1988 Education Act states that ‘Religious Education has equal standing in relation to core subjects of the National Curriculum in that it is compulsory for all registered students’.

All Saints Academy, Dunstable is a Church of England Voluntary Aided Academy, therefore the provision of RS must be in accordance with the Trust Deed of the Academy. The Governors in consultation with the Principal have decided, following advice from the Diocese, to adopt the Bedfordshire Locally Agreed Syllabus and supplement this with material from the Diocese and elsewhere. The provision of RS is broadly Christian in keeping with our status as a Church of England Voluntarily Aided Academy.

Religious Education is central to the church’s understanding of education and mission. ‘The National Society Statement of Entitlement’ outlines the following aims for RS in a Church of England Academy:-

- To enable students to encounter Christianity as the religion that shaped British culture and heritage and influences the lives of millions of people today
- To enable students to learn about the other major religions, their impact on culture and politics, art and history, and on the lives of their adherents
- To develop understanding of religious faith as the search for and expression of truth
- To contribute to the development of students’ own spiritual/philosophical convictions, exploring and enriching their own faith and beliefs

2. Aims for Teaching Religious Education

In Religious Education at All Saints Academy we aim that Religious Education will:

- Be concerned with the deep meaning that individuals and groups make of their experiences and how this helps them give purpose to their lives;
- Help students to reflect upon the experiences and the mysteries of life and the contribution of religious and spiritual dimensions;
- Support students in acquiring and developing knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other principal religions represented in the United Kingdom and particularly in All Saints Academy;
- Develop an understanding of the influence of beliefs, values and traditions on individuals, communities, societies and cultures;
- Develop the ability to make reasoned and informed judgements about religious and moral issues, with reference to the teachings of the principal religions represented in the United Kingdom and thereby develop confidence in their own beliefs and values;
- Enhance students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by:

- developing awareness of the ultimate questions of life raised by human experiences, and of how religions can relate to them;
- responding to such questions with reference to the teachings and practices of religions and other belief systems, relating them to their own understanding and experience;
- reflecting positively on their own identity, beliefs, values and experiences in the light of their study;
- Develop positive attitudes:
 - of respect towards other people who hold views and beliefs different from their own, and;
 - towards living in and contributing to an inclusive and caring community and a society of diverse religions.

3. The contribution RS makes to other curriculum aims in particular to SMSC, promotion of the Academy's Christian values and the promotion of 'British Values'

a. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

SMSC prepares students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. Learning about and from religions and beliefs, through the distinct knowledge, understanding and skills contained in RS 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. SMSC is tracked across all subjects and within lessons.

b. The Academy's Christian values

RS should contribute to the promotion of the Academy's distinctively Christian values. Making connections between the values and learning in RS will bring about greater understanding of the values and how they can be put into practice across a range of experiences.

c. Respect for All & Global Learning

RS makes an important contribution to an Academy's responsibility to promote respect for all and global learning. It provides a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism, discrimination and extremism.

d. The Academy community – RS provides a positive context within which the diversity of cultures, beliefs and values can be celebrated and explored.

e. The community within which the Academy is located – RS provides opportunities to investigate patterns of diversity of religion and belief and forge links with different groups in the local area, in particular local churches.

f. The UK community – a major focus of RS is the study of diversity of religion and belief in the UK and how this influences national life.

g. The global community – RS involves the study of matters of global significance recognising the diversity of religion and belief and its impact on world issues.

h. The promotion of 'British Values'

RS provides opportunities to promote the 'British Values' of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty & mutual respect.

4. Approaches to teaching RS

- a. RS has an important part to play as part of a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum to which all students are entitled
- b. High quality learning experiences in RS are designed and provided by careful planning through the locally agreed syllabus and diocesan materials taking into account the need to offer breadth of content
- c. In order to make religious education a lively, active subject we employ a variety of teaching methods.
- d. Where possible we want our students to have opportunities to encounter local faith communities through visits to local places of worship or visits from members of local faith communities
- e. Enrichment Days are planned to enable RS teaching to come to life through a broad range of experiences and through the teaching methods of art, music, discussion, the development of thinking skills, drama, the use of artefacts, pictures, stories, and the use of periods of stillness and reflection.

We use as a basis for our planning the Bedfordshire Locally Agreed Syllabus.

5. How RS is organised

In accordance with the structure of the locally agreed syllabus we have agreed that delivery of RS will take place as follows:

- a. In **Years 7, 8 and 9**, students follow a course covering the main four religions Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam. They receive two lessons of one hour each week.
- b. In **Years 10 to 11**, students receive one lesson lasting an hour a week and study both Christianity and Islam. They work towards a GCSE in RS.
- c. In **Sixth Form** students have a recognisable and identifiable provision which includes consideration of Christianity and other faiths.

From 2020/21 onwards we will offer the following distinct pathway through Key Stage 4:

- a. Two-year course covering full GCSE RS specification, reducing to Short Course qualification in November of Year 11 but leading to a GCSE qualification due to additional needs of vulnerable students

6. Assessment, Recording and Reporting of RS (see Academy Assessment policy)

The Agreed Syllabus sets out a structure for recognising student achievements and each student can work progressively towards achieving the statements of attainment following the expected rates of progress as outlined by the Bedfordshire Locally Agreed Syllabus. Assessment in RE is seen in its broadest sense and is not limited to measurement and testing.

