



Leigh St Mary's Church of England Primary School Religious Education Policy

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Approved by: Governing Body

RE Subject Leader: Hannah Little

Headteacher: Sarah Watson

1. Our Theologically Rooted Christian Vision

Our Religious Education curriculum sits within and contributes directly to our theologically rooted Christian vision:

"As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so continue to live in him. Keep your roots deep in him and have your lives built on him. Be strong in the faith, just as you were taught. And always be thankful."

Colossians 2:6–7

At Leigh St Mary's Church of England Primary School, our vision is to be a flourishing Christian community where every child is inspired to learn, believes in their potential and achieves all they are called to be.

Rooted in the love and grace of God, revealed through Jesus Christ and inspired by Colossians 2:6–7, we seek to ensure that every member of our school family is “rooted and built up in Him”, growing in faith, wisdom and character.

Guided by our Christian values of Friendship, Respect, Honesty, Perseverance, Kindness and Love, we nurture a community where love shapes relationships, everyone is valued and each person knows that they belong.

Through our motto:

Inspire, Believe, Achieve

we strive to enable every child to flourish spiritually, academically, socially and emotionally. We seek to equip pupils to live life in all its fullness, serve others with compassion, integrity and joy and make a positive difference in God’s world.

2. Our Mission

At Leigh St Mary’s Church of England Primary School, we promote a lifelong love of learning. Through enriching, exciting learning opportunities and a creative curriculum, children are given the foundations from which to flourish.

Our Christian values are at the heart of our school and create a culture of happiness, respect and trust. We promote a sense of belonging within a warm, nurturing environment where children feel safe and valued.

We celebrate diversity and believe that every child should have the opportunity to be the best that they can be. Through good manners, kindness, friendship, aspiration and an ‘I can’ attitude, we seek to equip our children with the knowledge, character and skills required to succeed in an ever-changing world.

Religious Education contributes significantly to this mission by giving children strong roots of knowledge and understanding while opening windows into the beliefs, experiences and worldviews of others.

3. Rationale for Religious Education

Religious Education is a core and highly valued academic subject at Leigh St Mary’s.

As a Church of England school, we recognise that high-quality RE is fundamental to our Christian identity and to our responsibility to prepare pupils for life within a diverse local, national and global community.

RE provides a unique opportunity for pupils to explore some of humanity’s deepest questions:

What do people believe? Why do they believe it? What difference does belief make? Who am I? What is important? How should we live? How can people with different beliefs live well together?

The principal aim of the Manchester Diocese syllabus is to enable pupils to explore what people believe and the difference this makes to how they live, developing the knowledge, understanding and skills required to engage with questions of religion and belief and reflect upon their own ideas and ways of living.

At Leigh St Mary's, RE is therefore neither religious instruction nor simply the learning of facts about religions. It is an academically rigorous subject which develops religious literacy, theological understanding, critical thinking, dialogue, reflection and respect.

4. Statutory and Diocesan Framework

Leigh St Mary's follows the Manchester Diocese Religious Education Syllabus 2023–2028 from Reception to Year 6.

The syllabus was produced by RE Today on behalf of the Manchester Diocesan Board of Education and is designed to provide high-quality and balanced Religious Education.

Our provision also reflects:

- the Church of England's expectations for Religious Education;
- the school's Church of England foundation and Trust Deed;
- statutory requirements for Religious Education;
- Manchester Diocesan Board of Education guidance;
- the expectations of SIAMS relating to the effectiveness and quality of RE;
- the needs and context of the pupils and families we serve.

RE is an entitlement for pupils and an important part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

Collective worship and RE are distinct areas of school provision. Although natural connections may exist between them, curriculum time allocated to RE is not collective worship time.

5. The Aims of Religious Education

At Leigh St Mary's, RE aims to enable every pupil to:

- develop a rich and secure knowledge of Christianity as a diverse, global and living faith;
- engage thoughtfully with biblical texts and important Christian theological concepts;
- develop knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and non-religious worldviews;
- appreciate diversity both between and within religious traditions;
- understand how beliefs influence how people live, worship, make decisions and understand the world;

- develop appropriate and increasingly sophisticated religious vocabulary;
- ask and explore challenging theological, philosophical and ethical questions;
- develop curiosity and an openness to ideas;
- listen respectfully to viewpoints which may differ from their own;
- give reasons for their opinions and conclusions;
- engage in meaningful and informed dialogue with people of different religions and worldviews;
- reflect upon their own ideas, beliefs, values and experiences;
- develop the religious literacy required to live well within a diverse society.

