

Bell's Brae Primary School

Religious & Moral Education and Religious Observance Policy



Revised March 2014

Rationale

The provision of religious and moral education in non-denominational schools to every child is statutory for all pupils attending primary and secondary education. *“Children and young people deserve the opportunity to have this taught in a meaningful and progressive way.”*

Scottish Government advice letter, Feb 2011

If children and young people are to achieve their full potential and enjoy fulfilment as well-balanced, socially aware individuals, they must consider and express their own beliefs, values and opinions. They must be able to make judgements about what is right and wrong and develop responsible attitudes. Furthermore, to enable them to participate fully in society, pupils need to be educated about the beliefs and values of others.

“Scotland is a nation whose people hold a wide range of beliefs from the many branches of the Christian faith represented throughout the land to the world’s other major religions and to beliefs which lie outwith religious traditions. Such diversity enriches the Scottish nation and serves as an inspiring and thought-provoking background for our children and young people to develop their own beliefs and values. Religious and moral education enables children and young people to explore the world’s major religions and views which are independent of religious belief and to consider the challenges posed by these beliefs and values. It supports them in developing and reflecting upon their values and their capacity for moral judgement. Through developing awareness and appreciation of the value of each individual in a diverse society, religious and moral education engenders responsible attitudes to other people.”

Building the Curriculum 1, 2006

“Children and young people must become aware that beliefs and values are fundamental to families and to the fabric of society in communities, local and global. There is an intrinsic value in learning about religion as well as learning from religion, as children and young people develop their understanding of diversity in our society and their own roles in it. The skills of reflection and critical thinking and an enhanced understanding of the beliefs and values of others are all crucial in assisting in this process.”

Religious and Moral Education: Principles and Practices, 2009

Aims

“The values of compassion, wisdom, justice and integrity that underpin Curriculum for Excellence are also reflected in the shared values of the world’s major religions and belief systems. Deepening children and young people’s understanding of these values and the behaviours that emanate from them is a key outcome of effective Religious and Moral Education.”

Religious and Moral Education: Curriculum Impact Review, 2014

The aims of teaching and learning within Religious and Moral Education will be to:

- recognise religion as an important expression of human experience
- learn about and from the beliefs, values, practices and traditions of Christianity and the World Religions selected for study, other traditions and viewpoints independent of religious belief
- explore and develop knowledge and understanding of religions, recognising the place of Christianity in the Scottish context
- investigate and understand the responses which religious and non-religious views can offer to questions about the nature and meaning of life
- recognise and understand religious diversity and the importance of religion in society
- develop respect for others and an understanding of beliefs and practices which are different from their own
- explore and establish values such as wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity and engage in the development and reflection of their own moral values
- develop their beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices through reflection, discovery and critical evaluation
- develop the skills of reflection, discernment, critical thinking and deciding how to act when making moral decisions
- make a positive difference to the world by putting their beliefs and values into action
- establish a firm foundation for lifelong learning, further learning and adult life.

Religious and Moral Education: Principles and Practices, 2009

The curriculum content

It is important that while recognising the role of Christianity as the major religious tradition of this country, pupils should also be encouraged to develop understanding of, and respect for, people of other faiths and people who adopt a non-religious stance for living.

In order to meet statutory requirements, and the principles and practices of Curriculum for Excellence, a cohesive RME Programme of Study has been devised for Nursery to Primary 7 in Bell's Brae Primary School. This ensures religious and moral education is delivered as both a specific subject discipline and one which contributes to high quality interdisciplinary learning. It will stimulate learning that incorporates "challenge, enjoyment and depth."

Religious and Moral Education: Curriculum Impact Review, 2014

Every child can expect their education to provide them with a broad general education, and within religious and moral education this includes well planned activities for Early, First and Second Level experiences and outcomes across *Christianity, World Religions* and *Developing Beliefs and Values*.

Teachers are expected to identify appropriate learning and teaching styles to suit the needs of their pupils while recognising the importance of active learning and the capacities of Curriculum for Excellence.

Assessment

“Assessment in religious and moral education will focus on learner’s knowledge and understanding of religious practices and traditions and on their skills in making informed, mature decisions to issues of belief and mortality.”

Religious and Moral Education: Principles and Practices, 2009

Assessment evidence can be gathered from a variety of sources:

- Pupil responses to practices and traditions and beliefs and values
- Specific assessment tasks to determine progress in knowledge, understanding and skills
- Discussion with children about beliefs, moral values and attitudes
- Video and audio recordings of religious activities
- Peer and self evaluation of their work

Approaches to assessment will respect the fact that there is not always a “right answer” when discussing beliefs and values and that, while the process and skills used to come to conclusions can be assessed, an individual’s values and opinions should not be assessed as right or wrong. Similarly, a pupil’s religious faith will never be assessed.

Assessment should link to other curricular areas both within and outside of the classroom setting.

Recording and reporting

In determining progress, teachers will establish if a pupil has demonstrated competence in the knowledge and understanding described in the RME experiences and outcomes. Recording and reporting procedures are in line with Bell’s Brae and Shetland Islands Council policies. They are manageable and will be used to inform parents/carers of pupil progress and attainment, e.g. evidence of pupil work is retained on e-portfolios and in assessment folders.

The role of Parents/Carers

We recognise that parents/carers have a significant role in fostering and supporting positive attitudes towards RME. Through termly curriculum overviews, Parent/teacher appointments and annual progress reports we aim to inform parents/carers of the aims, objectives and content of RME.

Some parents/carers may have anxieties that RME conflicts with their family beliefs or religious practices. Should this arise, discussion will take place between parents/carers and class teacher so that the educational rationale can be discussed and any anxieties allayed.

However, parents who so wish can opt for their children to be withdrawn from RME. Any requests should be made in writing to the headteacher. Where a child is withdrawn from Religious Education, suitable arrangements will be made for the pupil to participate in a worthwhile alternative activity. Religious Observance

Religious Observance is defined for schools in Scotland as:

“Community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community and express and celebrate the shared values of the school community.”

Circular 1/2005 Provision of Religious Observance in Scottish Schools

Religious Observance will provide experiences which will be meaningful to all pupils and staff, aiding their spiritual development.

The school community will comprise staff, pupils and families from a variety of faith backgrounds and worldviews. This diversity will be valued and considered when planning acts of Religious Observance.

The aims of Religious Observance are defined as:

“To promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community; To express and celebrate the shared values of the school community”

Circular 1/2005 Provision of Religious Observance in Scottish Schools

Under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, parents have the right to ask for their child to be withdrawn from Religious Observance. The school deals with such requests with sensitivity and understanding. School staff will offer to meet with any parent/carer wishing to withdraw their child to ensure that they are clear about the school policy on Religious Observance.

In particular, parents should be reassured that the Religious Observance planned by the school adopts an open and respectful approach and does not seek to compromise the beliefs of any pupils or their families.

Where a child is withdrawn from Religious Observance, suitable arrangements will be made for the pupil to participate in a worthwhile alternative activity.

School assemblies take place on a weekly basis and over the course of the school year there will be a minimum of six Religious Observance opportunities for each pupil. Local ministers, school staff and visiting speakers take turns to speak at these assemblies. In addition, the school will maintain traditional celebrations central to the life of the school community so that special assemblies are held at Harvest, Christmas, Spring and at the end of the summer term. The Christmas assembly is held in the Methodist Church in Lerwick.

Although assemblies have been the traditional way of delivering Religious Observance, other creative options are considered

The School Chaplain is Rev Jeremy Dare, minister of the Methodist Church in Lerwick.

This policy will be reviewed regularly.