

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS

A Statement of Entitlement from the Board of Education/National Society Council

This statement is intended as a guide for all involved in church schools and academies ensuring the teaching and learning of RE is treated with the importance and delivered with the excellence it deserves. It includes aims, outcomes, teaching and learning about Christianity, teaching and learning about other faiths and world views, curriculum balance, curriculum time, staff and outcomes for pupils. These areas raise important issues for policy making for schools and dioceses. They can be used with parents and staff to promote understanding of the value of RE as well as to support curriculum development and syllabus writing where appropriate.

Education and mission

1. The General Synod motion of 1999 affirmed that Church of England schools stand at the heart of the mission of the Church to the nation. This was followed by the Dearing report ***The Way Ahead***, which looked in detail at how this was to be exemplified in the life of the schools.
2. ***Going for Growth*** (endorsed by General Synod in 2010) examined the work of the church with children and young people within the mission framework. The final Action Points have significant application to schools, especially the first:
'the Church at national, diocesan and local level is called to work towards every child and young person having a life enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ' (5.2)
3. The mission imperative was clearly stated at the first meeting of the National Society in 1811, when the commitment to set up Church of England schools across the nation was undertaken specifically so that 'the national religion (should be) the foundation of national education.'
4. Consistent with this understanding of mission church schools put spiritual development at the heart of the curriculum. All members of the school community should experience Christianity through the life of the schools, as well as through the taught curriculum.

Religious Education

5. Religious Education is central to this understanding of education and mission.

The aims of Religious Education **in church schools** are

- To enable pupils to encounter Christianity as the religion that shaped British culture and heritage and influences the lives of millions of people today
- To enable pupils 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 pupils' own spiritual / philosophical convictions, exploring and enriching their own faith and beliefs

6. The outcomes for pupils at the end of **their** education in church schools are that they are able to

- Think theologically and explore ultimate questions
- Reflect critically on the truth claims of Christian belief
- Develop the skills to analyse, interpret and apply the Bible text
- Recognise that faith is a particular way of understanding and responding to God and the world
- Analyse and explain the varied nature and traditions of the Christian community
- Make a well informed response to Christianity
- Respect those of all faiths in their search for God
- Reflect critically on areas of shared belief and practice between different faiths
- Enrich and expand their understanding of truth
- Reflect critically and express their views on the human quest and destiny

Teaching and Learning about Christianity

7. Christianity should be the majority study in RE in every school. In church schools that should be clearly adhered to. Understanding Christianity as a living religion is the foundation of pupils' Religious Education in schools. It is important that this draws on the richness and diversity of Christian experience in the breadth of its Anglican and other denominational forms, and in the variety of worldwide forms. The encounter must be an open one which stems from and instils respect for different views and interpretations and in which real dialogue and education takes place. Pupils will be enabled to deepen their understanding of God as encountered and taught by Christians.

Teaching and learning about other faiths and world views

8. Church schools have a duty to foster an accurate and increasing understanding of world religions and world views. As a result, pupils will gain greater insight into the world in which they are growing up. They will also be able to appreciate the faith of others and develop a deeper understanding of their own beliefs and practices. These outcomes must contribute to harmonious relationships within and between communities, promoting social inclusion and combating prejudice.

Curriculum balance

9. Christianity will form the majority study in all church schools

- KS 1 – 3 at least 2/3 Christianity
- KS 4 the study of Christianity will be a significant and substantial part of any public qualification
- KS 5 the opportunity to continue the study of Christianity at As and A level

Curriculum time

10. Sufficient dedicated curriculum time, meeting explicitly RE objectives, however organised, should be committed to RE. Normally this should be between 5% and 10%.

Staffing

11. It should be a priority in church schools to build up staff expertise in RE.

- At least one member of staff should have specialist RE qualifications
- All teachers teaching RE to have appropriate professional development
- RE to have equal status with other core subjects in staffing, responsibility and resourcing

Outcomes for pupils

12. Pupil achievement in RE should equal or be better than comparable subjects, and all pupils should take a recognised and appropriate qualification at KS 4

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