



The Meadows School

Religious Education Subject Overview

Introduction

The Meadows School is deeply committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for all its students. We provide a broad and balanced curriculum designed to meet the unique needs of each learner. To ensure this, we implement a multi-tiered curriculum model, tailoring both content and teaching strategies to the specific needs of our pupils. This approach is structured around four key pedagogical pathways; these pathways include the Pre-formal Pathway (Engagement for Life), the Informal Pathway (Foundations for Life), the Semi-formal Pathway (Learning for Life), and the Formal Pathway (Options for Life).

Each curriculum pathway is carefully designed to align with the developmental needs of the students, ensuring they build a strong foundation of knowledge and skills. This prepares them for progression into the next pathway or equips them for life beyond school, including successful transitions into adulthood.

The Religious Education curriculum is intentionally sequenced and planned to ensure that prior knowledge is built upon, and students are prepared for their next steps. It is connected to the Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) outcomes, supporting key areas of Community Inclusion.

The principle aim of Religious Education

The principal aim of religious education is to **explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live**, so that students can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.



- Students are taught an **increasing knowledge and understanding of religious and world views** and are supported to **make sense of their beliefs**.
- Students learn to **express and communicate ideas and insights about the nature, significance, and impact of religions and world views**, understanding the **impact of religion**.
- They should **gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and world views**, making connections of their own. (Sandwell Sacre).

The Meadows school **follows the key aims and principles of the Sandwell Sacre, but is appropriately differentiated** for students with Profound, Complex, Severe and Moderate Learning Difficulties through our specialist pathways and key stages.

The curriculum is designed to:

- Build **thematic and conceptual understanding** across major world religions and non-religious perspectives.
- Encourage **personal reflection, empathy, and critical thinking**.
- **Connect religious content to students ' lived experiences** through sensory, symbolic, and values-based learning.
- **Promote schema-building** through revisiting key themes (e.g. Special People, Celebrations) across key stages.

The curriculum supports students in developing the knowledge and skills to engage meaningfully with religious and non-religious worldviews, preparing them to participate respectfully in a diverse society.

Rationale for Sequencing Religious Education

Our Religious Education curriculum is **designed to be accessible and progressive through proximal (self and our immediate environment) learning, distal learning (learning about culture, community and wider society), and a spiral curriculum approach**. These principles ensure that students build confidence, deepen understanding, and broaden their worldview in a structured way.



Religious Education introduces concepts that are familiar and relevant to students' lives (proximal learning)—such as Christian festivals like Harvest and Christmas. These experiences are often part of everyday life, making them easy to connect with and reducing barriers to engagement.

As students' awareness grows, we move towards distal learning, introducing ideas from wider cultures and worldviews. For example, Hindu celebrations like Holi and Makar Sankranti appear later in KS3, while Islamic practices such as Eid ul-Adha and Hajj and Jewish festivals like Hanukkah are explored in KS4 and KS5. Even the theme of Special Places follows this pattern, starting with local churches before moving to global sacred sites such as the Golden Temple and Mecca.

This progression from familiar to unfamiliar respects cognitive load and makes learning inclusive and meaningful.

The spiral approach is particularly important in Religious Education because understanding faith and belief systems develops over time. Revisiting religions at multiple points allows students to:

- **Reinforce prior knowledge** (e.g., recalling symbols and festivals).
- **Add new layers of meaning** (e.g., moving from celebrations to ethical principles and practices).
- **Make connections between beliefs, values, and cultural traditions.**

This spiral design was chosen because it **supports schema development, strengthens memory through repetition, and encourages critical thinking by gradually increasing complexity**. It ensures that Religious Education is not a one-off experience but a continuous journey of understanding, making learning both meaningful and culturally rich.

Overarching Themes Across Key Stages

Students are **introduced to major world religions and non-religious worldviews** in a structured way, revisiting them with increasing depth and complexity across the key stages.



