

## Why Religious Education?

### Religious Education in Church Schools and Academies

Christian education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century seeks to nurture, support, develop and celebrate the flourishing of individuals, families and the communities in which they serve. As 'schools of faith' Church of England schools and academies recognise the common search of all humanity for ultimate truth and relationship with the Divine. A vision of education inspired by the life and example of Jesus Christ is a catalyst for a process of formation for the whole person and the whole human family. Character education emerges and develops from the Church of England's Vision for Education, *'through the cultivation and encouragement of an expansive range of moral, spiritual, intellectual, civic and performance character virtues'*. It is therefore important for young people to have opportunities to explore, engage with and develop their understanding and knowledge of virtues *'seeing them as "character in action", grown through experience and demonstrated over time in word and deed.'* One such opportunity is through the Religious Education curriculum

Religious Education (RE) has always been the natural home for such academic enquiry into character education through its academic study of faith in action, as seen in the lives of biblical and contemporary figures and leaders of faith. The late Lord Runcie, when he was Archbishop of Canterbury, highlighted the fundamental role, which RE continues to hold today: *'to nourish those of the faith; encourage those of other faiths and challenge those who have no faith.'* Inspired by this statement, DBE Services Framework for RE stated that 'Religious Education aims to affirm and nourish, encourage and challenge all students on their spiritual journey.' Academic excellence in Religious Education is inspirational and challenging, allowing students to explore, within a safe space, their own and others' religious, spiritual and philosophical convictions. Students will engage with religious and philosophical texts, *'giving evaluative accounts of the continuing role of religion in contemporary British and global society.'* High quality Religious Education enables young people to reflect on and engage with opportunities for personal growth. These opportunities are presented to aid character development, *'in wisdom, hope and shaped by an understanding of the role of a belief in God, personal faith and the role of faith communities and how they are at work in the world.'* In the pursuit of academic excellence there is a vision to present opportunities for active learning to shape every individual's story. *Leadership of Character Education Report, 2017*

As a result of the broad and balanced curriculum offered by Religious Education, a significant contribution to a Church school's Christian character will be developed, rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ. As inclusive communities, Church

schools are actively encouraged to learn about and foster respect for other religions and worldviews. This is implicit within the new SIAMS Framework 2018.

Therefore in an Anglican school or academy, the educational process is rooted in the Christian foundation of the school community. All teaching, learning and planning takes place within the ethos of the school community and are of the highest standard.

Religious Education lies at the very heart of the curriculum, reflecting and conveying the distinctively Christian character of the school community as reflected in the Anglican\* tradition. For that reason, the teaching and learning of Religious Education must be treated with importance and delivered with the excellence it deserves as it has a key role in helping students to engage with the living faith of the school.