



St Margaret's Church of England Primary School

A Place to Become

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY STATEMENT – July 2024.

Our vision and the fundamental aim of our curriculum is to provide pupils with 'A Place to BECOME'. A place where children are given the opportunity to develop morally, socially, academically and spiritually and to gain an understanding of 'Life in all its fullness'. A place where they BECOME more confident; a place where they BECOME empowered. **Religious Education at St Margaret's lies at the very heart of our curriculum – it is intrinsic to the outworking of the school's Christian vision in enabling pupils to BECOME.** It is recognised as a core subject and links with the Christian values of the school and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are intrinsic to the RE curriculum. The policy for RE reflects the statement for entitlement, the locally agreed syllabus and the study of Christianity meets the requirements outlined in the Diocesan syllabus.

St Margaret's Church of England Aided Primary School follows the syllabus for Religious Education produced by the Diocese of Manchester which was introduced in September 2023.

This new syllabus has been developed for Manchester Diocese by RE Today and it reflects current thinking and research around religion and worldviews. As we



strive to create a broad and balanced, knowledge rich curriculum, considering all elements that define high quality RE, we have recognised a need for greater amounts of time and focus to be given to faiths and worldviews other than Christianity. This syllabus presents a 50% balance between Christianity and other Religions and Worldviews. It responds to national calls for deepening pupils' knowledge about religions and for developing their 'religious literacy'. It does this by studying one religion at a time ('systematic' units), and then including 'thematic' units, which build on learning by comparing the religions, beliefs and practices studied.

1. AIMS AND PURPOSE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION WITHIN OUR SCHOOL

The aims and purposes of religious education in this syllabus reflect those set out in the 2019 Statement of Entitlement¹. They are to enable pupils:

- ✚ to know about and understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith through the
- ✚ exploration of core beliefs using an approach that critically engages with biblical text.
- ✚ to gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews appreciating
- ✚ diversity, continuity and change within the religions and worldviews being studied.
- ✚ to engage with challenging questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence
- ✚ and experience.
- ✚ to recognise the concept of religion and its continuing influence on Britain's cultural heritage
- ✚ and in the lives of individuals and societies in different times, cultures and places.
- ✚ to explore their own religious, spiritual and philosophical ways living, believing and thinking.

Appropriate to their age at the end of their education in Church schools, the expectation is that all pupils are religiously literate and, as a minimum, pupils are able to:

- ✚ Give a theologically informed and thoughtful account of Christianity as a living and diverse faith.
- ✚ Show an informed and respectful attitude to religions and non-religious worldviews in their search for God and meaning.
- ✚ Engage in meaningful and informed dialogue with those of other faiths and none.
- ✚ Reflect critically and responsibly on their own spiritual, philosophical and ethical convictions.

The purpose of RE is captured in the principal aim, which is intended to be a shorthand version for day-to-day use. It should be considered as a doorway into the wider purpose articulated above.

Principal aim

The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils 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.

2. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

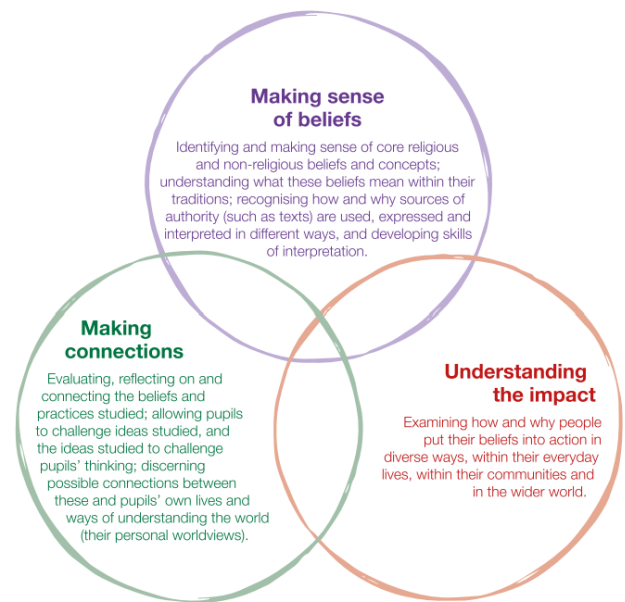
RE at St Margaret's will meet legal requirements by:

- ✚ **RE is for everyone** – it is an intrinsic part of the curriculum for all registered pupils. In primary school, this is a requirement for all pupils in Reception to Year 6 but does not include children in nursery classes. However, at St Margaret's, pupils in nursery also take part in RE. See Section Six
- ✚ **RE is plural** - reflecting the fact that religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religious traditions represented in Great Britain.
- ✚ **RE is determined locally, not nationally** - governors are ultimately responsible for the subject and they must ensure that their Religious Education syllabus and provision is in accordance with 'the rites, practices and beliefs of the Church of England'. Governors have adopted the Diocesan syllabus (in accordance with the trust deed) and RE is taught in accordance with locally agreed diocesan guidelines – at least 5% of curriculum time will be spent on RE (60 mins for KS1 children and 75 mins for KS2 children).

3. SCHEME OF WORK

The syllabus is intended for all staff with responsibility for the teaching of Religious Education from Reception to Year 6. The detailed programme of study for each year group can be found on the school's internal system. Learning overviews are produced by the RE Coordinator at the beginning of each unit which highlight values to be explored; aim of the unit; key questions; key experiences (including any visits/visitors) and learning outcomes.

The teaching and learning approach has three core elements (see right and Appendix One), which are woven together to provide breadth and balance within teaching and learning about religions and beliefs, underpinning the aims of RE outlined above. Teaching and learning in the classroom will encompass all three elements, allowing for overlap between elements as suits the religion, concept and question being explored.



4. TEACHING AND LEARNING.

- † The syllabus is based around a key question approach, where the questions open up the content to be studied. As a result, it is engaging and encourages enquiry. Key questions help staff to delivering high-quality RE that enables coherence and progression. The unit outlines give structured support in terms of learning outcomes and suggested content, to enable good planning and progression.
- † High quality knowledge rich, learning experiences in RE are designed and provided by careful planning through the agreed syllabus and diocesan materials considering the need to offer breadth of content.
- † RE is delivered in ways that make it a lively, active subject by employing a variety of teaching methods; including technology, art, music, discussion, the development of thinking skills, drama, the use of artefacts, pictures, stories and the use of periods of stillness and reflection.
- † The RE curriculum is relevant - statistics from the syllabus are used with the children and are good for supporting them to understand different ways of knowing - the language of some, many, few runs throughout the teaching and learning and statistics are used and shared with the children so that they can understand better the complexity of religions or worldviews. Where RE units link in with current events, content is made even more relevant by making connections, for example, Peacemaker prayer space used Autumn/Spring 2024 during the yr 6 Humanism and Christianity unit - peace as shared value; and the yr 2 Gospel unit - Jesus brings good news of peace.
- † Whilst following the Diocesan recommended scheme of work the RE subject leader has ensured the teaching and learning sequences are well-sequenced and well-balanced. Unit planning demonstrates the balance of the threefold aim. Consequently, staff are able to create and maintain classrooms in which academic rigour is balanced with respect for different personal beliefs and identities. Where there are specific decisions to be made about content to be included, she is able to evidence sequencing that allows pupils to build on prior knowledge (both within a unit, from unit to unit and from year group to year group).
- † The Understanding Christianity Bible Timeline is used consistently and as a significant resource across all classes. As a result children are building up their awareness of the core concepts of Christianity and the 'Big story of the Bible'. Subject lead has provided training and resources

to support staff in this area. [Bible Timeline Slides](#). As a result, staff are confident delivering the content and there is evidence in children's books that they are building up their understanding of the core concepts over time.