Through activities for example, discussion with students, group activities, marking and guiding their work, observing, displaying work, asking and answering questions, teachers are continually finding out about their students' achievements. At the Academy we appreciate that a vital aid to learning

is for students to be actively involved in their own assessment. This information is then recorded against the statements of attainment in line with other areas of the curriculum.

We collect information 3 times over the academic year. Performance information is generated from exam style assessments at least once a half term and in line with the recording and reporting calendar.

As a staff we have undertaken moderation exercises to ensure that we are familiar with the statements and what they mean in the context of a student's work. School reports are sent home during the academic year and the RE report is written with reference to progress made and attitude to learning.

7. Arrangements for monitoring standards of teaching and learning in RS, including how RS contributes to SIAMS Academy Self Evaluation

The Director of Social Sciences oversees the delivery of RS with the Principal and will monitor the subject delivery within the Academy through analysis of assessment data, learning walks, book trawls and scrutiny of data. The Assistant Principal for SIAMS is responsible for contributing to the Church Academy self-evaluation process.

8. Responsibilities for RS within the Academy (Principals and Governors)

As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, the Governing Body and Principal should also make sure that:

- a. all students make progress in achieving the learning objectives of the RS curriculum
- b. the subject is well led and effectively managed and that standards and achievement in RS and the quality of the provision are subject to regular and effective self-evaluation
- c. those teaching RS are suitably qualified and trained in the subject and have regular and effective opportunities for CPD
- d. teachers newly appointed to the Academy are provided with support offered by the Diocese to enable them to become effective teachers of RS
- e. teachers are aware of RS's contribution in developing students' understanding of religion and belief and its impact as part of the duty to promote community cohesion
- f. where appropriate, students have opportunities to take courses leading to an accredited qualification in the subject
- g. teachers explore how new pedagogies and technology can be fully utilised to support RS learning objectives
- h. clear information is provided for parents/carers on the RS curriculum and the right to withdraw
- i. teachers are aware that they do not have to teach RS unless specifically appointed to do so
- j. RS is resourced, staffed and timetabled so that the Academy can fulfil its legal obligations on RS and students can make good progress

- k. where there are insufficient teachers in the Academy who are prepared to teach RS, the Principal ensures that students receive their entitlement to RS. In these circumstances, the Principal will seek advice from the Diocese, or LA SACRE.

9. The right of Withdrawal from RS

It is hoped that in a Church of England Academy it will not be necessary for any students to be withdrawn from RS. However, we recognise that this may sometimes be necessary. The Academy policy should therefore state clearly how that withdrawal will be managed.

At All Saints Academy we wish to be an inclusive community but recognise that parents/carers have the legal right to withdraw their children from religious education on the grounds of conscience. However, the right of withdrawal does not extend to other areas of the curriculum when, as may happen on occasions, spontaneous questions on religious matters are raised by students or there are issues related to religion that arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship.

We would ask any parent/carer considering this to contact the Principal to discuss any concerns or anxieties about the policy, provision and practice of religious education at All Saints Academy.

10. Managing the right of withdrawal

The Academy will ensure that parents/carers who want to withdraw their children from RS are aware of the RS syllabus and that it is relevant to all students and respects their own personal beliefs. Parents/carers should be made aware of its learning objectives and what is covered in the RS curriculum and should be given the opportunity to discuss this, if they wish.

The Academy may also wish to review such a request each year, in discussion with the parents/carers. The use of the right to withdraw should be at the instigation of parents/carers (or students themselves if they are aged 18 or over), and it should be made clear whether it is from the whole of the subject or specific parts of it. No reasons need be given.

Parents/carers have the right to choose whether or not to withdraw their child from RS without influence from the Academy, although an Academy should ensure that parents or carers are informed of this right and are aware of the educational objectives and content of the RS syllabus. In this way, parents/carers can make an informed decision. Where parents/carers have requested that their child is withdrawn, their right must be respected, and where RS is integrated in the curriculum, the Academy will need to discuss the arrangements with the parents or carers to explore how the child's withdrawal can be best accommodated. If students are withdrawn from RS, Academies have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost. Students will usually remain on Academy premises.

Where a student has been withdrawn, the law provides for alternative arrangements to be made for RS of the kind the parent/carer wants the student to receive. This RS could be provided at the Academy in question, or the student could be sent to another Academy where suitable RS is provided if this is reasonably convenient. If neither approach is practicable, outside arrangements can be made to provide the student with the kind of RS that the parent/carer wants, and the student may be withdrawn from the Academy for a reasonable period of time to allow them to attend this external RS.

Outside arrangements for RS are allowed as long as the LA SACRE (VC Academies) or Diocese (VA Academies) is satisfied that any interference with the student's attendance at the Academy resulting from the withdrawal will affect only the start or end of an Academy session. As All Saints Academy is a secondary academy and parents/carers have withdrawn a student from RS provided at the

Academy and asked for alternative RS to be provided in accordance with the tenets of a particular religion or denomination, then the Academy must either:

a. provide facilities for the alternative RS to be given at the Academy, unless there are special circumstances which would make it unreasonable to do so

or

b. agree to outside arrangements being made as long as no financial burden falls on the Academy as a result of these arrangements