



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

Introduction

The Premier Academy is a secular institution that values the diversity of our school community while remaining a non-religious academy. Our primary focus is to provide a cohesive and focused learning environment that prioritises the delivery of the National Curriculum for all children.

The Premier Academy recognises the effect that an inclusive teaching style can have on children's progress, both inside and outside of the school environment. The Academy provides a broad and balanced curriculum which encompasses spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, in accordance with guidance sought from the Milton Keynes SACRE to ensure high quality coverage.

The Academy has created this Policy to ensure that:

- All children are provided with a balanced and broad curriculum which encompasses the traditions of Great Britain as well as a variety of other mainstream religions and beliefs, including those identified within the Academy community.
- All staff members are aware of planning, assessment, teaching and learning requirements for the RE curriculum.
- All children know how to plan, practice and evaluate their work.
- All children understand all elements of RE, as per the agreed curriculum.
- All children receive a high level of teaching which is always maintained.
- Community cohesion and high standards of achievement are promoted.
- Progression of academic achievement occurs consistently throughout the key stages.

Legal Framework

This Policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The School Standards and Framework Act 1998

This Policy has been created with regard to the following statutory and non-statutory guidance:

- DfE 'Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance'
- DfE 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage'

EYFS Curriculum

All children in the EYFS will be taught RE as an integral part of their learning, in line with the following Early Learning Goals:

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Understanding the world

All children will encounter religions and world-views through multiple methods of teaching, e.g. books, teacher-led activities, child-initiated activities, storytelling.

All children will reflect on their feelings and experiences.

Teachers will encourage imaginative play and curiosity in children.

All RE teaching and learning will have regard to the most up-to-date version of the DfE's [EYFS framework](#).

Curriculum Aims

The Academy's aim is to provide information to children, which will help them to understand their own position and to appreciate the viewpoint of others. We provide them with the opportunity to reflect, so that they can develop skills, attitudes and knowledge as they form their own beliefs and values in life.

Our RE curriculum is question led and encourages children to share their own personal experiences with their peers. Units of work have been planned to reflect the diverse makeup of the Academy. In Reception and KS1 children are introduced to key religions including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. Learning focuses on origins, key beliefs, special places, symbols and sacred texts. As children move into KS2 they build on prior knowledge and begin to compare and contrast different religious views on key concepts including pilgrimages, worship, forgiveness, peace, justice, freedom and commitment.

Children learn about religions by:

- Acquiring and developing knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world religions.
- Developing an understanding of the influence of beliefs, values and traditions of individuals, communities, societies and cultures.

Children learn from religions by:

- Developing a positive attitude towards other people, respecting their right to hold different beliefs from their own and towards living in a society of diverse religions.
- Developing the ability to make reasoned and informed judgements about religious and moral issues with reference to the teachings of the principal religions represented in Great Britain.

Children enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by:

- Developing awareness of the fundamental questions of life raised by human experiences and how religious teachings can relate to them.
- Responding to such questions with reference to the teachings and practices of religions and to their understanding and experience.
- Reflecting on their own beliefs, values and experiences in light of their study.

We also aim to:

- Promote an inquiring, critical and sympathetic approach to the study of religion.
- Value the challenging and varied nature of religion and the ways in which this is reflected in experience, belief and practice.
- Create opportunities for reflection on religious responses to moral issues.
- Foster a reflective approach to life.
- Encourage an understanding of experiences, attitudes, beliefs and practices of humankind.
- Provide opportunities, which will help the understanding and tolerance of the viewpoints of others.
- Create an environment, which will provide opportunities for developing awareness of the spiritual dimension.

Good practice includes:

- An enquiry-based approach to RE.
- Exploring controversial issues in the modern world.
- Working with local communities who observe the beliefs taught in lessons.
- Assemblies which recognise and celebrate different beliefs.
- Encouraging children to deploy their skills and reflect on questions regarding truth and morality.

- Promoting debate and dialogue of children within their local community.

Teaching Strategies

There are two types of Religious Education: implicit RE and explicit RE. Explicit RE deals with aspects of religions such as buildings, founders, beliefs, symbols and festivals; implicit RE encourages reflection on self-awareness, relationships with others and encounters with the natural world. RE requires the fostering of skills needed to understand religion, such as the ability to enter imaginatively into somebody else's experience and the ability to understand symbolic language, which is the human response to the religious dimensions in life. Attitudes, which are essential for religious understanding such as an open questioning approach to life, respect for the views of others and reverence for all forms of created life, should be nurtured.

