

ELLEL ST JOHN'S CofE PRIMARY SCHOOL

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY



Loving, living and learning in the light of Christ

Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. ~ Matthew 5:16

At Ellel St John's, children thrive socially and emotionally in a stimulating environment that nurtures every child with learning at the heart of all we do. We are committed to providing an excellent education where children achieve their full potential and our academic standards are consistently very high. Through our strong Christian ethos and pastoral care, we help our children develop into caring, confident, responsible and reliable young people.

Ellel Statement of Intent: We believe each child is known, unique, special and made in the image of God. Our children will discover a love of learning for life through an inspiring curriculum full of opportunity. Our school family is a welcoming, friendly community that builds compassionate and resilient children ready to take their place in the world.

Ellel St. John's provides an engaging and memorable place-based curriculum, relevant to each individual child in their locality. Every child is entitled to a diverse curriculum which builds on and develops their life experiences, ensuring that they are offered equality of opportunity.

Our curriculum ensures that it develops the whole child: their spirituality; their social and emotional mental health and well-being; their physical health; their academic success and their creativity and innovation. These aspects contribute to our children becoming local, national and global citizens for the future.

Within the Anglican ethos of the Church of England Foundation our school aims to:

- Uphold the tradition as a Church of England school and nurture the children's moral and spiritual development.
- Ensure that every child feels safe, happy and part of the Christian family.
- Create a happy, healthy and safe school in which children are able to develop their own personalities, confidence and curiosity to learn.
- Provide an enjoyable and stimulating learning environment that allows children to develop knowledge and skills.
- Develop a curriculum that enables and challenges children of all abilities within a nurturing environment.
- Encourage children to develop responsibility for themselves and each other.
- Develop a strong, supportive partnership with parents and the community.
- Encourage children to see themselves as part of the local, national and global community.

The aims of Religious Education

Religious education enables children to investigate and reflect on some of the most fundamental questions asked by people. At Ellel St John's CE School we develop the children's knowledge and understanding of the major world faiths, and we address the fundamental questions in life, for example, the meaning of life and the existence of a divine spirit. We enable children to develop a knowledge not only of Christianity but also

of other world religions and humanism. Children reflect on what it means to have a faith and to develop their own spiritual knowledge and understanding. We help the children learn from religions as well as about religions.

Religious Education aims to help children:

- develop an awareness of spiritual and moral issues in life experiences;
- develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world religions and value systems found in Britain;
- develop an understanding of what it means to be committed to a religious tradition;
- be able to reflect on their own experiences and to develop a personal response to the fundamental questions of life;
- develop an understanding of religious traditions and to appreciate the cultural differences in Britain today;
- develop investigative and research skills and to enable them to make reasoned judgements about religious issues;
- have respect for other peoples' views and to celebrate the diversity in society.

RE and Collective Worship in our School lie at the very heart of our curriculum.

Religious Education in our school should also help pupils to:

- learn about other faiths, their beliefs, traditions and practices and from them through encounter and dialogue;
- recognise and respect those of all faiths in their search for God;
- recognise areas of common belief and practice between different faiths;
- enrich and expand their understanding of truth while remaining faithful to their own tradition;
- enrich their own faith through examples of holy living in other traditions.

Religious Education in Church Schools should help pupils to:

- reflect theologically and explore the ultimate questions and challenges of life in today's society;
- reflect critically on the truth claims of Christian belief;
- see how the truth of Christianity is relevant today;
- understand the challenge faced by Christians in today's pluralist and post-modern society;
- develop the skills to handle the Bible text;
- recognise that faith is based on commitment to a particular way of understanding God and the world;
- begin to develop their own commitments, beliefs and values;
- develop a sense of themselves as significant, unique and precious;
- experience the breadth and variety of the Christian community;
- engage in thoughtful dialogue with other faiths and traditions;
- become active citizens, serving their neighbour;
- find a reason for hope in a troubled world;
- understand how religious faith can sustain believers in difficult circumstances and in the face of opposition.;

Religious Education in Church Schools should enable:

- pupils and teachers to talk openly and freely about their own personal beliefs and practice without fear of ridicule;
- pupils to make excellent and appropriate progress in their knowledge and understanding of Christianity;
- pupils from Christian families to talk openly about their beliefs and values in lessons and to grow in their faith;
- pupils from other faith backgrounds to understand and be encouraged in their faith;
- pupils with no religious background to be given an insight into what it means to be a person of faith;

- pupils of all backgrounds to have a safe place to explore the ultimate questions and challenges of life in today's society.

The legal position of religious education

Our school curriculum for RE meets the requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). Ellel St John's CE School is a Voluntary Aided School. Within a Voluntary Aided school the management of RE is a distinctive role of the Governors and Headteacher. RE has to be in accordance with the Trust Deed and in accordance with the rites, practices and doctrines of the Church of England. The Governing Body as a whole is responsible for determining the nature of Religious Education provided in its school.

