

St. John's Church of England VA Primary School



Religious Education Policy

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Shining Bright Together As One Family

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1. St. John's Christian Vision and Values

We have high aspirations and expectations for all our pupils, aiming to provide a safe and secure environment in which everyone can flourish and grow as God's children. Working together with parents and carers, we are building strong relationships, enabling us to 'Shine Bright Together as One Family.'

This reflects our Christian vision and associated values, where every member of our school community – pupils, parents, staff and governors – has a role to play in ensuring every person thrives. Our vision is based on the words of Jesus written in Matthew chapter 5 verse 16:

“In the same way, let your light shine before others,
that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

The desire at St. John's is for every person to shine their own light brightly, whether it be through academic ability, sport, music, art or personal interest outside of school. Everyone is important and special: a unique masterpiece in the eyes of God.

We also feel it is important that we are never truly alone. At St. John's, we stand together with each other, supporting and helping, celebrating and comforting. We are one school, church and community family, doing life together.

The four core Christian values which are particularly important in the life of our school are:

- Forgiveness
- Friendship
- Respect
- Perseverance

2. Statement of Intent

At St. John's, religious education (RE) is regarded as a rigorous academic subject. All pupils are entitled to RE that is delivered in an objective and critical manner. Pupils are entitled to a balanced RE curriculum which enquires into religions and worldviews through theology, philosophy and the human and the social sciences. It is a coherent curriculum that enables progress through ordered and sequential learning developing both knowledge and skills. We have curriculum vision and intent, a structure for implementation and provision and a process for evaluating impact.

Aims and objectives of RE:

- To know about and understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith through the exploration of core beliefs using an approach that critically engages with biblical text.
- To gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews appreciating diversity, continuity and change within the religions and worldviews being studied.
- To engage with challenging questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence and experience.
- To 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.
- To have respect for other people's views, and hence to celebrate diversity in society.
- To explore their own religious, spiritual and philosophical ways of living, believing and thinking.

(Religious Education in Church of England Schools: A Statement of Entitlement 2019)

RE provides opportunities for spiritual development and personal reflection. It develops children's knowledge and understanding of the nature of religion and belief; provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose, truth and values, identity and belonging. RE at St. John's prepares children for citizenship in today's diverse society, enabling them to develop sensitivity to and respect for others.

3. The legal position of religious education

Our school curriculum for RE meets the requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). The ERA stipulates that religious education is compulsory for all children, including those in Reception class who are less than five years old.

The ERA allows parents and carers to withdraw their child from RE classes if they so wish, although only after they have given written notice to the school governors. The ERA also allows teachers to refuse to teach religious education, but only after they have given due notice of their intention to the school governors. The RE curriculum forms an important part of our school's spiritual, moral and social teaching.

It meets all the requirements set out in that document. The ERA states that the RE syllabus should reflect the fact that religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian, and that it should, at the same time, take account of the teachings and practices of other major religions.

