

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

AGENDA

**Meeting to be held in the MAIN HALL, BUNNY HILL CENTRE,
HYLTON LANE, SUNDERLAND, SR5 4BW on Tuesday 18th JUNE,
2024 at 4.30 pm**

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1. Apologies for Absence	-
2. Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson	
3. Minutes of the last meeting of the Council held on 19th March, 2024	1
(Copy attached)	
4. Matters Arising	
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Report of the Assistant Director of Law and Governance (Copy attached)	
6. Update on School Improvement Officer Role to support SACRE	-
7. Plan for Training and Support for School in 2024-25 (e.g. Autumn Conference. Network Meetings)	-
8. Discuss content of Annual Report (Copy attached)	8

9.	Update for Working Group – Collective Worship	-
10.	Development Plan review (Copy attached)	16
11.	Ofsted RE Subject Report (April 2024) (Copy attached)	24
12.	National Content Standard for RE in England (Copy attached)	75
13.	NASACRE Briefing (Copy attached)	104
14.	RE Hubs – Members Update on Kite Mark Training attended	-
15.	Development of directory of SACRE members that can support schools.	-
16.	Any Other Business	-
17.	Date and Time of the next meeting – Tuesday 15th October 2024	-

ELAINE WAUGH,
Assistant Director of Law and Governance.
City Hall,
SUNDERLAND.

28th May 2024

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

HELD ON TUESDAY, 19th MARCH, 2024 AT 4.30 PM

**VENUE: COMMITTEE ROOM 1 CITY HALL, PLATER WAY,
SUNDERLAND**

Present: -

Local Councillors

Councillor Dodds

Christian and Other Denominations

Barbara Adshead (Substitute)

Rev Dr David Whiting

Zaf Iqbal

Church of England

Amy Clarke

Rev Chris Howson

Teachers Association

Nicola Jackman

Steven Beck

Rachel Winlow

In Attendance

Cathryn Forbes, Specialist Officer

Richard Cullen, Strategic Lead, School Improvement & Early Years

Paul Wood, Principal Governance Services Officer

SAC227 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors P. Smith and Williams. Also apologies from Caroline Weir, Matt Moore, Nicky Anderson, Tracy Conway, Elizabeth and Tony Wortman.

SAC228 Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 17th October, 2023

It was AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 2023 were a true record

SAC 229 Matters Arising

Mrs Forbes advised that the Annual Report had now been posted to the DfE and NASACRE websites.

Mr Wood to send out the NASACRE Members log in and password details to the new Members of the Council.

SAC230 SACRE Membership

The Assistant Director of Law & Governance submitted a report (copy attached) for Members of the Standing Advisory Council to review and approve the list of volunteers (listed in 3.1 of the report) onto its Membership.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Paul Wood, Clerk to the Council presented the report and advised of a slight error within the report and that Sarah Hammal would be designated as a Coopted Member and not as stated within the report as Christian Denominations & Other Religions for the time being.

It was acknowledged that Mr Kevin Lapping was in attendance at the meeting as a Pagan representative and that he would be included in the report for the next meeting to be added to the Membership.

Ms Hammal, Ms Dunne and Mr Lapping were all welcomed to the meeting.

It was AGREED to approve the new volunteers listed in paragraph 3.1 of the report onto the Membership of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education.

SAC231 NASCARE Briefing – including attendance at Annual Conference

Mrs Forbes addressed the Council advising that the NASACRE website could help new Members in regards to training and as advised above, Mr Wood would circulate log in details.

Mrs Forbes also advised of the Westhill Awards and how each SACRE could apply for bursaries for projects, with the whole list also on the NASACRE website and was something to consider and may be useful to have on the June agenda.

Rev. Howson commented in relation to a recent meeting on City of Sanctuary in Newcastle and that we did not have any schools participating and suggested that a project be utilised on this. Mrs Forbes suggested that Rev. Howson have a look at the website to see if the Awards could be used for such a project.

Mrs Forbes also briefed the Council on the nominations for NASACRE Executive Committee members, the NASACRE Notice Board and that the RE Hubs was to be discussed further in the agenda but wished to comment that in relation to Training linked to RE Hubs it was encouraged that Teachers set up their own local groups/networks and dates of these were also on the NASACRE website.

Mrs Forbes advised of the NASACRE Conference taking place on 20th May at Hilton, York and the possibility of sending two delegates with SACRE funding the travel. Should any Members wish to attend then to contact Mr Wood in the first instance.

The Chair strongly encouraged Members to regularly check the website.

SAC232 NASACRE Training

The Chair informed that she had recently attended training with Mrs Weir on Collective Worship.

Mrs Forbes commented that it was definitely worth attending some of the training sessions offered and as this was to be a regular item on future agendas it would be nice if Members were able to contribute on their experiences.

SAC233 Feedback from @in conversation with NASCARE meeting 23.11.2023

Mrs Forbes informed that Karenza Passmore was the chair of our RE Hub for the North East which aimed to create a resource which was much more accessible for Teachers. There was an introduction to the RE Hubs project, shared issues with other North East SACREs and discussions around hybrid meetings.

Mrs Forbes advised that there had been a little bit of movement in relation to if every authority needed its own SACRE or if we could have a North East SACRE and if the Memberships would be better served this way. Mrs Forbes also advised that these meetings would be held regularly to discuss these issues further.

Mr Cullen commented that with the Sunderland position and the growth of Academies we had chosen to go with RE Today for the Agreed Syllabus. So the ambitions of moving towards a regional basis may mean the choice of individual units would be restricted but it would be interesting to see how we move forward in this regard.

In response to Rev. Howson's query over what was to happen to Mrs Forbes role now that she was retiring, Mr Cullen informed that they were looking to appoint to the role after easter when expressions of interest were being sought.

SCA234 Updates on Interfaith Network and the recent Youth Conference on '@Faith and Climate for Sustainable future' and HMD in Sunderland

Mr Iqbal and Rev. Howson updated the Council on upcoming events and invited Members to an Iftar for Ramadan if they wished to attend. There was also a Big Lunch scheduled in Summer for the 2nd June on Minster Green.

Mr Iqbal informed that he had been carrying out a great deal of work with the schools on Ramadan and also a couple of weeks of work in Washington Academy as well as setting up a prayer room.

Rev Howson informed that they had held a Holocaust Memorial Day which had been well attended and that they had a new person coming into the Minster and may be a possible new Member for SACRE. Rev Clare MacLaren was to join from Newcastle as Provost of Sunderland Minster and a replacement for Rev Stuart Bain. Rev Howson commented that she would be brilliant to work with and would be great for SACRE.

SCA235 November Ofsted Report and its comments on RE

Mrs Forbes advised that the full Ofsted Report was on the NASACRE website and covered a whole raft of areas with the main points, extracted from the annual report, being that:

'RE in schools is generally of poor quality. Although it is a statutory subject, schools often consider RE as an afterthought. As a subject on the curriculum, it is under-valued. RE is a complex subject, and the lack of clarity and support from government makes schools' job harder. Some schools steer through these challenges well, but most do not. We found that:

- many schools do not meet the statutory requirement to teach RE at all stages
- pupils are rarely taught enough substance to prepare them to engage in a complex, multi-religious and multi-secular society (where religion and non-religion play different parts in different people's lives)
- too often, schools do not teach topics in the RE curriculum deeply enough for pupils to develop a substantial understanding of the subject matter
- non-examined RE is typically not high quality.'

'All pupils should develop a broad and secure knowledge of the complexity of religious and non-religious traditions. It will take coordinated effort by stakeholders to improve the quality of RE in schools:

- schools need high-quality professional development to teach RE well
- curriculum publishers need to identify clearly what pupils will learn and when, building on knowledge over time, so that pupils develop a deep knowledge of the chosen religious and non-religious traditions
- the government should provide clear expectations about RE provision in schools. Schools should follow these. Current non-statutory guidance for RE

should be updated and include clear information for schools about the breadth and depth of the syllabus they are expected to teach.'

In response to Rev. Howson's query as to what each school was doing, the Chair advised that as her school was a Church School, RE was a core subject and the Calendar reflected that, but it was her job as RE Lead to champion that.

Ms Winlow advised of the difficulties within her school as the vast majority of families within had no faith, but this could also be a positive as it gave the opportunity to introduce them to these faiths. On the negative side they did not have a great number of staff with expertise so she was in affect the only source for religious education.

Ms Winlow also advised that Ofsted had been happy with a developing subject and she wanted to teach across the whole key stage.

Mr Beck wished to echo those comments advising that he could see quite a few knowledge gaps within his school and he was having to backfill some concepts and had to strip back and be creative.

Ms Jackman informed the Council that her school was an Academy but they had chosen to follow the agreed syllabus and the teachers available had needed help and training for this.

Ms Dunne advised that RE was a core subject within the Catholic schools and Ofsted were looking for parity between the subjects. RE had to be 10% of the timetable every week and within the secondary schools there was the expectation that RE at GCSE would be taken.

Rev Dr Whiting commented that in relation to training, the closest available was in York and that there was an issue of recruitment in the North East. Mrs Forbes added that this was the case with RE leads also.

In response to a query from Rev Howson on if the Council had any plans to tackle this, Councillor Dodds advised that she could ask the Leader on this. Mrs Forbes commented that as a SACRE they could write to each school and ask the question of how much RE they were providing but they did not have any powers to enforce.

Mr Cullen advised that the Headteachers determine the curriculum and due to the demands of Ofsted on secondary schools in particular, RE was not the main focus and therefore naturally the Headteachers focussed more on the subjects they were to be judged on, until this changed RE's prominence was always going to be less. Mr Cullen also wished to stress that this was the same context nationally and wasn't just a Sunderland specific issue.

Mrs Forbes commented that it would be interesting to see what the report due out in June advised and that the full Ofsted report was now on the NASACRE website if people wished to view.

SCA236 RE Hubs – A look at the Web Pages

Mrs Forbes took the Council through the RE Hubs website and advised that if there were any speakers wishing to give talks at school, the Hubs offered an accreditation via online course every month on either Teams/Zoom. There were also events going on locally and an Event Calendar on the site provided detail on this.

Ms Adshead commented that it was interesting to know about the school accreditation as she had been into several schools to speak and as quakers they all did something different and it seemed teachers were as interested to know as the students.

