



Parent Forum

Thank you to the parents who attended to parent Forum on 14th November 2023 which focused on Religious Education (RE).

The RE curriculum taught at Commonswood School is based upon an agreed Local Authority syllabus. We are now using the 2023- 2028 syllabus. The focus for learning is engaging with diversity: an exploration of religion and worldviews.

It is good to have a locally Agreed Syllabus as the RE that we teach here in Hertfordshire has been put together by local religious groups and leaders, members of our community and teachers and leaders who teach in our schools. They understand our community and its diversity, its needs and its ambitions.

Introduced in April 2023, our present Agreed Syllabus states that:

RE is the open exploration of what people believe, their way of life and the impact of beliefs, values and ways of living in local, national and global communities. It engages pupils in the process of understanding what others believe, what is important to them, how they live their lives and what influences them. In doing this, pupils also reflect on their own beliefs and values and their main influences.

What should RE be?

- **exploration** of what people believe, their way of life and the impact of beliefs, values and ways of living in local, national and global communities.
- **understanding** what others believe, what is important to them, how they live their lives and what influences them.
- **reflection** on their own beliefs and values and their main influences.

RE At Commonswood:

Early Years

Children encounter Christianity and religions and beliefs represented in the class, school or local community and beyond. RE supports a growing sense of the child's awareness of self, their own community and their place within this.

Years 1 and 2

Christianity and at least one other Abrahamic religion are to be studied in depth (Judaism and/or Islam), or the predominant additional principal faith represented in the school. Pupils may also learn from other religions and worldviews in thematic units.

Years 3 and 4

Christianity and at least two other principal faiths are studied in depth, one Abrahamic and one Dharmic. Pupils may also learn from other religions and worldviews in thematic units.

Years 5 and 6

Christianity and at least two other principal faiths are studied in depth, one Abrahamic and one Dharmic. (Recommended focus faiths for upper KS2 – Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism or Buddhism). Pupils may also learn from other religions and worldviews in thematic units.

All six principal religions and non-religious worldviews will have been introduced by the end of the Year 6, though not all necessarily at the same depth

Question: How is RE taught at Commonswood?

RE is central to the children's learning here. It teaches children:

- to be questioning, creative and reflective thinking about philosophical argument, theological (multi-faith) concepts and life issues.
- to question and interpret 'Truth' claims for themselves.
- consider the meaning of life and beliefs.
- to find different ways of investigating the subject-matter, including a range of academic disciplines and approaches.
- to listen with understanding and compassion.
- to engage positively with diversity.

This aspect of RE reflects the first two 'types of knowing' in the Ofsted research review (p8), substantive knowledge and ways of knowing.

However, it is also deeply personal and encourages pupils to reflect on their own experience and:

- raise challenging questions of meaning, purpose and value directly for themselves.
- engage in critical dialogue, with their peers and with people of different faiths, beliefs and backgrounds, about issues that really matter in people's lives.

It is in this respect that RE contributes significantly to aspects of 'personal development' within Ofsted, not least through the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development of pupils (including Fundamental British Values) and the development of character.

These more personal dimensions are an integral part of pupils' education and are central to the nature of RE.

This aspect of RE reflects and deepens the third way of knowing identified by Ofsted: 'personal knowledge'. We call this personal reflection.

Worldviews (a recent development in RE teaching nationwide)

"A worldview is a person's way of understanding, experiencing, and responding to the world. It can be described as a philosophy of life or an approach to life. This includes how a person understands the nature of reality and their own place in the world. A person's worldview is likely to influence and be influenced by their beliefs, values, behaviours, experiences, identities and commitments." Commission on RE Report 2018 p.4

Worldviews are not restricted to just religious belief, but also include behaviour, experience and attitudes of what it means to be human.

Worldviews should not be understood merely as sets of propositional beliefs. They also have

- emotional,
- affiliative (belonging)
- and behavioural dimensions.

Question: How is RE assessed?

Assessment

We do not formally assess progress in RE as it is impossible and unfair to gauge a child's spiritual development.

We aim however to develop children who have:

'Religious literacy' which focuses on the human experience of religion and belief and the development of skills for expressing these experiences.

'Theological literacy' which focuses on the big concepts upon which religions are founded, such as God, creation and the afterlife and the development of skills for expressing these concepts.

'Philosophical literacy' which focuses on the concepts and arguments used to explore, express and respond to questions of meaning, purpose, knowledge and value and the development of skills to express these.

You do not need to belong to a faith or have a personal faith to succeed in RE.

Success Criteria: think, understand, know, appreciate and evaluate.

Question: How can I help my child in their learning?

The Agreed Syllabus has started to use new vocabulary for some of the religions.

Abrahamic Faiths (from the line of Abraham): Judaism, Christianity, Islam

Dharmic traditions (sharing the concept of Dharma): Sanatana Dharma ('Hinduism'), Buddhist Dhamma ('Buddhism'), Sikhi ('Sikhism').

We would appreciate your view on using these terms in RE learning, especially if you are a member of that faith.

Home learning is always an asset to learning in class. If you have the opportunity to take your child to visit a place of worship or pilgrimage on holiday, a museum or discuss a wedding or other rite of passage if you attend one, even speak with a friend or family member who belongs to a faith or who has no faith about an ultimate question.

Visits and visitors both enhance a child's learning by making it real and relevant. If you are able to come and speak to a class or a small group of children about an aspect of religious life, then please contact us at school by emailing the school office.

Parents attending the forum acknowledged the importance of children learning about world views and tolerance through critical thinking.

Self-reflection examples were discussed to provide an understanding of how children are given the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences. This gives children the understanding that 'my views matter' which is fundamental in having and maintaining healthy relationships now and in the future.

Cultural capital – being given opportunities to visit and learn about different cultures and religions in order to be aware, have views and be tolerant of differences was discussed.