Bath and Wells Diocesan Academies Trust

Religious Education Policy

"That they may have life, life in all its fullness" (John 10:10).

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Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust
Religious Education POLICY

Context
The Bath & Wells Diocesan Academies Trust (the Trust) is a mixed learning community. In order to ensure that the Trust is a safe, supportive environment where pupils and staff can learn and thrive, there needs to be clear procedures,

structures, and expectations in place. Trust policies are a formal way of documenting the procedures and values of the Trust and are designed to provide an instant picture of the principles of the Trust. They form an important framework that will ensure consistency in applying the agreed values and principles across all elements of the Trust.
Religious Education (RE) is a statutory entitlement and an essential part of the basic curriculum for all registered pupils. Its provision is governed by legislation, each academy's funding agreement and, where applicable, the school's trust deed and denominational foundation.

In Church of England schools, this policy should be read alongside the Church of England Religious Education Statement of Entitlement, January 2026, which applies from September 2026 and provides the principal point of reference for the evaluation of RE through SIAMS Inspection Questions 6 and 7

Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure that high-quality RE is provided for all pupils across Trust schools.
- Establish RE as a high-profile, academically rigorous subject that is prioritised, appropriately resourced and effectively led.
- Promote inclusivity, integrity, and respect through RE, enabling all pupils to flourish and live "life in all its fullness" (John 10:10).
- Support the Trust vision: *"An excellent education for every child, enhanced by a distinctive Christian ethos within our Trust family."*
- Ensure that RE is taught objectively, critically and pluralistically, and is distinct from collective worship.
- Enable pupils to understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith.
- Enable pupils to gain secure knowledge of a range of religious and non-religious worldviews, including diversity within and between them.
- Develop pupils' religious literacy, critical thinking, reflection and capacity for respectful dialogue, and Enable pupils to explore and articulate their own personal worldviews while respecting the freedom and integrity of others.

Scope
This policy applies to all schools in the Bath & Wells Diocesan Academies Trust – Anglican, Methodist, and Community schools.
The Church of England Statement of Entitlement applies specifically to Church of England schools. Methodist and community schools will meet the requirements arising from their designation, foundation, funding agreement and the relevant locally agreed syllabus.

Trust Alignment
This policy supports the Bath & Wells Diocesan Academies Trust's **five pledges** and the strategic priority: *High quality and inclusive education that ensures excellent outcomes for all children*.

- **Pledge 1: Children at the heart of decision making**
  RE enables children's voices to be heard by encouraging them to articulate their beliefs and values, question respectfully, and contribute to shaping the ethos of their school. Pupil feedback and involvement in RE curriculum development ensure children remain central in practice.
- **Pledge 2: Removing barriers, challenging injustice, celebrating diversity**
  Through learning about different religions and worldviews, RE fosters respect, challenges prejudice, and celebrates diversity. It equips pupils to challenge injustice and promotes inclusivity in every community the Trust serves.
- **Pledge 3: Maximising resources**
  High-quality RE resources, including *Understanding Christianity* and locally agreed syllabuses, are shared across the Trust, ensuring consistent quality and effective use of expertise. Joint CPD, moderation, and Network meetings leverage economies of scale to benefit all pupils.
- **Pledge 4: Valuing our workforce**
  RE supports staff wellbeing and professional growth by offering CPD, shared planning, and access to specialist support from the Diocese and Trust. Teachers are empowered to deliver RE confidently and creatively, becoming the best versions of themselves.
- **Pledge 5: Developing and sustaining a unique vision for each school**
  While RE ensures consistency across the Trust, it is also adapted to reflect each school's local context, history, and community partnerships. This enables each school to develop a unique Christian vision enriched by diversity and rooted in its distinct identity.

Other Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Collective Worship Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Church of England Religious Education Statement of Entitlement, January 2026
- National Content Standard for Religious Education in England, 2023
- The current locally agreed syllabus applicable to each school, including the Somerset Agreed Syllabus where relevant
- The individual school's academy funding agreement and trust deed, where applicable

Monitoring

This policy is owned by the Deputy CEO and the Christian Distinctiveness Lead and will be reviewed yearly by the Trust Board, or sooner if statutory or diocesan guidance requires.

- At school level, RE Leads are responsible for planning, monitoring, and reporting.
- At Trust level, the Deputy CEO and the Christian Distinctiveness Lead will oversee implementation, provide CPD, and monitor impact through hub meetings, moderation, and feedback from SIAMS inspections.
- Reports will be shared with Trustees on the quality and effectiveness of RE provision across the Trust.

Trust Vision Statement

As a Diocesan Multi Academy Trust, we are committed to ensuring that all pupils flourish, becoming the best version of themselves, and experiencing *"life in all its fullness"* (John 10:10).

Our vision is:

"An excellent education for every child, enhanced by a distinctive Christian ethos within our Trust family."