- † There is a two year cycle in place for the mixed-age classes which ensures that no child repeats the same content and all children access age-appropriate material as set out in the syllabus.
- † The new RE syllabus allows children to dig deeper and linger longer - for example, the previous KS1 Islam unit looked at all five pillars whereas the new unit (as the first systematic unit) deepens on previous thematic learning in FS and spends the majority of time looking at Tawhid and Shahadah. Children have a much more substantial understanding of the basis of the Islamic religion to then build upon this in lower key stage two when the five pillars are studied. The 'What does it mean to be a Muslim in Britain today' at upper key stage two ensures that children have been taught the substance to prepare them to engage with this unit fully.
- † The syllabus is challenging - key questions require children to think deeply. Careful and creative task design, based on the contextual factors of the class, ensure that children are understanding the diverse and complex nature of religions.
- † Subject lead planning has completed medium term planning for each unit which in turn has led to a decrease in workload and increased wellbeing for staff in line with school vision. Furthermore it ensures prior knowledge has been built up and content is sequenced coherently and allows for progression, ensuring planned visits and visitors (as per pupils' feedback in July 2023), increase the use of the Bible Timeline to allow children to develop greater understanding of the 'big story of the Bible' and the core concepts of Christianity; and ensure the consistent application of retrieval practice, feedback tasks and empowerment tasks. This has also ensured that the most current thinking about RE (some of which are still undergoing research - worldviews, ways of knowing) is incorporated into teaching and learning - planning and resources reflect the latest understanding around religion and worldviews, including language to be used. Whilst RE planning is completed centrally - teachers have the freedom to go beyond the planned content to further extend the learning - either utilising the 'Digging Deeper' content or teachers bringing their passion and experiences and creativity to the lessons.
- † Subject lead maintaining a detailed overview of each unit has also allowed for the adaptation of the flexible thematic units which enable different traditions to be drawn in (where they fit with the theme and question) and where there are representatives of those traditions in the school and community. The syllabus no longer includes depth studies on Sikh people. However, we have a small number of Sikh children whom we felt it important to make space for the worldviews of.
- † Feedback tasks offer further challenges and offer lots of opportunities for children to consider their own personal views as well as make connections.
- † Typical RE lesson - retrieve/feedback tasks, key questions promote deep thinking, bible timeline, depending on where up to in unit will be focusing on an aim which builds up multiple ways of knowing, use of quality resources - statistics used with children to build up knowledge of worldviews/ways of knowing, quality images - breadth of religions; quality tasks which allow children to engage thoughtfully and creatively with the key question/s.
- † The curriculum enquires into religions and worldviews through theology, philosophy and the human and social sciences. Although national projects are ongoing around a shift towards a religions and worldviews curriculum and what precisely this means, the curriculum uses the idea of worldviews as a way of allowing for some flexibility in the presentation of traditional religions - acknowledging the diversity within traditions, geographically and across time.

4. SCHOOL ORGANISATION.

RE is taught by teachers in all classes. As a Church Voluntary Aided school, a minimum of 5% of the weekly timetable is given to RE Teaching. However, as an average 10% of teaching time at KS1 is devoted to RE and 8% of teaching time at KS2. Of that time, 50% of time is given to the teaching of Christianity in line with the syllabus requirements. RE is usually taught in once each week, however, there are occasions when a faith day/week might be held and RE teaching is blocked.

5. ASSESSMENT, RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING

The curriculum at St Margaret's is ambitious and used as the progression model - it has been carefully designed to build on prior learning and enable children to develop detailed knowledge and skills, preparing them for the next stage of their education and allowing all children, including those with SEND, achieve the best possible outcomes. It has been sequenced coherently and is specific enough that children's progress in what they know, remember and be able to do is able to be measured. The syllabus identifies end of phase outcomes and unit outcomes – these are expressed in relation to the three elements of the teaching and learning approach and support teachers in assessing whether pupils are on track to meet expectations.

The impact of the curriculum can be seen in the curriculum 'products' - the things pupils write, say or draw, or the things they make. These provide insights for the teacher into the extent to which pupils know, understand and can do something on their own terms. Curriculum end points are identified as part of the medium-term planning process and staff work towards these throughout the unit. Regular use of low stakes quizzes is incorporated both for the beneficial effect they have on securing information in pupils' long term memory but also to form accurate pictures of children's knowledge. This valuable information is used to adapt subsequent lessons and curriculum plans as needed. Feedback tasks are provided on a regular basis which consolidate or enrich the learning for children based on formative assessment.

Learning overviews identify key outcomes and utilise the end of phase outcomes from the syllabus where appropriate and always include end of unit outcomes. Empowerment tasks at the end of units provide both a picture of children's knowledge and enable learning to take on another dimension by providing a real audience for children's work. Children work towards a crafted product at the end of a unit that requires them to apply their knowledge and skills. For example:

- At the end of a year five unit on the Bible in Religious Education, children research a current issue in the news and using what they have learnt throughout the unit about Jesus and the Bible, they work collaboratively to address the issue and present their findings to the class.

