

High Days and Holidays...

In addition to classroom based RE we run a number of educational visits during the course of a child's time at school with us. This includes church and synagogue visits and occasionally visitors from the community or from our parent body to talk about their faith and culture.

Very few of us will go through life without at some point wishing to attend a wedding, a funeral or some other significant event at a place of worship in support of friends or family. Experiencing what various places of worship look like and developing an understanding of their importance to the people who identify with them is a useful life skill for all of us.

We also have an annual Carol Service, Christmas Plays and sometimes activities related to Easter or St Patrick's Day. We have celebrated Diwali, Chinese New Year and other non-Christian festivals in the past and we will continue to be creative and affirming in our approach to the positive cultures and beliefs that exist within our school and communities.

To indicate which RE route you would like your child to follow please click on the link below and complete the online form.

It's Complicated...

Delivering RE in an integrated school is complicated. We have many different outlooks and opinions and we do our best to be as inclusive as possible.

Some people would prefer a school system where RE was not on the curriculum at all, as is the case in some countries.

However, that is not the case in the UK and we do believe that in our context, as a society emerging from a period of conflict, that there is real value in us having better informed generations of young people who will understand each other better and be less susceptible to accepting the myths and stereotypes that fuel sectarianism and racism.

We therefore encourage all parents to include their children in one of our RE classes and help us to be as inclusive and together as possible.



Withdrawal form RE

Parents can opt to withdraw their children from RE altogether. In most cases this would mean your child being provided with alternative work in the same classroom as their peers. We simply do not have the staff or the classroom space to have separate provision for pupils withdrawn from RE. If this is an option you wish to pursue you will need to contact the principal through the school office to discuss the arrangements.



Religious Education at Forge IPS From P3 Onwards

In this leaflet we will try to explain:

- Why we teach Religious Education (RE)
- Our Ethos and rationale
- How we Teach RE
- What your Options Are



Why Teach RE?

Religious Education (RE) is a statutory subject offered in all schools in the UK.

As an integrated school we have a variety of faith backgrounds amongst our pupil body. We are committed to offering the most inclusive RE programme we reasonably can with the resources we have.

Our school was founded in 1985 by parents who wanted a school where children of all faiths and none could be educated together in the context of a divided community. We believe an understanding of the beliefs and traditions of others helps reduce prejudice and promotes a more functional and productive society - education as an antidote to ignorance.

There are 3 strands to our RE programme:

Catholic RE

Aimed at catering for parents who want their children to celebrate Catholic Sacraments through school this programme is linked to the parish church and involves elements of worship and sacramental preparation.

General RE

This programme is aimed at all pupils of all faiths and none. We use a 'teach not preach' model to provide children with an insight into some of the major religious stories and themes. The content bias leans towards stories from the Christian culture reflecting the society we live in. However it is designed to be inclusive and does not include worship or proselytizing.

Integrated Studies

Children who follow either of the programmes outlined above will come together for part of the school year to follow this programme, designed by staff to challenge negative attitudes, value and practices in society and inform children of world faiths. Children address prejudice and bias issues like disability, colour, race and culture in a sensitive, age related and thought provoking way. They also learn about Christianity, Taoism and the NI Chinese Community, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam.

The Excerpt Below is taken directly from our Religious Education Policy and will provide an insight into our attitude and approach to RE

The teaching of R.E. in Forge should;

- Provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of their own identity, beliefs, values and ideas.
- Challenge pupils to consider religious and moral issues.
- Help pupils to develop and reflect on their understanding and awareness of the religious beliefs of others.
- Highlight the diversity of religious belief in society, and the world.
- Promote sensitivity towards the beliefs and values of others.
- Foster attitudes of inclusion and appreciation, and working against sectarianism, racism and prejudice.

Teachers should try to make R.E.

Relevant - Where possible teachers should look to find ways to make R.E. relevant to the lives of pupils today. For example studying religions that are present in school, a religious festival related to a certain time of year or maybe a religious issue that has been in the news.

Integrated - R.E. topics and themes will attempt, where possible, to tie in with other aspects of the curriculum, such as PDMU, Literacy and World Around Us.

Inclusive - Other than the classes for Catholic children preparing to take the sacraments, all R.E. is taught as a subject. (The only exception to this might be a prayer in assembly, or the carol service; attendance during both is optional). The practice of a particular religion is a matter for parents and ultimately for the pupils themselves. This is a departure from how R.E. has traditionally been taught in Northern Ireland. When looking at aspects of a religion, the role of R.E. is not to state what is true or false, so much as to help pupils understand the beliefs and practices of others.

The language teachers use in discussing stories and topics in R.E. has been given careful consideration. For example statements such as;

“We believe that...”

“This story teaches us that Jesus was the Son of God...”

“This tells us how the world was created...”

...are not used. Instead teachers will say;

“Christians/Hindus/Sikhs believe that...”

“This is why Christians believe...”

“This is how the bible says the world was created...”

“People take communion to remind them...”

Similarly, stories from a religion are taught as such; they are stories from a religion. Their ultimate truth, literal or parabolic, is not a matter for school. For example, the creation story in Genesis will be studied as a story from the bible, which is important to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. (It is likely that by P6 or P7 pupils will be able to discuss not just the story's content, but also its possible meanings, and why it has caused so much disagreement, even among Christians.)

This way R.E. is a subject that includes everyone, and no one is left out because they are of a religion other than Christianity, or have no religious beliefs.