Many **units align with real-world festivals and seasons** (e.g. Christmas, Diwali, Holi, Ramadan), allowing experiential and sensory learning that connects with students lived experiences.

Each year includes themes such as:

- Special People
- Special Places
- Symbols
- Celebrations
- Values and Beliefs

These are revisited across religions and worldviews, supporting schema-building and thematic understanding. Humanism and broader non-religious perspectives are included in each key stage, promoting diversity and critical thinking.

Sequences of Learning

Key Stage 3

KS3 builds foundational knowledge of major religions and introduces key concepts like celebration, symbolism, and belonging.

- **Year 1:** Begins with Christianity and Hinduism, then explores places and non-religious views.
- **Year 2:** Introduces Sikhism, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism with a focus on celebrations, symbols, and community.
- **Year 3:** Revisits non-religious views, Judaism, Buddhism, and Christianity with deeper themes like meditation and special stories.



Key Stage 4

KS4 deepens understanding through narrative, ethical reflection, and global perspectives.

- **Year 1:** Christianity and Hinduism are revisited with deeper themes (e.g. Creation, Christmas globally), followed by Judaism and ethical concepts like the Golden Rule.
- **Year 2:** Expands into Sikhism, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism with a focus on stories, places, and festivals.

Key Stage 5

KS5 encourages personal reflection, philosophical thinking, and synthesis of values across belief systems

- **Year 1:** Christianity and Hinduism are explored through personal and devotional lenses, ending with worldview discussions.
- **Year 2:** Focuses on rituals, commandments, pilgrimage, and special people across Sikhism, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism.
- **Year 3:** Synthesizes learning with themes like enlightenment, special people, and non-religious worldviews.

What does this look like in our curriculum pathways?

Our students all learn in different ways. Although students follow the same breadth of progressive content across each key stage, **RE looks very different in each curriculum pathway and is dependent on the independence and communication needs of the students.**



The RE curriculum draws on the key ideas of discovering, exploring, connecting, and responding from this agreed syllabus. (Sandwell SACRE 2024-2029). **Our RE curriculum explores central concepts from religions, on the basis of what will connect with pupils' experiences and enable them to respond whilst developing understanding, knowledge and skills to apply RE to their own lives and within their community.**

The RE curriculum utilises the 'Five Keys' planning model by Anne Krisman. The Five Key model supports the curriculum to respond to the diverse learning needs of our students across each pathway through providing relevant and meaningful explorations of religious content. The Five Keys planning model focuses on the following key areas:

1. **Connection** – what links can we make with our pupils' lives? - Creating a bridge between pupils' experiences and the religious theme.
2. **Knowledge** – what is the burning core of the faith? - Selecting what really matters in a religious theme, cutting out peripheral information.
3. **Senses** – what sensory elements are in the religion? - Looking for a range of authentic sensory experiences that link with the theme.
4. **Symbols** – what are the symbols that are most accessible?- Choosing symbols that will encapsulate the theme
5. **Values** – what are the values in the religion that speak to us?- Making links between the values of the religious theme and the children's lives.

Please see below the Intent, Impact and Implementation of our RE curriculum across our pathways:

Engagement for Life (Informal; PMLD)	Foundations for Life (Informal; Complex ASC)	Learning for Life (Semi-Formal; SLD)	Options for Life (Formal; MLD)
	This pathway typically consists of our ASC learners	This pathway typically consists of learners who have	This pathway typically consists of learners who have MLD who are learning to