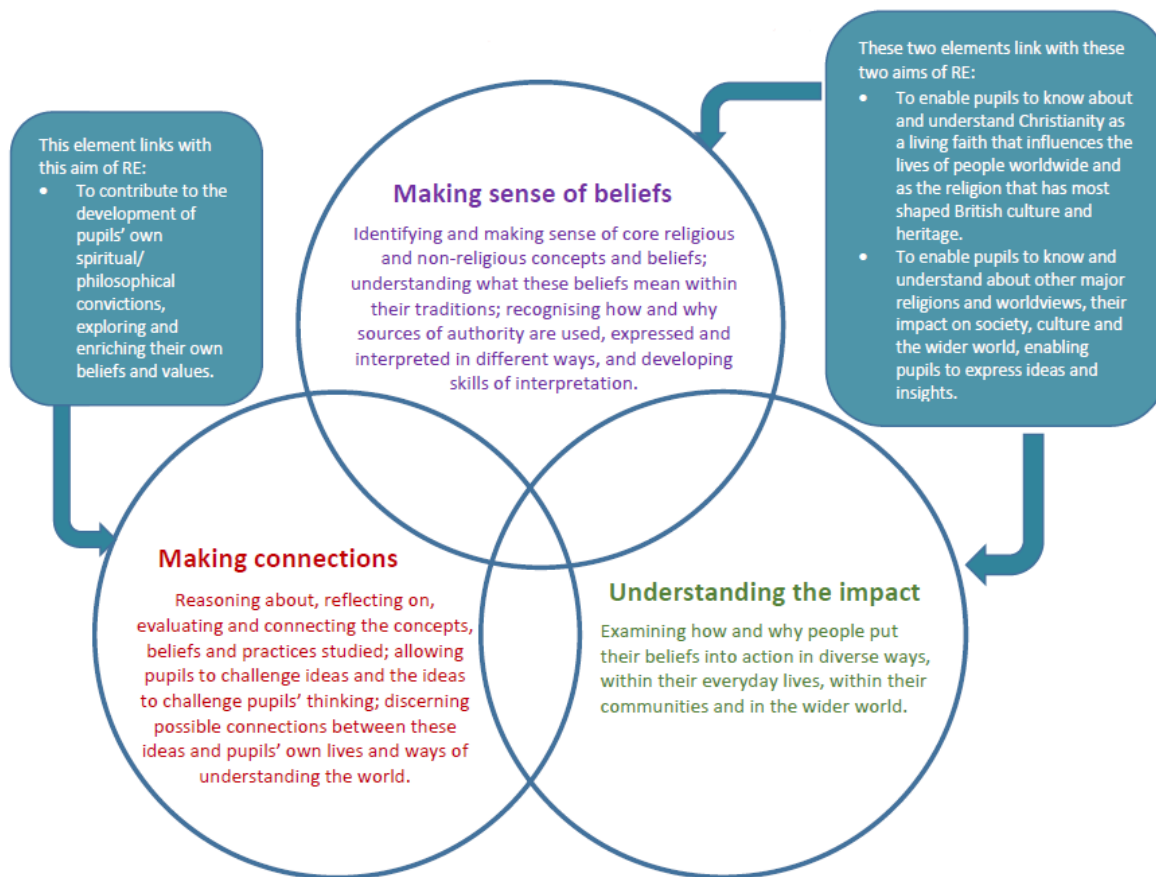
Our RE curriculum fully meets the requirements of the document *Religious Education in Church of England Schools: A Statement of Entitlement 2019*.

St. John's RE curriculum is based on the Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Syllabus for Religious Education 2024, which follows the RE Today Services *Understanding Christianity* resources and additional religious and non-religious worldviews units.

4. Teaching and learning model

The RE syllabus, on which we have based our curriculum, supports us in developing and delivering excellence in RE. It sets out an approach to teaching and learning, supporting our teachers to help pupils encounter core concepts in religions and worldviews in a coherent way, developing their understanding and their ability to hold balanced and informed conversations about religion and worldviews. Our curriculum is underpinned by three core elements which are woven together to provide breadth and balance within teaching and learning about religions and beliefs, thus supporting the aims of RE outlined earlier.

Teaching and learning in the classroom encompass all three elements, allowing for overlap between elements as suits the religion and/or worldview, concept and question being explored.



These elements set the context for open exploration of religions and worldviews. They offer a structure through which pupils can encounter diverse religious traditions, alongside non-religious worldviews, presenting a broad and flexible strategy that allows for different traditions to be treated with integrity.

The teaching and learning style in RE is based on the key principle that good teaching in RE allows pupils both to learn about religious and non-religious traditions and to reflect on what the ideas and concepts mean to them. Each lesson is very much based on a key question for the pupils to explore. Our teaching enables pupils to extend their own sense of values and promote their spiritual growth and development. We encourage our pupils to think about their own views and values in relation to the themes and topics studied in the RE curriculum.

Our teaching in RE enables pupils to build on their own experiences and to extend their knowledge and understanding of religious traditions. We use their experiences at religious festivals such as Christmas, Easter, Diwali and Passover etc., to help develop their religious thinking. When possible, visits to local places of worship are organised, and on occasion, invite representatives of local religious groups to come into school and talk to the pupils.

Pupils carry out enquiry-based tasks to answer the question for each lesson. They study faiths, comparing the religious views of different faith groups on topics such as rites of passage or festivals. Pupils investigate religious and moral issues either individually or in groups.

We recognise the fact that all classes in our school have children of widely differing abilities, so we provide suitable learning opportunities for all pupils by adapting the challenge of the task to the ability of the child. We achieve this in a variety of ways, for example by:

- setting tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses
- setting tasks of increasing difficulty (we do not expect all pupils to complete all tasks)
- grouping the pupils by ability and setting different tasks for each ability group
- grouping in mixed-ability groupings for pupils
- providing resources of different complexity, adapted to the ability of the child
- using HLTAs and TAs to effectively support the work of individuals or groups of children.

