DIOCESE OF

ST ALBANS

MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

Religious Education Policy

Northill CE Academy

Policy type	**Trust Localised Policy**
Renewed	**Every 3 years**
Author/Responsible Officer	**Headteacher**
Board to be ratified	**Education, Ethos & Standards Committee**
Approved by	**Alison Richards**
Date of ratification	**4th December 2023**
Date of next review	**Autumn 2 2026**

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Our mission, vision and values

The Trust has a clear mission at its core, ensuring that all pupils are enabled to flourish, rooted in God's Love - academically, socially, spiritually, physically and mentally. This is central to our work, and rooted in our Christian foundation (John 10 v 10). Our commitment to mutual flourishing within the school community is built upon our shared belief in Church of England principles. In our Trust, just as in the wider Church of England community, 'flourish' refers to prospering, thriving and growing – not shrinking out and dying. It means prayerfully encouraging all within our schools so that they might prove fruitful, successful and contented in the longer term. We seek to provide space generously for all to flourish in life and all of its structures. Equal treatment for all pupils, staff and the wider community is a core part of enabling this long term, holistic flourishing.

We have a clear vision about creating successful schools for the benefit of their communities. We expect any school in the Trust to continuously improve, and those graded by OFSTED as RI/Serious Weaknesses/Special Measures to make rapid progress and be able to secure an OFSTED grading of at least "Good" within 3 years post-conversion. All schools provide rich and diverse curricula which evolve to meet the needs of their children and local communities, as well as delivering educational excellence to enable them to continue to flourish in later life.

The way we work and deliver against our mission is critical to our Trust. We have shared, agreed values of:

Hope; Nurture; Equality; Respect; Collaboration

The Trust's vision is underpinned by a Christian values framework which is adopted by all schools. It provides clear expectations for all Trust employees on how we wish our values to impact on all areas of school life. It draws on, and is informed by, the National Church of England Vision for Education and the Diocesan Board of Education Vision.

Our community

The Trust are dedicated to delivering education that serves local communities. Our schools are inclusive, welcoming those from all and no faiths, from all abilities and backgrounds. We believe in providing a high-quality education, underpinned by Christian values, which enables every child to flourish.

Underpinning all of the Trust's work is a belief in educational excellence. The Trust serves all stakeholders by providing schools with the highest levels of academic rigour and pastoral care.

Our schools are places where children and young people develop and thrive intellectually, socially, culturally and spiritually. All of the Trust's schools teach a broad and balanced curriculum within national guidelines focusing on core skills. This is designed to ensure that all pupils reach their academic potential and seek to enrich their experience along the way. Pupils will be enabled to succeed in an atmosphere of high expectation, aspiring to educational excellence with a firm foundation of values.

This policy forms part of our Trust governance and ensures that we are held to the highest standards as we carry out our duties. OBJ

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1. Vision

'You will shine among them like stars in the sky'
Philippians 2:15

At Northill CE Academy we want all our children to flourish and have the brightest futures, each one nurtured individually to be a guiding light with a unique sparkle. We teach one another to live with kindness and respect. We help our children to understand that with courage and perseverance they can excel.

Love, Compassion, Respect, Courage, Excellence

Through our core Christian values we want to ensure that our school is a place which enables children to learn and play, feel safe, happy and valued, where they are able to flourish and experience God's wonderful world in all its fullness. We aim to provide rich, memorable learning experiences which build character in each individual child, inspire their learning and provoke curiosity. Strong relationships underpin all we do where we value and respect each other's uniqueness. We provide space for all children to flourish and be the best they can be. Our Christian ethos nurtures personal beliefs and attitudes, which enables all to seek meaning through life's journey.

We shine brightly by…

Showing Love –*We think about others before ourselves*

Being Compassionate –*'Standing in someone else's shoes' and being kind*

Being Respectful –*Valuing everyone and everything and celebrating our differences.*

Being Courageous – *We are brave, prepared to try new things and will stand up for what is right*

Aiming for Excellence – *by living our values, we show excellence in our behaviour and learning*

Northill CE Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers and visitors to the school to share this commitment.

Our school Vision underpins this procedure. Our Church school respects each child as unique in the sight of God, loved and accepted in an ethos that encourages and celebrates difference. We will endeavour to afford sustainable opportunities for academic and personal development with a life and moral code based on key Christian values of truth, justice, trust, love peace, hope, compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption, which underpin the life and work of our school.

2. RE Policy Statement

Religious education is unique in the curriculum in that it is neither a core subject nor a foundation subject but the 1988 Education Act states that: 'Religious Education has equal standing in relation to core subjects of the National Curriculum in that it is compulsory for all registered pupils'

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3. Aims

The broad aims of religious education are set out within the locally agreed syllabus and the Church of England Education Office Statement of Entitlement (2019). The primary purpose of religious education is to promote religious literacy. By this we mean that pupils are able to hold balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief.