<p>This pathway typically consists of PMLD learners who need and respond to a sensory based curriculum that supports their holistic care and physical wellbeing needs.</p>	<p>who may have complex needs alongside varying communication needs. These students often need support to manage their emotions and process information.</p>	<p>SLD who are learning to communicate through the most appropriate means to them, building independence and confidence to generalise skills in different social contexts.</p>	<p>build on existing skills and develop greater independence and confidence within different social contexts and environmental settings.</p>
<p>RE</p>	<p>RE</p>	<p>RE</p>	<p>RE</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Intent</p> <p>Our intention is for our students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a sense of connection to the world around them through sensory and experiential engagement with religious and cultural themes that are meaningful and accessible. • Encounter key concepts such as belonging, celebration, and values through multi-sensory 	<p style="text-align: center;">Intent</p> <p>Our intention is for our students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience meaningful connections between their own lives and religious themes through sensory-rich, emotionally resonant activities. • Engage with the world around them by encountering core ideas from religious and non-religious worldviews in ways that are accessible and relevant. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Intent</p> <p>Our intention is for our students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a sense of wonder and curiosity about the world, exploring big ideas like kindness, celebration, and belonging through sensory and experiential learning. • Explore and a diverse range of religious and non-religious worldviews, enabling them to begin recognising and 	<p style="text-align: center;">Intent</p> <p>Our intention is for our students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a secure and meaningful understanding of world religions and non-religious worldviews, by exploring key beliefs, practices, and values in a way that is accessible, relevant, and respectful. This includes Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and Humanism.



<p>exploration that supports their individual ways of learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience awe and wonder, promoting emotional and spiritual development through carefully designed activities that reflect their interests and needs. • Develop personal responses to stimuli that reflect their preferences, emotional reactions, and emerging awareness of others and their environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop awareness and responses to sensory stimuli that reflect personal preferences, emotional reactions, and emerging understanding of others. • Explore values and celebrations through multi-sensory experiences that promote a sense of belonging, joy, and curiosity. • Build spiritual and emotional development through repeated, familiar routines that foster comfort, anticipation, and engagement. 	<p>responding to key features such as special people, places, symbols, and celebrations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop emotional literacy and personal awareness, by engaging with values such as love, sharing, peace, and respect in ways that connect with their own experiences. • Build social interaction and communication skills, using RE as a platform for shared experiences, turn-taking, and expressive responses. • Understand that people celebrate and believe in different ways, and that all beliefs are respected. • Develop spirituality, experience awe, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build thematic and conceptual knowledge through recurring themes such as Special People, Special Places, Symbols, Celebrations, and Values and Beliefs. These themes are revisited across key stages to support schema-building and deepen understanding over time. • Engage in personal reflection and critical thinking, considering how religious and non-religious ideas relate to their own lives, experiences, and communities. • Connect religious content to their lived experiences, using sensory, symbolic, and values-based learning approaches. Make meaningful connections
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		<p>reflection, and connection through music, light, nature, and story.</p>	<p>and enhance engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop respect for diversity and difference, learning to appreciate the beliefs and practices of others while forming their own views.
<p>Implementation</p> <p>A highly differentiated and holistic curriculum that is taught through thematic units and personalised for each learner.</p> <p>RE is embedded within the curriculum within themes, routines and interactions with people, objects and their environment.</p> <p>Understanding of themselves, people and the world around them is developed through sensory based interactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection: Linking religious themes to pupils' 	<p>Implementation</p> <p>A differentiated and structured curriculum (one lesson per week) that is taught through sensory based RE Themes.</p> <p>RE is embedded within the curriculum within themes, routines and interactions with people, objects and their environment.</p> <p>Understanding of themselves, people and the world around them is developed through sensory based interactions</p>	<p>Implementation</p> <p>A differentiated curriculum one lesson per week that is taught through RE based themes.</p> <p>Use of differentiated resources suitable to the needs and abilities of the learners.</p> <p>Thematic units aligned with festivals, seasons, and key concepts (e.g. Special People, Celebrations) using repetition and routine to build familiarity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection: Themes are introduced through 	<p>Implementation</p> <p>A differentiated curriculum one lesson per week that is taught through RE based themes.</p> <p>Use of differentiated resources suitable to the needs and abilities of the learners.</p> <p>Thematic units aligned with festivals, seasons, and key concepts (e.g. Special People, Celebrations) using repetition and routine to build familiarity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection – Lessons begin by linking religious