6. EARLY YEARS STATEMENT

Nursery

Although the statutory requirement for religious education does not extend to nursery, RE forms a valuable part of the education experiences of children throughout the key stage. RE sits very firmly within the areas of personal, social and emotional development and understanding of the world. Through a balance of guided, planned teaching and children pursuing their own learning in the environment, they develop a positive sense of themselves, and others, and learn how to form positive and respectful relationships. They begin to understand and value the differences of individuals and groups within their own community and develop their emerging moral and cultural awareness. Activities children engage in during the nursery year provide the building blocks for later development. Themes are carefully chosen and there are several themes which have been chosen to lend themselves to opportunities for RE work.

Examples of teaching and learning ideas which have been incorporated into nursery during 2023/24 are:

- Creative play, make-believe, role play, dance and drama
- Dressing up and acting out scenes from stories, celebrations or festivals

- Making and eating festival food
- Talking and listening to each other; hearing and discussing stories of all kinds, including religious and secular stories with themes such as goodness, difference, the inner world of thoughts and feelings, and imagination
- Exploring authentic religious artefacts, including those designed for small children
- Seeing pictures, books and videos of places of worship and meeting believers in class
- Listening to religious music
- Starting to introduce religious vocabulary
- Work on nature, growing and life cycles or harvest
- Seizing opportunities spontaneously or linking with topical, local events such as celebrations, festivals, the birth of a new baby, weddings or the death of a pet
- Starting to talk about the different ways in which people believe and behave, and encouraging children to ask questions.

Reception

In addition to following an approach similar to nursery, especially in the earlier months of the reception year, our reception classes follow the non-statutory guidance in the Manchester Diocesan syllabus. Children encounter Christianity and other faiths as part of their growing sense of self, their own community and their place within in. During the year children study three units which focus on Christianity and three units which include opportunities to focus on Christians, Hindus, Jews and Muslims as well as non-religious responses and ways of living.

Class	Autumn Term		Spring Term		Summer Term	
Reception	F4: Being Special: Where do we all belong?	F2: Why is Christmas special for Christians? UC - Incarnation Church Visit	F1: Why is the word God so important to Christians UC - God	F3: Why do Christians put a cross in an Easter garden UC - Salvation	F6: What times/stories are special and why?	F5: What places are special and why? Muslim Learner Service visit

7. ADAPTATIONS

Our whole school inclusion, English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) policies apply to RE. All pupils have an absolute entitlement to the important knowledge they will need in life, for which RE plays a significant role.

Teachers are aware that pupils who have barriers to learning in other areas may have a strong interest in and aptitude for RE. All pupils should be encouraged to progress to their full potential and a variety of teaching methods should be employed to ensure that this is possible. The components of the curriculum have been carefully considered and are introduced in manageable 'chunks' which are sequenced in a coherent way to enable pupils to build on prior knowledge. Curriculum remains ambitious for all and not diluted or unnecessarily reduced for SEND pupils. Some general practices used to improve learning and achievement for SEND (see below) but each child is considered as an individual. Cognitive load theory given attention - ensuring SEND pupils aren't expected to think about too much at any one time. Where necessary key information is isolated to allow pupils to pay attention to what they should be learning as well as careful task design to make key aspects of RE lessons clearer and more accessible for pupils with SEND. Teachers are skilled in adapting tasks to make the key aspects of RE lessons clearer and more accessible for pupils with SEND – ensuring that those who find learning more difficult are likely to be disadvantaged by overly elaborate task design which can make it harder for pupils to give attention to what they are learning. For pupils whose needs are more complex, it may be necessary for different curriculum expectations - based on individual needs – where this is the case there would usually be an EHCP in place and numerous professionals involved. However, even where this is the case, staff retain ambitions for the pupil.

Pupils who are Gifted and Talented in RE are given opportunities to demonstrate and develop their strengths. Some pupils have positive and deep experiences of religion from their lives outside of school.

While there is no doubt that these experiences should be valued, they do not necessarily relate to pupils' ability in RE.

All children are given equal opportunities in all aspects of work arising from the RE curriculum.

8. MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In Voluntary Aided Schools the management of Religious Education is a distinctive role of the governors and headteacher. RE is in accordance with the Trust Deed and in accordance with the rites, practices and doctrines of the Church of England. The Governing Body as a whole is responsible for determining the nature of Religious Education provided in its school.

