



Religious Education (RE) Policy

2026 – 2028

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‘LEARNING FOR LIFE’

At Whiston Willis Primary Academy, we are a safe, happy and inclusive community where everyone is valued, respected and celebrated. We embrace difference and promote equity, ensuring that every child feels a strong sense of belonging and has the support, opportunities and encouragement they need to thrive.

We have high expectations for every child and are committed to enabling all pupils to reach their full potential academically, socially and emotionally. Through an ambitious, inclusive and engaging curriculum, we develop knowledge, skills and understanding while nurturing curiosity, confidence, independence and a love of learning.

We believe that every child should have a voice. Through purposeful talk, active listening and respectful dialogue, we empower our pupils to express their ideas, listen to others, challenge themselves and participate confidently in their learning and the wider world.

We are committed to developing the whole child. Through positive relationships, shared values and a strong sense of community, we support our pupils to become resilient, respectful and compassionate individuals who understand their responsibilities towards others and approach their future with a strong moral purpose.

Learning is a lifelong journey. We aim to inspire motivated, independent and reflective learners who are equipped with the knowledge, character and confidence to embrace opportunities, overcome challenges and make a positive contribution to an ever-changing world.

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out Whiston Willis Primary Academy's agreed approach to Religious Education (RE) from Reception to Year 6. RE is part of the basic curriculum and is compulsory for pupils in state-funded schools, subject to the parental right of withdrawal. RE is not a National Curriculum subject and there is no national programme of study for its content.

As an academy, Whiston Willis adopts the Wirral Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education and Worldviews (2019) as the framework for its RE curriculum. The school has developed a bespoke, progressive curriculum from that syllabus to meet the needs of its pupils, school organisation and community while retaining the syllabus's principles, six Big Ideas, breadth of religions and worldviews, and expectations for progression.

This policy should be read alongside the school's curriculum map, medium-term planning, Teaching and Learning Policy, Assessment and Feedback Policy, SEND and Inclusion Policy, Equality Policy and Safeguarding Policy.

2. Vision and Rationale

At Whiston Willis, RE enables pupils to develop secure knowledge and understanding of religions and non-religious worldviews and to consider the significance of beliefs, practices, texts, traditions, communities and lived experience. Pupils learn how religion and non-religion can influence individuals, communities, culture and society.

Our curriculum prepares pupils for life in a diverse society. It develops informed curiosity, respectful dialogue and the ability to encounter difference without stereotyping. Pupils are taught that members of the same religion or worldview may understand, express and practise their beliefs in different ways.

RE also provides structured opportunities to consider significant questions about meaning, purpose, identity, morality, belonging and human experience. Reflection is educational rather than confessional: pupils may express personal views, but are never required to adopt, practise or affirm a particular religious or non-religious belief.

3. Curriculum Intent

Our RE curriculum is designed to ensure that pupils:

- develop increasingly secure knowledge of Christianity and a range of other religions and non-religious worldviews;
- understand important beliefs, concepts, practices, texts, stories, symbols, celebrations, places and communities in appropriate context;
- recognise diversity within, as well as between, religions and worldviews;
- use subject-specific vocabulary accurately and with increasing confidence;
- make increasingly informed comparisons and connections across religions, worldviews, time and context;
- understand that religion and worldviews may influence identity, ethics, community, culture and responses to life's experiences;
- ask increasingly thoughtful questions about religion, belief, meaning, morality and human experience;
- use evidence, examples and taught knowledge to explain and support ideas rather than relying on unsupported generalisation;
- engage respectfully with different perspectives, including religious and non-religious worldviews;
- reflect on ideas and questions while recognising every pupil's right to hold, develop or withhold personal beliefs;
- develop the knowledge and disciplinary habits required for increasingly deep study of Religion and Worldviews at secondary school.

4. Curriculum Framework: the Wirral Agreed Syllabus

4.1 The six Big Ideas

The bespoke Whiston Willis curriculum is organised with reference to the six Big Ideas within the Wirral Agreed Syllabus. These provide recurring conceptual lenses through which pupils revisit, connect and deepen learning:

- Continuity, Change and Diversity - how religions and worldviews persist, develop and vary within and across communities;

- Words and Beyond - how beliefs and experiences are expressed through language, texts, symbols, art, music, ritual and other forms;
- A Good Life - how religions and worldviews address ethics, values, relationships, responsibility and ideas about living well;
- Making Sense of Life's Experiences - how people interpret significant, spiritual, puzzling or everyday experiences;
- Influence, Community, Culture and Power - how religion and worldviews interact with communities, culture, identity, institutions and wider society;
- The Big Picture - how religions and worldviews engage with ultimate questions and larger accounts of reality, humanity, life and death.

