

Esher Church School



Religious Education Policy

2025 - 2026

Approved by:	Christian Distinctiveness committee
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Last reviewed on:	December 2025
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Review cycle	Annual
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Next review due by:	September 2026
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Vision and values

Our school vision and values are based on and reflect a Christian understanding of the nature of God and how they motivate, underpin and express the school's service to its community.

The ECS Vision

'Love one another' – John 13:34

*Rooted in Christian values of **community, wisdom and courage**, we aspire to grow in kindness, learn with confidence and make a difference in the world.*

This policy reflects Esher Church School's Vision and the Christian values, which are at the heart of all we do. Christian values are the foundation of our School and underpin all our behaviour, learning and interactions.

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Religious Education at Esher Church School

Background

Religious Education (RE) enables children to reflect on, investigate and discuss some of the most fundamental questions asked by people of all ages. As a Church of England school, Esher Church School (ECS) recognises that every child is at a different stage in their spiritual knowledge and understanding of what it means to have a faith. We aim to help all children learn **from** a range of world religions - their attitudes, tolerance and respect of others; their responses and personal development- as well as **about** religions - their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world religions at a level appropriate to their stage of development.

RE is a unique subject. It is a central part of our curriculum and, although it is not a 'core' subject, it has equal status under the 1988 Education Act which 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.'

Context

Esher Church School is a Single Academy Trust, established as a church school in 1859, moving to the current school site in 1868. It caters for children from a variety of backgrounds and traditions. The local church, Christ Church Esher, is an important part of school life, through the governance of the school, visits from the Rector to school, and visits by the children to Christ Church for celebrations, events and lessons.

Aims and Purposes of RE

RE enables children to develop values and attitudes that support the wider ethos of the school. In particular, children work both independently (encouraging them to be independent learners) and with others, listening to others' ideas and treating these with respect. They take pride in, and celebrate, their achievements and the achievements of others by reflecting on and reviewing their work, experiences and knowledge, and recognising their own progress. The approach to RE at ECS encapsulates the school values.

The subject enables children to develop a respect for each other, to develop their own cultural awareness and understanding, and appreciate the value of differences and similarities. They develop an understanding that all people are equal, regardless of age, race, sexuality, gender, religious belief or ability. It provides opportunities for children to explore other cultures and beliefs and develop their understanding of the global and world views.

In line with the Church of England's Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education, ECS aims for all 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 world views appreciating diversity, continuity and change within the religions and world views being studied;
- To engage with challenging questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence and experience;

- 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;
- To explore their own religious, spiritual and philosophical ways of living, believing and thinking.

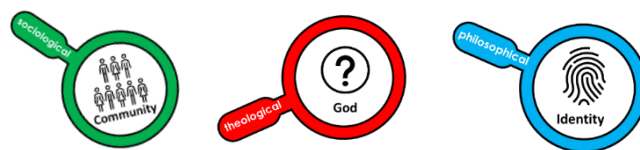
Learning Opportunities, including approaches in lessons

Teaching and Learning in Religious Education

ECS uses the agreed Surrey syllabus for the teaching of RE (based on the Guildford model - <https://www.cofeguildford.org.uk/surrey-agreed-syllabus/>). The RE curriculum has been designed using the Guildford Diocese Syllabus and Understanding Christianity, which aims to fully respond to the Church of England's statement of entitlement with a text-rich, varied spiral curriculum covering the key theological concepts of Christianity.

Our RE curriculum is designed to ensure a balance of theology, sociology and philosophy. We have identified these as three Golden Threads:

- 'God': relating to theological approaches;
- 'Identity': relating to more philosophical approaches;
- 'Community': relating to sociological approaches.



These 'Golden Threads' are threaded throughout the units of work as part of the syllabus progression model in the way that they develop children's knowledge, understanding and skills in age-appropriate ways.

Pupils' own perspectives form a part of their learning within the syllabus as part of the development of their personal knowledge. Using pupils' starting points is one of the ways in which the syllabus strives to be inclusive of the wide spectrum of religious and non-religious beliefs that are a part of our community.