SCA237 Collective Worship Update and Training attended

The Chair advised that she had attended the NASACRE training and that every child was entitled to collective worship and the course highlighted the features of good collective worship. The Chair advised that at the last SACRE Meeting they had talked about setting up a working party, this had now been established and a Questionnaire was to be circulated shortly. Any Members were welcome to join the working group if they so wished.

Mrs Forbes advised that consideration of Collective Worship had been identified as part of the Self evaluation carried out and it was decided to set up this Working Group to come up with a policy for SACRE to approve.

SCA238 Any Other Business

At this juncture, as there was no further business to discuss, Mr Cullen wished to thank Mrs Forbes for all of her work and support given to SACRE commenting that she would be hard to replace, would be sorely missed and wished her all of the best in her retirement.

The Chair then read out a statement on behalf of Ms Weir who could not be in attendance, thanking Mrs Forbes for her dedication to SACRE, our schools, to our young people and to great RE in Sunderland and wished her all the very best for a long and happy retirement.

SCA239 Date and Time of the next meeting

The next meeting was to be confirmed once the Council Diary had been approved at Annual Council on the 15th May and Mr Wood would circulate the dates for the year soon after this.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting

(Signed) Amy Clarke,
Chair

SACRE MEMBERSHIP

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF LAW &
GOVERNANCE**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 For Members of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) to review and approve the list of volunteers (as listed in paragraph 3.1) onto its Membership.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Volunteers to become SACRE Members must be approved by the Council before formally being recognised as Members with voting rights (dependent upon their category).
- 2.2 Members are appointed to the Council for a period of 4 years as per the Constitution. At the end of this period, the Clerk notifies the Members in question and seeks permission to include the extension as an item on the next available agenda for the Council to approve

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 The following representatives have volunteered their services to become a Member of SACRE

Kevin Lapping Christian Denominations & Other Religions (Pagan Representative)

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 To approve the new volunteers onto the Membership of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education.

Contact Officer: Paul Wood, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Paul.wood@sunderland.gov.uk

Item 8

Introduction

Sunderland Council has statutory obligations relating to Religious Education in the City. This report summarises those statutory requirements and sets out key aspects of how they have been met in the academic year September 2022-July 2023.

This annual report has been prepared by the Sunderland Council Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE). Members of SACRE are representative of churches and other religious traditions in the region, teachers' associations and elected councillors. SACRE members donate their time and are not paid for their services.

Religious Education is required by law and contributes to community cohesion by promoting mutual respect and tolerance in a diverse society. It provides a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism and discrimination.

The Chair of SACRE Comment

The year 2022-23 has been a productive one for Sunderland SACRE with the further embedding of the Agreed Syllabus, ably supported by our RE consultant, Cathryn Forbes, through professional advice and training sessions for teachers. We note the farewell of Councillor Louise Farthing who has stepped down from chairing SACRE this year, a position which she has held since 2016; we thank her for her service to SACRE and wish her well in her retirement. I take over the role from Councillor Farthing and look forward to working with our dedicated members in this new role.

Quoracy remains a challenge, particularly within Group C. We are keen to amplify teachers' voices and working on supporting membership and attendance for this group will be a priority in the coming year. However, we welcomed a dedicated new member to Group C this year and have been delighted with the positive contribution they have brought. Membership in Group D has remained fairly consistent but we also said goodbye to Councillor McKeith this year. We have also welcomed two new members to Group B, as well as welcoming several new members to Group A which has increased the diversity of SACRE membership and enabled us to be more representative of the community that we serve. For the first time in many years, we now have representation from a number of religious traditions other than Christianity (as well as broadening our Christian representation) which we are delighted about. A special thanks must go to our clerk, Paul Wood, for all of his efforts in recruiting new members.

To function effectively, SACRE relies on the contributions of its members and officers. I would like to thank our members for their commitment this year, as well as expressing our gratitude to the dedication of our clerk, Paul Wood, our local authority officer, Richard Cullen, and our specialist adviser, Cathryn Forbes, who all serve SACRE so well and are key to its success. I am looking forward to my new role as Chair, serving alongside our new Vice-

Chair, Amy Clarke, and working together with our committed members to strengthen the work of SACRE even further in the coming year.

1 Meetings

This academic year saw 'in person' meetings, taking place on 12.10.22, 21.03.23 & 20.06.23.

We have seen our membership increase with members of the Jewish and Muslim faith joining us, alongside a member of the Methodist Church. We also recruited to the teachers' group which has meant we have been quorate.

Our existing chair retired at the March meeting and in June a new Chair and Vice-Chair were elected.

We carried out a survey of SACRE members in early 2023. This was, in part, to help maximise the opportunity for meetings to be quorate. Members were asked about their preference for time, place, and day of SACRE meetings. In addition, we took the opportunity to ask members: in which areas of SACRE work they wished to be more involved; how often they used NASACRE resources; and the areas of work they would most wish to see Sunderland SACRE develop.

The development areas highlighted by members and the use of the NASACRE SEF tool saw us in June begin to formulate a three year action plan for Sunderland SACRE.

2 RE (Statutory Responsibilities)

2.1 Local Agreed Syllabus and RE in schools

The academic year 2022-23 saw SACRE provide a free day of training on the 21st September for teachers to support the implementation of the new Agreed Syllabus. The day was led by Lat Blaylock of RE Today as we are using their Syllabus B for the Sunderland Agreed Syllabus.

The event saw 63 schools take part in a day that was inspirational and full of practical activities to use in the classroom. The event provided an excellent platform for teachers to further enhance the skills and knowledge to implement the new syllabus fully within their schools.

Schools have been able to download all the resources from the day and take advantage of discounts to purchase additional support materials to facilitate their delivery of the Agreed Syllabus.

Following our full day conference, there have been four further half-day training sessions (details in 2.2).

Teachers completed a questionnaire at the end of the autumn term on their experience of working with the Sunderland Agreed Syllabus.

Over a third of schools responded and we were very pleased that over 80% of schools that responded are currently using the syllabus.

When asked about **attendance at the training** that has been provided 28 of the responding schools had attended both the launch and the one-day conference and 46% of respondents had attended all training offered. The following are some of the comments made about the training:

“All training has been exceptional. Very informative and helpful.”

“The SACRE Conference was a fantastic event which should be an annual event so that RE Leads and Senior Leader can network and improve the teaching and learning of RE.”

Teachers were asked to **detail the positive aspects** of the new Sunderland Agreed Syllabus. The areas most frequently commented on included: Clear vision; clarity of outcomes; clear progression; easy to use; and greater depth. One respondent commented: *“It fits in with our other curriculum subjects with its spiral curriculum and its aim of digging deeper. Its intention is clear. Staff have found it clear to use and outcomes are clearly matched to the key questions.”*

Teachers were asked to outline any **challenging aspects** of the new Sunderland Agreed Syllabus. The two biggest issues were: covering knowledge gaps when introducing a new syllabus across all year groups; and resourcing lessons.

Teachers were asked to share something **they felt proud** of having used the new syllabus. These are some of the comments:

“In the dinner hall two children from Year 2 turned to the deputy head teacher and asked her if teachers could see everything, and when she replied that nobody can see everything one boy replied well God can. The other little boy disagreed politely and they started to debate whether God was all knowing. Two year 2 children having a philosophical discussion while eating their lunch because of their new thought provoking RE curriculum.”

“The children are enjoying the Big Question aspect of the lesson plans - not only is it a key way to assess their knowledge of what has been taught but also a good review for them and a great way to get children to discuss certain aspects of the religion taught so far.”

Teachers identified a number of areas that would help with the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus. These included: Assessment; support with G&T; sharing resources on some sort of central hub; lesson resources; and more training on the teaching of Islam.

SACRE concluded that it is evident from the schools that responded to the survey that the new Sunderland Agreed Syllabus is viewed positively. Teachers in Sunderland schools are working hard to implement the new syllabus and feel that children are benefitting from a more challenging RE curriculum.

Teachers have overall taken advantage of training offered and particularly value the One-day conferences delivered by Lat.

A focus on developing assessment models and challenging all children would further enhance the delivery of the new syllabus.

2.2 Training, Monitoring and Other Information

Through Together for Children, the RE advisor for SACRE provides training to schools. To support the launch of the new Agreed Syllabus, the following courses were delivered:

- 14th November 2023: Approaching how to teach non-Christian faiths.
- 6th February 2023 1.15-3.15pm Communities of Enquiry and delivering quality RE
- 2nd May 2023 1.15-3.15pm Working with the thematic units from Sunderland's Agreed Syllabus for RE
- 19th June 2023 1.15-3.15pm Looking back and looking forward: Lessons and strategies from working with The Sunderland Agreed Syllabus for RE.

These courses are well received and have good attendance. The courses saw the inclusion of a networking session with participants being asked to bring examples of students' work and resources they had developed using the new Agreed Syllabus. This worked well and is to be a regular feature. The training also provides opportunities to discuss national RE trends and topics, as well as to explore further support teachers may require.

SACRE have noted that OFSTED no longer undertake any subject scrutiny visits in RE. In the past, these were useful for analysing national issues of importance. SACRE's capacity to conduct direct monitoring has always been limited and there is a need to consider how this activity will take place in the future given current budget pressures. SACRE will note any mentions of RE in OFSTED reports, particularly any 'deep dives' that are carried out in RE.

SACRE has looked at the preliminary findings of the RE GCSE results for Sunderland Schools 2023 and they are as follows:

- A total of 899 entries (no indication as to which course)
- 58% of entries identified themselves as female.
- 42% of entries identified themselves as male.
- 71% pass rate at Grade 4 – 9 (F-60% M-40%)

SACRE provides a regular newsletter to all schools. Topics covered included:

January 2023:

- New Agreed Syllabus
- Spotlight on the North East Religious Resource Centre
- SACRE survey
- RE CPD
- Sunderland Inter Faith Forum and resources

March 2023:

- New Agreed Syllabus and what you have to say.
- News from the North East Religious Resource Centre
- RE CPD
- What is going on in Sunderland this spring?

