Bath and Wells Diocesan Academies Trust

Religious Education Policy

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Bath and Wells Diocesan Academies Trust

Context
The Bath & Wells Diocesan Academies Trust (the Trust) is a vibrant learning community. In order to ensure that the Trust is a safe, supportive environment where pupils and staff can learn and thrive, there needs to be clear procedures, structures, and expectations in place. Trust policies are a formal way of documenting the procedures and values of the Trust and are designed to provide an instant picture of the principles of the Trust. They form an important framework that will ensure consistency in applying the agreed values and principles across all elements of the Trust.

The **Religious Education (RE) Policy** is a statutory requirement under the Education Reform Act 1988, reinforced in academy funding agreements, and is also a key focus of SIAMS inspection in Church of England and Methodist schools.

- All academies within the Trust must provide RE for all pupils, except those withdrawn by their parents in line with statutory rights.
- The RE curriculum must reflect that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the principal religions represented.
- In schools with a religious character, RE is subject to inspection under the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework.
- Academies must also meet the RE requirements set out in their individual funding agreements.

Purpose
As a Diocesan Multi Academy Trust, we are committed to ensuring that all pupils flourish, becoming the best version of themselves, and experiencing "life in all its fullness" (John 10:10).

Our vision is:
"An excellent education for every child, enhanced by a distinctive Christian ethos within our Trust family."
Religious Education (RE) plays a central role in realising this vision. We are committed to providing an exciting, creative, and relevant RE curriculum that fosters wisdom, hope, community, dignity, and respect. This policy applies to all our schools, Anglican, Methodist, and Community, ensuring inclusivity and integrity in practice.

The purpose of this policy is to:
- Support the provision of high-quality RE for all pupils across Trust schools.
- Promote inclusivity, integrity, and respect through RE, enabling all pupils to flourish and live "life in all its fullness" (John 10:10).
- Support the Trust vision: *"An excellent education for every child, enhanced by a distinctive Christian ethos within our Trust family."*
- Provide pupils with opportunities to:
    - develop a deep understanding of Christianity as a living faith;
    - explore other religions and worldviews with respect;
    - engage in critical thinking and reflection;
    - articulate their own beliefs and values while respecting others.

The aims of RE within the Trust are to:
I. Ensure Christianity is central to the RE curriculum as a living, diverse faith.
II. Provide sequenced learning about a range of religions and worldviews.
III. Teach RE in line with all legal and funding agreements.
IV. Encourage pupils to:
    - Develop a comprehensive understanding of Christianity.
    - Explore diverse religions and worldviews with respect.
    - Engage in critical thinking and reflection.
    - Articulate their own beliefs and values while respecting those of others.

Trustees confirm through this policy that RE will be provided for all pupils as part of the basic curriculum. The curriculum will reflect the central place of Christianity while taking account of other religions and worldviews. Methodist schools will ensure that pupils learn about the Methodist story, its history, traditions, and identity and all RE will be provided in accordance with each school's funding agreement.

Trustees support the contribution that RE can make to the wider curriculum by:

- Promoting spiritual, moral, social, and cultural (SMSC) development;
- Preparing pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of later life;
- Embedding school and Trust values, including British Values; and
- Fostering respect for diversity, community cohesion, and positive citizenship.

- Trustees have determined that RE will be taught for a minimum of 36 hours per year at Key Stage 1 and 45 hours per year at Key Stage 2.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), RE will be planned in line with the EYFS framework.
- In Church schools, Christianity must be the majority faith studied, accounting for at least 50% of RE curriculum time, in line with the National Society's Statement of Entitlement. The expectation is close to 10% of curriculum time but not less than 5%.
- In Community schools, RE will be taught in line with the locally agreed syllabus.

Scope
This policy applies to all schools in the Bath & Wells Diocesan Academies Trust – Anglican, Methodist, and Community schools.

Trust Alignment
This policy supports the Bath & Wells Diocesan Academies Trust's **five pledges** and the strategic priority: *High quality and inclusive education that ensures excellent outcomes for all children*.

- **Pledge 1: Children at the heart of decision making**
  RE enables children's voices to be heard by encouraging them to articulate their beliefs and values, question respectfully, and contribute to shaping the ethos of their school. Pupil feedback and involvement in RE curriculum development ensure children remain central in practice.
- **Pledge 2: Removing barriers, challenging injustice, celebrating diversity**
  Through learning about different religions and worldviews, RE fosters respect, combats prejudice, and celebrates diversity. It equips pupils to challenge injustice and promotes inclusivity in every community the Trust serves.
- **Pledge 3: Maximising resources**
  High-quality RE resources, including *Understanding Christianity* and locally agreed syllabuses, are shared across the Trust, ensuring consistent quality and effective use of expertise. Joint CPD, moderation, and Network meetings leverage economies of scale to benefit all pupils.
- **Pledge 4: Valuing our workforce**
  RE supports staff wellbeing and professional growth by offering CPD, shared planning, and access to specialist support from the Diocese and Trust. Teachers are empowered to deliver RE confidently and creatively, becoming the best versions of themselves.
- **Pledge 5: Developing and sustaining a unique vision for each school**
  While RE ensures consistency across the Trust, it is also adapted to reflect each school's local context, history, and community partnerships. This enables each school to develop a unique Christian vision enriched by diversity and rooted in its distinct identity.

Legal responsibilities and Other Related Policies
Trustee support parents' legal right to withdraw their child from RE in whole or in part. Schools must respect this right and discuss with parents how best to accommodate the withdrawal, while maintaining the child's safety and wellbeing. Schools are not required to provide alternative teaching during this time.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Collective Worship Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Curriculum Policy

Monitoring
This policy is owned by the Director of Education and the Christian Distinctiveness Lead and will be reviewed yearly by the Trust Board, or sooner if statutory or diocesan guidance requires.

- At school level, RE Leads are responsible for planning, monitoring, and reporting.
- At Trust level, the Director of Education and the Christian Distinctiveness Lead will oversee implementation, provide CPD, and monitor impact through hub meetings, moderation, and feedback from SIAMS inspections.
- Reports will be shared with Trustees on the quality and effectiveness of RE provision across the Trust.