Although Religious Education and Collective Worship naturally compliment and enrich one another, they are managed separately.

The Co-ordinator is there to assist and advise in all areas relating to the teaching of RE. Monitoring of planning will be carried out within the requirements of the School Development Plan. Provision of RE Resources will be achieved in consultation with staff to meet their teaching needs within the constraints of the budget.

9. SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

The curriculum is defined as the entirety of the children's experience at St Margaret's. Pupils experience many opportunities for spiritual development, of which RE makes a significant contribution.

In RE pupils are often exploring the spiritual experiences of others and how these shape their lives. Discussing, sharing ideas and learning from one another's perspectives and worldviews is a key feature in the RE lesson. Through the curriculum on offer at St Margaret's, pupils begin to recognise that they are part of their own local and global communities. Time is provided in RE lessons to wonder about life's amazing things as well as things that take us by surprise.

Throughout RE units, links are made with the children's own lives and children are encouraged to make meaningful connections. Time and space is provided for children to use the knowledge of other people and their beliefs to reflect on their own: allowing pupils to become more aware of their own thoughts, feelings and experience, forming a worldview.

As children make meaning for themselves in their community with others, they are encouraged to think about how this makes a difference. Children are encouraged to do something creative as a means of expressing, applying and further developing their thoughts and convictions.

10. VISITS AND VISITORS

St Margaret's understands the importance of visits and visitors to a pupil's experience of RE. Each year, each class will experience at least one visit or visitor. We aim to arrange at least one visit/visitor for each KS1 and KS2 class. During their time at our school, pupils will have the opportunity for:

Reception – Visit to Church, Muslim Learner Service visitor in school

Year 1 and 2 – St Margaret's Church, Muslim Learner Service visitor in school, Jewish Museum London workshop

Year 3 and Four – Priest visit (impact of Holy Spirit), Hindu temple visit, Muslim Learner Service visitor in school, Jewish Museum London workshop (Passover)

Year Four and Five – Manchester Cathedral visit, Humanist visitor in school, Muslim Learner Service visitor in school

Year 6 – Manchester Cathedral, Hindu temple visit,

These visits are arranged by year group leaders/class teachers with the support of the RE Subject Leader.

Visitors from faith communities and the general community can make an important contribution to RE and appropriate visitors are invited to RE lessons at fitting points in schemes of work.

11. RELIGIONS AND WORLDVIEWS

The Diocesan syllabus sets out the religions and traditions to be studied in depth at each key stage. In line with the syllabus guidelines, a minimum of 50% of time will be spent on Christian people; all key stages will consider people who do not have a religious belief where it is appropriate to do so.

EYFS: Children will encounter other Christianity and other faiths, as part of their growing sense of self, their own community and their place within it. Hinduism and Islam

KS1: Christians, Jews and Muslims

KS2: Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Jews

The above is a minimum requirement and at St Margaret's we have adapted some of the flexible thematic units which enable different traditions to be drawn in (where they fit with the theme and question) and where there are representatives of those traditions in the school and community. The new syllabus no longer includes depth studies on Sikh people. However, we have a small number of Sikh children whom we felt it important to make space for. Therefore, we have adapted the thematic units to take this into account. These units will be adapted depending on the cohort of children.

12. Parental Rights of Withdrawal in a Voluntary Aided School

Parents may withdraw their children from Religious Education as they may in any school . . .

'The Worship and Religious Education provided by the school is in accordance with the Church of England or Methodist Church Foundation. This foundation is also reflected in the curriculum and the whole life of the school community. Since the conduct of the school as a whole reflects the Church of England or Methodist Church ethos, removal of pupils from Worship and/or Religious Education (as parents are legally entitled to do) cannot insulate them from the religious life of the school.' (Wording from Church of England Board of Education)

If such a request for withdrawal is made, the Headteacher will explore the reasons for the request and seek to arrive at an accommodation. It may be that only some elements of Religious Education or Worship are objected to.

Parents may request the governing body to provide Religious Education for their children according to the Agreed Syllabus. This can only be requested when parents cannot, with reasonable convenience, arrange for their children to attend another school where Religious Education is provided according to the Agreed Syllabus. The governing body **should** make provision unless the circumstances make it unreasonable to do so.

Should the governing body be unable to make such arrangements for Religious Education to be delivered according to the Agreed Syllabus, the responsibility for doing so then falls on the Local Authority. The Local Authority may decide that such a request for separate Religious Education is unreasonable and the parental request then fails.

