**William Cassidi C. E. Aided Primary School**

**Religious Education Policy Statement**

**Introduction:**

William Cassidi is an Aided Church School, as such we believe Religious Education should be of the highest standard whereby we always strive for excellence and reflect the school’s distinctive Christian character. We believe Religious Education provides children with a wealth of background knowledge concerned with their own faith and that of others as well as providing opportunities to explore feelings and attitudes, such as open-mindedness, respect, consideration, curiosity, sensitivity, empathy, understanding, appreciation and wonder. Religious Education encourages a sense of self-awareness and self-confidence.

Religious Education is part of the Basic Curriculum. As such, it is an educational subject in its own right and is a

fundamental entitlement for all pupils. Religious Education at William Cassidi, as a Church Aided School, is distinctively managed by the governors and head in accordance with the Trust Deed and the rites, practices and doctrines of the Church of England. The Governing Body as a whole is responsible for determining the nature of Religious Education provided throughout the school and Religious Education is taught in accordance with the Durham Diocesan Syllabus for Church Aided Primary Schools.

**Religious Education and Collective Worship:**

 Collective Worship promotes the Christian ethos of the school. We recognise that Religious Education and Collective Worship naturally compliment and enrich one another, however we acknowledge they should be managed separately. The daily act of collective worship as a whole school, class or key stage, is firmly based on the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. The school also has strong links with the local church in Stillington, where there are opportunities for the children to engage in worship.

Our school Mission Statement is:

*William Cassidi C. E. Aided Primary School exists to promote the Christian values of love, care and respect.*

*We aim to provide a quality education within a Christian community where each individual child is nurtured, develops a desire to achieve and is sensitive to the needs of others so preparing them for their future lives.*

*We also encourage children to have confidence, to take initiative, to take responsibility for and have pride in their work and their school environment.*

Our school Moto is:

*‘Go The Second Mile’.*

Our Mission Statement for Religious Education is:

*At William Cassidi, we believe that the principal aim of R.E. is to enable our pupils to hold balanced and informed conversations about religion and belief. Our curriculum is designed to equip our pupils with the knowledge and skills to fulfil this principal aim. Our curriculum ensures that pupils understand the fundamental importance of faith to believers’ lives both now and in the past, and how religion has played a role in shaping cultural life. Our pupils learn about the religious texts and beliefs that underpin religious faith. They consider the impact of belief upon people of faith and are encouraged to make connections between their own and others’ attitudes and beliefs. We encourage our children to be curious about religion, to ask questions, suggest answers and offer their own opinions. Through R.E. we develop the following attitudes in our pupils: curiosity and wonder, a sense of fairness, respect for others, self-understanding, open mindedness and a willingness to examine ideas.*

**Content:**

At William Cassidi School, Religious Education lies at the very heart of the curriculum. The content, organisation and time allocation agreed are:

* Christianity is taught using ‘Understanding Christianity’ units (a resource from the Church of England Education Office). These reflect the National Framework for RE, the National Society Statement of Entitlement and the requirements of SIAMS.
* Since September 2019, new units provided by the Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle have been used to teach our pupils about faiths other than Christianity.

* At least 5% of curriculum time is devoted to RE (1 hours per week in Key Stage One, and 1 ¼ hours per week in Key Stage Two)
* Christianity plays a central role in RE, taking up between two thirds and three quarters of the time available.

As an Aided School we also celebrate our distinctiveness within our curriculum through:

* opportunities to explore the experience of the Church’s year
* visits to places of worship, especially the local parish Church and a Cathedral, to develop the understanding of the Church as a living community
* welcoming visitors from the local parish to share their experience of Christian belief and life
* liaison with the local parish to enable these visits and links to occur
* skills to confidently use religious language to express knowledge and opinions
* the facility to listen to Christian ‘psalms, hymns and spiritual songs’ from a wide variety of traditions
* access to Christian artefacts that are used with care, respect and confidence
* a sacred space that can be used as a focus for prayer and silent reflection
* a well-used set of Bibles in language that can be understood by the learners and examples of Bibles and prayer books from a variety of contexts.

**Approach to Learning:**

In order to ensure that our pupils are able to hold balanced and informed conversations about religion and belief we provide opportunities for children to make sense of religious texts and beliefs, understand the impact of religious texts and teachings on believers’ lives, and make connections between religious teachings and pupils own values and behaviours.

**Making Sense of the Text/Beliefs:**

Identifying and making sense of core religious and non-religious texts, concepts and beliefs; understanding what these beliefs/texts mean within their traditions; recognising how and why sources of authority are used, expressed and interpreted in different ways, and developing skills of interpretation.

