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Religious Education (RE) Policy 2026 – 2027

St Johns C of E Middle School

This policy was written by Revd Duncan Hutchinson, a Church of England Diocesan Education Adviser (Worcester), Caelen Gower and Giles Monaghan and is approved annually by the Local Governing Body.

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Introduction
This policy has been written in the light of the Church of England's *Vision for Education* (Autumn 2016), Flourishing for All (September 2024) and through reflection on the 2023 SIAMS Evaluation Framework for schools.

Name of School: St John's Middle School

Legal Position of Religious Education in School
Religious Education (RE) is unique in the curriculum as it is neither a core or foundation subject. The 1988 Education Act states 'Religious Education has equal standing in relation to core subjects of the National Curriculum in that it is compulsory for all pupils.

St John's C of E Middle School is a Church of England Academy; therefore, Religious Education is provided in-line with the funding agreement and the academy follows the Worcestershire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2025 – 2030.

The Church of England's Statement of Entitlement
The Church of England's *Statement of Entitlement* (September 2026) outlines the aims and expectations for RE in Church of England schools and guides this school's approach to RE.
It begins by stating: 'Religious Education in a Church school should enable every child to flourish and to live life in all its fullness (John 10:10). It will help to educate for dignity and respect encouraging all to live well together'. Quoting from the Church of England's *Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good*, it continues: 'Such an approach is offered through a commitment to generous hospitality, being true to our underpinning faith, but with a deep respect for the integrity of other religious traditions (and worldviews) and for the religious freedom of each person'.

Religious Education and the school's Christian Vision

Our vision is to be a school where every individual in our community is valued and enabled to flourish as a child of God; where education impacts upon the whole-person, and care and concern for others is key. We seek to be a truly inclusive community where all can 'Give of their Best', achieve their full God given potential, be good citizens and respect difference in our growing global world.

RE at St John's contributes to the outworking of our vision by having a RE curriculum that is ambitious, challenging, enriching and inclusive. We recognise that RE can be a first step to recognising and appreciating diversity and want St John's pupils to learn about things that matter in the lives of local people, people within our country and in

the wider world. RE can support pupils in developing ideas, values and identities and we encourage our pupils to express their insights and learn to agree or disagree with others respectfully. We recognise that RE lessons allow time for all pupils to reflect upon their own beliefs and values. We aim to develop confident and compassionate pupils who are equipped to flourish in our diverse and global world. Our aims and vision for RE also reflect our school vision and the principal aim of the Worcestershire Agreed Syllabus for RE (2025). The principal aim of this syllabus, which informs all RE planning, teaching and assessment is below:

> The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.

School Approach to Religious Education

In-line with all church schools, this school has a duty to provide accurate knowledge and understanding of religions and world views.

In RE lessons we use a range of imaginative teaching methods and pupil groupings ensure effective RE lessons. We appreciate the positive impact that local faith communities can have on pupils' experience in RE. Therefore, this school aims to encourage visits to places of worship and to welcomes visitors from different faith communities. We recognise it is vitally important that teachers demonstrate respectful attitudes towards all faiths, modelling the attitudes and responses we would expect from our pupils.

As identified in the *Statement of Entitlement*, teaching and learning in RE in this school will provide:

- Engage meaningfully and critically with learning which helps them to make sense of the multi-religious and multi-secular world in which they live.
- Know about and understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith through the exploration of beliefs and practices, using approaches which engage with biblical text and key sources of authority.
- Gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religious and non-religious worldviews, appreciating the complexity, diversity, continuity and change that exists within those worldviews being studied.
- Grapple with questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence and experience.
- Understand the concept of religion and recognise its continuing influence on Britain's cultural heritage and in the lives of individuals, communities and societies in different times, cultures and places.

- Develop disciplinary knowledge which equips pupils to be religiously literate.
- Explore their personal worldviews; their own religious or non-religious, spiritual and philosophical ways of living, believing and thinking.
- an assessment process which has rigour and demonstrates progression based on knowledge and understanding of core religious concepts
- RE that makes a positive contribution to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development.

Our school values of forgiveness, love, integrity and perseverance permeate our whole school and the RE department organises termly certificates to celebrate some children who consistently demonstrate these values.

All pupils are encouraged to enter the National "Spirited Arts" Competition each year. There is an after-school club held in the summer term of each year to support this aim.

Organisation & Time Allocation

The Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education specifies that Christianity is to be the main religious worldview studied in and through RE in each year group/phase equating to at least 50% of curriculum time. In also states that, in a Church school there should be sufficient dedicated curriculum time, meeting explicitly RE objectives, committed to the delivery of RE. This should aim to be close to 10% but must be no less than 5% in key stages (KS) 1-4.

In accordance with the Statement of Entitlement and the structure of Worcestershire Agreed Syllabus / Dudley Agreed Syllabus we have agreed that, as a minimum:

- At Key Stage 2 pupils study Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam and also consider non-religious worldviews - RE will be taught for at least for 45 hours over the year.
- At Key Stage 3 pupils study Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism and also consider non- religious worldviews - RE will be taught for at least for 45 hours over the year.
- RE is timetabled for one fifty-five-minute lesson per week in both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3
- We also have two enrichment days a year in RE with a focus on the Christian faith.