Teachers use the building blocks and suggested text/impact/connections activities to build coherent unit plans for Understanding Christianity units, which fit their prior knowledge and intended outcomes for the year group.

Religious Education in EYFS

The RE curriculum for the EYFS always starts from where the children are, often taking a child's-eye view and drawing upon their personal experiences. The curriculum allows children to explore the world around them from this starting point. In our school we organise our EYFS curriculum through direct teaching and activities in both adult initiated and child-initiated activities.

Religious Education in Key Stage One

Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the worldviews, beliefs and 'lived experience' of some Christian, Jewish and Muslim people, and some non-religious people.

Pupils become more aware of other peoples' worldviews and are encouraged to develop important subject-specific and cross-curricular skills.

Religious Education in Lower Key Stage Two

Pupils extend their knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and lived experience of some Christian, Jewish and Muslim people and are introduced to the importance of equality to Sikhs, and the Golden Rule to Humanists, recognising the impact of religion and belief on people's worldviews, locally (including within their own school), nationally and globally. Pupils make connections across their learning in the thematic units and deepen their understanding of concepts within and across religions / beliefs.

Pupils are encouraged to become more self-reflective in the way that they understand their own personal worldview and the things that may have influenced it. They will also continue to develop important subject-specific and cross-curricular skills.

Religious Education in Upper Key Stage Two

Pupils further develop their understanding of the beliefs and lived experience of some Christian, Jewish, Muslim & non-religious people, and are introduced to Hindu (Sanatana) Dharma and Buddhism. As learning develops across this phase, pupils will increasingly become aware of the factors that might account for diversity within and across communities, including opportunities to consider how some sacred texts can be interpreted in different ways e.g. creation stories.

Pupils continue to explore their own personal worldview and begin to articulate some of the factors that may have

influenced it, also applying their thinking to help them to understand the worldviews of others.

The subject leaders have worked with RE consultants at the Diocese of Guildford to place units into a long-term plan, which aims to lay deep knowledge-based foundations, make links and garner rich responses from the use of carefully-chosen Diocesan and Understanding Christianity units of work including thematic units.

Units include learning about traditions, festivals and key stories from religious texts. While religions are taught through discrete units, links are often made, for example through thematic units.

Pause & Enrichment Afternoons

The school holds an annual 'Christmas Pause Afternoon' and 'Easter Pause Afternoon' based on materials designed by the Diocese of Guildford and adapted for our pupils. The aim of the day is to give children more opportunities to engage in high-level thinking and to deepen pupils' understanding of Christmas and Easter as Christian festivals.

ECS also aims to deepen understanding of other religions through a range of whole school and class activities, which may be linked to our collective worship cycle.

Harvest festival is celebrated each year with a service in school and children donating food items to local foodbanks.

At Christmas, we hold a Christingle service. Children create their own Christingle and reflect on what it represents for Christians.

Leadership

RE is a core subject at ECS with a high profile in the curriculum. There are two subject leaders. RE also benefits from a Christian Distinctiveness trustee committee to advise leaders and report back to governors on learning, teaching and progress in the subject. The RE subject leaders attend Guildford Diocese subject leader briefings and deliver training to school staff.

Role of the RE subject leader

The subject leader will:

- support colleagues in the teaching of Religious Education.
- be informed about any current developments in the subject, locally and nationally.
- provide a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school.
- attend termly RE network meetings at Guildford Diocese.
- ensure that all pupils receive their legal entitlement of religious education.
- ensure RE provision reflects the Church of England Statement of Entitlement.
- produce and regularly review a subject policy to ensure that it remains up to date.
- ensure all teachers know what should be taught in religious education, what resources are available, and what standards of attainment are expected at the end of each Key Stage.
- monitor and review the implementation of policy and units of work.
- monitor the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in RE and pupils' progress and standards.
- ensure there are rigorous assessment systems in place to enable teachers and pupils to gauge progress and attainment in RE.
- monitor, analyse and question RE assessments carried out by staff.
- liaise with the Headteacher and trustees to feedback on the monitoring and impact of RE across the school.
- support colleagues by sharing new ideas and pedagogy, to help develop their subject confidence and expertise through CPD opportunities and support sessions.
- seek opportunities to share effective practice locally and regionally and engage in professional development for themselves and other staff members.
- oversee the RE budget and monitor RE resources to ensure they are kept and stored respectfully and replaced where necessary.
- ensure there is a school protocol that covers safeguarding procedures and a suitability process, for when visitors are invited into RE lessons.