**Understanding the Impact:**

Examining how and why people put their beliefs into action in diverse ways, within their everyday lives, within their communities and in the wider world.

**Making Connections:**

Reasoning about, reflecting on, evaluating and connecting the concepts, beliefs and practices studied; allowing pupils to challenge ideas, and the ideas to challenge pupils’ thinking; discerning possible connections between these ideas and pupil’s own lives and ways of understanding the world.

**We believe Religious Education helps pupils to:**

* reflect theologically and explore the ultimate questions and challenges of life in today’s society
* reflect critically on the truth claims of Christian belief
* see how Christianity is relevant today
* understand the challenge faced by Christians in today’s pluralist and post-modern society
* develop the skills to handle the Bible text
* recognise that faith is based on commitment to a particular way of understanding God and the world
* begin to develop their own commitments, beliefs and values
* develop a sense of themselves as significant, unique and precious
* experience the breadth and variety of the Christian community
* engage in thoughtful dialogue with other faiths and traditions
* become active citizens, serving their neighbour
* find a reason for hope in a troubled world
* understand how religious faith can sustain believers in difficult circumstances and in the face of opposition.

**We believe Religious Education should enable:**

* pupils and teachers to talk openly and freely about their own personal beliefs and practices.
* pupils to make excellent and appropriate progress in their knowledge and understanding about Christianity, other faiths and different worldviews.
* pupils with religious faith to talk openly about their beliefs and values in lessons.
* pupils with no religious background to be given an insight into what it means to be a person of faith
* pupils of all backgrounds to have a safe place to explore the ultimate questions and challenges of life in today’s society

**Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development.**

RE makes an essential contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our pupils.

RE can support the **spiritual** development of our pupils by promoting: self-awareness, curiosity, collaboration, reflection, resilience, methods of responding to demanding or controversial views, values which promote an ethos of fairness and mutual respect, appreciation for some of the marvels and mysterious of the natural world and human life.

RE supports the **moral** development of our pupils by providing opportunities for pupils to explore and develop their own moral outlook and understanding of right and wrong.

RE supports the **social** development of our pupils by providing opportunities to explore and understand social situations and contexts they may encounter in school or outside.

RE supports the **cultural** development of our pupils by providing opportunities for pupils to explore Britain’s rich diversity of religious, ethnic and geographic cultures.

**Religious Education and British Values.**

RE promotes British Values:

**Mutual tolerance**

A baseline for a fair community is acceptance that each person’ has a right to ‘be themselves’ and be accepted by all. RE can challenge children and young people to be increasingly respectful and to celebrate diversity.

**Respectful attitudes**

In RE, attention focuses on developing mutual respect between those of different faiths and beliefs, promoting an understanding of what a society gains from diversity. Pupils will learn about diversity in religions and worldviews, and challenged to respect others who see the world differently to themselves.

**Democracy**

In RE, pupils learn the significance of each person’s ideas and experiences through methods of discussion. In debating the fundamental questions of life, pupils learn to respect a range of perspectives. This contributes to learning about democracy, examining the idea that we all share a responsibility to use our voice and influence for the wellbeing of others.

**The rule of law**

In RE, pupils examine different examples of codes for human life, including commandments, rules or precepts offered by different religious communities. They learn to appreciate how individuals choose between good and evil, right and wrong, and they learn to apply these ideas to their own communities.

**Individual liberty**

In RE, pupils consider questions about identity, belonging and diversity, learning what it means to live a life free from constraints. They study examples of pioneers of human freedom, including those from within different religions, so that they can examine tensions between the value of a stable society and the value of change for human development.

**Assessment, Recording and Reporting:**

The assessment and expectations of the Christian element of RE is based on the ‘knowledge building blocks’

provided for the ‘Understanding Christianity’ units. Assessment of thematic and non-Christian faith units is guided by the learning outcomes provided for each of the units. In addition, there are a set of assessment statements provided by Durham and Newcastle Diocese for the end of Key Stage 1, Lower Key Stage 2 and Upper Key Stage 2. Teachers, in the appropriate classes, will provide a summative assessment of children’s knowledge and understanding at the end of the summer term.

It is expected that levels achieved in RE should be similar to the levels being achieved in other core curriculum subjects. Some activities cannot be levelled as they are linked with the child’s personal spiritual development, such as the writing of prayers, or because the activities are simply fun and creative.

Children’s progress in RE is recorded and reported to parents at the end of each school year in their annual report.

Teachers indicate in their weekly planning the lesson question they are using in order to develop children’s knowledge and understanding.

