



Bennett Memorial Diocesan School

Religious Education Policy

Adoption Arrangements and Date

All statutory policies in the Trust are ultimately the responsibility of the Trust Board. To enable it to discharge this responsibility appropriately and in collaboration with the constituent schools, the Trust Board will

1. either set a full Trust wide policy,
2. or set a 'policy principles' document (a framework within which LGBs develop a full and appropriately customised policy),
3. or delegate to LGBs the power to develop their own policy which the Trust Board will then ratify.

Review Body:	Local Governing Body	Adopted:	23.03.17
Leadership Grp Responsibility:	Headteacher	Date of next review:	June 2020
Policy Type:	Non-statutory	Review period:	3 years

This is a Level 3 Policy against the Trust Governance Plan.

Policy aims

The aims of this policy are

- To set out a rationale for the teaching of religious studies in this Church of England School which is part of the Tenax Trust in the Diocese of Rochester
- To state how religious studies contributes to the school's distinctive character and supports students' spiritual and moral development
- To set out how religious studies is provided within the curriculum and beyond
- To set out Governors' policy for the leadership and management of religious studies
- To state Governors' policy on exemption from religious studies

Rather than being an exhaustive or detailed description of all the work of the religious studies department, the policy aims to set down a broad strategic role and direction for the subject, supported by the governing body, which can then inform the learning of the subject and its development in a practical way.

Rationale for religious studies at Bennett

As a Church of England school, Bennett aims to provide a secure yet challenging environment where young people can become theologically informed about the Christian faith, its history and diversity, and explore how this faith can underpin their own lives and developing value systems. This is accomplished in a wide range of ways, and the school's Christian character informs and underpins all its work. Within the broad framework of Christian values, religious studies as a subject plays an important and distinctive role in the spiritual and moral development of students. They will learn how Christianity has influenced the lives of people worldwide and as the religion that has most shaped British culture and heritage.

At its heart the teaching of religious studies at Bennett is the teaching of Christianity, rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The subject aims to strike a balance between teaching and learning about Christianity in its diversity, and other world faiths, on the one hand, and helping students understand and develop their own faith through this growing understanding on the other hand. A process is established whereby there is engagement with the student's world whilst encouraging them to explore their own religious life and to reflect upon what they have learnt. Central to this is helping students understand the transcendental and mystical; a sense of otherness; that there is more to life than that which can be seen and touched. Consequently, students develop an extended religious and theological literacy, understand that religious belief is an important worldwide phenomenon and that it is part of what makes communities work.

So, religious studies at Bennett aims to be more than simply an academic subject, but does not attempt to catechise, or to present one religious viewpoint as the only acceptable one. The emphasis is always on supporting students in reaching their own understanding and empowering them to make their own decisions on matters of faith and ethics, within an understanding that personal faith and morals are a crucial part of a young person's growth and development, and indeed of life.

All of this is done in an atmosphere which is fundamentally sympathetic to the Christian perspective, and it is important for us that teachers of religious studies are themselves committed Christians and able to articulate and demonstrate how religious values can be lived. Where religious studies teachers are not themselves committed Christians, it is expected that they are reflective, spiritually minded and philosophically and theologically educated people who are able to explore matters of faith and ethics with students in a way which is sympathetic to the Christian perspective. Certainly, the teaching of religious studies is part of our vocation, ministry and mission as a Church of England school.

Within Christianity, the outlook and heritage of the Church of England is given a clear and appropriate emphasis, and other Christian perspectives are also explored and valued. In practice, the diversity within Anglicanism makes it relatively straightforward to draw parallels between Anglicanism and other Christian traditions. The school draws on Christian communities, mainly but not exclusively Anglican, of all shades, although the evangelical tradition is more strongly represented than others in the school.

Other world religions are also studied, with Christianity, as part of the religious studies programme at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. There are a number of reasons for this, not least the need to ensure that students are able to gain enough theological understanding of other religions and their followers to see that the religious quest is common to humanity, and to develop respect for adherents of other faiths in the complex society in which we live. It is also vital that students learn about other world religions in order to gain understanding of their values and beliefs in order to sustain positive engagement and interaction with people of other faiths. Once again, a delicate middle path must be steered here. Any tendency towards syncretism must be avoided on the one hand, as also must any tendency to reduce the study of other world religions simply to customs, festivals and externals on the other. In other words, there must be a genuine attempt to understand other religions from the perspective of their believers, whilst ensuring that students are clearly aware of mainstream Christian teaching about the uniqueness of Christian revelation.

How religious studies contributes to the school's distinctive character and supports students' spiritual and moral development

The important place given to religious studies in the curriculum for all students means that the subject is in a strong position to contribute to the school's distinctive character. The very fact that religious issues are believed to be important enough to warrant a significant proportion of curricular time (and, as set out below, such a well staffed and high profile department) should make a clear statement about the subject's importance.