Summer 2023:

- RE Hub
- RE CPD
- What is going on in Sunderland this Summer and coming up in the Autumn?
- Spirited Arts Competition
- Archbishop of York Youth Trust - Young Leaders Awards

Each newsletter always includes CPD that is being provided and the following paragraph encouraging schools to get in touch:

*“**AND FINALLY**...All of us involved in teaching RE are acutely aware of the number of demands we face and how busy life gets! But we want to keep the work of SACRE relevant to everyone and to take every chance to share experiences (good and less so), as well as to celebrate your hard-won successes as widely as possible.*

So, even though we know it takes time and even though we know how hard you're all already working, PLEASE do keep in touch! Let us know what you have found particularly useful of what we are sharing and what you have been doing that might helpfully be shared with others. You can always reach us by emailing [...]

We are REALLY looking forward to your feedback and news (so get emailing!). “

Any queries about the provision of RE in schools, and resources to support that, are responded to by the RE advisor to SACRE who works on a non-contractual basis. In addition, the RE specialist advisor supports SACRE by attending meetings, reviewing policy documents and keeping the SACRE appraised of local and national RE issues, as well as, when requested, facilitating training and providing advice and guidance to schools within the Local Authority.

3 Collective worship

Having recently been remodelled SACRE has not as yet monitored collective worship but is seeking appropriate ways to do this. A working party was created in June 2023 to begin the work on this area.

4. Links with other bodies

Sunderland SACRE is a member of NASACRE and uses their briefings for discussion at meetings.

SACRE members have also been involved in the focus groups run by 'The Faith and Belief Forum' discussing 'Religions and Worldviews'. The discussions from the focus groups have been part of the research in creating the 'Promoting the Exploration of Religion and Worldviews in Schools – Fostering Coherency and Diversity' Insights Report.

5. SACRE local involvement

Both local Christian Dioceses have members on the Sunderland SACRE.

6. Management of SACRE, working in partnership

6.1 SACRE membership

The membership of Sunderland Local Authority SACRE is listed in the Appendix. Membership has increased across the four 'committees' (though the committees remain unbalanced), resulting in more meetings being quorate. SACRE continues to work with the local authority in identifying faith/community leaders to continue to expand membership.

6.2 Training for SACRE members

Members have made use of the training materials offered by NASACRE.

Several members have also taken part in the full training day on the new Agreed Syllabus offered to teacher.

6.3 SACRE funding and support

Sunderland LA has not reduced the SACRE budget and made a commitment to funding support for the Specialist RE advisor.

SACRE has made a commitment to use funding to provide CPD to support the development of RE in schools.

SACRE has been well supported by the clerk to SACRE, provided by the Law and Governance Team.

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

	SIGNATURE
CLLR DODDS	
CLLR O'BRIEN	
CLLR SAMUELS	
CLLR P. SMITH	
CLLR WILLIAMS	

CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS AND OTHER RELIGIONS

MATT MOORE	
MRS SYEDA FAHMENA KHATUN	
REV DR DAVID WHITING	
MR TONY WORTMAN	
MRS ELIZABETH WORTMAN	
MR MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL	
IMAN YUSEF MEAH	
MR DHAVALKUMAR VYAS	
MR ZAF IQBAL	

CHURCH OF ENGLAND

MISS CAROLINE WEIR	
MRS AMY CLARKE	
REV CHRIS HOWSON	
NICKY ANDERSON	

TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS

MISS NICOLA JACKMAN	
MRS FIONA MATTHEWS	
MS GEMMA HAWLEY	
MS LOUISE RIDINGS	
MS TRACY CONWAY	
MRS AMY CLARKE	
MS RACHEL WINLOW	
MR STEVEN BECK	

CO-OPTED

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OFFICERS

RICHARD CULLEN	
CATHRYN FORBES	
PAUL WOOD	

Development Plan 2022 - 2025

Section 1: How far does the SACRE's partnership with the LA enable it to carry out its responsibilities effectively?

Ref	Action points	Lead	Timescale	Success criteria	Summer Meeting 2023	Summer Meeting 2024
1.1	Have a good attendance where all four committees are well represented, and meetings are quorate.	CoS	Membership to be reviewed every meeting.	To have multiple representation in each of the four committees on SACRE; Identify members through contact with local and national religious bodies.		
1.2	Agendas and papers are distributed well in advance ensuring all members have time to consider them carefully, consulting when relevant their representing sponsoring bodies.	PW	Ongoing	Agendas and papers collated by Governance Officer and distributed in accordance with LEA meeting criteria.		
1.3	There are some opportunities for teachers and representatives of faith and worldview communities to be invited to share their work.	PW	Ongoing	Call for agenda items , made by Governance Officer prior to circulation of agenda and papers.		
1.4	Meetings are well managed with strong contributions from a wide range of members.	PW & CoS	Annual review of membership	To ensure each committee is represented at each SACRE meeting; to have recruited to all available vacancy on SACRE		
1.5	Meetings move beyond routine matters to consider wider issues about the quality of RE and Collective Worship	CoS	To be addressed at agenda setting mtg	Standard agenda item to include NASCRE briefing and new RE related reports.		
1.6	Have an active membership that fulfils the basic statutory obligations.	PW & CoS	Ongoing	To have multiple representation in each of the four committees on SACRE; Identify members through contact with local and national religious bodies.		
1.7	Ensure arrangements to fill vacancies are pursued effectively	PW	Annual Review of membership	To identify nominating bodies for each member position, which can be contacted immediately when a vacancy occurs		

1.8	Ensure there is an induction and training opportunities for SACRE members	PW & CoS	Agenda item for Oct 2023 mtg. New members Induction pack.	To have in place an induction pack for new members. To seek volunteers from existing SACRE members to talk to new members. To use NASACRE materials on ' SACRE membership'.		
1.9	Have a costed development plan which is reviewed regularly and updated on an annual basis, which provides an effective focus for SACRE's work and wider LA priorities.	CoS & SIO's	Current plan to be reviewed at June 2023 mtg	To have in place a 3 year development plan. That has been discussed at SACRE meetings and approved.		
1.10	SACRE has awareness of national projects or initiatives related to the work of SACRE and so is able to plan work or request funding to update and review their development plan.	Chair	Review work plan document at Jan 2024 meeting	To continue to use the work plan document, to ensure SACRE meetings cover the appropriate items in a timely fashion		
1.11	The SACRE is regularly represented at national events relevant to its work; for example: NASACRE.	CoS & SIO's	Interest for NASACRE conference agenda item each Jan	To continue to circulate NASACRE training details and to fund up to two places on the NASCRE General Conference.		
1.12	Regularly provide with clear information relevant to the quality and provision for RE and Collective Worship in local schools and given a context within which any school is working.	CoS	Oct 2023 mtg create working party on CW	See Separate CW action plan		
1.13	The SACRE receives the information in a way that enables it to act as a critical friend and question the LA's work.	CoS & SIO's	Ongoing	To identify what information SACRE requires in order to act as a critical friend.		
1.14	Be well informed about other key stakeholders supporting RE and have some meaningful contact with the groups involved.	CoS & SIO's	Ongoing	To explore the inclusion of members of Sunderland Youth Council at SACRE meetings		
1.15	SACRE members are supported at a national level by their sponsoring body.	CoS & SIO's	Ongoing	To continue to circulate NASACRE training details and to fund up to two places on the NASCRE General Conference.		
1.16	SACRE members attend the annual NASCRE conference and other training opportunities.	CoS	Standard agenda item	To continue to circulate NASACRE training details and to fund up to two places on the NASCRE General Conference.		
1.17	Hear from pupils/students as part of their work around high quality RE and Collective Worship	CoS	To create a working party to explore during 2023/2024 sessions	To explore the inclusion of Youth Council members at SACRE meetings.		

Section 2: Standards and quality of provision of Religious Education; the quality of teaching and provision

Ref	Action points	Lead	Timescale	Success criteria	Summer Meeting 2023	Summer Meeting 2024
2.1	Build upon a strong relationship with the LA, whereby the LA shares its information and from this SACRE gains an overview of RE provision within the LA.	SIO's	To be provided in time for inclusion with annual report. Presented at Oct mtg	The LA to provide data with reference to GCSE results , information for RE withdrawals and any commentary from Ofsted SIAMS in relation RE provision.		
2.2	SACRE works effectively with the LA to support and promote pupil entitlement.	CoS & SIO's	Meeting TBA	The LA and SACRE to hold discussions around the parameters of this work, including tie, cost and expectations.		
2.3	Examples of different models for fulfilling pupil entitlement within local schools will be shared with all schools so that schools can have a menu from which to adapt an approach that delivers pupil entitlement whilst meeting the specific needs and priorities of their schools.	CoS & SIO's	Meeting TBA	The LA and SACRE to hold discussions around the parameters of this work, including tie, cost and expectations.		
2.4	Have a process in place to find out how well learners are doing in KS1-3, (e.g., by meeting teachers, pupils and through the LA)	CoS & SIO's	Meeting TBA	The LA and SACRE to hold discussions around the parameters of this work, including tie, cost and expectations.		
2.5	SACRE will be provided with adequate information about examination entries and standards in examinations in secondary schools and how these relate to national figures	SIO's	To be provided in time for inclusion with annual report. Presented at Oct mtg	SACRE annual report to include analysis of examination results across the LA		
2.6	Have some information regarding the quality of learning and teaching from a range of sources including contact with teachers and pupils.	SIO's	Standing agenda item	RE CPD and Networking to be included in SACRE Annual Report and reported on at each SACRE meeting.		

Section 3: The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus

Ref	Action points	Lead	Timescale	Success criteria	Summer Meeting 2023	Summer Meeting 2024
3.1	Some opportunities for members' training prior to the implementation of ASC with reference to the purpose and action plan for the work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference are clear.	SIO's	Process of review to begin June 2025	Every 5 years the AS needs to be reviewed. Commence the process at least 1 year prior to the ending of the current syllabus. To set aside SACRE agenda to discuss an AS is created. To agree membership of an ASC at least 1 year prior to the end of the current syllabus		
3.2	Have all four committees well represented at ASC meetings. Agendas and papers are distributed well in advance, so all members have time to consider them carefully.	SIO's	Process of review to begin June 2025	Agendas and papers collated by Governance Officer and distributed in accordance with LEA meeting criteria.		
3.3	Meetings are well managed with strong contributions from a wide range of members.	SIO's	Process of review to begin June 2025	Appropriate Chair elected for ASC 1 year prior to syllabus ending.		