Assessment

A variety of approaches are used in order to inform assessments that enable teachers to identify areas for development in pupils' knowledge and understanding as well as whole school areas for development.

Assessment in Religious Education will:

- Be directly related to the expectations of the Surrey Agreed Syllabus
- Recognise the importance of Religious Education in a Church school, while also recognising that the taught time is considerably less than that of English and maths.
- Seek to identify pupils' development of factual knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- Inform next steps in teaching and learning both for individual pupils and class groups.
- Inform whole school areas for development.
- Enable effective reporting to parents.

Teachers record those who have broadly achieved the expected outcomes, those who are working towards, and those who have deepened their understanding beyond the expected standard.

Teacher's judgements are ratified through cross school moderation sessions allowing for a professional discussion of children's work and their subsequent assessment judgement.

At the end of the year, teachers use unit judgements to reach an overall assessment for each child which is reported to the subject leader, senior leadership team and governors.

Monitoring

The RE subject leaders, supported by the Christian Distinctiveness committee trustees, will monitor teaching, learning and outcomes in RE through the use of:

- Periodic book monitoring using a sample of books, with outcomes, general themes and areas for development fed back to staff.
- Learning walks: both those focusing on RE teaching and those focused on wider provision; displays, reflective journals and tables.
- Pupil Voice: questions about pupils' understanding, enjoyment and opinions about RE will be included in periodic Pupil Voice sessions.
- Pupils presenting at Christian Distinctiveness committee meetings termly.

The teaching of RE is not part of Ofsted inspections; however, it forms a key part of SIAMS inspections held approximately every 4 years.

Time Allocation

The timetable of each class will adhere to Diocese of Guildford guidelines and the statement of entitlement that the following minimum hours should be devoted to RE:

- A minimum of 5% of teaching time should be spent on RE.
- Christianity should be the majority religion studied in each year group and should be at least 50% of curriculum time.
- Collective Worship is not part of the 'taught day' and so cannot be included in the calculation of RE time.

Resources

Religious Education will be funded to enable a variety of resources to be purchased, including books for pupils and teachers; bibles, artefacts, online resources and consumables: supplies for artistic or food-based activities.

The subject leaders have a variety of resources concerning Christianity. Individual year groups hold resources for other world faiths where they are taught exclusively by that year group. Teachers are able to request resources to enhance their units of work; bids are submitted yearly to fund additional resources, with the aim of building a bank of artefacts across year groups as well as maintaining a stock of good-quality bibles for pupil use.

Legal Requirements / Withdrawal

Religious Education must be provided for all registered pupils in full time education except those withdrawn at their parents' request (or their own request if aged 18 or over).

(DfE Circular 1 / 94, paragraphs 44 & 49, and Non-Statutory Guidance 2010 page 28)

The school must comply with any request from a parent to withdraw their child and parents are not required to give their reasons for wanting to do so. However, in view of the Christian ethos and distinctive Christian character of our school, we would hope that all children admitted will participate fully in RE, and that anyone wishing to withdraw their child would discuss this with the headteacher before making this decision.

If parents request the withdrawal of their child(ren) from RE lessons, children will be provided with alternative work to do while their peers are studying RE. Teachers also have a right to request that they do not teach RE to their classes. In this instance, the Headteacher and RE subject leader will agree on the most appropriate member of staff to administer units of work.

