



Religious Education at St. Michael's Woolmer Green

St Michael's Woolmer Green Primary School is a single-entry Church of England voluntary aided (VA) primary school set within a rural village. Religious Education (RE) links to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school has a clear Christian vision, "Shine as lights in the World", Matthew 5.16. Our approach to work in RE, collective worship and across the curriculum emphasises Christian values and promotes good personal development, striving for excellence in all we do and links to the Church of England's vision (July 2016), "life in all its fullness" (Appendix 1).

We are an inclusive community and we have developed a rich and varied curriculum. As a Church school Christianity is the major religion studied in each year group and Christianity is taught for at least 50% of RE curriculum time. However, we enable learners to engage with other religions and world views fostering respect for them. We encourage our pupils to gain a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and to make links between the beliefs, practices, and value systems of the range of faiths and world views studied.

Our curriculum has been designed to:

- allow pupils to develop a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of Christianity as a living and diverse faith, focussed on the teaching of Jesus and the Church,
- increase knowledge and understanding of religions and worldviews,
- promote dialogue to allow pupils to develop their wisdom, their opinions and their spirituality,
- be progressive, building on knowledge from Reception to Year 6,
- be high-quality,
- offer sequential religious education allowing all pupils to build on their knowledge and understanding of concepts about a range of religions and worldviews, fostering respect for others,
- offer a full curriculum that prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of life in modern Britain,
- to reflect the range of religions and beliefs pupils may encounter now and, in the future,
- be taught in accordance with the trust deed of our VA school.

Curriculum Implementation

RE has a high profile within the curriculum and is intrinsic to our Christian vision and values in enabling all children to flourish. Our RE curriculum contributes to the British values and spiritual moral social and cultural development, which we have linked to our school curriculum through the 'My Personal Best' approach (Appendix 1).

Our Religious Education long term curriculum plan can be viewed on our website. RE is taught for 30 minutes twice a week in Reception. Key Stage 1 has a weekly 50 minute to 1 hour lesson and Key Stage 2 have an hour a week of RE teaching. In addition, we have daily collective worship, prayers and opportunities for spiritual development.

We use Understanding Christianity to support the teaching of Christian units. This resource explores Christianity widely and uses an enquiry approach engaging with biblical texts to help develop religious and theological literacy. Learning opportunities provide fully for the needs of all learners to allow them to be inspired and develop higher levels skills including enquiry, analysis, interpretation, evaluation and reflection and we aim for high attainment and progress for all pupils.

We use Identities, Meaning, Values: The RE Agreed Syllabus for Bedfordshire to explore a range of religions and beliefs, to understand 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.

Children are taught regularly by teachers who have a secure subject knowledge and access to high quality training through our links with the Diocese of St Albans. This provides them with the confidence to help them navigate and challenge cultural and religious stereotypes, prejudices and extremism as well as providing fully for the needs of all pupils. We work closely with our governing body to monitor standards in RE effectively.

While Christianity is the predominate religion within the school and local community, we want our children to learn about other religious and non-religious viewpoints through RE to reflect Britain as a multicultural society.

We provide opportunities for pupils to:

- know about and understand Christianity as a living world faith, by exploring core theological concepts
- develop knowledge and skills in making sense of biblical texts and understanding their impact in the lives of Christians
- gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews
- learn about and compare religious beliefs, worldviews and philosophical ideas
- develop their ability to connect, critically reflect upon, evaluate and apply their learning to their own growing understanding of religion and belief (particularly Christianity), of themselves, the world and human experience
- appreciate diversity, continuity and change within the religious and worldviews being studied
- explore sacred texts and respond to images, stories, art and music
- handle artefacts
- use discussion, debates, imaginative play and drama to express their thoughts and ideas
- visit religious places of worship where possible including virtual visits
- engage with visitors from religious communities/parents
- participate in moments of quiet reflection
- take part in whole school events such as collective worship, school performances including Nativity plays and religious festivals such as Harvest Festival or Easter services
- recognise the concept of religion and its continuing influence on Britain's cultural heritage and in the lives of individuals and societies in different times, cultures and places
- explore their own religious, spiritual and philosophical ways of living, believing and thinking.

Each term we hold a Religious Experience Day where pupils share the story of the Christian faith and engage in the events and celebrations of major Christian festivals.

EYFS

RE is a compulsory part of the basic curriculum for all Reception-age pupils. It sits within the areas of personal, social and emotional development and understanding the world: People, Culture and Communities, which states that children should:

“know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class.” (EYFS 2021)

Practitioners consider the needs, interests and development of every child and they use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable learning experience and environment. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- playing and exploring – children investigate and experience things and ‘have a go’
- active learning – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- creating and thinking critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

Our curriculum enables children to develop a positive sense of themselves and others and to learn how to form positive and respectful relationships. They will do this through a balance of guided, planned teaching and pursuing their own learning within an enabling environment. They will begin to understand and value the differences of individuals and groups within their own immediate community.

Children will have the opportunity to develop their emerging moral and cultural awareness. They will encounter religious and non-religious worldviews through special people, books, times, places and objects and by visiting places of worship. They will listen to and talk about stories. Children will be introduced to subject-specific words and use all their senses to explore beliefs, practices and forms of expression. They can ask questions and reflect on their own feelings and experiences. They use their imagination and curiosity to develop their appreciation of, and wonder at, the world in which they live.

Key Stage 1

The principal aim of RE 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.

Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of religions and worldviews, recognising their local, national and global contexts. They use basic subject-specific vocabulary. They raise questions and begin to express their own views in response to the material they learn about and in response to questions about their ideas. They will study Christianity and either Islam in year 1 or Judaism, in year 2 but flexibility exists, especially where pupils from different religious communities are present in the class.