The Big Ideas are not taught as isolated topics. They recur across the school so that pupils encounter them through increasingly rich content and more demanding questions.

4.2 Religion and worldviews

The curriculum uses a Religion and Worldviews approach consistent with the Wirral syllabus. Pupils learn about organised religious traditions and non-religious worldviews while also recognising lived diversity: individuals and communities may interpret, practise and express traditions differently.

Teachers avoid language that implies that every member of a religion believes or behaves in exactly the same way. Where appropriate, language such as 'some Christians', 'many Muslims', 'within this Hindu tradition' or 'this Humanist perspective' is used to preserve accuracy and avoid essentialising groups.

4.3 Breadth and balance

Christianity has a substantial and continuing place within the curriculum, reflecting the requirements that underpin agreed syllabuses in England. Pupils also encounter other principal religions represented in Great Britain and, at Key Stage 2, non-religious worldviews including Humanism in accordance with the Wirral syllabus.

The school's curriculum map identifies the particular religions, worldviews and enquiries taught in each phase. Selection is purposeful: sufficient curriculum time is given to build depth and secure knowledge rather than attempting superficial coverage of every possible festival, belief or practice.

5. Bespoke Whiston Willis Curriculum Implementation

5.1 A progressive year-by-year curriculum

Whiston Willis is a two-form-entry primary school, with two classes in each year group and no mixed-age classes. The bespoke RE curriculum is therefore organised as a progressive year-by-year sequence from Reception to Year 6. Both classes within each year group follow the same agreed curriculum content, sequence and intended learning outcomes, ensuring equality of curriculum entitlement and consistency of expectation while allowing teachers to adapt teaching, resources and support appropriately to the needs of individual pupils and classes.

The Subject Leader maps prerequisite knowledge, recurring concepts, religions and worldviews across the year-by-year sequence. Teachers make explicit links to previous learning so that pupils build connected knowledge rather than experience RE as a series of disconnected celebrations or topics. Parallel-class planning and professional dialogue support consistency between the two classes in each year group. Consistency does not require identical lesson delivery or identical pupil outcomes; the priority is that all pupils access the same ambitious curriculum and work towards the same intended endpoints.

5.2 School-specific lesson principles

The school retains effective elements of its established RE practice, including enquiry, purposeful talk, explicit vocabulary, 'I Know/I Wonder' thinking, knowledge organisers and appropriate end-of-unit review. These are refined so that they support, rather than substitute for, secure subject knowledge.

Teaching reflects Whiston Willis's wider pedagogy: CUSP six-part lesson principles, Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction and Voice 21. Lessons may use Connect, Explain, Example, Attempt, Apply and Challenge/Review as appropriate. Teachers activate prior knowledge, explicitly teach new content and vocabulary, model careful reasoning, check understanding and provide opportunities to apply learning through discussion, comparison, interpretation and reflection.

RE remains a distinctive subject. Generic literacy activities, colouring, craft or festival celebration do not constitute sufficient RE unless they directly advance the intended knowledge or understanding.

5.3 Enquiry

Enquiry is central to the Wirral syllabus and to Whiston Willis RE. Enquiry questions are sufficiently focused for pupils to answer using the knowledge taught. Pupils learn to ask questions, examine relevant examples and sources, make connections, compare perspectives and reach appropriately qualified conclusions.

Teachers ensure pupils possess sufficient background knowledge before asking them to debate complex questions or make comparisons. Personal opinion does not replace subject knowledge; pupils are taught to distinguish between 'what I think' and 'what the evidence or taught examples show'.

5.4 Vocabulary, reading and oracy

Key vocabulary is explicitly identified, taught, revisited and applied. This includes names of traditions, concepts, practices, texts and places as well as language needed to discuss similarity, difference, interpretation and worldview.

Pupils encounter high-quality stories, sacred and other significant texts, accounts of lived experience, images and age-appropriate secondary sources. Texts are contextualised carefully and are not treated as though a single extract represents every believer.

