

Why study Religion and Worldviews?

Audience focus: parents of KS1 and KS2 students as an RE lead.

Hello parents and carers, and welcome to our school discussion about the subject of RE – Religious Education. I am looking forward to working with you and your children this year, and I hope it will be an inspirational educational year that your children and families will enjoy.

As always, I am happy to answer any queries or questions as the session continues today.

For many of us, the subject of Religious Education probably holds a very different meaning to how it is taught in our schools today. If anything, children have a more diverse and varied diet of exposure to people, places and thoughts, and this is no different to the way in which other subjects in your child's curriculum is approached.

The amount of learning a student can hold throughout their KS1 and KS2 experience is rich: rich in experience, language and also reflection. Luckily for us, we are able to draw on the rich diversity of knowledge in our community as well as country, in order to enable a broad and balanced curriculum of learning for your children. As is true, your children are coming to their lessons with their own wealth of knowledge and backgrounds, some similar to their peers, and in many other instances, very different.

Interestingly, how do you remember the lessons of RE being taught at school, if any? For many of us, it may have been a one dimensional, matter of fact situation. This religion believes this, and this is what the people look like. However, and with great testimony to the curiosity of your children, RE has taken a far more critical and curious attitude: children are able to explore and learn about the beliefs and practices of different faith groups and peoples through many different lenses and perspectives.

We may use the example of Ibtihaj Muhammed, the American Muslim Olympic fencer: she is someone who we can draw on her qualities in the community and society as a whole to draw links. Her charitable efforts such as her work with charity: water in helping different communities globally to attain clean, fresh water sustainably parallels the idea of zakat (charity) in Islam. Zakat is a religious duty for all Muslims who meet the wealth criteria to help the needy. Ibtihaj's efforts are about being selfless in the pursuit of helping those less fortunate than herself, whilst also still linking to her faith of Islam, where water is considered a gift (nima) from God. Regardless of whether one is a Muslim or not, children would be able to make the link between religious rulings, and the behaviours of people in their society who match this.

As your child's teacher, along with my other colleagues, we enable environments that allow your children to explore, to be curious, and to begin to develop their own opinions and sense of identity. For some, this is when it becomes extremely personal: how can the academic study of a subject be blended seamlessly (and with boundaries in place) with the experiences of our children who are studying it? Naturally, this makes some aspects of our teaching and learning challenging, and you may feel it places your child in a vulnerable position. Will they feel comfortable to share their views? Will there be space for peers to challenge or reflect respectfully with one another?

These are fair questions and assumptions to have. The subject of RE is here to work in conjunction with other subjects in the curriculum to allow for healthy discussion, debate and disagreement, as well as the discovery of life's big questions. Your children will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the classroom, as will the teachers delivering

the sessions; however, boundaries will be put in place to ensure respect is at the forefront of all learning, regardless of the topic or faith group at hand.

We hope to help your children in their journey of religious literacy, and to understand not only those who are around us, but also those who are not, as society varies from place to place. It will enable and encourages participation in the public discussion of issues that impact our daily lives— if not our own, then the lives of friends, neighbours and others living in British society.