Our aim is not to tell pupils what to believe, but to give them sufficient knowledge, vocabulary, understanding and intellectual confidence to engage thoughtfully with questions of religion, belief and meaning.

6. The Manchester Diocese Threefold Approach

Teaching and learning in RE is structured through three interconnected elements:

Making sense of beliefs

Pupils develop knowledge and understanding of religious and non-religious beliefs. They encounter important texts, teachings, concepts, traditions and sources of authority and increasingly learn how these may be interpreted.

Understanding the impact

Pupils consider how beliefs influence people's lives. They explore worship, festivals, traditions, ethical choices, community life and the different ways in which people express and live out their beliefs.

Making connections

Pupils make connections between beliefs, practices and ideas. They ask questions, evaluate and reflect, compare viewpoints, give reasons for their responses and consider connections with their own developing understanding of the world.

These three elements are deliberately woven together within teaching so that RE does not become simply factual knowledge or personal reflection. Pupils need knowledge in order to think deeply, and they need opportunities to use that knowledge to interpret, question and make connections.

Our own RE aims document reflects this structure and identifies curiosity, discussion and enquiry, including theological, philosophical, ethical and social ways of thinking, as central to classroom RE.

7. Curriculum Design and Progression

Our RE curriculum is carefully sequenced from Reception to Year 6.

Our long-term whole-school plan follows the Manchester Diocese syllabus and is designed so that pupils revisit important concepts with increasing depth and sophistication.

Learning is spiral rather than repetitive. When concepts are revisited, pupils encounter new content and more challenging questions which build upon previous knowledge. Manchester Diocese identifies this spiral approach as important in enabling pupils to connect ideas and develop increasingly coherent understanding.

Our progression documents identify both:

Substantive knowledge – what pupils need to know about religions, beliefs, texts, concepts, practices and worldviews;

and

Disciplinary knowledge – how pupils learn to think, question, interpret, explain, compare and reflect within RE.

From Reception onwards, pupils are taught to **make sense of beliefs, understand impact and make connections**. For example, Reception children move from recognising that Christians believe people are known and loved by God towards retelling biblical stories and connecting these with experiences of belonging and feeling special.

By Year 6, pupils are equipped to encounter substantially more challenging questions such as:

- *Creation and science: conflicting or complementary?*
- *Why do some people believe in God and some people not?*
- *Why do Hindus want to be good?*
- *What do Christians believe Jesus did to save people?*
- *What kind of king is Jesus?*
- *How does faith help people when life gets hard?*

This demonstrates increasing theological, philosophical and ethical complexity.

8. Christianity within the Curriculum

Christianity has a central place within RE at Leigh St Mary's and is studied as a living, diverse and global faith.

Through the Manchester Diocese syllabus, children progressively encounter key Christian concepts including:

God – Creation – Fall – People of God – Incarnation – Gospel – Salvation – Kingdom of God.

The syllabus incorporates the principles and approach of Understanding Christianity, enabling pupils to engage with biblical text and theological ideas rather than learning Christian stories simply as isolated narratives.

Pupils develop increasingly sophisticated understanding as they move through school. For example, younger pupils consider what Christians believe God is like and why Christmas and Easter matter, while older pupils explore Trinity, Pentecost, Messiah, Gospel, Salvation and Kingdom of God.

Through this progressive approach, pupils develop a rich understanding of the 'big story' of Christianity and recognise that Christianity is lived and expressed in diverse ways by Christians around the world.

9. Religions and Non-Religious Worldviews

Our curriculum reflects our belief that pupils should be equipped to live well with people whose beliefs may be different from their own.

Alongside Christianity, pupils develop substantial knowledge of other religions and non-religious worldviews.

In Reception, children encounter Christianity alongside other faiths and worldviews through stories, celebrations, places, people and experiences.

In Key Stage 1, children study Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

In Lower Key Stage 2, pupils deepen their study of Christianity alongside Islam, Hinduism and Judaism.