Voice 21 approaches support respectful discussion and disciplined dialogue. Pupils listen to others, build on ideas, ask questions and explain viewpoints using relevant knowledge. Teachers establish clear norms so that disagreement is thoughtful and no pupil is expected to disclose personal beliefs.

5.5 Artefacts, visitors and lived experience

Artefacts, images, virtual resources, visitors and first-hand encounters are used where they deepen curriculum knowledge. Teachers explain their significance and context rather than presenting objects as curiosities.

Where visitors speak from personal faith or worldview experience, pupils are taught that the visitor represents their own perspective and should not be assumed to speak for every member of a tradition.

5.6 Visits and community links

Visits to places of worship and engagement with local communities are valuable opportunities to encounter religion as lived experience. Whiston Willis seeks to use local and regional opportunities, including links with churches and other faith or worldview communities, where they have a clear curricular purpose.

Visits are prepared for and followed up through substantive learning. They are conducted respectfully and in accordance with safeguarding, educational visits, equality and health-and-safety procedures. Pupils may observe religious practice for educational purposes but are not required to participate devotionally.

5.7 Cross-curricular links

RE has meaningful links with English, History, Geography, Art, Music and PSHE, but these links do not replace the planned RE curriculum. Teachers make the disciplinary purpose explicit: for example, a religious artwork is studied to understand expression of belief, not simply as an art activity.

RE contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and supports informed understanding of diversity and respectful relationships. It should not, however, be reduced to generic values education or used solely to teach 'tolerance'.

6. Phase Implementation and Progression

6.1 Reception / EYFS

RE is provided for registered pupils in Reception. It is delivered in an age-appropriate way that connects particularly with Understanding the World, Communication and Language, Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Expressive Arts and Design.

Children encounter special people, stories, books, places, times, objects, celebrations and communities. They talk about similarities and differences, listen to stories, ask questions, use their senses and respond creatively. Teaching

develops curiosity and respectful awareness while laying foundations for the Big Ideas and vocabulary used in Key Stage 1.

EYFS RE is not simply a calendar of festivals. Experiences are selected because they contribute to coherent knowledge and understanding.

6.2 Key Stage 1

At Key Stage 1, pupils build foundational knowledge of Christianity and selected other religions in accordance with the Wirral syllabus. They explore religious and non-religious expression, stories, people, celebrations, worship, symbols, communities, beliefs and ideas through carefully selected content.

Pupils begin to use religious vocabulary accurately, recognise that people within traditions may differ, identify similarities and differences, ask questions and make simple connections between beliefs and ways of living. They begin to consider how stories, practices and symbols communicate meaning.

6.3 Key Stage 2

At Key Stage 2, pupils build on earlier learning through deeper study of Christianity, selected principal religions and non-religious worldviews, including Humanism as required by the Wirral syllabus. They encounter greater complexity and diversity within traditions.

Pupils increasingly interpret information, compare perspectives, connect beliefs with practice and lived experience, examine how religion and worldviews interact with culture and community, and address ethical and ultimate questions using relevant knowledge.

By Year 6, pupils should be able to discuss religions and worldviews with increasing precision, recognise internal diversity, make informed comparisons and explain how beliefs and worldviews may influence individuals and communities without assuming simple or deterministic relationships.

7. Curriculum Impact

The impact of the RE curriculum is reflected in what pupils know, remember, understand and can increasingly explain about religion and worldviews. Strong outcomes are not defined by pupils adopting particular beliefs or values.

By the end of Year 6, we expect pupils to:

- demonstrate connected knowledge of Christianity, other religions and non-religious worldviews studied;
- recall and use important subject vocabulary accurately;
- recognise diversity within and between religions and worldviews;
- make informed connections across the six Big Ideas;
- explain links between beliefs, practices, texts, experiences, communities and ways of living;
- use specific examples rather than stereotypes or unsupported generalisations;
- ask and respond to increasingly sophisticated questions about religion, belief and human experience;
- compare perspectives carefully, identifying meaningful similarities and differences;
- discuss religious and non-religious worldviews respectfully without being required to reveal or defend personal beliefs;
- apply prior knowledge to new enquiries and be appropriately prepared for secondary RE.

Impact is evaluated through multiple sources of evidence: pupil discussion, retrieval of prior learning, use of vocabulary, responses to enquiry questions, comparison and explanation, books or curriculum records, assessment tasks and pupil voice. No single quiz or written outcome is treated as a complete measure of RE attainment.

