



# STEP Academy Trust

## Religious Education and Collective Worship Policy

**Date of Policy:** November 2015

**Review:** November 2018

### **Introduction**

The STEP Academy Trust Board of Trustees has agreed this Policy and as such, it applies to all Academies within the Trust.

### **Aims and Purpose of Religious Education**

It is a legal requirement that all schools include Religious Education within their curriculum. STEP Academies follow their LA Religious syllabus, for example, Croydon STEP Academies follow the Croydon Approved Religious Education Syllabus 2013; this syllabus has been approved and recommended by all the main faith group organisations within the LA: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.

The Education Act states that all pupils should follow a balanced and broadly based curriculum which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, mental and physical development of pupils and of society, and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life'. Learning about and from religions and beliefs, through the distinct knowledge, understanding and skills contained in RE within a broad-based curriculum, is essential to achieving these aims. Exploring the concepts of religion and belief and their roles in the spiritual, moral and cultural lives of people in a diverse society helps individuals develop moral awareness and social understanding.

The aim and purpose of Religious Education each STEP Academy is to:

- teach children about the religious beliefs and practises of the main faith groups;
- enable children to consider spiritual and moral issues;
- enable children to explore their own beliefs;
- promote respect towards the right of all people to hold their own personal religious and spiritual beliefs.

### **Ethos for Religious Education**

Throughout STEP Academy Trust, we have many numbers of different faith groups. We consider it a vital part of the children's education that they have the opportunity to learn about the diverse faiths within their local community. Religious Education enables children to gain knowledge about the beliefs and practices of the main faith groups and to reflect upon their moral and spiritual meaning. It is not the purpose of Religious Education to promote or show bias of any one faith group. It is the role of parents and carers to instruct their own children about their personal religious beliefs.

### **Organisation of Religious Education**

STEP Academies follow the International Primary Curriculum. In practice, subjects/topics such as Discovery Time, RE, History, Personal, Social and Emotional educational topics or citizenship might be taught discretely but also together within a humanities framework, with links to history and citizenship. Additionally, some Academies might choose to focus on intensive teaching of RE

in particular years. Approximately one hour is spent teaching RE in one form or another (see above). Cross-curricular dimensions such as identity, cultural diversity and community cohesion provide important unifying themes that help young people make sense of the world and give education relevance. They reflect the major ideas and challenges that face individuals and society and can provide a focus for work within and between subjects and across the curriculum as a whole.

We are a Rights Respecting MAT and the values and themes within this agenda will often link to the areas of study which pupils will be researching as part of the Religious Education Agreed Syllabus. These areas of study are: Authority and Worship, Sacred and Inspirational Writings, Lifestyle and Identity, Special Times, Places and Events and Challenge Units.

Teachers study the six main faith groups:

- **KS1** Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam;
- **KS2** Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.

The syllabus incorporates two main components:

**1: Learning about Religion** which enables pupils to learn about the religious and spiritual beliefs, practices, insights and experiences that are expressed in the main faith groups studied.

**2: Learning from Religion and Human Experience** this provides opportunities for pupils to explore and express their own responses and personal beliefs.

These learning objectives are statutory and it is expected that, wherever possible, pupils will be taken on visits to places of worship at each key stage.

### **Aims and Purpose of Collective Worship**

It is a legal requirement that all schools include collective worship within their curriculum. The aim and purpose of collective worship throughout The STEP Academy Trust is to:

- enable children to consider spiritual and moral issues;
- enable children to explore their own beliefs;
- encourage participation and response;
- develop in children a sense of community spirit;
- promote a common ethos with positive attitudes and
- teach children how to behave during a time of quiet reflection or worship of God.

### **Ethos for Collective Worship**

We understand collective worship to be a special occasion whose purpose should contribute towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in each Academy. Collective worship involves all members of our Academy coming together and participating in an assembly. We expect everyone to take an active part in the assembly. The 1988 Education Reform Act states that collective worship should be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'; we conduct our assemblies in a manner that is sensitive to all the individual faiths and beliefs of all members of our MAT and the wider community.

## **Organisation of Collective Worship**

Collective worship forms part of each day's assembly within each STEP Academy. We conduct the collective worship part of the assembly in a dignified and respectful way. We tell children that this part of the assembly is a period of calm reflection. We regard it as a special time and expect children to behave in an appropriate way. We ask them to be quiet and thoughtful and to listen carefully to the teachings and participate fully in a prayer or time of quiet reflection. We create an appropriate atmosphere by using music and sometimes candles or other objects that act as a focal point for the attention of the children.

The Head Teacher or other members of staff conduct assemblies. Our assemblies reflect the festivals within the religious calendar of the main faith groups represented within each Academy, and at this time representatives of local religious groups may be invited to contribute to the assembly. We plan our assemblies as part of a series of themes well in advance of the day they take place. We link our assemblies to the Personal, Social and Emotional educational topics. Additionally, many of our Academies are Rights Respecting and the values and themes within this agenda provide us with a half termly focus for the assemblies.

Our assemblies celebrate the achievements and learning of our children. We encourage our children to participate in assemblies by showing their work to the other children and raising issues that they have discussed in their classes. Assemblies offer an opportunity to acknowledge and reward children for their achievements both in and out of our Academies. They play an important part in promoting the ethos of the Academy, which is that all children are valued and all achievements are recognised. A significant part of our assemblies is music. We believe that listening to music and singing songs is an excellent way to teach a deeper understanding of the moral and spiritual. Singing together as an Academy creates a community bond and teaches the children how to communicate emotion by both listening to and using their voices.

We invite parents to special assemblies and we encourage them to attend - this promotes the community spirit of each Academy and is a practical demonstration of the way the home and the Academy work together to support the achievements of our children. We welcome governors' attendance at our assemblies at any time.

## **Right of withdrawal**

We expect all children to participate in Religious Education as an integral part of The STEP Academy Trust's curriculum. We expect all children to attend assembly. However, any parent can request permission for their child to be excused from participating in the Religious Education curriculum and assembly and each STEP Academy should make alternative arrangements for the supervision of the child during the period concerned. Parents do not have to explain or give reasons for this. This complies with the 1944 Education Act and was restated in the 1988 Education Reform Act.

The Head Teacher keeps a record of all children who are withdrawn from Religious Education and assembly.