In Upper Key Stage 2, pupils continue to develop their understanding of Christianity and other world religions while also encountering non-religious worldviews, including Humanism.

Our whole-school plan deliberately includes questions such as *Who is Muslim and how do they live?*, *Who is Jewish and how do they live?*, *What does it mean to be Hindu in Britain today?* and *What matters most to Humanists and Christians?*

Pupils learn that there is diversity within, as well as between, religions and worldviews. Teachers therefore avoid presenting religions as fixed lists of beliefs or implying that all members of a religion believe or behave in exactly the same way.

10. Religious Education in Reception

RE begins purposefully in Reception.

The Manchester Diocese syllabus identifies RE as a compulsory part of the basic curriculum for Reception-aged pupils on the school roll and recognises the importance of play-based, child-centred and experiential learning.

Our youngest children explore questions including:

- Where do we belong?
- Why is Christmas special for Christians?
- Why is the word 'God' important to Christians?
- Why is Easter special to Christians?
- Which stories are special and why?
- Which places are special and why?

Learning is brought to life through stories, discussion, play, artefacts, creativity, visitors, exploration and practical experiences.

Reception teaching establishes essential foundations of vocabulary, questioning, respect, belonging and curiosity upon which later RE is built.

11. Teaching and Learning

We have high expectations for the quality of teaching and learning in RE.

RE is taught regularly as a clearly identifiable subject. Lessons are carefully planned so that pupils know and remember more over time.

Effective RE teaching at Leigh St Mary's includes:

- clear key questions and learning outcomes;
- retrieval and activation of previous knowledge;
- explicit teaching of subject-specific vocabulary;
- careful explanation and modelling;
- high-quality religious texts and sources;
- engagement with biblical texts;
- questioning and enquiry;
- structured opportunities for talk and oracy;
- partner and collaborative learning;
- practical and creative approaches where appropriate;
- use of religious artefacts and imagery;
- high-quality resources;
- reflection and reasoning;
- opportunities to compare and make connections;

- appropriately challenging written and non-written outcomes.

Our medium-term planning format identifies the unit, key vocabulary, learning questions, individual session outcomes and overall unit outcome, helping teachers retain clarity about what children are expected to know, understand and be able to do.

Teachers are expected to use a range of approaches while maintaining academic rigour and clear RE objectives.

12. Oracy and Vocabulary

Vocabulary and oracy are important elements of our whole-school curriculum and are particularly significant within RE.

Religion and worldviews contain complex concepts that children cannot discuss or understand deeply without appropriate language.

Teachers therefore explicitly teach and revisit key vocabulary. Pupils are encouraged to:

- rehearse vocabulary orally;
- explain ideas to partners;
- participate in discussion;
- ask and answer questions;
- compare viewpoints;
- justify their ideas;
- listen respectfully;
- use increasingly precise theological and religious language.

Our aim is that pupils leave Leigh St Mary's able to talk confidently, accurately and respectfully about religion and belief.

13. First-Hand Experiences and Enrichment

We believe high-quality RE should enable pupils to encounter living religion and worldviews, rather than experiencing them only through a textbook or screen.

Where appropriate, learning is enriched through:

- visits to places of worship;
- visitors representing religious communities;
- clergy and parish partnerships;
- workshops;

- artefacts;
- practical and creative experiences;
- opportunities for questioning people about their lived faith.

Our close relationship with St Mary the Virgin Parish Church enables classes to visit regularly to explore the church building, Christian symbolism, worship and practice.

Children also experience other places of worship; for example, Year 2 pupils have visited Leigh Mosque as part of their learning about Islam and sacred places.

Experiences such as Prayer Spaces and diocesan events further enrich pupils' understanding of Christian spirituality. Where experiences have a devotional character, teachers maintain a clear distinction between curriculum RE and collective worship.

14. Inclusion and SEND

RE is for all pupils.

Our theologically rooted Christian vision leads us to believe that every child is valued, has potential and should be able to participate fully in an ambitious curriculum.

Teachers therefore make reasonable and appropriate adaptations for pupils with SEND and differing learning needs while maintaining high expectations.