8. Inclusion, SEND and Equity

RE is an entitlement for all pupils unless a parent exercises the statutory right of withdrawal. Whiston Willis maintains ambitious expectations for pupils with SEND and makes reasonable adjustments so that barriers to language, memory, sensory processing, communication, reading or recording do not unnecessarily restrict access to rich RE content.

- pre-teaching and retrieval of essential vocabulary and background knowledge;

- carefully selected images, artefacts, diagrams, timelines and visual supports;
- chunked texts, supported reading and teacher explanation;
- structured talk, sentence stems and graphic organisers for comparison and explanation;
- adapted recording or assistive technology where writing is not the intended learning;
- multi-sensory access to appropriate artefacts, music, images or environments;
- additional rehearsal and reduced cognitive load without reducing the conceptual ambition;
- greater depth through more complex examples, sources, comparisons and independent enquiry for pupils ready for further challenge.

Adaptations preserve the integrity of the subject. Pupils with SEND should not routinely receive simplified festival crafts or generic values activities in place of the intended RE curriculum.

9. Assessment, Feedback and Recording

9.1 Formative assessment

Assessment is integral to teaching. Teachers use retrieval, questioning, discussion, vocabulary checks, 'I Know/I Wonder' responses, comparison, explanation and other tasks to identify what pupils know and understand and where misconceptions remain.

Feedback focuses on the intended RE learning: accuracy of knowledge, vocabulary, quality of connections, use of examples and increasingly careful reasoning. Misconceptions and stereotypes are addressed promptly.

9.2 Summative assessment

At agreed points, including the end of units where appropriate, teachers make professional judgements about how securely pupils have learned the intended curriculum. Assessment reflects both substantive knowledge and pupils' increasing ability to connect, interpret, compare and explain.

End-of-unit quizzes may contribute evidence of factual recall but do not assess the whole subject. They are therefore used alongside richer evidence such as oral explanation, enquiry responses and application of the Big Ideas.

9.3 Recording and reporting

Pupils' books contain selected evidence of learning. Not every RE lesson requires a lengthy written outcome. Teachers record summative judgements in accordance with the school's assessment arrangements and report pupils' progress in RE to parents through normal school reporting procedures.

10. Right of Withdrawal

Parents have a statutory right to withdraw their child from all or part of RE. Whiston Willis respects this legal right while also ensuring that parents have accurate information about the educational, non-confessional nature of the school's RE curriculum.

A parent wishing to withdraw a child should make the request to the Headteacher/Principal. The school will offer an opportunity to discuss the request, clarify which elements of RE are to be withdrawn from and explain the curriculum, but parents are not required to justify their decision.

Withdrawal from RE is distinct from withdrawal from collective worship. Where a pupil is withdrawn, the school will make appropriate supervisory arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements and school procedures. The school will not seek to influence a pupil's personal religious or non-religious convictions.

The right of withdrawal does not extend to other curriculum subjects merely because they contain material relating to religions or worldviews.

11. Sensitive, Controversial and Personal Questions

RE may involve sensitive questions about belief, non-belief, identity, death, suffering, morality, prejudice and disagreement. Teachers establish a safe and respectful climate in which pupils can ask questions without ridicule and in which inaccurate or discriminatory claims are challenged appropriately.

Teachers distinguish between explaining a worldview and endorsing it. Pupils are not asked to perform acts of worship, disclose their own faith position or speak as representatives of a religion, culture or family.

Where discussion gives rise to a safeguarding disclosure or concern, normal safeguarding procedures apply.

12. Resources and Representation

Resources are selected for accuracy, depth, age appropriateness and respectful representation. Teachers use the Wirral syllabus, school-developed planning and knowledge organisers, religious and non-religious texts, artefacts, images, video, maps and other appropriate materials.

Resources should represent lived diversity and avoid presenting religions as fixed lists of beliefs and practices. Teachers check online materials carefully and use first-person accounts alongside appropriate contextual knowledge where these strengthen understanding.

Sacred texts and artefacts are handled respectfully. Respect is taught as informed care for people and traditions, not as a requirement to accept religious claims as true.