Whole School Curriculum Overview

	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Reception	<p>Introduce Christian Meditation</p> <p>Story for Bible:</p> <p>Know that Christians believe God made our wonderful world: Creation story</p> <p>Story of Noah</p> <p>Know that we are all unique</p> <p>Celebrations are joyful times and a time to say thank you</p> <p>Harvest: being thankful for our food and sharing with others who are less fortunate.</p> <p>Celebrations from other faiths: know that Diwali is a special time for Hindus and Sikhs</p>	<p>Nativity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who the key people are in the Christmas story? Why Christmas is a special time for Christians? Know that Jesus's birth brings a message of joy, peace and understand why retelling and performing the Nativity story <p>Celebrations from other faiths and special places of worship: Judaism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why and how people celebrate Hanukah <p>Special places: attend Christmas church service</p> <p>Armistice Day</p>	<p>Continue learning from Old Testament Bible stories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moses David and Goliath <p>Talk about things they find interesting or puzzling</p> <p>Visit from local Vicar (Christchurch) to discuss his role in society and how he supports the community</p> <p>Celebrations from other faiths and special places of worship: Luna New Year, Buddhism</p>	<p>Continue learning from Old Testament Bible stories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good Samaritan The lost sheep Jonah and the Whale <p>Talk about things they find interesting or puzzling</p> <p>Easter story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> new life being important at Easter On Good Friday Christians remember Jesus' death and on Easter Day Christians celebrate new life in Jesus resurrection. Begin to understand that Christians believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and that they believe he is still alive today Learn that Christians believe Jesus died to show people how much God loves them and to 'rescue' them Explore feelings of loss, surprise, hope and joy <p>Celebrations from other faiths and special places of worship: Ede and Islam</p>	<p>Continue learning from New Testament Bible stories and how Jesus changed the life of his friends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daniel and the Lions Jesus Calms the storm The loaves and fish Sowing the seeds Jesus walks on water <p>Know how Jesus taught people to love one another</p> <p>Christians believe Jesus wants to be everyone's friend.</p> <p>Celebrations from other faiths and special places of worship: Sikhism</p>	<p>Continue learning from New Testament Bible stories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wise and foolish man Jesus turns wine into water <p>Celebrations from other faiths and special places of worship: Hinduism</p>

Year 1	Why do Christians call God creator?	What is the Nativity and why is it important to Christians?	Why do Jewish families celebrate the gift of Shabbat?	What do Christians learn from the stories of Jesus?	What is important for Muslim families?	What makes a good leader?
Assessment						
Year 2	What is God like for Christians?	Why is giving important to Christians?	What is the Torah and why is it important to Jewish families?	Why do Christians call Jesus 'Saviour'?	Who is Allah and how do Muslims worship him?	Why should we look after our world?
Assessment		What can we give this Christmas?				
Year 3	What's the Bible's 'big story' – and why is it like a treasure to Christians?	How can artists help us to understand what Christians believe and do?	What are important times for Jewish people?	How did Jesus change lives – and how is it 'good news'?	What do Sikhs value?	What is the 'Golden Rule' and why do so many people live by it?
Assessment						
Year 4	Christianity: What did God promise to his people?	Christianity: What did Jesus say about God's kingdom & why is it 'good news'?	Islam: How does 'ibadah' (worship) show what's important to Muslims?	Christianity: For Christians, is communion a celebration, or an act of remembrance?	Humanism: How do non-religious people celebrate new life?	Community: How do people try to make the world a fairer place?
Assessment						
Year 5	What helps Hindus (Santanis) to worship?	Why Should Hindus live a good life?	What do Christians believe about creation?	Why is the idea of rescue so important to Christians?	How did the church begin?	Good Life
Assessment						
Year 6	What does it mean to be part of a synagogue community?	How is God Three – and yet One?	What helps Muslims to live a good life?	What do Christians believe about the Messiah – and why is it good news?	For Christians, what difference does it make to belong to God's Kingdom?	Is life a journey?
Assessment						