Clearly, its effectiveness must depend not only on the time and resources allocated to it, but also on the quality of teaching and learning which takes place. The exploration of theological, ethical and philosophical perspectives should mean that students are able to recognise these as central dimensions in their educational development. Combined with other ethos-related aspects of school life, such as worship, concern for others and charity work, reference to Christian values in individual transactions with students, and a clearly articulated vision for the Christian community,

all contribute to students' spiritual and moral development and to the school's distinctive Christian character.

Religious studies teaching also contributes to the school's ethos through the character and style of the lessons. There is a particularly strong emphasis on modelling behaviour, building up student confidence, participation from all, and valuing individuals' perspectives and insights. Furthermore, dialogue should be a key pedagogic tool; to engage with our 'brother and sister' reflects Christ's engagement with those he came into contact with. Once again, this clearly has to be balanced with the need to cover a certain range of topics to a required level, but it is felt that religious studies, if it is to be aligned with and contribute to the school's ethos, must be a subject area where each individual is felt to be important and treasured for what they bring.

How religious studies is provided within the curriculum and beyond

All students in years 7 to 12 follow a timetabled religious studies programme within the curriculum for 2017 to 2018 is as follows:

Year 7	2 hours of Religious Education and 2 hours of philosophy per fortnight
Year 8	2 hours of Religious Education and 2 hours of philosophy per fortnight
Year 9	5 hours per fortnight
Year 10	5 hours per fortnight
Year 11	4 hours per fortnight.
Year 12 and 13	2x6 hour blocks in each year

While the teaching of Philosophy has its own intrinsic value, it is also intended that by studying this course students will also be able to engage with the GCSE Religious Studies programme at a deeper level of understanding. For example, students are introduced to the basic logical structure of arguments which can then be applied when studying natural theology at GCSE. Similarly, they are introduced to ethical theories that can be applied to a range of issues in Year 10. Furthermore, students also study a unit on the Philosophy of Religion which introduces key themes that are explored in greater depth at GCSE.

In years 7 and 8 the religious studies course begins by looking at the history and distinctive ethos of the school, and then explores a range of themes principally from a Christian perspective, but also including the perspectives of other world religions. The GCSE programme follows the Philosophy and Ethics GCSE specification, using Christianity alongside Islam as the religion of reference.

In the year 13 religious studies is provided through termly study days which are themed according to topics of religious and ethical interest to students. Attendance at these programmes is expected for all students.

In addition, both religious studies and philosophy are offered as A Level subjects.

Religious studies is assessed, for the purposes of accountability for its effectiveness, through the Bennett Mastery curriculum levels in years 7 and 8 with formal exams twice a year, and through

GCSE grades from year 9 onwards. Every student in religious studies has a target grade based on their prior attainment at KS2, against which their progress can be objectively measured. These targets are set at a challenging level. The effectiveness of the department as a whole is measured by aggregating these grades. Alongside the measurement of outcomes, quality is assessed through lesson observations and drops-ins by the team leader and members of the school's management team, scrutiny of students' work, discussion with students and informal discussion among staff.

Outside the taught curriculum, a variety of other activities should enhance the work of the team as appropriate. These should include particularly activities which assist students in their understanding of the school's place in the Diocese of Rochester and the Church of England more widely, and which also help to bring alive the study of other religious traditions.

How religious studies is led and managed

Governors take a particular responsibility for the provision of religious studies in the school, because of the special role it plays in the nurturing and development of the school's distinctive ethos. This is exercised both through the Bennett Governing Board, which will be expected to explore and approve any significant change in the provision of religious studies in the curriculum, and who will have regular opportunities to be informed and to question key staff on religious studies policy and practice. The headteacher will also take a special and direct responsibility for the quality of provision for religious studies, in the light of the rationale set out above. The school is accountable, through the headteacher, to the governing body for examination results in religious studies.

The team leader for religious studies will be remunerated at a level which recognises the subject's importance for the school. In the appointment of the team leader the Diocese of Rochester will normally be consulted. The team leader will be assisted in his/her leadership and management of the team by two post holders as assistants. Special care is taken to ensure that other religious studies teachers are appropriately qualified with theology or philosophy qualifications at degree level.

Special care will be taken to ensure that the work of the religious studies team is appropriately resourced, in comparison with other subject areas in the school.

Exemption from religious studies

The school recognises the legal right of parents to withdraw their children from religious studies. However, given that parents make a positive choice to send their children to a school with a clear and overt Christian ethos, the school would not expect many parents to exercise this right. In the past ten years just one parent has exercised this right. The school is pleased that parents from other non-Christian faith backgrounds, principally Muslim and Hindu, have always been pleased to allow their children to attend religious studies lessons.