**In the Classroom:**

Every class should utilise an RE ‘scrapbook’. The scrapbook should contain evidence of pupils’ discussions, comments and ideas, visits and visitors, photographs, group work, post it notes etc. The scrapbook can be annotated by the class teacher. Each child in Key Stage One and Two should also have an individual RE book to record their activities. This should be marked in accordance with the ‘Marking Policy’.

**In the School:**

The RE Co-ordinator will undertake regular book/work scrutinies and learning environment walks. The RE Co-ordinator will also create a portfolio of evidence of the RE taking place throughout the school. The purpose of the portfolio is to monitor standards and achievements and to ensure that all children are experiencing creative and challenging RE. It should be a working document that can be shown to staff, governors, parents and inspectors. The portfolio should be a celebration of success and the distinctive quality of RE in the school. The portfolio could include:-

* Children’s work.
* Photographs recording displays, artwork, visits and visitors;
* Teachers’ plans showing evidence of quality, creative and challenging RE;
* Records of the RE Co-ordinator’s scrutiny of work.
* Plans and work from special RE days or theme weeks.

**Monitoring, Evaluation and Review:**

The RE subject leader will monitor the delivery of RE throughout the school. This is carried out through reviewing teachers’ planning and recorded assessments, looking at children’s work and monitoring the Class Scrap Books. Support, advice and feedback will be provided. Class teachers are responsible for evaluating their weekly RE lesson and informing the RE subject leader of any additional support or resources required. Annual curriculum audits and review of the RE policy will be carried out.

**Pupils’ Entitlement:**

We endeavour to ensure that every child at William Cassidi C. of E. Primary School, regardless of religion, ethnic origin, gender or ability has equal access to the RE curriculum. Activities are planned in such a way to encourage full and active participation by all children.

**Equal Opportunities:**

This policy has been reviewed with reference to equal opportunities, race equality and the Human Rights Act.

**Health and Safety:**

Pupils are taught to use religious artefacts in an appropriate manner and any off-site visits will follow both Health and Safety and out of school visit guidelines.

**Role and Job Description of RE Subject Leader:**

* To use leadership and communication skills in working with colleagues to help implement the School Improvement Plan and the agreed curriculum in the Durham Diocesan Syllabus for Religious Education throughout the school
* To maintain the policy and long, medium and short term planning for Religious Education, which reflects the requirements of the Durham Diocesan Syllabus for Religious Education
* To monitor teachers’ planning, including short term planning and work undertaken in Religious Education
* To monitor the assessment, reporting and display of Religious Education
* To evaluate standards achieved and the quality of education provided in Religious Education in the school as a whole
* To maintain a school portfolio
* To keep up to date with any developments in Religious Education by attending courses and reading relevant literature
* To arrange and, on occasion, provide in-service training in Religious Education for members of staff
* To find out where to go for information and advice about training and support materials in Religious Education
* To audit and evaluate school resources for Religious Education, organise them effectively and plan for their enhancement
* To encourage the development of close curriculum links with the Secondary School

**Parental/Community Links:**

Links with parents and the community are positively encouraged. At William Cassidi C. of E. Primary School we have very close links with the local church of Stillington which can provide an excellent resource for numerous activities.

**Parental Rights of Withdrawal in a Voluntary Aided School:**

Parents may request the governing body to provide Religious Education for their children according to the Agreed Syllabus. This can only be requested when parents cannot, with reasonable convenience, arrange for their children to attend another school where Religious Education is provided according to the Agreed Syllabus. The governing body **should** make provision unless the circumstances make it unreasonable to do so.

Should the governing body be unable to make such arrangements for Religious Education to be delivered according to the Agreed Syllabus, the responsibility for doing so then falls on the Local Authority. The Local Authority may decide that such a request for separate Religious Education is unreasonable and the parental request then fails.

Parents may withdraw their children from Religious Education as they may in any school and this opportunity is described on the school website. The Church of England Board of Education and the Methodist Church have suggested an appropriate form of words:

 *‘The Worship and Religious Education provided by the school is in accordance with the Church of England or Methodist Church Foundation. This foundation is also reflected in the curriculum and the whole life of the school community. Since the conduct of the school as a whole reflects the Church of England or Methodist Church ethos, removal of pupils from Worship and/or Religious Education (as parents are legally entitled to do) cannot insulate them from the religious life of the school.’*

If such a request for withdrawal is made, the Head Teacher will explore the reasons for the request and seek to arrive at an accommodation. It may be that only some elements of Religious Education or Worship are objected to.

Policy author: Mrs. Helen Allen

Policy approved by the Governing Body: 1st July 2020

Date for Review: July 2022

The policy will be reviewed every two years unless amendments are required prior to that date.