<p>lived experiences (e.g. family, food, light, sound).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge: Focusing on core ideas like celebration, kindness, and belonging. • Senses: Prioritising tactile, auditory, visual, and olfactory stimuli (e.g. handling symbolic objects, listening to chants). • Symbols: Using simplified, bold symbols (e.g. candles, water, flowers) to represent key ideas. • Values: Exploring values like love, peace, and sharing through stories, processes and interactions. 	<p>Thematic units aligned with festivals, seasons, and key concepts (e.g. Special People, Celebrations) using repetition and routine to build familiarity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection: Linking religious ideas to pupils' everyday experiences (e.g. family, food, light, music). • Knowledge: Focusing on core ideas like celebration, kindness, and belonging, avoiding abstract or peripheral content. • Senses: Using tactile, auditory, visual, and olfactory stimuli (e.g. incense, bells, fabrics, lights) to explore religious themes. • Symbols: Introducing simple, bold symbols (e.g. 	<p>familiar routines, stories, and experiences that resonate with pupils' lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge: Core ideas from each religion are distilled into simple, powerful concepts (e.g., light at Diwali, kindness in Christianity). • Senses: Learning is enriched through touch, sound, smell, and visual stimuli—such as artefacts, music, food, and role play. • Symbols: Students engage with accessible symbols like candles, water, and flowers to represent deeper meanings. • Values: Lessons highlight universal values such as love, sharing, and 	<p>themes to pupils' own lives, fostering engagement and personal relevance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge – Core concepts of each religion are distilled to their essential meaning, avoiding cognitive overload. • Senses – Sensory experiences (e.g. food, music, artefacts, rituals) are embedded to deepen understanding and engagement. • Symbols – Accessible and meaningful symbols are used to encapsulate religious ideas and support memory. • Values – Lessons explore values within religions that resonate with pupils'
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	<p>candles, water, flowers) to represent key ideas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values: Exploring values through stories, role-play, and sensory activities that promote empathy and understanding. 	<p>peace, helping students relate to others and their community.</p>	<p>own experiences and moral development.</p>
<p>Impact Our students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show awareness of sensory stimuli linked to religious themes (e.g. light, sound, texture, scent). • Demonstrate preferences through physical, emotional, or vocal responses to sensory experiences. • Anticipate familiar routines and rituals associated with celebrations and special times. 	<p>Impact Our students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage and participate in sensory and thematic activities, with progress tracked through observation and engagement profiles. • Develop expressive and receptive communication, including gesture, vocalisation, and use of AAC, in response to religious and cultural stimuli. 	<p>Impact Our students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a growing awareness of themselves and others through shared experiences and celebrations. • Have the ability to recognise and respond to key symbols, stories, and values from a range of worldviews. • Further develop improved communication and social interaction through 	<p>Impact Our students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate understanding of key beliefs, practices, and values across major world religions and non-religious worldviews. • Make connections between religious content and their own lives, showing empathy and respect for others. • Engage in some reflective and critical thinking.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond emotionally to music, stories, or sensory elements that reflect values such as love, peace, and kindness. • Participate in shared experiences that promote a sense of belonging and connection to others. • Experience awe and wonder through immersive and meaningful sensory encounters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show emotional responses to stories, symbols, and sensory experiences, indicating connection and emerging understanding. • Demonstrate social interaction and shared attention, reflecting growing awareness of others and a sense of community. • Make progress in personal development, including self-awareness, emotional regulation, and enjoyment of learning through meaningful RE experiences. 	<p>collaborative and sensory activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop their spiritual and moral development, contributing to their overall wellbeing and sense of identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use religious vocabulary appropriately and express their views increasing confidence • Show readiness to participate in their communities with an understanding of religious diversity and shared values.
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