RE plays a central role in realising this vision by fostering wisdom, hope, community, dignity and respect. It helps pupils make sense of the multi-religious and multi-secular world in which they live and prepares them to contribute thoughtfully and compassionately to society.

Aims

The aims of Religious Education within the Trust are to:

- ensure Christianity is studied as a diverse, global and living faith, through engagement with biblical texts and other key sources of authority;
- provide a coherent, ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum covering a carefully selected range of religious and non-religious worldviews;
- develop pupils' substantive and disciplinary knowledge and confident religious literacy;
- enable pupils to use different disciplinary lenses, including theology, philosophy and the human and social sciences;
- develop enquiry, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, reflection and informed dialogue;
- enable pupils to grapple with questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence and experience;
- help pupils understand the continuing influence of religion and belief upon individuals, communities, cultures and Britain's heritage;
- support pupils to recognise, examine and develop their own personal worldviews; and
- teach RE in accordance with all relevant legal, funding agreement and denominational requirements.

Legal Requirements

All academies within the Trust must provide RE for all registered pupils, except where a pupil has been withdrawn in accordance with the statutory right of withdrawal.

Each school will provide RE in accordance with its legal designation, trust deed where applicable, and academy funding agreement. Leaders must understand the specific legal basis for RE in their school and seek diocesan or Trust advice where required.

- Community schools and former voluntary controlled academies will follow the current locally agreed syllabus where this is required by their funding agreement.
- Former voluntary aided schools will provide denominational RE in accordance with their foundation arrangements and funding agreements.
- Methodist schools will provide RE in accordance with their legal and foundation requirements and ensure that pupils learn about the Methodist story, history, traditions and identity.
- The curriculum will reflect that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian, while taking account of the other principal religions and non-religious worldviews represented.

- Church of England schools are accountable through SIAMS for meeting the Statement of Entitlement. Ofsted may inspect RE, subject to the statutory restrictions applying to denominational RE in voluntary aided and former voluntary aided schools.

Teaching and Learning

RE will be recognised as a high-profile academic subject. It will be given sufficient dedicated curriculum time, leadership attention, staffing, resourcing and professional development to enable all pupils to achieve highly.

- RE will be taught objectively, critically and pluralistically. It is non-confessional in nature and entirely separate from collective worship.
- The curriculum will be ambitious, balanced and well sequenced, enabling pupils to build secure knowledge over time.
- Christianity will be studied as a diverse global living faith, alongside a carefully selected range of religious and non-religious worldviews.
- Pupils will study diversity, continuity and change within and between worldviews and avoid stereotypical or over-simplified representations.
- Teaching will critically engage pupils with religious and non-religious source materials, including biblical texts and other key sources of authority.
- Pupils will use disciplinary lenses including theology, philosophy and the human and social sciences.
- Teaching will develop accurate vocabulary and confident religious literacy and will identify and address misconceptions.
- Classrooms will provide safe and supportive spaces in which pupils can explore questions, express personal worldviews and engage in informed and respectful dialogue.

Inclusion and Entitlement

- All pupils will be enabled to achieve highly in RE, irrespective of educational need, disability, disadvantage, prior attainment, background or belief.
- Curriculum adaptations will maintain ambition and entitlement rather than narrowing the knowledge pupils receive.
- Teachers will make appropriate adaptations, provide accessible resources and use assessment to identify barriers and misconceptions.
- Pupils with SEND will receive the support necessary to engage meaningfully with the same ambitious curriculum.

Time Allocation

- RE will be taught for a minimum of **36 hours per year at Key Stage 1** and **45 hours per year at Key Stage 2**.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), RE will be planned in line with the EYFS framework.
- In Church of England schools, sufficient dedicated curriculum time must be committed to objectives that are explicitly RE. This should aim to be close to 10% but must be no less than 5% of curriculum time in Key Stages 1–2. Collective worship time must not be included.
- In every Church of England school, Christianity will be the main religious worldview studied in each year group or phase and will account for at least 50% of RE curriculum time.
- In Community schools, RE will be taught in line with the locally agreed syllabus.

Curriculum Resources and Local Context

- Curriculum resources, including Understanding Christianity and locally agreed syllabus materials, will be used as tools rather than followed uncritically.
- Schools will adapt resources carefully to their designation, pupils, locality and curriculum intent while ensuring that statutory and Statement of Entitlement expectations are fully met.
- Schools required to follow a locally agreed syllabus will implement the current syllabus adopted by the relevant local authority and SACRE, including the Somerset Agreed Syllabus where applicable.
- Curriculum plans will be reviewed when a revised syllabus is introduced.

Contribution of RE to the Wider Curriculum

RE contributes significantly to the wider curriculum by:

- promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- preparing pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life;
- developing respect for freedom of religion and belief;
- challenging prejudice, stereotyping and religiously motivated hatred;
- supporting community cohesion, respectful citizenship and understanding of diversity; and
- enabling informed engagement with British values and questions of justice and responsibility.

