



[Philosophy, Religion and Ethics (Religious Studies) Curriculum Policy]

[AVANTI SCHOOLS TRUST]

This policy is in force until further notice from:	Dec-20
This policy must be reviewed by:	Jul-22
Policy Author(s):	Nitesh Gor
Date policy reviewed by Education Director:	Dec20
Location of publication of policy:	Trust website/school websites
Under the Trust's Scheme of Delegation this policy must be approved by [NAME OF COMMITTEE OR BOARD]. Such approval was given on:	Learning, Teaching and Standards Committee
[Only if policy applicable to ASL] The Avanti Services Limited Board adopted this policy on:	N/A
[Only if policy applicable to GL] The Govinda's Limited Board adopted this Policy on:	N/A

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Philosophy, Religion and Ethics curriculum policy

Avanti schools exist to help each person become a well-rounded human being through intellectual, personal and spiritual growth, and so make the world a better place. PRE is a core curriculum strand that supports the achievement of this aim.

1. Introduction

This document sets out the framework for the Avanti Schools Trust's Philosophy, Religion and Ethics (PRE) curriculum for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and primary and secondary phases of education and includes:

- Aims and purpose of the PRE curriculum;
- Pedagogic and curriculum principles;
- Approach to inclusion and alternative provision.

2. The Avanti Schools Trust PRE curriculum

The Trust's vision is for its schools to progressively foster confident, articulate, knowledgeable, inquiring, philosophically critical, reflective and spiritually insightful students who contribute meaningfully as responsible British citizens.

The PRE curriculum upholds the principles embedded in the 2014 National Curriculum in England by:

- Promoting spiritual, moral and mental well-being, and social and cultural development within the school and wider community;
- Developing learners' sense of self and identity to empower them to achieve excellence academically and personally, ready for their next phase of learning in life; and,
- Ensuring an exploration of philosophies and religions.

Avanti schools aim to develop religiously literate learners who:

- Love learning and are deeply inspired by knowledge of and about life;
- Are confident, inquisitive and articulate, and strive to learn more independently;
- Are curious about the different descriptions of 'reality', including those expressed in Western and Eastern philosophies as well as religious ideologies;
- Whilst discovering or being rooted in their own beliefs and values, are able to critically discuss and debate these in relation to those of others;
- Are socially responsible, and exhibit a passion to achieve the very best for themselves and society;
- Are highly successful and display humility, aware in the knowledge that their success is also inextricably linked to the success and support of others.

PRE is a core subject in Avanti Trust schools and 10% of curriculum time is allocated to it. This does not include worship. PRE lessons will be held *weekly* at primary schools lasting *90 minutes each* and *three times a week* for years 7, 8 and 9 lasting *60 minutes each*.

Schools will offer Religious Studies examined courses for Key Stage 4. The GCSE examination and board will be Christianity and Hinduism with AQA. At Key Stage 5,

the choice of examination board and specific RS/PRE subjects will be agreed year on year between the Trust's central team and each school.

The PRE curriculum does *not* explicitly include the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum, citizenship, nor any other National Curriculum subject (although values are explored); it stands as *a discrete area of knowledge*. The PRE curriculum is our RS curriculum offer in primary phase and in Years 7, 8 and 9. As the PRE curriculum includes RS, parents are entitled to withdraw their children from all or part of the sessions.

The curriculum develops learners' a) knowledge and understanding of religions and other worldviews and b) critical thinking skills. Closely aligned to the 2010 Non-Statutory Curriculum Framework for Religious Education and 2013 A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England, these are categorized into four aspects: knowledge, critical thought, application and experience:

- **Knowledge:**
 - Learning from and about philosophical concepts drawing from the religious traditions.
- **Critical thought:**
 - Teaching students how to construct arguments and debate (in written and oral ways), with critical analysis as essential.
 - Teaching students to become skillful and articulate questioners, able to question 'blind faith', common assumptions or held views.
- **Application:**
 - Applying learning and skills to ethical and moral dilemmas.
 - Debating and questioning 'big' philosophical questions and problems.
- **Experience:**
 - Experiencing religious life in real contexts (e.g. visiting places of worship).
 - Learning about different religious rituals, festivals and ways of life (with the option to be involved in festivals, for example).

These categories give the foundations on which an appropriate pedagogy can be constructed to include:

- Balanced pupil and teacher voice, giving opportunities for students to pose critical questions;
- Dialogue;
- Knowledge acquisition through direct teaching;
- Planned opportunities for students to debate and critique their own and others' thinking;
- Planned opportunities for students to use their knowledge productively through presentations/projects to improve the school or society, teaching younger pupils, volunteering etc.;
- Independent research skills and practice;
- Learning through visits to religious places and meeting people from different faiths;
- Direct teaching of debating skills and critical thinking;
- Effective assessment that informs planning and differentiation so that every student is challenged and motivated to enquire further;
- Half-termly summative assessments to monitor and track progress;
- High-impact marking with student responses every fortnight (at secondary level).

3. Inclusion: learning opportunities for all

The principles above should be developed across the PRE curriculum so that complex questioning, confident debate and discussion, and focused acquisition of knowledge stretches all. Learners who are identified as gifted should be challenged by offering deep learning experiences that require more complex thinking (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) and planned independent study (e.g. research projects).