Prepared by: R. Whittle (RE coordinator) and D Whittle (Headteacher). July 2024. To be reviewed July 2025 or earlier considering any new guidance.

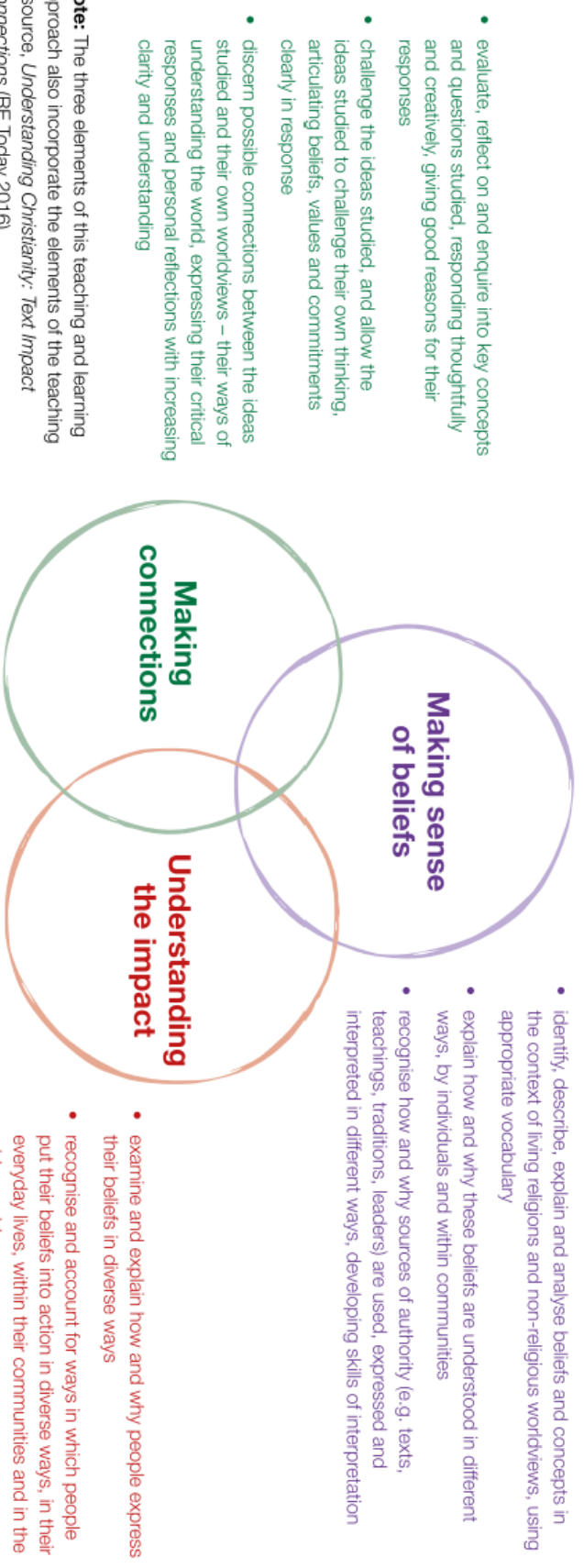
Our school aims to support all families and the wider community. Any queries or concerns regarding individual policies will be considered on an individual basis.

Appendix One – The Threefold Aim

Appendix Two – Example of learning overviews used at the beginning of each unit

Teaching and learning approach and the aims for RE in Manchester Diocese

This diagram shows how the three elements of the teaching and learning approach in this syllabus reflect the aims for RE set out on p.8. Units of study offer content and ideas for enabling pupils to achieve these aims.



Note: The three elements of this teaching and learning approach also incorporate the elements of the teaching resource, *Understanding Christianity: Text Impact Connections* (RE Today 2016).

This is recommended for all Church schools within the Diocese, in order to meet the requirements of the Statement of Entitlement 2019, which states that: *In a Church school the pupils and their families can expect an RE curriculum that enables pupils to acquire a rich, deep knowledge and understanding of Christian belief and practice, this should include the ways in which it is unique and diverse. Parents can expect the use of high-quality resources, for example, the Understanding Christianity resource. Pupils can expect that teaching and learning in Church schools will use an approach that engages with biblical text and theological ideas.*

