



Beechview Academy Religious Education (RE) and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Education Policy

2026–2027

School	Beechview Academy
Policy owner	RE/SMSC Lead / Senior Leadership Team
Date adopted	October 2026
Review date	October 2027
Applies to	Nursery to Year 6

1. Purpose and principles

At Beechview Academy, Religious Education and SMSC are central to our ambition for pupils to become knowledgeable, reflective, compassionate and responsible members of their communities. Our approach reflects our inclusive, relationship-centred ethos, high expectations and commitment to belonging. Pupils are supported to encounter religious and non-religious worldviews respectfully, ask thoughtful questions, develop reasoned responses and understand that people may hold different convictions.

RE is a distinct curriculum subject. SMSC is broader: it is developed through the whole curriculum, school culture, relationships, assemblies and collective worship, enrichment, pupil leadership, pastoral provision and wider community experiences. The two areas complement one another but are not interchangeable.

2. Legal and guidance framework

Beechview Academy is an academy and provides Religious Education for registered pupils in accordance with the requirements applying to academies and the school's funding arrangements. As a non-faith school, our curriculum is designed with reference to the Buckinghamshire locally agreed approach and SACRE guidance. RE is provided for pupils in Reception to Year 6; appropriate opportunities for exploring people, culture, communities, beliefs and celebrations are also embedded within the EYFS curriculum in Nursery.

This policy has been informed by:

- Department for Education guidance on Religious Education and collective worship in academies and free schools.
- The Buckinghamshire SACRE / SchoolsWeb model for Religious Education and the locally agreed approach to RE.
- Department for Education advice, Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools.
- The Education Act 2002, including the expectation for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within a broad and balanced education.
- The Equality Act 2010 and the school's duties to prevent discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.
- Current safeguarding, Prevent and curriculum expectations, where relevant to pupils' age and stage.

3. Aims of Religious Education

Through RE, Beechview Academy aims to enable pupils to:

- develop secure, progressively deeper knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other principal religions represented in Great Britain, and appropriate non-religious worldviews;
- understand how beliefs, texts, traditions, practices, communities and lived experience can shape people's identities and ways of life;
- ask increasingly challenging questions about meaning, purpose, truth, morality, identity, belonging and commitment;
- use subject-specific vocabulary accurately and make connections within and between religious and non-religious worldviews;
- interpret, compare, evaluate and respond to ideas and evidence, giving reasons for their views;
- reflect on their own ideas and experiences without being required to adopt any particular religious or non-religious position;
- develop respect, empathy and curiosity, while learning to recognise and challenge stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination.

4. Curriculum organisation and progression

RE is planned as a coherent curriculum from Reception to Year 6, with EYFS experiences in Nursery preparing children for later disciplinary and substantive learning. The curriculum is mapped so that knowledge, vocabulary, concepts and ways of thinking are revisited and developed with increasing depth. Christianity has a significant place within the curriculum, alongside systematic study of other principal religions and encounters with non-religious worldviews, reflecting the religious traditions of Great Britain and the diversity of modern society.

Beechview uses the Jigsaw RE approach as its principal scheme of work and teaching resource to support delivery of the RE curriculum. Jigsaw RE provides an enquiry-based approach that begins with pupils' own life experiences before moving into structured learning about and from religion and worldviews. It supports pupils to develop knowledge and understanding, personal reflection and increasingly sophisticated evaluation and critical thinking. Jigsaw RE is used within, and mapped against, the Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus and SACRE expectations; it supports rather than replaces the school's locally agreed curriculum entitlement and progression.

RE is taught regularly through discrete curriculum time. It may be enriched through visits, visitors, artefacts, texts, discussion, local community links and relevant assemblies. Assemblies and collective worship can reinforce learning but do not replace curriculum RE.

5. Early Years Foundation Stage

In Nursery and Reception, children encounter RE-related learning through developmentally appropriate stories, talk, play, celebrations, artefacts, visitors and experiences. This contributes particularly to Communication and Language; Literacy; Understanding the World; and Expressive Arts and Design. Children explore themselves and others, belonging, important people and places, celebrations and festivals, religious stories, feelings, similarities and differences, and how different families and communities live.