Section 4: Promoting improvement in the provision and quality of Collective Worship

Ref	Action points	Lead	Timescale	Success criteria	Summer Meeting 2023	Summer Meeting 2024
4.1	To understand local issues of delivering pupil entitlement and of the challenges schools face in providing CW	CoS	Oct 2023 mtg create working party on CW	See Separate CW action plan		
4.2	Provide some advice and support of delivering pupil entitlement.	CoS	Oct 2023 mtg create working party on CW	See Separate CW action plan		
4.3	Obtain feedback from schools to evaluate the impact of advice and support. Periodically review its strategies for supporting pupil entitlement.	CoS	Oct 2023 mtg create working party on CW	See Separate CW action plan		
4.4	Have occasional agenda items on CW, with some insight into how it is being delivered in the LA's schools.	CoS	Oct 2023 mtg create working party on CW	See Separate CW action plan		
4.5	Understand what effective provision is, but SACRE members have little 'hands-on' experience of CW.	CoS	Oct 2023 mtg create working party on CW	See Separate CW action plan		
4.6	Promote in service support for teachers with responsibility for CW.	CoS	Oct 2023 mtg create working party on CW	See Separate CW action plan		
4.7	Advise on enhancing quality of provision.	CoS	Oct 2023 mtg create working party on CW	See Separate CW action plan		
4.8	Be aware that schools have an option of requesting a determination, and SACRE has a major role in process.	CoS & SIO's	To identify suitable person to lead on this piece of work.	To create a document advising what to do when a determination request has been received		

4.9	Provide some training to its members regarding determinations, either directly through working on earlier requests, or through specific elements in developmental sessions.	CoS & SIO's	To identify suitable person to lead on this piece of work.	To create a document advising what to do when a determination request has been received		
4.10	Respond in an adequate but piecemeal fashion, when requested for a determination, without a systematic overview of this area of work	CoS & SIO's	To identify suitable person to lead on this piece of work.	To create a document advising what to do when a determination request has been received		

Section 5: Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community

Ref	Action points	Lead	Timescale	Success criteria	Summer Meeting 2023	Summer Meeting 2024
5.1	Ensure membership broadly reflects the religious diversity of the local community.	CoS	To create a working party to explore this further. Agenda Oct 2023	Using the knowledge of members of committee four (La representatives / councillors), to ensure that all Religious communities of Sunderland are represented. To use their knowledge of local faith groups, to enhance the work of SACRE.		
5.2	Regularly reviewed by SACRE in partnership with the LA particularly where there is a high mobility communities.	CoS & SIO's	To create a working party to explore this further. Agenda Oct 2023	Using the knowledge of members of committee four (La representatives / councillors), to ensure that all Religious communities of Sunderland are represented. To use their knowledge of local faith groups, to enhance the work of SACRE.		
5.3	To be provided with a detailed analysis/ knowledge of the religious and cultural diversity with the LA and therefore be well aware of different groups representing the diversity within the local area.	CoS & SIO's	To create a working party to explore this further. Agenda Oct 2023	To use most up to date census data . too ensure SACRE is a representation of the diversity of the Sunderland area.		
5.4	Know about and have a relationship with local interfaith groups and the work that they do in the locality.	CoS	To create a working party to explore this further. Agenda Oct 2023	As appropriate include SACRE agenda items to utilise the knowledge of local inter-faith groups		

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Research and analysis

Deep and meaningful? The religious education subject report

Published 17 April 2024

Applies to England

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Context

The scope of religious education (RE) is vast. Through RE, pupils encounter ancient and living traditions that have shaped the world. They explore foundational texts and the way that individuals and groups live in the world, as well as the values, beliefs and ideas that bind people together. Pupils consider deep questions that have inspired human thought throughout history, and that still challenge children and adults alike today. The knowledge that they gain stretches beyond oversimplifications: it enables pupils to derive meaning from complexity.

The RE sector generally agrees that RE contributes to pupils' personal development. However, the sector does not agree on – or discuss enough – the distinct body of knowledge that pupils learn in RE. This report explores the content and substance of what pupils learn in RE. Within the RE classroom, teachers and pupils work with claims about religious and non-religious traditions, as well as the reflections that they themselves bring to the table. At its best, RE can help pupils to make sense of a complex world where aspects of religion and non-religion hold different places in the lives of its citizens.

RE forms part of the basic curriculum for all state-funded primary and secondary schools up to the end of sixth form. Unlike the content of other subjects, the RE content is not nationally defined. Maintained schools and voluntary-controlled schools must teach the agreed syllabus that has been proposed by their local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education and approved by the local authority. Voluntary-aided schools must teach RE but do not have to follow this syllabus. They can determine their own curriculum, which should be in accordance with their trust deed. If they convert to academy status, this requirement remains in place.

What academies and free schools must teach in RE is outlined in their funding agreements. Many choose to follow the locally agreed syllabus. Sometimes, trusts develop their own curriculum. All schools, including independent schools, must promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. RE may be a significant part of the school's provision of this.

This report considers the evidence gathered through inspections and research visits. For our methodological note, [see Annex A: Methodological note](#). The report is split into findings in primary schools and those in secondary schools; it includes evidence from Reception Year to sixth form. It evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of RE, building on the work of our 2021 [research review into RE \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education). It considers:

- curriculum: the content that pupils learn in RE lessons
- pedagogy: how schools teach and implement the curriculum
- assessment: how teachers check the extent to which pupils have learned the curriculum

- how RE is organised in schools
- teacher education and professional development

Strengths and weaknesses are exemplified through this report. The report aims to illuminate effective practice. It makes recommendations to help wider stakeholders, leaders and teachers understand how they can make sure that all pupils leave school with the depth of knowledge that they need about a range of religious and non-religious traditions. It explains what it means for pupils to have a meaningful understanding of the complex and diverse world that they live in.

The evidence gathered suggests that many of these RE curriculums are in the process of refinement. In some schools, an ambitious RE curriculum is clearly still a 'work in progress'. There is much to do to ensure that all pupils have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum.

The quality of RE is not determined by the type of school or the source of its curriculum. We found better quality RE in a range of schools, from small primary schools to non-selective and selective secondary schools. Factors that contributed towards this included:

- strong teacher subject knowledge
- access to professional development
- regular time for RE lessons
- a well-organised curriculum containing knowledge chosen by leaders to enable pupils to deepen their understanding term by term

Religion in schools

The place of religion in schools in England is complex, eliciting much debate. These debates fall beyond the scope of this report, which focuses on the curriculum subject of RE.

The focus of this report is on the content and teaching of RE in schools. Specifically, it looked at RE in schools where the subject falls within Ofsted's inspection purview. Our research focused on evidence about the quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment in RE. Our research also looked at the impact of the curriculum on the knowledge and skills of pupils.

We did not gather evidence on the wider work of schools relating to social, moral, social and cultural education, or on other areas of school life which have religious dimensions. For instance, this report does not explore provision for collective worship in schools.

RE and personal development

There are a range of different ways in which RE operates in schools. We are aware that the way that schools approach RE can be relevant to 2 different judgements within our education inspection framework (EIF): the quality of education and personal development. The quality of education is about the academic substance of what is taught. It looks at what pupils learn and know in each subject. The personal development judgement explores how the curriculum may extend beyond the academic, technical or vocational. This may include, for instance, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. This report outlines what we have found out about RE through our 'deep dive' methodology on inspections and our research visits. As such, the report is primarily concerned with the school RE curriculum considered through the lens of the quality of education judgement.

Main findings

The RE curriculum often lacked sufficient substance to prepare pupils to live in a complex world. The RE content selected rarely was collectively enough to ensure that pupils were well prepared to engage in a multi-religious and multi-secular society.

A superficially broad curriculum does not always provide pupils with the depth of knowledge they require for future study. In most cases, where the curriculum tried to cover many religions, like equal slices of a pie, pupils generally remembered very little. In cases where the curriculum prioritised depth of study, pupils learned much more.

The RE curriculum rarely enabled pupils to systematically build disciplinary knowledge or personal knowledge.

The content of some secondary curriculums was restricted by what teachers considered pupils needed to know for public examinations at the end of key stage 4. In a significant number of cases, teachers taught examination skills too prematurely. This significantly limited the range and types of RE content taught.

In the secondary phase, most statutory non-examined RE was limited and of a poor quality. A notable proportion of schools did not meet the statutory

requirement to teach RE to pupils at all stages of their schooling.

Where RE was weaker, the knowledge of traditions specified for pupils to learn was overly and uncritically compartmentalised. Sometimes, pupils were presented with over-simplistic assertions about religious traditions, which were often based on visible entities, such as places of worship.

What schools taught was rarely enough for pupils to make sense of religious and non-religious traditions as they appear around the world. Curriculums did not identify clearly the suitable mix of content that would enable pupils to achieve this.

There was a profound misconception among some leaders and teachers that 'teaching from a neutral stance' equates to teaching a non-religious worldview. This is simply not the case.

In some schools, leaders were rightly focusing on developing the curriculum before considering assessment. However, even when leaders had systems of assessment in place, these rarely gave them the requisite assurance that pupils were learning and remembering more and increasingly complex content over time.

Long gaps between lessons hindered pupils' recall. When the timetable was organised so that pupils had regular RE lessons, they remembered more.

Although a few teachers had received subject-based professional development in RE, the overwhelming majority had not. Given the complexity of the subject and the kind of misconceptions that pupils were left with, this is a significant concern.

10 years on – what has changed in RE since our last subject report?

In 2013, our [subject report \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/religious-education-realising-the-potential\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/religious-education-realising-the-potential) stated that RE 'should make a major contribution to the education of children and young people'. The unrealised potential of the subject remains now, as it was then. At the time, the report made several

recommendations to improve the subject in schools. One recommendation was that the Department for Education (DfE) should review statutory arrangements that allow RE to be determined locally by agreed syllabus committees. Others related to responding to weaknesses found in RE by clarifying expectations, training staff, monitoring provision, having enough resources, and improving subject quality. All these factors could have significantly improved the quality of the RE curriculum that pupils learn, preparing them to be well informed and thoughtful about religious and non-religious traditions that shape the world. Ten years later, and although much of the educational landscape has changed, the problems and challenges facing RE persist.