13. Roles and Responsibilities

13.1 RE Subject Leader

- maintains a clear, ambitious and inclusive vision for RE at Whiston Willis;
- ensures the bespoke curriculum remains aligned with the adopted Wirral Agreed Syllabus and relevant legal requirements;
- maps progression across the six Big Ideas, religions, worldviews, vocabulary and key concepts;
- ensures consistent curriculum entitlement, sequencing and expectations across the two classes in each year group;
- supports staff subject knowledge through guidance, resources, modelling, coaching and CPD;
- checks that Christianity, other principal religions and non-religious worldviews receive appropriate breadth and depth;
- develops links with appropriate local communities, visitors and places of worship;
- monitors implementation and impact through proportionate triangulation;
- reviews access and outcomes for pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and other relevant groups;
- reports strengths, priorities and impact to the Curriculum Lead, SLT and governors.

13.2 Class teachers

- teach the agreed year-group curriculum sequence and maintain high expectations for all pupils, working with the parallel class teacher to secure consistent curriculum entitlement and expectations;
- secure their own subject knowledge before teaching and use accurate terminology;
- teach sufficient content before asking pupils to compare, debate or evaluate;
- make explicit links to prior learning and the relevant Big Ideas;
- represent religions and worldviews accurately, including diversity within traditions;
- facilitate respectful discussion without promoting personal beliefs;
- use formative assessment to address misconceptions and inform subsequent teaching;
- make reasonable adaptations while preserving ambitious subject learning.

13.3 Teaching assistants and support staff

Support staff reinforce agreed vocabulary, knowledge and discussion routines and support pupils to participate independently. They should not supply personal responses or complete comparative and reflective thinking on pupils' behalf.

13.4 Senior leaders and governors

Senior leaders ensure sufficient curriculum time, appropriate resources and professional support for high-quality RE. Governors provide strategic challenge and assurance regarding statutory provision, curriculum quality, inclusion, withdrawal arrangements and the impact of subject leadership.

14. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring is developmental, proportionate and focused on whether pupils are learning the intended RE curriculum. The RE Subject Leader works with the Curriculum Lead and SLT through the school's planned monitoring cycle.

- review of year-by-year curriculum sequencing, alignment with the Wirral Agreed Syllabus and consistency of entitlement across parallel classes;
- book or curriculum-record review focused on knowledge, vocabulary, Big Ideas and progression;
- lesson visits or learning walks where appropriate;
- pupil voice focused on recall, connections, diversity within traditions and ability to discuss religion and worldviews accurately;
- teacher voice and identification of subject-knowledge, resource or CPD needs;
- review of assessment information and selected exemplification;
- review of inclusion, access and withdrawal arrangements.

Evidence is triangulated before conclusions are drawn. Monitoring does not require duplicate planning, unnecessary marking, compulsory written outcomes or photographs solely for accountability.

15. Equality, Diversity and Safeguarding

This policy is implemented in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the school's equality duties. RE makes a distinctive contribution to pupils' understanding of religious and non-religious diversity, but it does so through accurate curriculum knowledge rather than assumptions about individual pupils or communities.

No pupil should be expected to represent a religion or worldview because of their name, family, ethnicity or perceived background. Teachers challenge prejudicial language and stereotypes and ensure that controversial material is handled with appropriate context and sensitivity.

Visitors, visits, online resources and discussion are managed in accordance with safeguarding procedures. Staff remain alert to the difference between legitimate exploration of religious ideas and material that may raise safeguarding concerns.

16. Policy Review

The RE Subject Leader and Curriculum Lead will review this policy biannually, or sooner where changes to legislation, Department for Education guidance, the Wirral Agreed Syllabus, academy requirements or school priorities make this necessary.

17. Key Statutory and Professional References

- Wirral Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education and Worldviews (2019), adopted by Whiston Willis as the curriculum framework.
- Department for Education: Religious Education and Collective Worship in Academies and Free Schools.
- Department for Education: Religious Education in English Schools - Non-statutory Guidance (2010).
- Education Act 1996 and School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as applicable to RE provision.
- Ofsted: Deep and Meaningful? The Religious Education Subject Report (2024), used as non-statutory research-informed evidence.
- Ofsted: Research Review Series - Religious Education, used as non-statutory research-informed evidence.
- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage - current version.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Whiston Willis Teaching and Learning, Assessment and Feedback, SEND and Inclusion, Equality, Safeguarding and Educational Visits policies.