6. Teaching and learning in RE

Teaching is objective, critical, respectful and age-appropriate. Lessons create a safe environment in which pupils can ask questions and discuss different viewpoints. Teachers distinguish between accurate description of a worldview and personal commitment to it, avoid presenting any religion or worldview as uniform, and use examples of lived diversity where appropriate.

Teaching approaches include direct instruction, high-quality texts and sources, discussion and debate, enquiry, comparison, interpretation, reflection, visits and visitors, and carefully selected creative responses. Pupils are taught to substantiate ideas with knowledge and evidence rather than simply sharing unsupported opinions.

The Jigsaw RE approach at Beechview

Within this framework, Jigsaw RE supports teaching through a sequence of enquiry that encourages pupils to engage with significant questions, build accurate knowledge and understanding of the religion or worldview being studied, reflect on meaning and lived experience, and evaluate ideas in order to respond thoughtfully to the enquiry question. Pupils are encouraged to express their own ideas while developing empathy with, and respect for, people whose beliefs or worldview may differ from their own.

Jigsaw RE also contributes strongly to SMSC by provoking questions about meaning and purpose, right and wrong, commitment and belonging; developing awe, wonder and reflection; building identity and belonging; and encouraging empathy, generosity, compassion and respect. Teachers retain responsibility for ensuring

that Jigsaw materials are adapted where necessary to reflect the school's curriculum sequence, the Buckinghamshire agreed requirements, pupils' needs and current terminology.

7. Assessment in RE

Assessment identifies what pupils know, understand and can do in RE and informs future teaching. Teachers use a range of evidence, including discussion, questioning, written and creative work, retrieval and application tasks. Assessment focuses on curriculum expectations rather than pupils' personal faith, spirituality or willingness to disclose beliefs. The subject leader monitors standards and progression through curriculum review, pupil voice, work scrutiny, learning visits and moderation as appropriate. In keeping with the Jigsaw RE approach used at Beechview, teachers also draw on evidence across three connected aspects: pupils' knowledge and understanding of the religion or worldview being studied; their evaluation and critical thinking in relation to the enquiry question; and their capacity for personal resonance or reflection. Personal reflection is never assessed according to the religious or non-religious position a pupil holds.

8. Inclusion and equality

RE is for all pupils. Teaching is adapted so that pupils with SEND and other additional needs can access ambitious curriculum content without unnecessary reduction in intellectual challenge. Appropriate scaffolding, vocabulary support, sensory or visual resources, alternative recording and pre-teaching may be used. The curriculum represents religious and non-religious diversity carefully and avoids stereotypes. Discriminatory language, prejudice and intolerance are challenged consistently in line with school policy.

9. Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

SMSC is developed intentionally across school life. It is not assessed as a pupil's personal belief or character; instead, the school evaluates whether its curriculum, culture and opportunities enable pupils to develop in these areas.

Spiritual development

- developing self-knowledge, confidence, curiosity and a sense of identity and belonging;
- exploring beliefs, values, experiences and questions of meaning and purpose;
- using imagination, creativity, reflection and appreciation of the world around them;
- providing space for awe, wonder, gratitude and thoughtful reflection without requiring religious belief.

Moral development

- understanding right and wrong and the reasons for rules and laws;
- considering ethical questions and consequences, including where people reasonably disagree;
- taking responsibility for choices and behaviour and recognising their impact on others;
- understanding and challenging unfairness, prejudice and discrimination.

Social development

- working and communicating effectively with others, including those from different backgrounds;
- participating, cooperating, resolving disagreement and contributing to the school and wider community;
- developing leadership, service, responsibility and pupil voice;
- understanding how communities and institutions function and how citizens can contribute.

Cultural development

- understanding and appreciating their own cultural influences and the diversity of Britain;
- encountering a broad range of cultural traditions, heritage, arts, languages, faiths and worldviews;
- recognising commonality and difference without stereotyping;

- participating confidently and respectfully in a culturally diverse society.

10. Fundamental British Values

Through SMSC and the wider curriculum, Beechview actively promotes democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Pupils learn that freedom of religion or belief includes the freedom to hold a faith, a different faith, or no religious faith.