Ways of Knowing

Each teaching unit for RE allows for a range of questions reflecting approaches from religious studies, theology, ethics, sociology and philosophy.

In lessons, we use three characters to help pupils ask deep questions and to think about *ways of knowing* in RE:



Theo the Theologian



Livvy the Human/Social Scientist



Sophie the Philosopher

We help our pupils develop their own knowledge and understanding using:

- **Substantive Knowledge and Concepts** – This gives pupils a good level of understanding and knowledge of facts and information.
- **Disciplinary Knowledge** – Pupils build understanding of the right types of knowledge to know about religions and non-religious worldviews. This is where pupils ask questions as Theo, Livvy and Sophie, to aid depth of understanding.

5. RE curriculum planning

Our school's RE curriculum is based on the requirements of the Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Agreed Syllabus 2024. We ensure that the units studied in RE build on prior learning. Opportunities are offered for pupils of all abilities to develop their skills and knowledge in each unit of work, and we ensure that progression offers pupils an increasing challenge as they move through the school.

Across the whole school, the *Understanding Christianity* units, which are specifically designed to allow pupils to deepen their theological enquiry skills and offers increased subject knowledge for staff. *Understanding Christianity* upsills staff and gives them essential background social and cultural information directly relating to the Bible. The programme is based on eight core concepts which build knowledge and understanding through a 'spiral' curriculum – pupils revisit the core concepts as they move through school. These core concepts tell the 'big story' of the Bible. Each time pupils visit a concept they deepen their understanding of the ideas within the overall 'big story'. Across all eight core concepts, there are key questions for pupils to think about, progressively becoming more challenging as they move up through school. *Understanding Christianity* is a model with three main elements:

- Making sense of the text
- Understanding the impact
- Making connections

Through these elements, pupils' abilities to make sense of texts related to the core concepts, to understand the impact of belief in these concepts in the lives of Christians and the Christian community, and to make connections beyond the concepts with other learning, including pupils' own responses.

We carry out the curriculum planning in RE in two phases (long-term and short-term). The long-term curriculum plan maps the RE units studied in each term during each key stage. The RE subject lead devises this plan in collaboration with teaching colleagues in each year group. In Reception, Key Stages 1 and 2, a discrete RE lesson is taught each week.

Our long-term curriculum overview provides information regarding the breadth of Christianity teaching alongside that of other religious and non-religious worldviews. Short-term plans give details of each key question in a lesson which all build together to answer the unit key question. The RE subject leader keeps and reviews these plans on a regular basis.

The class teacher (or RE subject lead) writes the plans for each lesson, listing the key questions, learning objectives and expected outcomes. These individual plans are kept and often discussed with the RE subject lead.

The RE curriculum overview for the year is as follows:

	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Autumn 1	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS	MUSLIMS	CHRISTIANS
Key Question / Unit	God/Creation F1 Why is the word 'God' so important to Christians? Being Special F4 Being special: Where do we belong?	God 1.1 What do Christians believe God is like?	God (Digging Deeper) 1.1 What do Christians believe God is like?	Creation L2.1 What do Christians learn from the Creation story?	People of God (Digging Deeper) L2.2 What is it like for someone to follow God?	Religious Worldviews U2.10 What does it mean for Muslims to follow God?	God U2.1 What does it mean if Christians believe God is holy and loving?
Autumn 2	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS	MUSLIMS	CHRISTIANS
Key Question / Unit	Incarnation F2 Why do Christians perform Nativity plays at Christmas?	Creation 1.2 Who do Christians say made the world?	Incarnation 1.3 Why does Christmas matter to Christians?	Incarnation L2.3 What is the Trinity and why is it important for Christians?	Incarnation (Digging Deeper) L2.3 What is the Trinity and why is it important for Christians?	Religious Worldviews (continued) U2.9 What does it mean for Muslims to follow God?	Incarnation U2.4 Why do Christians believe Jesus was the Messiah?
Enhancement, Enrichment Visits & Visitors				Autumn 2: Rev. Carol & Andy Harris, Catherine Simpson (School Chaplain) – the importance of the Trinity for Christians	Autumn 1: Marriage – Rev. Carol / Rev. Frances – significance of wedding vows for Christians	Autumn 2: Visit to Newcastle Central Mosque	
Timings	36 hours of RE per year e.g. 50 minutes a week or as part of continuous provision	36 hours of RE teaching per year e.g. an hour a week, or less than an hour a week plus a series of RE days		45 hours of RE teaching per year e.g. an hour and a quarter per week, or a series of RE days or weeks amounting to 45+ hours of RE			

