



Policy for Religious Education

June 2021
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Introduction

This policy document explains the position of the teaching staff and Governors of Monkston Primary School with regard to the teaching of R.E. The document should be read in conjunction with our RE progression document and the Milton Keynes agreed syllabus for RE 2017-2022.

At Monkston Primary School, we place great value on promoting excellent practice in R.E. We maintain high expectations and are committed to clearly-defined objectives. We believe that effective R.E. teaching plays an important role in the spiritual and moral development of each pupil, helping them to reflect on issues of the greatest importance and preparing them for life as responsible and reflective global citizens

Our perception of Religious Education is in accordance with that of the Agreed Syllabus for Milton Keynes, which stresses that R.E. should be a balance of “learning about” and “learning from” religion.

We are committed to ensuring that R.E. is more than simply acquiring knowledge about religious practices, although this knowledge is a necessary prerequisite to a deeper study of reasons and belief systems. We believe there are many ways in which our pupils can learn from different religious traditions and we would prioritise our aims for R.E. as follows:

- > to help pupils in their search for meaning and purpose in life, relating knowledge and understanding gained to their own outlook and experience
- > to encourage pupils to acknowledge diversity in a spirit of openness and mutual respect
- > to help nurture an overall school ethos which values spiritual awareness and moral development

We acknowledge that the R.E. content in the Agreed Syllabus at Key Stage 1 and 2 is largely *explicit* (that is, concerning the specifics of religious belief and practice), rather than *implicit* (dealing with general issues of morality and relationships), and we seek to reflect this in our teaching. In Reception, *implicit* R.E. quite naturally takes precedence over specifically religious concepts, although these do feature.

It is our firm belief that, in the teaching of R.E, consideration should be given to authenticity. In whatever is planned and undertaken, the key consideration should always be whether most adherents to a particular faith or belief would recognise and affirm what is being taught.

We do not believe it is our place to promote or undermine any particular religious stance within the teaching of R.E., although teachers and visitors who hold religious convictions are at liberty to explain those convictions to the children, using appropriate language and in an appropriate educational context.

R.E. and the Law

Although R.E. continues to stand outside the National Curriculum, it nonetheless enjoys a significant legal status as an essential component of the *Basic Curriculum*. The provision of R.E. is governed by sections 26 to 28 of the 1944 Education Act, as most recently amended by the 1996 Education Reform Act.

The 1996 Act states that any locally-agreed syllabus should "reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and principles of the other principal religions in Great Britain."

The Milton Keynes Agreed Syllabus 2017 – 2022 is a legal document which sets out **required content** and teaching suggestions. At Monkston, our Scheme of Work has been carefully constructed to ensure a rich and balanced coverage of the Agreed Syllabus.

There are no statutory requirements with regard to the amount of curriculum time devoted to the teaching of R.E. At Monkston, we are realistic about the pressures of curriculum time-tabling and we have not insisted on a rigid approach to timetabling R.E. teaching. In fact, we have created a Scheme of Work which emphasises *quality* over quantity. We have also safeguarded the flexibility whereby teachers can pursue some lessons over a longer period of time than others, depending on the response of the children. Possibly above all subjects, we believe that the effective teaching of R.E. demands such flexibility. Our Scheme of Work anticipates in the region of 10 hours of R.E. teaching each term, totaling approximately 30 hours a year. Teachers are invited to use their professional judgement when deciding if a lesson plan can effectively be extended over 2 lessons or if some supplementary material needs to be added. We are confident that the time devoted to the teaching of R.E. at Monkston is sufficient to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus.

School Community

Our school family is rich in ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. Within the school community, the following religions are represented in significant numbers: Christianity [149], Islam [49], & Hinduism [29]. Also present are representatives of Sikhism [2], Buddhist [5], other [14] and refused [2]. 175 children are recorded as having "no religion" [NB Figures are according to pupil registration forms September 2020].

At Monkston, we do not pretend that all religions are in agreement on all issues. We believe that to do so would be offensive to the members of the different faith communities who are understandably concerned to uphold their distinctive beliefs. We do, however, believe it is important to acknowledge significant themes and concepts which one faith may have in common with another.

Links with Local Places of Worship

To help our pupils understand how different people express their beliefs in worship, we will try to ensure that by the end of Year 6, each pupil has had the opportunity to visit at least three different places of worship in the Milton Keynes area.

We are always open to discussing the educational possibilities of visiting a place of worship of a principal religion covered in our Scheme of Work:

KS1 – Christianity & Judaism

KS2 – Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Humanism & a reference to those taught in KS1.

Visitors

Although a number of our pupils belong to different faith communities and are considered to be important sources of information about religious belief and practice, we understand that a clearer overview can often be provided by a knowledgeable adult. Classroom R.E. teaching at Monkston Primary is therefore sometimes supported by contributions from other adults, visiting as representatives of different faiths. We are committed to ensuring that all visitors have relevant skills in communicating to children and that they understand their role as educators. To this end, we seek references from other schools as appropriate.

Assessment

With R.E. belonging to the *Basic*, but not the *National Curriculum*, there has historically been some uncertainty as to the value of applying standardised assessment procedures to R.E. At Monkston, we complete an annual assessment in R.E which assesses children against a set of key objectives. These objectives feed into teacher assessment of the child as to whether they are working below, at or above the expected level for that year group.

Of course, some aspects of R.E. do not readily fit methods of assessment. Much of R.E. is concerned with the development of self, relationships, openness to new ideas, creativity, empathy and self-expression. These aspects of R.E. which are related to personal and spiritual growth are *essential* to a balanced R.E. programme. They are difficult to articulate, but need to be encouraged and valued by the class teacher.

Ongoing Review & Evaluation of Policy

Whilst formal Reviews of the R.E. Policy and Scheme of Work may only take place every 3 years [depending on the requirements of the School Development Plan], we consider that we are regularly evaluating and reviewing the teaching of R.E. at Monkston through subject leader monitoring, in which the R.E. subject leader has the opportunity to provide constructive feedback on the quality of lessons taught, as well as work seen, and is able to discuss any training or resource implications. In

exercising 'quality control', we are striving to ensure the very best learning experiences for our children - experiences which have the potential to deeply affect their lives.

Right of Withdrawal

Parents/guardians have the legal right to withdraw their child from Religious Education, provided they give written notification to the school. Teachers can also exercise their right to withdraw from teaching the subject. However, since this legislation was introduced in 1944, the nature of R.E. has changed significantly from the nurture of children in a faith tradition to an open and educational enquiry. The Milton Keynes Agreed Syllabus states: *"It is hoped that parents and teachers will feel comfortable with the nature and areas of learning found in this syllabus and that, as a consequence, few will feel the need to withdraw either their children or themselves from the subject."*

At Monkston Primary School, we are confident that our approach to Religious Education is educationally sound and integral to the moral and spiritual development of our pupils. Our Scheme of Work has been designed to ensure that parents and teachers feel comfortable with the content.