Assessment and Expectations

Assessment will be rooted in the intended curriculum and will evaluate pupils' developing substantive and disciplinary knowledge and their ability to use this knowledge to interpret, analyse, evaluate, reason and communicate informed responses.

Schools may use Trust assessment descriptors where these support clear and proportionate judgements:

- **Developing** – some relevant knowledge and understanding, with emerging ability to use it.
- **Secure** – secure knowledge and understanding, used accurately to explain, interpret and make relevant connections.
- **Greater Depth** – deep and connected knowledge, used independently to analyse, evaluate and articulate well-reasoned responses.

Assessment will be inclusive and proportionate and will be used to:

- identify what pupils know, understand and can do;
- identify misconceptions and gaps and inform future teaching;
- enable pupils to make progress through the planned curriculum; and
- provide evidence of the standards pupils achieve and the effectiveness of RE provision.

Visits and Visitors

- Visits to places of worship and visitors from faith and belief communities will be integral to the RE curriculum.
- All visits and visitors must comply with the Trust's safeguarding, Prevent, and health and safety policies.
- Staff must engage in prior dialogue with visitors to ensure that contributions are accurate, inclusive, educational and aligned with curriculum aims.
- Visitors must not seek to evangelise, proselytise or promote one worldview as uniquely correct.

Right to Withdraw

- Parents and those with parental responsibility have the legal right to withdraw their child from all or part of RE. A request should normally be made in writing to the headteacher and must be respected. Parents are not required to provide or justify their reasons for withdrawal.
- The school may offer a respectful discussion to explain the purpose, content and non-confessional nature of RE and to clarify the extent of the requested withdrawal. Such a discussion must not delay the request, place an undue burden on the family or seek to dissuade parents from exercising their legal right.
- The school will agree suitable supervision and alternative arrangements with the parent. These arrangements must be safe, practical, non-disruptive and must not create additional financial or staffing demands for the school. Parents may provide suitable alternative materials, subject to the school checking their appropriateness.
- Pupils who are withdrawn must not be disadvantaged, isolated or stigmatised. Where appropriate, the pupil's views will be considered, taking account of age and understanding. A request may relate to all RE or particular elements, including a visit that forms part of the RE curriculum.
- Withdrawal from RE is distinct from withdrawal from collective worship and separate legal arrangements apply.

Roles and Responsibilities

Headteacher and Senior Leaders

- Give RE a high priority and clearly articulate its status as an academic subject.
- Ensure provision meets the school's designation, trust deed, funding agreement and applicable syllabus.
- Appoint and support a named, trained and knowledgeable RE leader.
- Ensure sufficient time, staffing, resources and professional development.
- Ensure RE remains entirely separate from collective worship.
- Report appropriately to those responsible for governance and the Trust.

RE Lead – School Level

- Lead curriculum design and ensure clear sequencing, progression, balance and accuracy.
- Support teachers' subject and disciplinary knowledge through training, feedback and coaching.
- Monitor teaching, curriculum implementation and pupils' learning through appropriate evidence, including pupil voice, work scrutiny and lesson visits.
- Ensure assessment is accurate, inclusive and used to improve teaching.
- Maintain appropriate evidence of the curriculum and its impact.
- Lead moderation and support the school's ongoing self-evaluation, including SIAMS where applicable.

Those Responsible for Governance

- Understand the distinctive role, purpose and legal basis of RE in the school.

- Ensure RE is appropriately prioritised, led, resourced and included in strategic monitoring.
- Monitor and evaluate standards, inclusion and the impact of RE.
- In Church of England schools, monitor compliance with the Statement of Entitlement and the school's trust deed or funding agreement.

RE Network Lead and Trust Leaders

- Maintain RE as a high priority academic subject across the Trust.
- Provide systems to monitor and evaluate standards and statutory compliance in every Trust school.
- Coordinate professional development, moderation and network activity.
- Develop subject knowledge and subject leadership to support high-quality teaching.
- Ensure relevant national, diocesan and SACRE updates are communicated and acted upon.
- Work with the Diocese and other appropriate partners for support and guidance.
- Report to Trustees on the quality, effectiveness and impact of RE provision.

Monitoring and Review

At school level, RE leaders and senior leaders will monitor curriculum implementation, teaching, inclusion, assessment and pupil outcomes. Those responsible for governance will receive sufficient information to evaluate standards and fulfil their responsibilities.

At Trust level, the Deputy CEO and Christian Distinctiveness Lead will oversee implementation, provide professional development and monitor impact through agreed Trust quality assurance processes, network meetings, moderation, school visits and relevant inspection evidence.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trust Board, or sooner where legislation, funding agreements, the locally agreed syllabus, denominational guidance or national expectations change.