These may include:

- pre-teaching vocabulary;
- visual and concrete resources;
- carefully selected artefacts;
- adapted recording;
- scaffolding;
- talk and partner work;
- modelling;
- repeated opportunities for retrieval;
- alternative ways of demonstrating understanding;
- additional adult support where appropriate.

The Manchester Diocese syllabus explicitly provides flexibility to adapt RE for pupils with SEND while maintaining its principal aims.

At Leigh St Mary's, inclusion does not mean reducing the intellectual ambition of RE. It means removing barriers so that every pupil can encounter meaningful theological, philosophical and ethical thinking.

15. Spiritual Development

RE contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual development but is not dependent upon a pupil holding a religious faith.

It provides opportunities to explore:

- identity and belonging;
- meaning and purpose;
- beliefs about God;
- questions about life and death;
- wonder and creation;
- human responsibility;
- suffering and hope;
- forgiveness;
- justice;
- morality;
- relationships;
- what it means to live a good life.

Pupils are encouraged to reflect upon their own ideas while learning that they are not required to express a particular belief.

Through RE, children increasingly develop self-awareness, curiosity, reflection, respectful dialogue and the confidence to engage with big questions.

16. RE and Our Christian Vision and Values

Religious Education contributes directly to our aspiration for pupils to be rooted in faith, growing in love.

Our values of *Friendship, Respect, Honesty, Perseverance, Kindness and Love* are not used to predetermine the conclusions pupils reach in RE. Instead, they help create a classroom climate in which difficult questions can be explored honestly and respectfully.

Friendship and Love encourage dialogue and living well together.

Respect enables pupils to encounter difference with dignity.

Honesty allows pupils to question, disagree and express uncertainty.

Perseverance encourages pupils to stay with difficult theological and philosophical questions.

Kindness shapes the way pupils listen and respond to others.

Through *Inspire, Believe, Achieve*, RE inspires curiosity about religion and the world, gives pupils confidence to develop and articulate their own thinking, and enables them to achieve progressively more sophisticated religious understanding.

17. Assessment

Assessment in RE is purposeful and should support learning rather than becoming a mechanical exercise.

Teachers assess what pupils know, understand and can do in relation to the learning outcomes within the Manchester Diocese syllabus.

Assessment is linked to:

- unit learning outcomes;
- substantive and disciplinary knowledge;
- the three elements of Making sense of beliefs, Understanding the impact and Making connections;
- end-of-phase expectations.

The Diocese emphasises that unit outcomes act as stepping stones towards end-of-phase outcomes and recommends professional teacher judgement based on a range of evidence, rather than simple tick-box assessment.

Evidence may include:

- pupils' written work;
- oral contributions;
- discussion;
- questioning;
- practical or creative outcomes;
- retrieval activities;
- pupil explanations;
- responses to key questions;
- teachers' professional observations.

Assessment information is used to identify misconceptions, adapt future teaching and evaluate whether pupils are building secure knowledge and understanding over time.

18. Feedback

Feedback in RE follows whole-school principles and is designed to move learning forward.

Feedback may be oral or written and should focus upon the RE knowledge, understanding and disciplinary thinking being developed.

Teachers may challenge pupils to:

- clarify vocabulary;
- provide evidence;
- develop an explanation;
- compare different perspectives;
- make a stronger connection;
- justify an opinion;
- revisit a misconception.

Personal beliefs themselves are not assessed. Pupils are assessed on the quality of their knowledge, understanding, reasoning and ability to engage with the subject.

19. Subject Leadership

The RE Subject Leader is responsible for providing strategic leadership for Religious Education.

The Subject Leader is allocated regular leadership time to monitor and support effective planning and teaching.

Responsibilities include:

- maintaining knowledge of diocesan and national expectations;
- ensuring implementation of the Manchester Diocese syllabus;
- maintaining the long-term curriculum and progression documents;
- supporting medium-term planning;
- monitoring curriculum coverage;
- monitoring the quality of teaching and learning;
- reviewing pupils' work;
- undertaking pupil voice;

- monitoring assessment;
- supporting colleagues' subject knowledge;
- identifying CPD needs;
- organising resources;
- developing visits and visitors;
- reporting to senior leaders and governors;
- identifying priorities for continued improvement.

Subject leadership seeks to answer not simply "Has RE been taught?", but:

What have pupils learned? What do they remember? How has their understanding developed?
Can they use their knowledge to think, question and make connections?