	Early Years	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Spring 1	CHRISTIANS	JEWS	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS JEWS MUSLIMS HINDUS SIKHS	CHRISTIANS	JEWS
Key Question / Unit	Special Stories F6 Which stories are special and why? (The Good Samaritan, The Lost Sheep)	Religious Worldviews 1.7 Who is Jewish and how do they live?	Gospel 1.4 What is the 'Good news' Christians believe Jesus brings?	Gospel L2.4 What kind of World did Jesus want?	Religious Worldviews L2.10 How and why do people mark the significant events of life?	Kingdom of God U2.8 For Christians, what kind of king is Jesus?	Religious Worldviews U2.11 What does it mean for a Jewish person to follow God?
Spring 2	CHRISTIANS	JEWS	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS JEWS MUSLIMS HINDUS SIKHS	CHRISTIANS	JEWS
Key Question / Unit	Salvation (Digging Deeper) F3 Why do Christians put a cross in an Easter garden?	Religious Worldviews (continued) 1.7 Who is Jewish and how do they live?	Salvation 1.5 Why does Easter matter to Christians?	Salvation L2.5 Why do Christians call the day Jesus died 'Good Friday'?	Religious Worldviews (continued) L2.10 How and why do people mark the significant events of life?	Salvation U2.7 What difference does the Resurrection make for Christians?	Religious Worldviews (continued) U2.11 What does it mean for a Jewish person to follow God?
Enhancement, Enrichment Visits & Visitors			Spring 1: Rev. Carol / Rev. Frances at St. John's Church & Pastor John Campbell (AoG Church in Evenwood) – the importance and impact of the Gospel for Christians			Spring 2: Rev. Carol / Rev. Frances (St. John's Church) / Catherine (School Chaplain) – the importance of Jesus' death and resurrection for Christians	Spring 2: Visit to the Faith Museum at The Auckland Project – What was it like for Jewish people to live in Bishop Auckland
Timings	36 hours of RE per year e.g. 50 minutes a week or as part of continuous provision	36 hours of RE teaching per year e.g. an hour a week, or less than an hour a week plus a series of RE days		45 hours of RE teaching per year e.g. an hour and a quarter per week, or a series of RE days or weeks amounting to 45+ hours of RE			

	Early Years	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Summer 1	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS MUSLIMS JEWS	MUSLIMS	SIKHS	HINDUS	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS
Key Question / Unit	God/Creation (Digging Deeper) F1 How can we care for our wonderful world? Special Stories F6 Which stories are special and why? (Noah's Ark / Jonah and the Whale)	Sacred Places 1.9 What makes some places sacred to believers?	Religious Worldviews 1.6 Who is Muslim and how do they live?	Religious Worldviews L2.8 What does it mean to be a Sikh in Britain today?	Religious Worldviews L2.7 What does it mean to be a Hindu in Britain today?	People of God U2.3 For Christians, how can following God bring freedom and justice?	Gospel U2.5 How do Christians decide how to live? 'What would Jesus do?'
Summer 2	CHRISTIANS	CHRISTIANS JEWS	MUSLIMS	SIKHS	HINDUS	CHRISTIANS NON-RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEWS	CHRISTIANS NON-RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEWS HUMANISM
Key Question / Unit	Special Places (continued) F5 Which places are special and why?	Belonging 1.8 Who am I? What does it mean to belong to a faith community?	Religious Worldviews (continued) 1.6 Who is Muslim and how do they live?	Religious Worldviews (continued) L2.8 What does it mean to be a Sikh in Britain today?	Religious Worldviews (continued) L2.7 What does it mean to be a Hindu in Britain today?	U2.13 Why do some people believe in God and some people not? U2.15 How does faith help when life gets hard?	Pilgrimage U2.14 Why is pilgrimage important to some religious believers? U2.12 What matters most to Humanists and Christians?
Enhancement, Enrichment Visits & Visitors	Summer 2: Visit to St. John's Church with Rev. Carol – Which places are special and why?	Summer 1: Visit to Shildon Methodist Church with Rev. David Payne – What makes some places special/sacred to Christians?		Summer 2: Visit to Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha (Newcastle NE4 5QU)	Summer 2: Visit to the Mandir and Hindu Cultural Society in Middlesbrough	Summer 1: Catherine – with links to Shildon Alive Summer 2: Rev. Carol & Andy Harris – Why does faith help when life gets hard?	Summer 2: Intro to the Bible session – with Andy & Rev. Carol Harris (St. John's Church)
Timings	36 hours of RE per year e.g. 50 minutes a week or as part of continuous provision	36 hours of RE teaching per year e.g. an hour a week, or less than an hour a week plus a series of RE days		45 hours of RE teaching per year e.g. an hour and a quarter per week, or a series of RE days or weeks amounting to 45+ hours of RE			