Lessons should be well planned, using the outcomes as a focus and ensuring progress within each year and across phases. Lesson planning should take full account of the ability of learners at different stages of learning English. Teaching will enable them to participate fully and contribute to discussions that advance their acquisition of English and understanding of the content of the PRE curriculum.

All learners, irrespective of their race, special need, disability, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation and other protected characteristics will gain equally from high-quality teaching and careful planning that sets out to overcome the prejudice and discrimination that can act as barriers to learning.

Teachers should take into account their duties under equal opportunities legislation and be well informed and sensitive to the communities they serve.

Teachers should draw on the PRE curriculum and our values to support learners who struggle to show positive attitudes to learning or have problems developing appropriate behaviours and relationships with others, including their peers. The curriculum promotes personal reflection, a sense of positive self-image and identity. These aspects of the PRE curriculum will influence teachers' behaviours and our schools' wider behaviour management strategies. Students who fail to show respect and appropriate behaviour towards the religious beliefs of others, religious books and/or artefacts, should be appropriately sanctioned according to the Trust's behaviour policy.

In some cases, PRE will be taught by a specialist teacher, however, class teachers should actively support the PRE lesson with their knowledge of the children's needs, unless an exception has been arranged between the Principal, PRE lead and the Trust.

4. Assessing and monitoring progress

Assessment for learning in the PRE curriculum across all stages, from EYFS to KS5, will be in the line of the 2010 Non-statutory Curriculum Framework for Religious Education and 2013 A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England.

In addition to the school's summative termly progress reviews, the School will use other forms of assessment. These assessments will be embedded in the curriculum such as marking and feedback; self-assessment topic sheet (one for each scheme of work); knowledge tests; peer assessment; presentations and quality of performing art works: art, drama and music; which is in the spirit of school's ethos.

Assessment at KS4 and KS5 will be aligned to the required or recommended frameworks to be found in the national examination board specifications.

Assessments will be used both to inform planning of subsequent teaching and learning as well as to summarise the attainment and progress of learners at agreed, predetermined intervals, and reporting the same to parents and carers. The outcomes will also be used by teachers and senior leaders within accountability process.

The overview for the PRE curriculum shows progression in learning and offers increasing opportunities for learners to develop, apply and demonstrate higher order thinking skills of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

5. Involving parents/carers and community

Avanti schools will endeavour to create positive relationships with their parent body and wider communities to support the high-quality teaching of the PRE curriculum, gaining from their specific and diverse beliefs, faiths, skills, experience and knowledge. Where appropriate, parents/carers and members of the wider community may participate in school curriculum learning. Parents will be invited to workshops to build their knowledge and to understand the PRE curriculum provided at Avanti schools. Each school must ensure that best endeavours are used to highlight the central importance of PRE.

Our schools will foster positive and collaborative relationships with local faith groups and places of worship so that our learners develop respect for others and an outward-looking attitude to the diverse neighbourhoods in which they live.

6. The role of PRE within SET/SLT and wider

PRE leads and teachers have a pivotal role in helping to manifest the Avanti Way in all schools. As such, PRE lessons should showcase the very highest expectations outlined in the Avanti Way. PRE leads and teachers must also help infuse the wider school with the core principles and ethos contained in the Avanti Way. PRE leads should also contribute to the development and implementation of behaviour policy so that the Avanti values pervade our approach to behaviour management. As such, unless agreed otherwise with the Trust's CEO, each school's PRE lead will be a part of the SET/SLT in each school.

7. Withdrawal

PRE at Avanti schools forms a core part of the educational, character and spiritual experience. PRE is inclusive and we encourage all students to attend. Students do have a right to withdraw from PRE and we suggest that any such withdrawal take place after understanding the nature of PRE and working with the school to see if/how the PRE provision might be adapted to enable their participation. If the right to withdraw is exercised by a student, the school has a duty of care to look after the pupil, but not to provide alternative education. Any arrangements made must **not** incur extra cost for the school. Most commonly, students can sit at the back of another classroom (not in their own classroom) or in the library reading a book whilst the lesson takes place. This time should **not** be used for other curriculum subject areas, e.g. extra maths or other lessons. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RE on the grounds that they wish to provide their own RE; such provision is the **parents'** responsibility.

Appendix 1 - Hindu faith schools

In our Hindu faith schools, the PRE curriculum includes elements of 'faith nurture', which comprises deepening one's faith in the Chaitanya Hindu tradition and developing an appreciation for this belief. It is important that every endeavour is made to ensure that PRE in Hindu faith schools is taught by those who are practitioners of the faith and that, at a minimum, teachers possess recognized education and training in the faith tradition. This does not in any way diminish the very highest professional standards we require for PRE teachers: they must first and foremost be excellent teachers.

Whilst rooted in the Chaitanya Hindu tradition, the intention is to *learn comparatively*, so that there is dialogue about the similarities and differences across different faiths and other world-views, including humanist, naturalist and atheist. In our Hindu faith schools, 10% (at primary) and 10-15% (at secondary) of the curriculum will address the major world faiths, weighted towards Christianity.