**Religious Education and British values**

**A perspective from the National Association for the Teaching of Religious Education**

Ideas that support the teaching of British values will regularly occur in Religious Education (RE). References to values such as democracy or the uniqueness of every individual will be made during discussions or circle time. Topics associated with the history or politics of British values may occur in the RE curriculum at secondary level.

This page explores briefly how RE contributes to the British values agenda in both curriculum and classroom structure and ethos.

**Curriculum**

**Democracy:** in the KS2 classroom, teachers may explain Britain’s democratic system when covering topics about rules and laws. At KS3, a democratic country may be contrasted to a theocratic country or a monarchy if the class is exploring rules, free-will and determinism. KS4 students may debate the value of majority rule when studying utilitarianism, which is an oblique critique of our democratic system.

**Rule of law:** in the primary classroom the rule of law may be contrasted with religious rules or moral precepts. For example, in an exploration of the idea of rules generally, children may consider why we all have to follow civic law and the impact this has on our lives. This may then be contrasted with rules, precepts and guidance given by different religious communities. In addition, pupils may explore how democracy and legislation in the UK, in contrast to some other jurisdictions, support and protect people’s religious beliefs and freedoms. At KS3, students may encounter religious customs, such as polygamy which are not allowed under civic law. At KS4, students may contrast the rule of law to ethical and religious norms.

**Individual liberty:** in studying non-Christian faiths in the UK the idea of freedom of religion may arise as part of the rights of the individual. At primary level, there will be the study of rights and responsibilities referencing celebrations such as Tu B’shevat – the Jewish festival tree, Ahimsa – the principle of non-harming and charitable giving. These are all examples of where, while we have individual liberty with it, religions explain that there are certain responsibilities. It would be appropriate at secondary level to explore in more detail the history of this right, and the nature of it within the Church of England.

**Mutual respect:** this occurs often across the phases in RE lessons through case studies, religious teachings and ethical debates. Pupils hear stories of people who have taken particular actions because of their beliefs, actions that have been about equal treatment and respect for those who are, for example, black, female, or have a different religious belief from the majority, such as Martin Luther King or Malala Yousafzi.

Students may question why some groups and individuals do not seem to be treated respectfully in the UK when studying units on prejudice and discrimination.

**Tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs:** this is clearly a key driver in RE lessons across the age range. To learn about different ways of life and beliefs requires openness to difference. Students at secondary level might query if tolerance as an ethic is powerful enough, and suggest warm acceptance or love is a better ideal to work towards.