



## Religious Education Policy

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## Aims

- 1 The aims of Religious Education at Alderbrook School (the academy) are -  
To enable students to develop a knowledge and understanding of the cultural and spiritual dimensions of human life, by means of an exploration of various religious traditions and stances for living, and by an investigation of their significance and function for adherents.
- 2 To enable students to develop a knowledge and understanding of the spiritual dimension of their own lives: by exploring the way in which they and others express their sense of values, interpret their experiences, and make sense of the world in which they live.
- 3 To enable students to develop the critical and evaluative skills necessary for the achievement of the above aims, in an atmosphere where both imaginative empathy and intellectual rigor are encouraged.
- 4 To assist students in the development of a critical self-awareness relating to all aspects of their life, attitudes, moral-judgment and actions.
- 5 To encourage students to develop an attitude of appreciation, respect and consideration towards cultural diversity.
- 6 To enable students to develop a social awareness, both in terms of what it means to be a good citizen of the United Kingdom, and of the world. This may be experienced through a faith-position, national identity and the degrees to which these complement or compete with each other. (e.g. the notion of individualism and individualistic responses; rights and responsibilities).
- 7 To assist students in the development of necessary skills in the areas of study, organisation and decision-making. For example: effective research skills, note-taking, extended writing, revision and examination preparation.
- 8 To foster respect for other religions and cultures, founded upon a knowledge and understanding of the religious traditions and spiritual values of different faiths. We aim to work from a fully multi-faith perspective which of necessity means that we avoid a confessional approach in the teaching of religious education.

## Religious Education at Alderbrook

- 9 Religious Education at the academy makes no presuppositions concerning the students' faith or lack of it, nor concerning their experience. We use, and welcome, contributions from students who openly espouse a religious faith. This serves our declared purpose of helping students to acquire an informed understanding of religious faith and its place in the life of a believer. The task of calling children to personal belief and faith is a different matter - the prerogative of the faith-community and not the school.
- 10 With regard to the current issue of the teaching of religion and science, Religious Education accepts that the teaching of Darwinian evolution takes place within both science and RE lessons. Darwinian evolution, creationism and the theory of intelligent design are given consideration in a balanced way, and we see personal acceptance of one view over another as

a matter for faith-communities and the individual student rather than the school. The school has no religious affiliation beyond the collective personal beliefs of the individuals within it.

- 11 Religious Education seeks to present religion to the students as a living and dynamic force which shapes people's lives. We are concerned with contemporary beliefs, practices and interpretations as with the origins and history of religions. Alongside an appreciation of the dynamism of religion, we aim to encourage an enquiring approach to religious, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. This approach encourages students to confront fundamental questions concerning themselves as individuals and citizens, allowing them to articulate and evaluate their own personal responses to them.

## Legal Requirements

- 12 In community schools and all foundation and voluntary schools without a religious character, RE will be taught in accordance with the agreed syllabus for the area, which is drawn up by a local conference called an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC), attended by teachers, local churches, faith groups and the LA. The conference is advised by Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs), which consist of many of the same groups. The head teacher shares responsibility with the LA and the governing body for making sure that the RE requirements are met.
- 13 All locally agreed syllabuses must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain (Education Act 1988). The DCSF, in partnership with the QCDA, issued a non-statutory national framework for RE in 2010, which supports those with a responsibility for RE in maintained schools, principally SACREs, and sets national standards and expectations to help promote higher standards in teaching and learning. This guidance was used to inform the creation of an Agreed Syllabus by the local standing advisory council for religious education (SACRE). This was in turn forwarded to the local authority where it was made statutory for LA schools and academies. Academies are still bound to follow local SACRE arrangements for RE.
- 14 Religious Education at Alderbrook currently meets this requirement and those of the Solihull Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education produced by the Solihull SACRE in 2008, and made statutory by the cabinet from September 2017. In line with DFE guidance, each student is given the opportunity to gain an external qualification in the subject, which at Alderbrook is the offer of the short course or full course GCSE.
- 15 Religious Education is separate and distinct from collective worship, for which there is a separate policy at the school. The recommended lesson hours do not include time for collective worship.
- 16 Religious Education proceeds with the conviction that religion and faith in all their complexity and variety are necessary subjects for exploration and study during a student's school career. This conviction is based upon the empirical and easily accessible evidence that religions and faith positions have an immense effect upon the lives of individuals and communities. Examples may be drawn from history where religious movements have greatly affected the directions of human cultural development; or from the contemporary world where we see, for instance, the resurgence of a militant Islamic consciousness and its effect upon international

economic and political developments. Witness also the problem of “cult” involvement by many young people worldwide. The department rests upon the conviction that an exploration of what it means to be a citizen of the United Kingdom and, indeed, properly human, involves an exploration of religious belief and commitment.

- 17 The school celebrates the cultural diversity within our global society, and is prepared to work creatively within that context
- 18 Religious Education is taught in the belief that all human beings have a spiritual dimension to their lives, whether or not they express it in terms of a definite religious commitment or a developed and considered life-stance. All human beings also have experiences, commitments, and a sense of value, which can be explored as a resource within the subject.

## Right of Withdrawal

- 19 Parents have a statutory right to withdraw their children from Religious Education. This no longer has to be on the grounds of religious conviction or personal conscience. Most parents accept that the school is engaged in teaching, not preaching, so withdrawal is quite rare. Where a parent wishes to exercise their right of withdrawal, we request that they state this in writing in a letter to the head teacher. OFSTED may ask to see such letters, along with other evidence, to ensure that the school is meeting its statutory requirements.

## Notes and References

- This Agreed Syllabus has been adopted by the Standing Conference and the Cabinet for Education of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council as the statutory framework for Religious Education for schools in the Local Authority." (page 7)
- There is a statutory requirement to implement this document from September 2008 (Solihull Agreed Syllabus 2008, page 9).
- The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Education, Children and Young People agreed to the publication of the Agreed Syllabus 2007 which became statutory in force in Solihull from September 1st 2008." (Solihull MBC Reference: ED2419, Tuesday, 15th January, 2008)
- “Recommended lesson hours do not include time for collective worship” (Guidance for Governance 2010, chapter 13, section 68.)