6. The Early Years and Foundation Stage

We teach RE to all pupils in the school, including those in Reception and Nursery.

In Nursery, RE is often taught through Bible stories and songs and as part of continuous provision. In Reception, RE is taught weekly as a discrete lesson, but is occasionally linked to a particular topic.

Below are the 'I know' statements for RE for Nursery and Reception:

EYFS Objectives			
Nursery	Reception <i>(36 hours of RE per year e.g. 50 minutes a week or as part of continuous provision)</i>		
All Year	End of Autumn	End of Spring	End of Summer
CHRISTIANS - I know that word God is a name. - I know that Christians believe God is Creator of the universe. - I know that Christians believe God made our wonderful world and so we should look after it. - I can give thanks to God for His wonderful creation and for the Harvest. - I know why we celebrate harvest and the importance of giving thanks to God for the harvest and all his gifts to us. - I can talk about special times celebrated by Christians and members of other faiths. - I can identify features of religious practice such as lighting candles, putting our hands together to pray. - I know that Christmas is the celebration of Jesus' birthday. - I know that Jesus was a very special baby, the Son of God. - I know that Christians believe God came to Earth in human form as Jesus. - I know that Christians believe Jesus came to show that all people are precious and special to God. - I know that God takes care of us and helps us. - I know that Christians believe Jesus came to show God's love. - I know that Christians try to show love to others. - I know that Jesus was a story teller. - I can learn from the stories Jesus told. - I know that Jesus can do anything. - I know that Christians remember Jesus' last week at Easter. - I know that Jesus' name means 'He saves'. - I know that the Church is a place of worship for Christians. - I know that I can talk to God.	CHRISTIANS HINDUS - I know that God is the Creator of the world', and he created the world from nothing. - I can give thanks to God for his good gifts; at Harvest, for example. - I know that humans are a part of God's creation, and each person is known by God. - I know that special times are celebrated differently all over the world. - I know that God came to earth as Jesus Christ, and he is called the 'Son of God'. - I know that God treasures each one of us, and that we are unique.	CHRISTIANS - I know that Jesus heard stories as a child. - I know that God speaks to us through the Bible. - I know that Jesus' name means 'he saves', and he helped all he met. - I know that Jesus died to save everyone, to pay the price of sin in our world and reunite humans with God.	CHRISTIANS RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEWS: Places of Worship - I know that Jesus was a storyteller and told people how God would like them to behave to one another. - I know that the Church is a special place to Christians - I know that people of other religions may not go to Church.

7. Spirituality in RE

Spiritual development is an integral part of our RE curriculum at St. John's.

Through the Early Years RE curriculum, children are encouraged to marvel at the natural world around them through being introduced to the story of creation; thus, leading to an ever-increasing awe and wonder which will stay with them through their childhood.

In Key Stage 1, spiritual development is promoted through developing natural curiosity and increased understanding of different religions such as Jewish and Muslim people.

In Key Stage 2, children are encouraged to use questioning skills as they come across other religious worldviews such as Sikh and Hindu people, as well as comparing the similarities and differences between religions already studied. Children are taught the skills to debate and question within RE lessons, developing their own unique worldview, as well as understanding and respecting that of others around them.