20. Professional Development

We recognise that high-quality RE depends upon confident and knowledgeable teachers.

The school therefore invests in professional development through:

- RE Subject Leader CPD;
- Manchester Diocese training;
- in-house staff development;
- phase-specific professional learning;
- sharing effective practice;
- access to diocesan advice and resources.

The RE Subject Leader has undertaken training on the Manchester Diocese Agreed Syllabus and shares relevant learning with staff.

Our Reception RE leadership has also accessed specialist training, including Early Years RE and Wiggle Worship, supporting strong foundations in pupils' earliest experiences of faith and spirituality.

Professional development is ongoing rather than undertaken solely in preparation for inspection.

21. Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness and quality of RE are monitored as part of the school's ongoing self-evaluation.

Monitoring may include:

- scrutiny of planning;

- learning walks;
- lesson visits;
- book scrutiny;
- pupil voice;
- teacher voice;
- assessment information;
- curriculum coverage;
- review of enrichment and first-hand experiences;
- discussion with governors;
- consideration of staff subject knowledge and CPD needs.

Monitoring pays particular attention to whether:

- pupils are building secure knowledge over time;
- learning demonstrates progression;
- Christianity is understood as a diverse living faith;
- other religions and worldviews are taught accurately and respectfully;
- appropriate vocabulary is developed;
- pupils can make connections and explain the impact of belief;
- pupils encounter increasingly challenging questions;
- SEND pupils access and flourish within RE;
- first-hand experiences enrich understanding;
- assessment informs teaching.

This reflects SIAMS' emphasis on impact rather than simply provision. The school seeks evidence that its RE curriculum is both effective and taught with consistently high quality.

22. Governance

Governors have an important responsibility for the effectiveness of RE within our Church school.

The Governing Body ensures that:

- statutory requirements are met;
- the agreed curriculum reflects the school's Church foundation;
- sufficient curriculum time and appropriate resources are provided;

- leaders monitor the effectiveness and quality of RE;
- staff receive appropriate professional development;
- areas requiring development are identified and addressed.

Governors receive information about RE through Headteacher and subject-lead reports and may participate in monitoring activities.

23. Curriculum Time

Religious Education is taught as a distinct and identifiable curriculum subject across Reception to Year 6.

In line with Manchester Diocese guidance, Leigh St Mary's provides sufficient dedicated curriculum time to enable pupils to meet the expectations of the agreed syllabus. The Diocese recommends a starting point of 60 minutes per week in Key Stage 1 and 75 minutes per week in Key Stage 2, or an equivalent annual allocation.

At Leigh St Mary's, RE is taught weekly throughout the school year, with curriculum time protected so that pupils can build knowledge, understanding and disciplinary thinking progressively over time.

Additional RE experiences such as visits to places of worship, visitors, workshops, Prayer Spaces and themed enrichment opportunities complement this weekly provision but do not replace the regular programme of RE teaching.

Collective worship is planned and delivered separately and is not included within RE curriculum time.

24. Resources

The school provides appropriate resources to support high-quality RE, including:

- Manchester Diocese syllabus materials;
- Bibles and appropriate religious texts;
- Understanding Christianity materials incorporated through the syllabus;
- religious artefacts;
- visual resources;
- high-quality texts and images;
- maps and contextual resources;
- age-appropriate digital resources;
- materials representing different religions and worldviews.

Resources should present religions and worldviews accurately, respectfully and authentically and should avoid stereotypes.

The budget for RE is separate from that for collective worship.

25. Right of Withdrawal

Parents and carers have the legal right to withdraw their child from all or part of Religious Education.

If a parent is considering withdrawal, they are encouraged to discuss this with the Headteacher so that the purpose, nature and content of the RE curriculum can be fully understood.

RE at Leigh St Mary's is educational rather than confessional. Pupils are not required to adopt or demonstrate a particular religious belief.

Where withdrawal is requested, the school will comply with statutory requirements. The Manchester Diocese syllabus confirms parents' legal right to withdraw children while recommending dialogue so that families understand the aims and value of RE before making this decision.

26. Religious Education and Collective Worship

RE and collective worship are complementary but distinct.