The Governors of Ellel St John's have adopted the latest version of the Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education Syllabus for RE – Questful RE - which reflects the National Framework for RE. In following this syllabus we also draw on Understanding Christianity to enhance and deepen the syllabus the children experience.

The Diocesan Board of Education also makes the following recommendations to Governing Bodies: –

- That the amount of **time allocated to RE should be at least 5%**. This is the minimum recommended in national guidelines. There will be occasions when RE takes a larger slice of the curriculum, reflecting the Church School's greater commitment to the subject.
- That in **Voluntary Aided Church Schools**, within the curriculum time for RE, Christianity should occupy **70%** of the time. Therefore, **30%** of RE curriculum time should be devoted to the study of the World Faiths listed below and non-religious world views. The planning guidance given in this syllabus leads to an 70/30 split.

The Worship and Religious Education provided by the school is in accordance with the Church of England or Methodist Church Foundation. This foundation is also reflected in the curriculum and the whole life of the school community. Since the conduct of the school as a whole reflects the Church of England or Methodist Church ethos, removal of pupils from Worship and/or Religious Education (as parents are legally entitled to do) cannot insulate them from the religious life of the school.

If such a request for withdrawal is made, the Headteacher should explore the reasons for the request and seek to arrive at an accommodation. It may be that only some elements of Religious Education or Worship are objected to. For children who are withdraw from RE, provision must be made by parents/guardians to provide suitable work.

Parents may request the governing body to provide Religious Education for their children according to the locally Agreed Syllabus. This can only be requested when parents cannot, with reasonable convenience, arrange for their children to attend another school where Religious Education is provided according to the locally Agreed Syllabus. The governing board should make provision unless the circumstances make it unreasonable to do so.

Should the governing board be unable to make such arrangements for Religious Education to be delivered according to the Agreed Syllabus, the responsibility for doing so then falls on the Local Authority. The Local Authority may decide that such a request for separate Religious Education is unreasonable and the parental request then fails.

Learning about Religion

We learn about

- God who reveals the truth about himself and humanity through creation, the giving of the law, his action in history and through the prophets.
- God who reveals himself ultimately in Jesus his Son, living among us and dying and rising for us.
- God who reveals himself in his Spirit working in the living faith of the Church experienced through scripture, tradition and reason.

Learning from Religion

We learn from

- an empathetic response to the Christian faith and a critical engagement with it.

- responding personally to the transforming power of Jesus Christ.
- developing a vision for life that transcends a dull materialism and recognises the reality of the spiritual realm.
- understanding ourselves and others, celebrating our shared humanity and the breadth of human achievement.
- examples of Christian living which give priority to the claims of justice, mercy, holiness and love.

The school also helps the pupils to:

- think theologically and explore the great questions of life and death, meaning and purpose.
- reflect critically on the truth claims of Christian belief.
- see how the truth of Christianity is relevant today and face the challenge of Jesus' teaching in a pluralist and post-modern society.
- develop the skills to handle the Bible text.
- recognise that faith is not based on a positive balance of probabilities but on commitment to a particular way of understanding God and the world.
- respond in terms of beliefs, commitments and ways of living.
- develop a sense of themselves as significant, unique and precious.
- experience the breadth and variety of the Christian community.
- engage in thoughtful dialogue with other faiths and traditions.
- become active citizens, serving their neighbour.
- find a reason for hope in a troubled world.
- understand how religious faith can sustain them in difficult circumstances and in the face of opposition.

In addition to Christianity, Questful RE allows children opportunity to learn about all world faiths – their beliefs and practices. The focus of world faiths is contained on the RE overview and within the Questful RE units.

The school helps the pupils to:

- learn about other faiths, their beliefs, traditions and practices and from them through encounter and dialogue.
- recognise and respect those of all faiths in their search for God.
- recognise areas of common belief and practice between different faiths.
- enrich and expand their understanding of truth while remaining faithful to their own tradition.
- enrich their own faith through examples of holy living in other traditions.
- recognise the common human quest for justice, peace and love and the common goal of the survival of life on this planet.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

At Ellel St. John's, Religious Education plays an important role, along with all other curriculum areas in promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our children.

Taken from Questful RE / National Society:

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development in a church school is distinctive because these four aspects of the school curriculum are inextricably rooted in the reality of God the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Religious Education (RE) curriculum in a church school is the place where excellent and distinctive SMSC is seen most clearly.

Spiritual development

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful.

Psalm 139.13-14

Spiritual development within RE in a church school enriches and encourages the pupils' discovery of God the creator, of their 'inmost being' and of the wonder of the environment.