The 2013 subject report suggested that the DfE worked with professional associations to clarify its expectations about RE and consider what high-quality curriculum, pedagogy and assessment might look like in schools. A decade on, there has been no change to the legal position of RE. RE syllabuses are still locally determined. However, the system has become more complex and includes the growth of multi-academy trusts. As a result, 'where teachers go' to tell them what to include in their RE curriculums has become even more complicated: the locally agreed syllabus applies in some, but not all, maintained schools. Academies have freedoms to develop their own RE curriculums in accordance with their funding agreements; and some multi-academy trusts have established trust-wide curriculum expectations.

The 2013 report also called for improvements in training, both locally and nationally. Until recently, bursaries for trainee teachers were withdrawn, and recruitment has reached a new low. The capacity of local authorities to develop and support school RE has reduced. There are various subject associations, organisations and networks, some of which are linked to charities, which provide support for RE. However, the subject lacks the kind of coordinated support that is, for example, provided through subject hubs in English and mathematics.

These factors have combined to mean that leaders in schools have been poorly served. The lack of a coherent approach to the subject has negatively affected leaders and specialist and non-specialist teachers. The absence of an infrastructure to support schools has only served to compound problems that already existed. This has meant that, in many cases, teachers' subject knowledge has not improved. Despite the importance of RE in preparing pupils to engage in a multi-religious and multi-secular world, these issues have not been addressed through primary legislation or statutory guidance. In many ways, the subject continues to wilt.

Although various subject organisations and stakeholders share a common pursuit for excellence in RE, they do not always agree about the best way forward. A coordinated approach led by the RE Council of England and Wales has suggested that a focus on 'religion and worldviews' would be an improved way of framing curriculum content in RE. This approach has gathered much interest and support, but not all in the world of RE agree with this reframing. Many have also discussed the need for a national standard for the subject.

While this debate continues, the status of RE as a mandatory subject, yet outside the national curriculum, remains unchanged. There are still no clear national expectations for RE. A system that is increasingly hyper-localised is confusing for leaders and teachers to navigate.

The challenge that this context presents to schools should not be underestimated. Even in schools where Ofsted inspects RE, leaders must balance competing views about what RE should cover and how this should be done. There is a significant duplication of time and energy in establishing the content of RE. This happens nationwide as local authorities, trusts and school leaders have to grapple with competing ideas. This adds undue complications for those who are involved in teacher development. It is hard to provide training and support for teachers when content is so varied across schools.

Statutory guidance has not kept pace with national changes, including the growth of multi-academy trusts. Leaders and teachers need up-to-date guidance in order to understand the implications of the complex legal foundation for teaching RE. Teachers moving from school to school may have to adapt to different models and expectations of RE each time. It can be tricky for parents to understand how RE in one school may differ from RE in another school down the road. It may be difficult for stakeholders to understand why Ofsted inspects RE in some schools and does not in others. These factors, and the failure to address them over the past 10 years, make the work of leaders and teachers harder.

Our research shows that, although some schools steer through these challenging waters well, most do not. The legacy of poor subject and pedagogical knowledge, scant training and a lack of clarity about RE content is that, in too many schools, the RE curriculum is poorly constructed, poorly implemented and poorly learned. What pupils know and remember about the subject is noticeably patchy. Misconceptions abound. A superficial and limited approach to RE sometimes ends up normalising caricatures or the most extreme or 'unusual' religious traditions. Leaders and teachers have not had the direction or support they need to inform their decisions about the structure and content of the subject. We called for this support in our 2013 report, and we call for this again now.

Despite all these challenges, this report demonstrates that it is possible to construct a curriculum that is ambitious and achievable. Some schools manage to select the knowledge they want pupils to gain so that it reflects the complex and diverse world that we live in today. They consider what might be collectively enough in the curriculum so that pupils can build an informed conception of the place of 'religion' and 'non-religion' in the world, (which includes making informed choices about what content, for practical reasons, has to be left out). They make thoughtful decisions about which narratives, texts, case studies and traditions pupils will explore in depth. They enable pupils to discern between different types of claims that different thinkers have about religion and non-religion. They plan carefully for how pupils can use the content of the RE

curriculum to reflect on their own position, including their personal beliefs and attitudes.

We found examples of this ambition in both small and large schools, in both primary and secondary schools, and in both maintained schools and academies. This shows that it is possible, realistic and attainable to have an ambitious RE curriculum, taught capably, which has a positive impact on pupils' lives in the long term. However, without serious attention and support, it is difficult to see how the fortunes of RE – a subject so essential to prepare pupils to make sense of the world deeply and meaningfully – will be reversed.

Recommendations

Curriculum

Schools should:

- ensure that there is a distinct curriculum in place for teaching RE at all key stages. They should make sure that this is rigorous and challenging and that it demonstrably builds on what pupils already know
- carefully select the knowledge they expect pupils to gain to make sense of a complex and diverse world. They should make sure that important content and concepts are clearly identified and sequenced. They should also make sure that curriculums do not contain oversimplifications of traditions, including, where appropriate, non-religious traditions
- balance the breadth and depth of study of religious and non-religious traditions to ensure that these are collectively enough for pupils to make sense of a complex world
- ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in RE over time. Leaders in secondary schools should make sure that the curriculum is designed to meet or exceed exam board specifications (rather than being driven by them)
- make sure that curriculums clearly identify how pupils will develop disciplinary and personal knowledge through the chosen substantive content

Teaching and assessment

Schools should:

- be ambitious for pupils to develop all aspects of knowledge: substantive, ways of knowing and personal knowledge. They should make sure that

teachers have high expectations of what pupils will know and remember

- provide opportunities for pupils to review and build on important knowledge over time. They should make sure that pupils use the knowledge that they gained in previous years as the curriculum becomes increasingly more complex and demanding
- ensure that teaching specifically develops pupils' knowledge of the complexity of religious and non-religious traditions
- develop manageable assessment methods that move beyond the simple recall of factual information. They should check that pupils recall and understand the intended curriculum over time and that the domain of their knowledge is expanding

Systems at subject and school level

Schools should:

- ensure that all teachers have the subject and pedagogical knowledge that they need to teach RE well
- check that the time allocated for teaching RE at all key stages is used effectively so that pupils learn a curriculum that is both broad and deep
- organise the timetable for RE so that gaps between teaching are minimised
- ensure that the curriculum for statutory non-examined RE at key stages 4 and 5 is ambitious and consistently implemented. They should make sure that the RE content is clearly identified and builds on what pupils have learned at key stage 3

Recommendations for others

- The government should urgently update guidance for schools about its statutory expectations for RE. The government should also ensure that there is appropriate clarity about what is taught in RE, and when and where it is taught, for those schools where Ofsted inspects the subject. This would help schools and, particularly, leaders and teachers of RE.
- Those involved in writing syllabuses and commercial curriculums should make sure that these enable pupils to build deep knowledge of the chosen religious and non-religious traditions. They should make sure that curriculums identify what pupils should learn and when. They should ensure that it is clear to teachers when pupils will revisit and review important content and concepts.
- Those involved in commissioning and organising professional development should increase access to, and the range of, training available to all leaders and teachers, to improve their subject knowledge.

- Those involved in training teachers and early career professional development should prioritise helping trainee teachers and those who are newer to the profession to gain the subject knowledge that they need.
- Exam boards should recognise that the way in which schools use exam-style questions is not always appropriate. They should make sure that their communication with schools reflects this.

Primary

Curriculum: what pupils need to know and do

Summary of the research review relevant to curriculum

Through the RE curriculum, pupils build knowledge of the religious and non-religious traditions that have shaped the world: substantive content and concepts. Pupils should increase their depth of knowledge about such traditions, which provides them with detail on which to build ideas and concepts about religion. At the same time, high-quality RE curriculums accurately portray some of the diversity and complexity found within and between different traditions.

In ways that are appropriate to the primary phase, pupils also need to learn 'how to know' in RE (how knowledge about religious and non-religious traditions came about). We call this ways of knowing.

In high-quality RE, substantive knowledge and ways of knowing are not separated. For example, leaders might plan for pupils to know how the meanings of a religious text might differ between followers in a particular tradition. Or they might plan for pupils to know different knowledge constructed in different ways, such as the results of national surveys and religious stories.

When pupils learn both substantive content and concepts and ways of knowing, they do so from a position that we define as their personal knowledge. Pupils come to see the relationship between what they learn in the RE curriculum and their own lives as they build awareness of the assumptions that they bring to discussions concerning religious and non-religious traditions.

Substantive knowledge – knowledge of religious and non-religious traditions

Summary of the research review relevant to substantive knowledge

There are a variety of religious and non-religious traditions that leaders of RE could include within their curriculums. It would be impossible to cover every tradition that could be covered in RE. Leaders therefore have to choose to include some content and leave other content out. The RE curriculum can be considered to include collectively enough RE content when what is included enables pupils to have an accurate overall conception of religion and non-religion in the world. In high-quality RE, pupils reach these ambitious end goals over time. Accuracy should not be confused with making the curriculum unnecessarily complex: there may be times when generalisations are helpful to show those aspects of traditions that bind some communities together, such as creeds.

A high-quality curriculum may build towards greater nuance over time. It will also be coherently planned and well sequenced, considering what specific prior content is needed ahead of future learning. This is particularly the case when introducing sensitive issues in RE. At primary, pupils may need a range of, for example, emotional and knowledge components before teachers introduce social and religious concepts such as death or community. In these ways, the RE curriculum may build towards greater nuance over time. These all illustrate how the curriculum is the progression model.

1. Leaders in this sample of schools said that they recognised the importance of RE and wanted to improve the quality of their educational offer. Just under half of the schools visited as part of the sample had recently introduced new curriculums. Leaders of several other schools were refining existing curriculums.
2. In the schools that inspectors visited, we found that Christian traditions were the most frequently studied. This is in keeping with the legal expectation that curriculums should reflect that traditions in England are 'in the main Christian'. Jewish and Muslim traditions were the next most frequently studied religious traditions.
3. In schools where RE was strong, leaders had clearly identified what children in the early years needed to know to be ready for the RE curriculum in Year 1. In one school, for example, teachers read stories from religious traditions to children in the Reception Year. As pupils were familiar with these stories, in key stage 1 they were able to build on this knowledge and learn what they might mean to different people.