Key Stage 2

The principal aim of RE 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.

Pupils should extend their knowledge and understanding of religions and worldviews, recognising their local, national and global contexts. They should be introduced to an extended range of sources and subject-specific vocabulary. They should be encouraged to be curious and to ask increasingly challenging questions about religion, belief, values and human life. Pupils should learn to express their own ideas in response to the material they

engage with, identifying relevant information, selecting examples and giving reasons to support their ideas and views. Children between the ages of 7 and 11 are also getting 'secondary ready' in their RE, although the learning in this key stage is focused on the needs of junior children.

During the key stage, pupils should be taught knowledge, skills and understanding through learning about Islam in year 3, Hinduism in year 4, Buddhism in year 5 and Judaism in year 6. This is the minimum entitlement. Pupils may also encounter other religions and worldviews (including non-religious worldviews) in thematic units.

Collective Worship

We have close links with St Michael and All Angels Church, and the rector takes weekly collective worship services. In Church of England schools, collective worship reflects the traditions of the Church of England and develops learners' understanding of Anglican traditions and practice. We work closely with St Michael's Church and we plan and deliver acts of worship that are invitational, reflective and engaging to enable all pupils to benefit without compromising their beliefs. Our rector leads our collective worship assembly every Wednesday and our children from year 2 to year 6 lead school services at the church.

We have daily collective worship including a singing assembly where we learn religious hymns and carols. We also participate in other religious events which we invite our school community to attend including our reception class nativity and our joint year 1 and 2 Nativity as well as a key stage 2 carol concert. During the year we invite other Christian leaders to lead our collective worship services. We learn common Christian worship prayers and regularly pray together throughout the day including before lunch and at the end of our day (Appendix 2) and we have our own school prayer which we learn together during Collective worship (Appendix 3). We also provide opportunities for our children to write and share their own prayers during assembly and class time. Every class has a prayer space.

Spirituality

Spirituality influences all areas of education and life and all areas of the curriculum may contribute to pupils' spiritual development, including Religious Education, collective worship and the teaching of Christian values.

Spiritual development relates to fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of life, which affects everyone and is not dependent on a religious affiliation. We use 'Big Questions' to develop pupils' thoughts and opinions allowing them to debate key points they encounter during their education, helping them become more aware of their natural, innate spirituality. Our school grounds offer opportunities for pupils to take part in mindful walks, reflect in quiet areas and engage with the natural world.

Curriculum Impact

Our curriculum allows our pupils to gain a deeper understanding of Christianity by revisiting Christian beliefs and engaging with Biblical texts and theological ideas. They will explore other world religions and non-religious beliefs. They will gain an understanding of their culture and build respect and tolerance towards other faiths and beliefs through enquiry based key questions.

The value of checking pupils' knowledge and planning for increasing knowledge and understanding, is built into every unit of the syllabus. Learning processes such as reminding, recapping, checking facts, identifying misunderstandings and inviting learners to name what they know and what they need to know are a part of all good RE teaching. Teachers regularly assess attainment to ensure all pupils make good progress.

Appendix 1

Our Vision

Our St. Michael's community will *Shine as Lights in the World*.

Our school is distinctive in character as a Church of England Primary School. Our approach to work in R.E., collective worship and across the curriculum emphasises Christian Values and promotes good personal development.

Different religions are studied, so that all pupils learn to respect each other and live peacefully together, but our main focus is on Understanding Christianity.

Our **hope** is for all our children to have the confidence to use their talents and skills, to make responsible decisions as they learn, grow and contribute positively to the wider world.

The children are encouraged to recognise feelings and emotions in themselves and others, taught through the 'Zones of Regulation'. We have one golden rule in our school – to treat others in the same way you expect to be treated. This helps us to establish our **community** as an inclusive and supportive environment with nurture and wellbeing at its core.

We enhance **dignity** through our curriculum and policies, which are both underpinned by our school values and 'My Personal Best'. These teach Christian values and core life skills to help the children become the best that they can be, demonstrating resilience, care for others and honesty.

We build **wisdom** in our pupils by encouraging them to be curious learners, constantly questioning and striving to answer key questions, so that they develop into lifelong learners.

Our Christian Values

Our School Monthly Values

September – Friendship

October – Sharing

November – Courage

December – Love

January – Perseverance

February – Curiosity

March – Hope & Reflection

April – Imagination

May – Honesty & Truth

June – Co-operation

July – Peace

My Personal Best

My Personal Best helps me to be the best I can be.

I will be
Healthy ME.



This means I feel
healthy, happy and
confident.

I will learn to have:

- **Self-belief**
- **Honesty**
- **Courage**

I will be
Social ME.



This means I have
friends and can
work with others.

I will learn to have:

- **Gratitude**
- **Empathy**
- **Fairness**

I will be
Thinking ME.



This means I like
and am good
at learning.

I will learn to have:

- **Curiosity**
- **Imagination**
- **Concentration**

Appendix 2

Reception and key stage 1 lunch prayer

Thank you for the world so sweet,
Thank you for the food we eat,
Thank you for the birds that sing,
Thank you, God, for everything!
Amen

Reception and key stage 1 home time prayer

At the end of the day, I stop and say,
"Thank you, God, for my work and my play."
I try to be good, in the way that I should
This is my prayer at the end of the day.
Amen

Appendix 3



Our School Prayer

This is our school
Let peace live here
Let the rooms be full of happiness
Let love be all around
Love of all people
And love of life and living
Let us remember
That as many hands build a school
So many hearts make a school
Amen