8. Contribution of RE across the whole curriculum

English

RE contributes significantly to the teaching of English in our school by actively promoting the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. When analysing texts in RE lessons, pupils are able to use those skills learnt through the English curriculum to help understand the meanings behind the text. In RE lessons, we encourage discussion and debating, particular in upper Key Stage 2, which helps pupils develop skills in speaking and listening. We also encourage pupils to write using different styles, such as diary entries, record information and write from their own or other characters' viewpoints to develop their writing skills.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship

Through our RE lessons, we teach the pupils about the values and moral beliefs that underpin individual choices of behaviour. So, for example, we contribute to the discussion of topics such as smoking, drugs and relationships and health education. We also promote British values and attitudes required for citizenship in a democracy by teaching respect for others and the need for personal responsibility. In general, by promoting tolerance and understanding of other people's views, we enable pupils to appreciate what it means to be positive members of modern society.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Through RE in our school, we provide significant opportunities for spiritual development. Pupils consider and respond to questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life. We help them to recognise the difference between right and wrong, through the study of moral and ethical questions, linking closely with Christian values. We enhance their social development by helping them build a sense of identity in a multi-cultural society. Pupils explore issues of religious faith and non-religious worldviews. In doing so, pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the cultural context of their own lives.

Computing

Computing enhances RE, wherever appropriate, in all key stages. The pupils select and analyse information, using the Internet on laptops and iPads. They also review, modify and evaluate their work, and to improve its presentation. Younger pupils take photographs or record the class using iPads acting out a Bible story. iPads are used to record visits to a place of worship. Pupils also explore virtual tours of places of worship to help develop and deepen their knowledge and understanding of a variety of worship styles.

Photographs and short video clips are added to our school Facebook account for all parents, family, the local and wider community to enjoy. Information from RE lessons is added to our school website and recorded in year group online floorbooks.

9. Inclusion in RE

At St. John's, we teach RE to all pupils, whatever their ability and individual needs. RE forms part of the school's curriculum policy to provide a broad and balanced education to all pupils. Through RE teaching, we provide learning opportunities which enable all pupils to make good progress. We strive hard to meet the needs of those pupils with special educational needs, those with disabilities, those more able, and those learning English as an additional language, and we take all reasonable steps to achieve this. (For further details, see separate policies on Special Educational Needs and Disability Discrimination.)

When progress falls significantly outside the expected range, the pupil may have special educational needs. Our assessment process looks at a range of factors – classroom organisation, teaching materials, teaching style, adaptation, support and intervention – so that we can take some additional or different action to enable the child to learn more effectively. This ensures that our teaching is matched to the pupil's needs. All pupils are valued and supported in our school so that each person can shine bright together in our school family.

We enable all pupils to have access to the full range of activities involved in RE. Where pupils are to participate in activities outside the classroom (e.g. a visit to a Jewish Synagogue that involves a journey), we carry out a risk assessment prior to the activity, to ensure that the activity is safe and appropriate for all pupils.

9. Assessment

Pupils demonstrate their ability in RE through a variety of different ways. Younger pupils might, for example, act out a famous story from the Bible, whilst older pupils might produce a PowerPoint presentation based on their investigation of sacred texts.

Teachers will assess pupils' work in RE by making informal judgements, through detailed and challenging questioning, as they observe them during lessons and in class discussions. During each RE lesson, staff 'live mark' pupils' work. This ensures that pupils understand about their own learning and how they can develop their future learning.

We follow our own assessment procedures in RE, using objectives based on the *Understanding Christianity* resource and the Durham and Newcastle Syllabus. The language we use when assessing pupils is: **working at expected**, **working below expected** or at **working at greater depth**. At the end of a whole unit of work, the teacher makes a summary judgement about the work of each pupil in relation to the specific learning objectives within the age-related expectations. This is recorded on our assessment sheets which are shared with the RE subject leader and the governor responsible for RE.

10. Resources

We have sufficient resources in our school to be able to teach all RE teaching units. We keep resources for RE in a central store, where there is a box of equipment and books for each unit of work. There is a set of Bibles in school (New Century Version), and a collection of religious artefacts which we use to enrich teaching in RE.

If needed, we can access the Durham Resource Centre at Cuthbert House for further artefacts and books.

11. Monitoring and review

The coordination and planning of the RE curriculum are the responsibility of the subject lead, working with the governor responsible for RE, who also:

- supports colleagues in their teaching, by keeping informed about current developments in RE and providing a strategic lead and direction for subject
- gives the headteacher and governors a termly summary report in which the strengths and weaknesses in RE are evaluated, indicating areas for further improvement as appropriate.

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is monitored and evaluated by the senior leadership team as part of the school's agreed cycle of monitoring and review.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.