4. In schools that had Reception classes, inspectors found that children were taught about a range of faiths and cultures. This linked to children's developing knowledge of the world around them. However, some leaders did not have coherent reasons for what they had chosen to include as part of the early years curriculum and why. Traditions selected in the early years did not always link well to the traditions that children would go on to study in key stage 1. In most cases, schools had little rationale for why content such as the Chinese New Year had been selected. The curriculum did not identify key concepts, such as 'festival' or 'new beginnings', that would help pupils at a later stage.

5. There were clear similarities in the ways in which the curriculum was organised across primary schools. For example, in most schools, pupils studied Jewish and Christian traditions at key stage 1. Inspectors found that few leaders could explain why they had organised the curriculum in this way. In roughly half of these schools, pupils did not study Jewish traditions again, and so they did not have the chance to build on this knowledge.

6. In almost all schools, pupils also learned about dharmic faiths. Few schools studied a dharmic faith at key stage 1. More curriculums included content on Hindu traditions than other dharmic traditions, such as Sikh and Buddhist traditions. However, less curriculum time was afforded to dharmic traditions than to Abrahamic traditions. Although this is not a problem in itself, it could become one if, over time, the curriculum did not reflect a range of religious traditions. This could lead to pupils having a skewed understanding of the historic and current religious landscape.

7. A minority of schools specifically allocated curriculum time to teaching about non-religious worldviews. In almost all these schools, this consisted of a unit of work in Year 6. It was rare that schools included systematic study of non-religious worldviews throughout the school curriculum. This could become a problem if pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to recognise and understand that there are religious and non-religious traditions and worldviews.

8. Inspectors found that there was a common misconception about teaching non-religious worldviews. Some teachers thought that explaining to pupils that RE was taught from a non-confessional standpoint equated to teaching about non-religious worldviews. Inspectors found that curriculums typically contained little about both defined non-religious traditions, such as Humanism, and the complexity of contemporary beliefs, such as those of people who might define themselves as 'spiritual' but not 'religious'.

9. Beyond the top-level headings (such as 'Judaism' or 'Christianity'), few schools had precisely identified the concepts and content they wanted pupils to learn. Many schools used either a locally agreed syllabus or a published scheme of work. These identified high-level outcomes of what pupils should know and be able to do. However, these were rarely adapted for individual schools. Schools had not identified, within these broad plans, precisely what pupils would know or decided how and when this would be taught and revisited.

They had not been selective in thinking through the specific content they wanted pupils to understand deeply.

10. In a few schools that followed locally agreed syllabuses, the curriculum went beyond the number of religious traditions that were recommended in the syllabus. Inspectors found that this did not increase pupils' knowledge of each religious tradition. Rather, this spread curriculum time thinly. Pupils did not have the chance to consolidate and deepen their learning. Few pupils could remember what teachers had planned for them to recall. Pupils had misconceptions about what they were learning.

11. Pupils, in general, had a relatively unsophisticated view of religion and non-religion through their study of the RE curriculum. For example, when some Year 6 pupils were asked about what they recalled about Sikh traditions, their response was: 'Be honest, everyone should be treated equally, don't bully other people, listen to other people's ideas.' Teachers had planned an incomplete version of the tenets of this tradition in the curriculum.

12. Few curriculums included planning that reflected the variety of beliefs within a tradition. Inspectors found that it was rarely the case that there was collectively enough content to lead pupils to an accurate understanding of the complexity and diversity of religious traditions. Pupils encountered an oversimplified representation of faiths and practice.

13. In a minority of schools, pupils recalled a great deal about what they had been taught. In one infant school, pupils had a deep understanding of Jewish and Christian traditions. In another school, pupils understood how religions change over time, and could explain different beliefs within Christianity about what happens after death. They could contrast this with knowledge of beliefs about moksha and reincarnation in Hindu traditions. However, in most schools, pupils remembered little of the taught curriculum.

How one school went about selecting collectively enough content to include in the RE curriculum

One school planned its curriculum by adapting the locally agreed syllabus. It selected 2 dharmic traditions and 2 Abrahamic traditions, as well as non-religious worldviews. Staff identified concepts they thought were most important from each tradition. They also had a clear rationale for what they did not study and why.

Leaders constructed the curriculum to focus on the lives of people who follow these traditions. This meant that pupils revisited important content as well as learning that there may be differences within religious traditions. Teachers planned precisely when pupils would encounter new content and when pupils could revisit important concepts such as 'prayer'. This meant

that they had the chance to recall this knowledge and meaningfully compare differences as well as similarities between traditions.

How one school went about sequencing content

One school explained how the similarities between the traditions in Christianity and Judaism helped pupils to understand how there are some shared values. Staff chose stories from the Torah that explained how God forgave the people of Israel when they turned from him. They contrasted these with the stories that Jesus told, such as the story of the prodigal son.

They said that learning about some of the writings in Christian traditions helped pupils when they learned about some of the teaching from the Qur'an in key stage 2. In Year 1, pupils learned about the practice of baptism in the Christian traditions as turning from evil and being welcomed into the family of the Church and a loving relationship with God. In Year 6, pupils contrasted this with the text from the Qur'an: 'Whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy hand.'

14. Inspectors found very little evidence of how schools decided that curriculum content might build up over time to help pupils to learn bigger ideas, such as 'covenant', 'dharma' or 'prophethood', that form part of different religious traditions. In some schools, inspectors found that the curriculum emphasised specific and important vocabulary. Inspectors found that some of these schools made sure that pupils became familiar with these words in context. In others, pupils did not have the chance to use this vocabulary again and forgot how to use these words accurately.

15. Inspectors found that the accuracy of the representation of traditions in the RE curriculum varied. In some schools, pupils became aware of complexities within religious traditions. For example, one pupil said: 'I used to think that all Christians thought being gay was a sin, but now I realise that not every Christian thinks this.' As another example, pupils recognised the idea that 'all Muslim women wear a hijab' is a misconception. In other schools, misconceptions remained because pupils had not retained important knowledge. This was evidenced through the kinds of claims and statements that pupils made. An example of these was when pupils explained that 'some Humanists believe in God because it's up to you'.

16. Curriculums typically focused on main beliefs, lifestyles and festivals. Some schools used these as topic titles for units of learning. There were few instances where curriculums included the challenging questions that religions seek to answer.

17. In a minority of schools, leaders had thought carefully about how RE can support pupils as they encounter sensitive content. They recognised, for example, that they needed to make sure that content about the Holocaust had

appropriate contextualisation. In one school, leaders explained that they had chosen to continue to study Jewish traditions because they knew that pupils would be learning about the Holocaust as part of their history curriculum and would need sufficient background knowledge of the traditions to understand what was being referred to in history. In other schools, this focus was less explicit.

Ways of knowing – learning ‘how to know’ about religion and non-religion

Summary of the research review relevant to ways of knowing

Ways of knowing is about pupils learning and acquiring different ways that scholars can study religious and non-religious traditions. This kind of knowledge is reliable and prevents pupils from depending on views and opinions that are not justified by scholarship. The professional standards of teachers include promoting the value of scholarship. In ways that are appropriate to the primary phase, the RE curriculum can include knowledge that is suitably precise. For example, leaders might add simple detail to make the representations on the curriculum as precise as possible by using qualifying words such as ‘some’, ‘many’ or ‘European’ (instead of blanket phrases such as ‘all Christians’, ‘Sikhs believe’, ‘Muslims practise’) to add clarity. This can help avoid over-simplifying or stereotyping religion and prevent misconceptions about religion from developing. The RE curriculum can also introduce pupils to different types of questions that scholars ask about religion. For example, at primary, the symbol of light in Hindu traditions could be approached by 2 contrasting questions, such as ‘Why do different Hindu stories talk about light?’ and ‘How does a festival of light bring different Hindus together?’ When pupils learn ways of knowing, this can help prevent misconceptions from developing, such as ‘Science is about facts; religion is about opinions’.

Younger pupils will experience ways of knowing before they understand its distinction from substantive knowledge. For example, when they study a topic on ancient Egypt in history and then learn about Jewish stories set in that period, they may ask ‘Did these stories really happen?’ Pupils may gather information about the significance of dharma in Hindu traditions from stories as well as from speaking to people from those traditions. Pupils may be curious about the difference between their own view of the world and those of others. In all these instances, teachers need to know how to respond in suitable ways. For this reason, teachers’ disciplinary knowledge is perhaps even more important than pupils’ at this stage. Effective training

to develop strong subject knowledge would help to avoid misconceptions and enable teachers to model ways of knowing well.

18. In most of the schools we visited as part of the sample, pupils were taught generalisations, for example that all followers of a particular religion might worship in the same way. Misconceptions communicated to pupils through the curriculum demonstrated a lack of subject knowledge. Pupils were taught ideas that did not reflect accurately the traditions that they were learning about, such as the idea of Christmas as 'God's birthday'. However, this was not always the case. However, this was not always the case. In one school, teachers spoke about how they had changed the language that they used to avoid generalisations, for example talking about what 'most Christians believe'. This stopped pupils developing the misconception that all Christians believe the same thing.

19. Some curriculums contained questions that developed pupils' disciplinary knowledge through new substantive content. For example, as one Year 6 class worked over time to answer the question 'How reliable are sources of authority for believers?' the pupils studied the story of Siddhartha Gautama and the Four Sights to learn how followers of Buddhist traditions interpret such stories. Through their developing disciplinary knowledge, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), began to understand how followers of traditions might interpret the same story in different ways.

20. Other questions gave pupils the opportunity to develop their personal knowledge once they had secured substantive knowledge. For example, when pupils had learned about the story of the Buddha's enlightenment and understood concepts such as 'attachment', they answered the question 'What do you do when you see suffering?' Pupils successfully used the substantive knowledge that they had gained in what they wrote. For example, one pupil described enlightenment as more than having an idea: 'It's like turning on a light.'