Skills

These can be divided as follows:

Investigation – this includes:

- asking relevant questions
- knowing how to use different types of sources as a way of gathering information

Interpretation - this includes:

- the ability to draw meaning from artefacts, works of art, poetry, music and symbolism
- the ability to interpret religious language
- the ability to suggest meanings of religious texts

Reflection - this includes:

- the ability to reflect on feelings, relationships, experience, ultimate questions, beliefs and practices

Empathy - this includes:

- the ability to reflect on feelings, experiences, attitudes, beliefs and values of others
- developing the power of imagination to identify feelings such as love, wonder, forgiveness and sorrow
- the ability to see the world through the eyes of others, and to see issues from their points of view

Evaluation – this includes:

- the ability to debate issues of religious significance with reference to evidence and argument
- weighing the respective claims of self-interest, consideration for others, religious teaching and individual conscience

Analysis – this includes:

- distinguishing between opinion, belief and fact
- distinguishing between the features of different religions

Synthesis – this includes:

- linking significant features of religion together in a coherent pattern
- connecting different aspects of life into a meaningful whole

Application – this includes

- making an association between religions and individual, community, national and international life
- showing an appreciation of the similarities and difference of religious and secular values

Expression – this includes:

- the ability to explain concepts, rituals and practices
- the ability to identify and articulate matters of deep conviction and concern, and to respond to religious issues through a variety of media

These skills are not learnt in isolation but by participating in directed activities and discussion. There are obvious links with language, historical enquiry and the expressive arts.

Diversity Week

Every year the Academy holds a Diversity Week where children learn about a country, focusing on the following areas:

- Human and physical geography e.g. location, flag, language, landmarks, currency, population, weather/climate, landscape, plants and animals.
- Life in the country e.g. homes, schools, jobs, trade/tourism, transport, food, leisure.
- Religion and beliefs e.g. symbols, festivals, celebrations, rituals.
- History and culture e.g. traditional dress, dance, music, art, famous people.

Children then share their learning with their peers through assemblies and presentations.

Policy on Religious Observance, Fasting and Prayer

While we are a non-religious institution, we respect the statutory right of families to observe major religious festivals. In accordance with the Education Act 1996, the Academy will authorise **one day** of absence per occasion for any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parents/carers belong.

Facilitating Prayer

As a secular Academy, our collective worship and curriculum are designed to be inclusive of all and exclusive of none. The provision of specific prayer facilities for one faith group would necessitate equal provision for all, which is operationally impossible within our current infrastructure without compromising our secular identity and the delivery of the National Curriculum for all children.

We fully respect the right of families to practice their faith outside of school hours. We view the school as a public space focused on civic and academic development, while religious practice remains a cherished private matter for the home and the community.

Daily prayer rituals often coincide with core lesson times. The Academy has determined that the withdrawal of children from lessons for religious rituals constitutes a significant disruption to their 'educational entitlement' and academic progress. We consider the consistent delivery of the National Curriculum to be a priority that outweighs the facilitation of non-statutory religious practices during school hours.

To maintain the safety and absolute supervision of all children and ensure the delivery of the full National Curriculum without disruption, the Academy does not provide daily prayer spaces or facilitate private religious rituals during the school day.

All decisions regarding these operational constraints are made in the best interests of the entire school community, and the Governing Body's decision is final.

Fasting

As part of our inclusive approach, The Premier Academy understands that some religions observe periods of fasting, such as Lent (Christianity) and Ramadan (Islam). We recognise that children

are not typically obliged to fast before the age of puberty and that many families do not encourage fasting in young children.

Whilst the Academy discourages fasting for all children, it is unable to authorise or facilitate religious fasting for children in Reception and Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2) due to our overriding safeguarding duty of care.

This decision is based on our overriding safeguarding duty of care and the following developmental reasons:

- **Nutritional Requirements:** Primary school children are in a critical stage of physical and cognitive development, requiring regular hydration and nutrition to maintain energy levels and focus throughout the school day.
- **Health and Safety:** Primary school children are less able to articulate or recognise the early signs of dehydration or exhaustion, posing an unmitigable risk to their physical well-being in a school setting.

We acknowledge that some older children (KS2) may practice fasting, and we ask that parents/carers inform the Academy in writing if their child is participating. While the Academy does not encourage any of its children to fast during the school day - believing that fasting is best practiced during weekends and holidays under the careful supervision of parents/carer - we make specific provisions for KS2 children who are fasting at this time.

Implementation for Key Stage 2

If a KS2 child states they are fasting without prior parental notification, they will be treated respectfully, and the Academy will contact the parent/carer immediately to verify the arrangement.

Children who are fasting will not be expected to exert themselves physically; they will not take an active part in PE lessons, active ECCs or active break times. Instead, they will be encouraged to use quiet areas, such as the school library, to conserve their energy.

The Academy maintains an overriding safeguarding duty of care. If any child - regardless of age or parental consent - shows signs of dehydration, dizziness, or exhaustion, they will be advised to break their fast immediately by drinking water and/or eating food. Parents/carers will be informed if the Academy has concerns about the child's welfare or if the child was encouraged to break their fast. Furthermore, children with medical conditions that would be complicated by fasting (e.g. diabetes) are not permitted to fast during school hours.

Withdrawal

Parental right of withdrawal from RE was first granted in 1944 when curricular RE was called 'Religious Instruction'. RE is very different now – open, broad and exploring a range of religious and non-religious worldviews. In the UK, parents/carers still have the right to withdraw their child from RE on the grounds that they wish to provide their own RE. This provision will be the responsibility of the parent/carer. If a parent/carer wishes to withdraw their child from RE, they must contact the Head of Education.

Monitoring and Review

This Policy will be monitored and reviewed every two years by the Governing Body.

Any changes to this Policy will be communicated to all teaching staff.