The aims of RE are to enable pupils to:

- Know about and understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith through the exploration of core beliefs using an approach that critically engages with biblical text;
- To gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews, appreciating diversity, continuity and change within the religions and worldviews studied;
- To engage with challenging questions of meaning and purpose raised by human experience and existence;
- To recognise the concept of religion and its continuing influence on Britain's cultural heritage and in the lives of individuals and societies in different times, cultures and places; and
- To explore their own religious, spiritual and philosophical ways of living, believing and thinking.

In achieving these aims, religious education contributes in a significant way to the flourishing of all children, allowing them to live life in all its fullness (John 10:10).

4. Curriculum

Religious education is an academic subject, delivered in an academic, objective and pluralistic manner.

The curriculum for religious education is designed to ensure religious literacy lies at the heart. A multi-disciplinary approach to curriculum design provides a balance between theology, philosophy and the human/social sciences.

Theology: This examines where beliefs come from, how they have changed over time, how they are applied differently in different contexts and how they relate to each other.

Philosophy: This is about finding out how and whether things make sense. It deals with questions of morality and ethics. It takes seriously questions about reality, knowledge and existence.

Human/Social Sciences: This explores the diverse ways in which people practice their beliefs, both now and in the past. It engages with the impact of beliefs on individuals, communities and societies.

A sequential curriculum map has been designed in order to allow pupils to become religiously literate through developing, year on year, their knowledge and skills. The three disciplines detailed above provide lenses through which each enquiry question is approached.

EYFS

- All children in the EYFS will be taught RE as an integral part of their personal, social and emotional learning.

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- All children will encounter religions and world-views through multiple methods of teaching, e.g., books, educational visits and storytelling.
- All children will reflect on their feelings and experiences.
- Teachers will encourage imaginative play and curiosity in children.
- All RE teaching and learning must have regard to the most up-to-date version of the DfE's EYFS framework.

• Details of what is taught in Key Stages 1 and 2 can be found in our long term curriculum map for RE.

Reflecting the school's trust deed or academy funding agreement parents and pupils are entitled to expect that in Church schools Christianity should be the majority religion studied in each year group and should be at least 50% of curriculum time. This entitlement is met both through the weekly or blocked teaching of religious education, and through additional 'RE' days which focus on an aspect of the Christian Faith.

The use of the resource *Understanding Christianity* particularly supports the development of the theological perspective.

5. Teaching RE

Religious education uses an enquiry-based approach to learning. This is based on the best practice framework in Understanding Christianity and Central Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus. This approach enables pupils to focus on an enquiry question which explores aspects of the theological, philosophical and human/social sciences. A range of teaching strategies are used to ensure learning is challenging and relevant including the use of art, music, thinking skills, artefacts and stories.

Where possible we want our pupils to have opportunities to encounter local faith communities through visits to local places of worship or visit from members of local faith communities.

6. Assessment

Pupils are assessed in terms of how they are making progress in relation to the theological, philosophical and human/social sciences disciplines within religious education. In broad terms, the following principles have been applied to each aspect in terms of what it means to become more religiously literate:
• Extending knowledge and understanding from the concrete and familiar to the abstract and complex;
• Moving from simple ideas and beliefs/concepts to making connections between them and placing these within a bigger picture or meta-narrative;
• Demonstrating increasing layers of interpretation of religion, religions, beliefs and worldviews through engagement with a broadening and increasingly complex range of information;
• Showing an increasing ability to critically question and form coherent, logical arguments, including increasing recognition of divergences of opinion about and the controversial nature of religion and belief; and
• Expressing a broadening understanding of diversity in terms of the nature of religion, religions and worldviews.

Pupils are assessed using age-related expectations. This is done in a variety of ways e.g., through written activities, role play, art work, discussion.

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Assessment is regarded as an integral part of teaching and learning and is a continuous process. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to assess all pupils in their class. We assess the children in order to ensure that they make good progress in this subject and to plan future work.

In addition, pupils are encouraged to use self-assessment to evaluate their own knowledge and understanding. A comment about their progress is made in the annual report to parents.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

The RE leader will monitor provision and standards within the academy through observation, looking at work, talking to children and reviewing the curriculum with staff.

The RE leader is responsible for contributing to the academy's self-evaluation process. In addition, the local governing body monitor the role of religious education in upholding the Trust Deed of Northill CE Academy and its contribution to the Christian vision of the school.

8. Responsibilities for RE -Academy- Headteachers and Governors

As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, the local governing body and Headteacher should also make sure that:

- all pupils make progress in achieving the aims of the RE curriculum;
- the subject is well-led and effectively managed;
- 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 regular and effective opportunities for CPD;
- where appropriate, pupils have opportunities to take courses leading to an accredited qualification in the subject;
- clear information is provided on the school website about the RE curriculum;
- RE is resourced, staffed and timetabled so that the school/academy can fulfil its legal obligations on RE and pupils can make good progress;
- where there are insufficient teachers in a academy who are prepared to teach RE, the Headteacher ensures that pupils receive their entitlement to religious education. In these circumstances, Headteacher might wish to seek advice from the Diocese.