Assessment / Recording & Reporting

The Worcestershire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2025-2030 sets out a structure for recognising pupil achievements and each pupil can work progressively towards achieving the expected end of Key Stage learning outcomes as outlined in the syllabus.

As a school we track progress in RE through formative ongoing teacher assessment within lessons. Half-termly pupil answer a key question in more depth to illustrate their

understanding against the 3 strands of RE. From this, we identify any pupils who might require a graduated response to meet their targets. School reports are sent home in the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms of each year and the RE report is written with reference to assessment records.

Responsibilities for RE in School

The Headteacher has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the legal framework for RE is carried out and that the teaching of RE fits within the school's distinctively Christian vision. At St John's Middle School some of the responsibilities for RE are delegated to other members of staff.

The **Subject Leader** is responsible for:

- ensuring personal subject knowledge and expertise are kept up to date by participating in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for RE and sharing good practice
- attending RE clusters / hub meetings (BMSLP; MAT; Pyramid; NATRE)
- providing and sourcing in-service training for staff as necessary.
- all teaching staff and those responsible for governance understand the distinctive role and purpose of RE within a Church school.
- ensure that Christianity is the main religion taught in and through RE in each year group/phase equating to at least 50% of curriculum time.
- ensuring the staff are familiar with the syllabus and supporting resources such as *Understanding Christianity*
- ensure that the teaching of RE enquires in to religious and non-religious worldviews through theology, philosophy and the human and social sciences.
- supporting and clarifying approach to planning, delivery and assessment being clear about the subject's intent, implementation and impact
- engage with their diocese when developing the school's RE curriculum and adapting schemes and frameworks, such as a locally agreed syllabus, to the school's context.
- acquiring and organising appropriate resources and managing the department's budget
- monitoring the teaching and learning of RE through regular lesson observations, work scrutiny, learning walks, analysis of data and pupil voice and being able to discuss impact and standards, all in conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team
- contributing to the SIAMS self-evaluation process.

The **Headteacher and Governors** must ensure:

- RE has a high profile within the curriculum
- that the legal framework for RE is upheld within the school

- that the Statement of Entitlement for RE is adhered to within school
- that all pupils make progress in achieving the learning outcomes of the RE curriculum
- the subject is well led and effectively managed and that standards and achievement in RE and the quality of the provision are subject to regular and effective self-evaluation
- those teaching RE are suitably qualified and trained in the subject and have effective and regular opportunities for CPD
- teachers newly appointed to church schools are provided with support offered by the diocese to enable them to become effective teachers of RE
- that clear information is provided for parents on the RE curriculum and the right to withdraw
- RE is resourced, staffed and timetabled so that the school can fulfil its legal obligations on RE and pupils make good progress
- appropriate support is in place to ensure the effective provision of RE.
- engage with the diocese when developing the school's RE curriculum and adapting schemes and frameworks, such as a locally agreed syllabus, to the school's context
- monitor RE effectively in accordance with the Statement of Entitlement.

The Right of Withdrawal from Religious Education

In the UK, parents still have the right to withdraw their children from RE on the grounds that they wish to provide their own RE. This provision will be the parents' responsibility. This right of withdrawal exists for all pupils in all types of school, including schools with and without a religious designation. Students aged 18 or over have the right to withdraw themselves from RE. Parents also have the right to withdraw their child from part of RE and can do so without giving any explanation. Teachers also have the right to withdraw from the teaching of RE. However, this does not apply to teachers who have been specifically employed to teach or lead RE. If a teacher wishes to withdraw from the teaching of RE, a letter requesting this must be submitted to the head of the school and its chair of governors. If a teacher withdraws from the teaching of RE, the school must still make provisions for the pupils to receive their entitlement to RE.

At St John's Middle School, we believe that Religious Education helps all children, irrespective of their own religious beliefs, understand the world around them and the communities in our world. We wish to be an inclusive community but recognise that parents have the legal right to withdraw their children from RE on the grounds of conscience. However, the right of withdrawal does not extend to other areas of the curriculum when, as may happen on occasions, spontaneous questions on religious matters are raised by pupils or there are issues related to religion that arise in other subjects such as history and citizenship.

Any request from a parent for the withdrawal from RE must be made to the Headteacher. All requests will be granted, and parents are under no obligation to provide a reason for their decision. Once a request has been received and granted by the headteacher, parents may be offered an opportunity to discuss the nature of RE within school, to support the school's understanding of the parents' decision. We would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about Religious Education in the school; however, parents are under no obligation to take up this offer and it is not conditional on a request for withdrawal being granted. Should parents take up the offer of a discussion, the school may seek to establish the religious issues about which the parent objects to their child being taught.

If pupils are withdrawn from RE, schools have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost. Pupils will usually remain on school premises.

Review

This policy will be subject to the normal cycle of policy review and will be reviewed and ratified by the governing body every year. Furthermore, there may be occasions where this policy is reviewed outside the normal review cycle, including but not limited to:

- a change in Agreed Syllabus
- Change in Church of England Statement of Entitlement
- a change in legal position framework for RE