RE is an academic curriculum subject in which pupils develop knowledge and understanding of religions and worldviews and learn to interpret, question and evaluate ideas.

Collective worship is the daily heartbeat of our Church school and provides an inclusive, invitational and inspiring opportunity for pupils and adults to encounter Christian faith, pray, reflect and explore the school's vision and values.

Curriculum RE is not replaced by collective worship, church services or devotional activities.

27. Partnership with Church, Diocese and Wider Faith Communities

Our curriculum is strengthened through positive relationships with St Mary the Virgin Parish Church, Manchester Diocese and the wider community.

Clergy, parish representatives and diocesan colleagues support the school in developing pupils' understanding of Christianity as a living faith.

We also seek meaningful relationships and encounters with people of different religions and worldviews, enabling children to ask questions and understand lived faith authentically.

Manchester Diocese currently provides schools with RE training, resources, advice and support for SIAMS, reinforcing the importance it places upon consistently high-quality Religious Education.

28. Equalities and Respect

RE makes a significant contribution to our commitment to equality, dignity and respect.

The subject enables pupils to encounter people, cultures and worldviews which may be different from their own and challenges stereotypes and misconceptions.

Teaching must be respectful of the religious and non-religious backgrounds of pupils and families.

We create a classroom environment in which pupils can say:

"I believe..."

"Some Christians believe..."

"Some Muslims believe..."

"A Humanist might argue..."

"I am not sure..."

"I disagree because..."

without fear of ridicule.

Learning how to disagree respectfully is an important part of becoming an informed and responsible citizen.

29. Intended Impact

By the end of Year 6, we intend that pupils will:

- possess secure and increasingly connected knowledge of Christianity and other religions and worldviews;
- recognise Christianity as a diverse, global and living faith;
- use appropriate religious and theological vocabulary confidently;
- understand ways in which beliefs influence people's lives;
- recognise diversity within religious traditions;
- engage thoughtfully with biblical and other significant texts;
- ask meaningful theological, philosophical and ethical questions;
- explain and justify their thinking;
- compare different viewpoints with sensitivity;
- engage respectfully in dialogue with people of different faiths and none;
- reflect thoughtfully upon their own developing worldview;
- demonstrate curiosity, respect and intellectual confidence.

Our ambition is for children to leave Leigh St Mary's religiously literate and intellectually curious, equipped to navigate a diverse and changing world with knowledge, dignity and respect.

30. RE as an Expression of Inspire, Believe, Achieve

Our RE curriculum contributes directly to our motto.

Inspire

We inspire pupils through rich questions, stories, beliefs, traditions, places of worship, visitors and encounters with people and ideas beyond their immediate experience.

Believe

We create safe spaces in which children can explore belief and non-belief, develop confidence in expressing their thinking and recognise that their questions and perspectives matter.

Achieve

We have high academic expectations for RE. Pupils are challenged to develop increasingly sophisticated knowledge, vocabulary, reasoning and religious literacy from their individual starting points.

In this way, RE contributes to our wider aspiration that pupils have the roots to grow and the wings to fly.

31. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner where changes to statutory, Church of England, SIAMS or Manchester Diocese guidance require this.

Implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Headteacher, RE Subject Leader, teaching staff and Governing Body.

This policy should be read alongside:

- the Manchester Diocese RE Syllabus 2023–2028;
- the school's RE Whole-School Curriculum Plan;
- the school's RE Progression Document;
- the school's Theologically Rooted Christian Vision;
- the Collective Worship Policy;
- the Spiritual Development Policy;
- the Curriculum Policy;
- the SEND Policy;

- the Equality Policy;
- the Teaching and Learning Policy.

At Leigh St Mary's, Religious Education is about knowledge, understanding, curiosity, dialogue and encounter.

It enables pupils to put down deep roots: understanding Christianity, religion and worldviews with increasing confidence and sophistication. It also opens windows onto lives, beliefs and experiences beyond their own.

Through ambitious teaching, thoughtful questioning, authentic experiences and respectful dialogue, we seek to Inspire children to be curious, enable them to Believe that their questions and thinking matter, and support them to Achieve the religious literacy and wisdom they need to flourish.

Rooted in faith, growing in love, we equip our children to understand others, reflect upon themselves and live well together in God's diverse world.