This is made meaningful through age-appropriate experiences such as pupil leadership and elections, class and school decision-making, understanding rules and laws, learning about public institutions, respectful debate, safeguarding and online safety education, protected characteristics, visits and community engagement. Views or behaviours that are discriminatory, prejudicial or seek to undermine these values are challenged appropriately.

11. Contribution across the curriculum and wider school life

SMSC is promoted through RE, PSHE/RSHE, English, history, geography, science, the arts, PE and computing, as well as through assemblies and collective worship, enrichment, trips, residential experiences, clubs, charity and community work, pupil leadership, restorative practice and the everyday relationships that shape school culture. Curriculum leaders identify authentic opportunities for SMSC while avoiding superficial or tokenistic links.

12. Collective worship and RE

Collective worship and RE are distinct. Collective worship contributes to pupils' spiritual and moral development and the shared life of the school, while RE is curriculum learning about religion and worldviews. Participation in an assembly or celebration does not replace the planned RE entitlement.

13. External visitors and visits

Visits to places of worship and contributions from members of faith and belief communities can enrich learning. They are planned around clear curriculum purposes and safeguarding requirements. Teachers remain responsible for the educational content. Visitors are briefed to present their perspective appropriately and not to proselytise, recruit or undermine the school's commitment to respectful, balanced education. Pupils are prepared to ask thoughtful questions and to understand that an individual visitor does not represent every member of a religion or worldview. This reflects the Jigsaw RE emphasis on encountering lived religion and belief while ensuring that contributions complement, rather than replace, planned curriculum teaching.

14. Sensitive and controversial issues

RE and SMSC may involve sensitive questions about belief, identity, morality, conflict and current events. Teachers establish respectful discussion routines, use reliable and age-appropriate sources, distinguish fact from opinion and belief, and ensure pupils encounter relevant perspectives fairly. Staff do not use their position to influence pupils towards a personal religious, non-religious or political viewpoint. Safeguarding concerns arising from discussion are managed under the school's safeguarding procedures.

15. Parental right of withdrawal from RE

Parents and carers have the legal right to withdraw their child from all or part of Religious Education. A parent does not have to provide a reason. The school will make information about its RE curriculum available so that parents can make an informed decision. Parents considering withdrawal are welcome to discuss the curriculum and practical arrangements with the Headteacher or RE Lead, but such a discussion is not a condition of exercising the right.

Requests should normally be made in writing and should state whether withdrawal is from all RE or specified parts. The school will respect the request and provide appropriate supervision and purposeful alternative activity during the period of withdrawal. Withdrawal from RE does not automatically constitute withdrawal from other curriculum subjects, assemblies or collective worship; collective worship has its own withdrawal arrangements. Parents may amend or withdraw their request at any time.

16. Roles and responsibilities

The Headteacher and governing/trust oversight arrangements ensure that the school meets its duties and that RE and SMSC are appropriately resourced and monitored. The RE/SMSC Lead maintains curriculum coherence, supports staff, monitors provision and keeps this policy under review. Class teachers are responsible for high-quality, inclusive delivery and assessment. All staff contribute to SMSC through professional conduct, relationships, language, safeguarding and the culture they create for pupils.

17. Monitoring, evaluation and staff development

The quality of RE and SMSC provision is reviewed through the school's normal quality-assurance cycle. Evidence may include curriculum plans, lesson visits, pupil voice, work and assessment, participation in enrichment and leadership, behaviour and culture information, and staff/parent feedback. Monitoring focuses on the quality and impact of provision rather than attempting to grade individual pupils' spirituality or personal beliefs.

Staff receive subject and policy support as needed, including updates on curriculum expectations, handling sensitive discussion, faith and worldview literacy, equality, safeguarding and relevant local SACRE resources.

18. Links with other school policies

- Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy
- PSHE and Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy
- Behaviour for learning Policy
- Equality Information and Objectives
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SEND Policy
- ICT Acceptable Usage of ICT (Online Safety Policy)

19. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where national legislation, Department for Education guidance, Buckinghamshire SACRE guidance or the school's curriculum changes materially.