This is promoted through:

- exploring their relationship with God and the sense that they are his children, unique and loved by him;
- exploring and experiencing prayer and worship from a variety of Christian traditions;
- giving thanks to God for all aspects of school life;
- discussing and reflecting upon key questions of meaning and truth such as the existence of God, the origins and purpose of the universe, good and evil, life after death;
- considering the value of human beings and their relationship with God, with one another and with the natural world;
- discovering how the creative and expressive arts enable spiritual development;
- opportunities to discuss feelings and emotions openly;
- recognising and encouraging the use of personal and group gifts and talents;
- opportunities to develop their gift of imagination and creativity;
- encouraging curiosity and questioning so that their own views and ideas on religious and spiritual issues can be developed within a secure environment where faith is valued;
- developing a sense of personal significance and belonging;
- encountering Christian fellowship.

Moral development

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12.2

Moral development in RE in a church school is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, which offer pupils a secure foundation stone on which to make decisions and build their lives.

This is promoted through:

- developing a sense of right and wrong based on the teaching of Jesus Christ;
- recognising the values identified within the Bible: truth, justice, trust, love, peace, compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption;
- learning to follow a path through the conflicting demands of faith, family, peers, society, the media and the world of ideas;
- recognising the importance of personal integrity;
- developing mutual respect across racial and religious divides;
- recognising that people's rights also imply responsibilities;
- developing a sensitive conscience.

Social development

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples.

John 13.34-35

Social development in RE in a church school develops pupils' understanding of what it means to live in a Christian community where Jesus' command to love one another is put into practice.

This is promoted through:

- developing a sense of empathy, compassion and concern for others;
- building relationships within the school and between the school, the parish and the local community;
- considering how Christian beliefs affect decisions at local and national level;
- investigating social issues from the perspective of Christianity and of other faiths, recognising the common ground and diversity that exists between them;
- providing opportunities for pupils to articulate their own views on a range of current issues and to show respect for the opinions of others and a willingness to learn from their insights.

Cultural development

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3.28

Cultural development in RE in a church school provides opportunities to develop an understanding of Christianity as a worldwide, multi-cultural faith that has an impact on the lives of millions of people. This is promoted through:

- promoting an understanding of Christianity from a global perspective through encounters with people, literature and the creative arts from different cultures;
- exploring the diversity of Christianity worldwide with particular reference to the diversity of the Anglican community;
- considering the relationship between British and European culture and Christianity;
- appreciating the diversity of cultures within Britain.

Taken from The National Society *Excellence and Distinctiveness Guidance on RE in Church of England Schools* document (2005)

RE also promotes an understanding of all religions and World views. Through the exploration of texts, beliefs, and practices lived out worldwide, pupils will develop respect and understanding. Cultural diversity should be recognised and celebrated as we remove barriers and build communities.

Inclusion

All children follow the agreed Blackburn Diocesan Syllabus. The needs of individual children, including those with an identified special need, able and talented, gender, race, ethnicity and culture are met through adaptive planning and teaching in line with school planning policy and Individual Education Plans.

Assessment and recording

We assess children's work in RE by following the guidelines laid out in the Questful RE Syllabus. Pupils are given the opportunity for self-assessment, to be reflective and give personal responses based on their own experiences and values and engaging with and interpreting the views of others. These self-assessments are recorded on 'I can, I know' grids which support teacher's assessments and their ongoing tracking in RE. Assessing a pupil's knowledge about religion is done through written work, discussion, observation and creative work.

A significant amount of the work children produce in RE will be found in the large floor book which each class uses. The children also have individual exercise books for some elements of their work.

Monitoring and review

The RE subject leader is responsible for: monitoring the standards of the children's work and the quality of the teaching in religious education; supporting colleagues in the teaching of RE; for being informed about current developments in the subject by keeping up to date with current best practice in RE by attending training courses and local RE Cluster meetings (Networks/Hubs); for providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school.

Resources

A wide range of RE resources are currently available in school. These include children's reference books, teacher's resource books, pictorial resources and videos. The resources are stored in the Reprographics Room. There is also a selection of reference books in the school library.

People from the local community are an additional resource and these include:

The Vicar from St. John's Church; Minister/representatives from Galgate Methodist Church; NISCU staff; parents; key figures in the local community, charity workers and members of other faith communities. St John's Church is another resource regularly used by groups of children to reinforce aspects of the RE syllabus.

Cross Curricular links

RE has links with many other areas of the curriculum including English, History, PSHE, music, Design Technology and Art. It is also linked to Collective Worship within the school.

RE also provides opportunities for teaching the following cross-curricular dimensions – Equal Opportunities, Personal and Social Education and Education for Ethnic Diversity.

Reporting

Pupil's progress is reported annually, in a written form and on other occasions verbally when parents and teachers meet to discuss progress.

Staff Training

All teaching staff are able to attend any appropriate training. This is generally delivered by members of Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education.

Jo FitzGerald – Spring 2025