9. The Right of Withdrawal from RE

Northill CE Academy is an inclusive community but recognises that parents have the legal right to withdraw their children from religious education on the grounds of conscience. However, the right of withdrawal does not extend to other areas of the curriculum when, as may happen on occasion, spontaneous questions on religious matters are raised by pupils or there are issues related to religion that arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship.
We would ask any parent considering this to contact the Headteacher to discuss any concerns or anxieties about the policy, provision and practice of religious education.

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Managing the right of withdrawal

• Northill CE Academy will ensure that parents who want to withdraw their children from religious education are aware of the syllabus and that it is relevant to all pupils and respects their own personal beliefs;

• Parents should be made aware of its learning objectives and what is covered in the religious education curriculum and should be given the opportunity to discuss this, if they wish;

• Northill CE Academy may review such a request each year, in discussion with the parents;

• The use of the right to withdraw should be at the instigation of parents, and it should be made clear whether it is from the whole of the subject or specific parts of it. No reasons need be given;

• Parents have the right to choose whether or not to withdraw their child from religious education without influence from Northill CE Academy, although Northill CE Academy should ensure that parents or carers are informed of this right and are aware of the educational objectives and content of the syllabus. In this way, parents can make an informed decision;

• Where parents have requested that their child is withdrawn, their right must be respected, and where religious education is integrated in the curriculum, Northill CE Academy will need to discuss the arrangements with the parents or carers to explore how the child's withdrawal can be best accommodated;

• If pupils are withdrawn from religious education, Northill CE Academy has a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost. Pupils will usually remain on the premises;

• Where a pupil has been withdrawn, the law provides for alternative arrangements to be made for religious education of the kind the parent wants the pupil to receive. This religious education could be provided at Northill CE Academy in question, or the pupil could be sent to another academy where suitable religious education is provided if this is reasonably convenient;

• If neither approach is practicable, outside arrangements can be made to provide the pupil with the kind of religious education that the parent wants, and the pupil may be withdrawn from Northill CE Academy for a reasonable period of time to allow them to attend this external religious education;

• Outside arrangements for RE are allowed as long as the local authority is satisfied that any interference with the pupil's attendance at Northill CE Academy resulting from the withdrawal will affect only the start or end of a Northill CE Academy session.

10. Role of the RE Leader

To ensure that the RE policy is implemented and to keep up to date with reviews;

• To have oversight of the RE curriculum and keep up to date with local and national changes;

• To monitor, review and update resources;

• To monitor pupil progress and achievement;

• To maintain and build priorities set by Northill Academy;

• To develop links with the Church and Diocese;

• To coach, mentor and support teachers in developing their strengths in teaching RE, including planning, arranging and delivering CPD as appropriate; and

• To liaise with parents to ensure all children receive their entitlement.

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11. Entitlement and Inclusion

All children are entitled to access a broad and balanced curriculum at an appropriate level. Teachers should include a range of teaching styles and groupings to allow all children to make progress. Every child should be given opportunity to develop their skills independently and in groups, enhancing their own confidence and self–esteem.

12. Parental and Community Involvement

Parents are encouraged to involve themselves in RE within Northill Academy. Parents are invited into the Northill CE Academy to look at their children's work, and a report on their child's standard and progress in religious education is given out annually. The community is encouraged to support the teaching of the subject through visits and visitors, e.g.: the children may visit the church to learn about concepts such as salvation.

13. Professional Development

Whole staff and individual training needs will be identified through Northill CE Academy's self-evaluation process and staff appraisal.

14. The contribution RE makes to other curriculum aims:

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Section 78 (1) of the 2002 Education Act states that all pupils should follow a balanced and broadly based curriculum which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, mental and physical development of pupils and of society, and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life'. Examining and exploring religions and beliefs, through the distinct knowledge, understanding and skills contained in religious education, is essential to achieving these aims. Exploring the concepts of religion and belief and their roles in the spiritual, moral and cultural lives of people in a diverse society helps individuals develop moral awareness and social understanding.

Personal development and well-being

Religious education plays an important role in preparing pupils for adult life, employment and lifelong learning. It helps children and young people become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. It gives them the knowledge, skills and understanding to discern and value truth and goodness, strengthening their capacity for making moral judgements and for evaluating different types of commitment to make positive and healthy choices.

Community cohesion

Religious education makes an important contribution promoting community cohesion. It provides a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism and discrimination. Effective religious education will promote community cohesion at each of these four levels.

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Northill CE Academy community
Religious education provides a positive context within which the diversity of cultures, beliefs and values can be celebrated and explored.

The community within which Northill CE Academy is located
Religious education provides opportunities to investigate patterns of diversity of religion and belief and forge links with different groups in the local area.

The UK community
A major focus of religious education is the study of diversity of religion and belief in the UK and how this influences national life.

The global community
Religious education involves the study of matters of global significance recognising the diversity of religion and belief and its impact on world issues.

Religious education subject matter gives particular opportunities to promote an ethos of respect for others, challenge stereotypes and build understanding of other cultures and beliefs. This contributes to promoting a positive and inclusive academy ethos that champions democratic values and human rights**.**

15. Monitoring and Review

The implementation and impact of the policy will be evaluated through Northill CE Academy self-evaluation processes. The policy will be reviewed every three years.

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