21. However, in too many cases, the curriculum questions that were asked were disconnected from the substantive content that pupils were learning, such as 'Does everyone need a fresh start?' Some questions were not appropriate to answer within an RE context: for example, 'How do you think Muhammad would have felt when he realised that he was a prophet?'

22. Many curriculum questions asked were poor because they elicited narrow yes/no answers. Questions such as 'Do you think that water is precious in Christian baptism?' and 'Is water precious to you?' did not require pupils to use the substantive knowledge that they might have gained. These were questions that simply required an opinion. As such, they were not fit for purpose.

23. Curriculum questions were not always anchored in disciplinary discussions. For example, sometimes pupils were asked to respond to the story of the Nativity as though they were one of the characters. This required pupils to

guess or suggest responses, rather than use the texts in the gospel narratives as evidence for their answers. Questions such as 'How would you feel?' were not approached in a way that built pupils' grasp of different ways of knowing. Pupils did not have sufficient knowledge of the differences in the gospel narratives to be able to explain the significance of these in the accounts.

24. Most schools said that they had artefacts from different faiths. However, they were not always used in a way that developed pupils' ways of knowing. Pupils in one school had been learning about Sikh traditions. They recalled some knowledge about who Guru Nanak was. Pupils enjoyed handling objects that represented the 5 Ks. They could suggest what they were when presented with them for the first time. However, they did not have enough knowledge of Sikh traditions to be able to develop this when they were asked to guess what the symbolic meaning of them was.

25. A few schools had identified important passages from religious texts that they thought would help pupils to know more about religious traditions. Some curriculums were written with the aim that pupils would know more about how some traditions were connected. For example, schools explained that they wanted pupils to understand that Christians would know stories that were also found in the Jewish Torah. In a few cases, teachers had higher expectations of how pupils would gain knowledge from and about these texts. They started to help pupils develop knowledge of how different people might interpret religious texts. For example, older pupils in one school considered the different messages of the 2 different narratives of the birth of Jesus in Christian traditions.

26. Although a few primary schools recognised the importance of laying foundations that would enable pupils to recognise different ways of knowing in RE, most did not. Most schools had not chosen to include this as part of their curriculums. Some did not see the relevance of this. Few schools considered different disciplinary aspects, such as discussing where, around the world, followers of different traditions lived in the past and live today.

27. In the few schools that did include ways of knowing content, curriculums were organised around different questions that groups of thinkers ask. For example, some content related to topics that might interest social scientists. In one school, the curriculum specifically identified opportunities for pupils to learn about Christian traditions around the world. Younger pupils learned about 'my life as a Christian' in contrasting locations, such as Liverpool and Israel. They learned about rites of passage in Britain and in other countries around the world, such as Australia. Older pupils looked at maps and statistics about religious demographics in countries around the world.

How one school went about developing ways of knowing in the RE curriculum

One school wanted pupils to be able to understand, before they went to secondary school, the different kinds of questions that scholars might ask about sacred texts. The school wanted pupils to know that not all followers would necessarily gain the same meaning from texts.

The curriculum identified the stories that pupils would learn in key stage 1. For example, pupils listened to the story of the 'Two gardens of Sheba'. They thought about how, to Muslims, faith in Allah was more important than material things. They considered how the story might be interpreted by different Muslims in different ways.

In lower key stage 2, pupils learned about how familiar stories fitted into a religious text as a whole. They learned about the beliefs and attitudes that prevailed when the texts were written and thought about the impact that this had on the stories. So, for example, before they read the story of 'The good Samaritan', they learned about how Jewish people might have thought about Samaritans. They learned about the roles of the priest and Levites so that they could understand what the story might have meant to contemporary audiences as well as to Christians today.

Finally, in upper key stage 2, pupils looked at different translations of the story of creation in Genesis. They thought about how people from different Christian traditions understood and used these passages in the 21st century.

Personal knowledge – pupils' awareness of the presuppositions and values they bring to studying religious and non-religious traditions

Summary of the research review relevant to personal knowledge

Pupils bring to the RE classroom a 'position': their viewpoint or perspective on the world. This position has been described using a range of words such as 'personal worldview' or 'positionality'; we define it as personal knowledge.

In high-quality RE curriculums, leaders are precise in how they select content to develop pupils' personal knowledge. For example, leaders may identify a specific concept such as 'searching', 'salvation' or 'rejoicing' when exploring Christian readings of 'The parable of the lost sheep'. Pupils can reflect on these specific concepts and consider how they might value them in similar or different ways – or may not value them at all. This is particularly important because pupils may not see the immediate value of that content. The focus on both knowledge of religious traditions and on what that

knowledge contributes to pupils' self-understanding is well established in RE. Pupils are free to express their own religious or non-religious identities, and these may or may not change because of their studying RE (and, indeed, there is no obligation for them to change).

28. Most schools visited claimed that their curriculums developed pupils' personal knowledge. Few had specifically planned how and when this would happen. Some believed that it was an inevitable by-product of teaching RE. As one leader stated, 'It just comes out.' Other leaders expected teachers to build in opportunities for reflection. However, these were rarely built into the curriculum systematically.

29. When teaching concepts within specific religious and non-religious traditions, some schools used appropriate stories to help pupils to understand significant concepts. For example, one school used the story of Siddhartha Gautama to help pupils reflect on how they reacted when they witnessed suffering. This helped them to answer the question, 'Where would you go to think about something important to you?' In the weakest cases, specific content was taught in ways that were too often artificially separated from their in-depth contexts.

30. In curriculums that did include opportunities for personal reflection, the point at which these happened differed. Some units built towards questions that pupils would consider, so that they would draw on the substantive knowledge gained across the year to answer them. Pupils could develop their personal knowledge through being taught the substantive knowledge.

31. In other curriculums, pupils were asked to develop their personal knowledge first. This meant that they did not use the substantive knowledge that they gained throughout the course of the unit to deepen their thinking. Pupils did not always reflect on the RE content that leaders had identified. For example, pupils discussed their own ideas about what they would do if they were powerful, without relating this back to the views about power from within the Christian and Islamic traditions that they had been learning about.

32. Approaches to teaching personal knowledge without considered connections to substantive concepts and content were problematic. In one example, pupils were asked to reflect on the Christmas story before they understood what Christians believed about it. This led to unhelpful misconceptions developing, such as the belief that it is 'God's birthday'. Pupils did not always have the knowledge of the concepts related to the story of the Nativity that teachers thought that they had. So, for example, when asked to give 3 reasons why God sent Jesus into the world, one pupil wrote, 'To be king, be kind and pick up litter.'

33. Sometimes, aspects of the curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) were conflated with RE. This meant that the kinds of personal knowledge that pupils were acquiring did not meaningfully draw on the

religious traditions that they were studying. For example, in one school, pupils were asked to explain when they might be kind to others and how they might show love to the world, or to reflect on the life of significant individuals. Teachers did not expect them to use what they had learned to help them to explain what they felt. This meant that tasks were poorly linked to the curriculum, and expectations of what pupils would know and be able to do were low.

34. Some schools wanted pupils to use their substantive knowledge to develop their personal knowledge. For example, in one school, pupils in key stage 2 used examples that they already knew about to explain the idea of different Christians trying to build God's kingdom on Earth. Pupils described how Elizabeth Fry 'did much to alleviate appalling prison conditions in the 18th and 19th centuries'. Pupils recalled the response of Christians in their local area, for example running a local foodbank and the work of the Salvation Army. This informed their own reflections: 'It is hard to believe that poverty and hunger really exist in the UK in this day and age. The truth is, it's a growing reality.'

35. However, pupils did not always have the substantive knowledge that they needed to be able to think and reflect more deeply. This was the case for pupils with SEND as well as their peers. For example, in one class, where pupils were learning about the events in Holy Week, they were asked how they would feel if they were Pontius Pilate, or Mary the mother of Jesus. However, they did not know enough to be able to answer this. Pupils were still learning the events of the story and were not able to give their personal ideas about the significance of these.

How one school went about developing pupils' personal knowledge

One school made deliberate choices about when and how pupils would develop their personal knowledge. The curriculum included specific units that would elicit pupils' reflections at the end of the academic year, so that pupils had built up substantive knowledge of what Christians, Jews, agnostics and atheists might believe. They made sure that pupils knew that there were complexity and variation in these religions and beliefs, as they had studied them the previous year.

The curriculum identified specific vocabulary and important concepts, such as creation and stewardship. Teachers checked that pupils remembered these. Pupils were familiar with texts, such as the accounts of the creation of the world in the book of Genesis. Pupils had learned about these stories earlier in their school career. Having secured this knowledge, pupils were able to use it to explain what they believed themselves. Teachers specifically planned questions so that pupils would come to evaluate an argument and learn to use the language that they needed to explain their own ideas.

Teaching the curriculum

Summary of the research review in relation to teaching the curriculum

High-quality teaching in RE enables pupils to remember the curriculum in the long term. Teachers adopt well-chosen approaches that recognise that different forms of knowledge might require different teaching activities. When teachers are choosing which methods and strategies to use, their decisions should depend on the specific type of content being taught. Importantly, methods and strategies are fit for purpose when they lead to pupils remembering the RE curriculum. Suitable methods are appropriate for what is to be learned (the curriculum object), are well matched to what pupils already know (because they will need certain knowledge to succeed at a task), and prompt pupils to remember previous content. There are a range of classroom activities that may well be enjoyable for pupils in RE; not all of these will lead to pupils remembering what they have been taught in the long term.

36. It was notable that, when inspectors visited lessons, over 50% were focused on developing pupils' knowledge of Christian traditions. However, scrutiny of pupils' work indicated that the curriculum covered a broader range of religious traditions over the year. That said, work about Abrahamic faiths was found far more frequently than work about dharmic faiths.

37. In some schools, the teaching activities chosen were appropriate because they were well suited to pupils' existing knowledge. However, in some cases, pupils did not expect to have to use what they had learned before. For example, pupils learning about Mother Theresa considered quotations that gave reasons why she chose to help those who were suffering. Few pupils were able to relate this to what they had learned about Jesus and understand that, as a follower of Jesus, she was copying what he did. Implicit links that were evident to teachers did not support pupils as well as teachers hoped they might.

38. Before covering sensitive content, schools used a range of examples to prepare pupils for this. They made sure that pupils had the background knowledge that they needed. For example, pupils in one school were learning about places of stillness and calm in Christianity and Islam. Teachers planned to visit a burial ground to enhance this teaching. However, they were also mindful of pupils' individual experiences and how they could prepare them for challenging topics. They thought carefully about suitable activities to explore sensitive content about death and afterlife, particularly for pupils who had suffered bereavement.

39. Many pupils did not have enough substantive knowledge to do extended writing activities or topic tasks. In addition, some activities did not support pupils to develop their knowledge of the topic in authentic ways. For example, some

activities were anachronistic or focused on developing writing in genres. For example, teachers asked pupils to write from the perspective of a religious and historical figure who would almost certainly have been illiterate. These tasks displayed a lack of teachers' subject knowledge and did not help pupils to build their knowledge of RE-specific content.

40. Pupils typically responded positively in RE lessons. They told inspectors that they recognised the importance of learning about faiths and different people's beliefs. However, pupils spoke less favourably about times when they had to do research to find out about faiths. Pupils found this difficult because they had insufficient prior knowledge to do this effectively.

How one school approached teaching the curriculum

One school had recently developed a new curriculum. The subject leader had worked closely with staff to make sure that they had the right subject knowledge to teach the new units of work. The subject leader supported them as they were teaching the unit so that she could make changes in the curriculum in subsequent years. Teachers commented that they felt well supported and could develop their teaching.

When teaching about significant Christians, such as Martin Luther King, leaders included appropriate references to the Bible to explain what he believed and where this came from. This gave pupils the knowledge that they needed to respond to the question 'How often do you think you should forgive someone?' Pupils were in turn able to use passages from the Bible to explain their ideas.

Assessment

Summary of the research review in relation to assessment

In our [RE research review \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education), we highlighted that there has been an overall lack of clarity about what exactly is being assessed in RE. For assessment to be fit for purpose, leaders and teachers need to be clear about what they are testing and why. We focus on the kind of assessment that checks whether pupils have learned the content of the RE curriculum. Approaches to assessment that do not check whether pupils have learned the curriculum are not very useful in determining pupils' progress in RE. In RE, assessment does not have to be used excessively.

Types of assessment and assessing types of knowledge in RE

Summary of the research review relevant to types of assessment and assessing types of knowledge

Assessment has different purposes in the RE curriculum. Formative assessment is granular. It can provide 'in the moment' feedback for pupils. Formative assessment can be used as part of adaptive teaching that, for example, responds to pupils' misconceptions. It can also give teachers very clear feedback on the next steps for teaching RE content. Problems can occur when schools use formative assessment for other purposes, such as accountability. Summative assessment checks whether pupils have learned portions of the curriculum. Those portions increase over time, as pupils are taught more. Schools can use more simple assessment tasks (such as multiple-choice questions) to isolate portions of knowledge, including vocabulary and basic concepts. However, they are a blunter tool for assessing ways of knowing or personal knowledge. Personal knowledge, due to its highly personal nature, might be an aspect of RE that should be unencumbered by assessment.

41. The primary schools sampled used whole-school assessment systems rather than assessment designed to specifically check pupils' substantive and disciplinary knowledge in RE. For example, teachers used some of the same techniques and practices that were used in other subjects, such as skilfully using questions to check what pupils could remember. Questions focused on checking what substantive knowledge the pupils had retained, or whether pupils could find that information quickly in their books. For example, pupils answered questions in simple sentences to explain why babies receive a candle when they are baptised.

42. Summative checks of what pupils have learned in RE did not feature as part of typical school practice. In schools that did use these, assessment seemed to be on a formative basis, lesson by lesson. For example, in one school, leaders explained that teaching began with 'recaps', such as 'We learned about Judaism last term. Can you tell your partner what you remember about Hannukah? Now can you tell me what your partner just told you?'

43. Where RE-specific assessment did take place, it focused on substantive knowledge, particularly vocabulary and definitions of concepts. Schools did not attempt to assess personal knowledge. A few schools anticipated that pupils might not recall some important vocabulary. During the lessons, pupils were reminded of words that might be new to them. Teachers then recapped this during the story they were telling. Pupils used the correct vocabulary to explain the meaning of the story, demonstrating how they were building their conceptual knowledge.

44. Very few schools could explain how they used assessment. In most of the sampled primary schools, the curriculum was not being used as the progression model. Few teachers were able to tell whether the curriculum was remembered over time.

45. Many schools recognised that they were not using assessment well enough in RE. Some had appropriately prioritised establishing a new curriculum first. They were mindful of the fact that they needed to adopt an approach that checked gains in substantive knowledge in a manageable way to avoid undue workload for teachers. Few schools had incorporated developing ways of knowing into their curriculum. Those that had included appropriate elements, such as representations of where followers of different traditions were most populous, did not assess these. They were justifiably not planning assessment of personal knowledge.

Relating assessment expectations to the RE curriculum

Summary of the research review relevant to assessment approaches that use the curriculum as the progression model

The curriculum maps out the journey of what it means 'to get better' at RE. So, when teachers want to know whether pupils have made progress in RE, they are asking a summative question: Have pupils learned and remembered the RE curriculum? If pupils have learned this curriculum, then they have made progress. Assessment models in RE that use 'scales', 'ladders' or 'levels' of generic skills to determine progress are not valid assessment models to assess specific RE curriculums. Assessment practices that report to parents, which are based on something other than checking whether pupils have learned the curriculum, or tasks that do not enable pupils to demonstrate what they have learned from earlier in the curriculum, are not useful. Good-quality assessment in RE relates assessment expectations precisely to the RE curriculum.

46. In most schools that inspectors visited, there was no assessment in place. In some of these schools, the curriculum was new, but not in all. Schools said that introducing assessment was a priority.

47. Some said that they had identified that the ways in which they had used assessment in the past were ineffective. Schools had stopped using them because they did not tell teachers what pupils could or could not remember. They said that they had focused instead on getting the curriculum right. This shows their sensible prioritising of securing appropriate knowledge first.

48. Some schools said that their assessments were based on end-of-key-stage statements in locally agreed syllabuses. These were often organised as end-of-year statements. They described high-level outcomes such as: 'Observe and consider different dimensions of religion so that they can explore and show understanding of similarities and differences between different religions and worldviews.' Statements like this describe a high-level end goal, rather than an assessment outcome. However, leaders had not spent time breaking down these high-level objectives into smaller units of knowledge to cover in their school curriculums. They did not provide a framework for checking how pupils' knowledge grew and deepened over time. As such, these assessments were of little use for making reliable and valid judgements about what pupils knew and could remember.

49. Because schools had not identified component elements in the curriculum, it was not clear what specific content needed to be learned and taught in lessons, units or year groups to meet these abstract or generalised statements. There was not an agreed expectation of what pupils should be able to remember for teachers to check. Assessment, where it took place, did not typically check whether pupils retained this knowledge to be ready for the learning that they would meet next.

50. In a small number of schools, leaders checked what pupils could remember. They did this through speaking to groups of pupils to check whether pupils had learned the intended curriculum. They also sampled pupils' work.

How one school used assessment effectively

In one infant school, the RE curriculum was very clearly defined. Teachers knew precisely what knowledge they expected pupils to have before they left for the junior school. This included important words which pupils would need to know, the stories that they would recall and the conceptual knowledge that they would gain through listening to stories, thereby learning about the ways in which believers lived in a range of countries.

Teachers used assessment tasks that checked important vocabulary. They also used discussions to check what pupils could explain during lessons. Teachers made sure that they listened to what pupils with SEND and those who were disadvantaged could tell them. Swift verbal explanations from teaching assistants helped pupils who had not understood something, or who had missed a lesson, to catch up. Teachers also checked pupils' written work.

This gave teachers deep knowledge of what pupils had and had not remembered. For example, they identified that pupils were able to explain the importance of Shabbat to Jewish people. But they also knew that pupils found it difficult to recall a symbolic meaning of the Chanukiah.

Systems at subject and school level

Summary of the research review in relation to systems, culture, policies and prioritisation

All schools that are state funded, including free schools and academies, are legally required to provide RE as part of their curriculum. They are required to teach RE to all pupils (who are of statutory school age) at all key stages, except those who have been withdrawn. The way in which schools structure and organise this is one indication of the quality of education.

Summary of the research review in relation to prioritising school RE

How the RE curriculum appears on the timetabled curriculum (how it is 'classified') may be an indication of the extent to which a school prioritises RE. Problems can emerge when the subject is too weakly classified (for example, a key stage 2 topic approach that provides pupils with historical and geographical knowledge, but relatively little RE content). What limits the quality of RE can be a lack of scope: there is not enough time to teach a high-quality subject curriculum. Subject organisations suggest that in about a quarter of primary schools, fewer than 45 minutes of teaching time a week were given to RE. Staffing decisions can also affect the quality of RE: at primary, RE classes are often the ones deprived of a main or specialist teacher. A report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on RE found that less than half of primary schools allocated the main teacher to teaching RE.

51. Inspectors found that some RE was being taught in all the primary schools visited. However, the quality and quantity of this varied widely. In 3 schools, RE was not taught in every year group.

52. In a very small number of schools, there was not a distinct curriculum for RE. In these schools, it was incorporated with PSHE or with other humanities subjects. It is worth noting that the blurring of subject boundaries in these cases did not enhance the quality of RE for pupils.

53. In most schools, RE was taught by class teachers. Some had changed to this model recently. This generally applied to both key stage 1 and key stage 2.

54. In most schools visited, RE was taught for around 36 hours at key stage 1 and 45 hours at key stage 2 over the academic year. In schools where teaching time was less than this, the quality of RE was weaker. However, the quality of RE was not decided by time allocation alone. In some schools where the timetable did allow for this amount of time, the curriculum did not have the

impact that leaders intended. However, in the schools where the quality of the planned and taught RE curriculum was stronger, RE featured on the timetable weekly for at least an hour at key stages 1 and 2.

55. RE is a statutory subject for all pupils of statutory school age. However, aspects of the early years foundation stage framework (which is also statutory) include content on religious and cultural communities. All schools that had Reception classes included some of this content. How it was planned and delivered was of variable quality.

56. Inspectors found that the way in which time allocations were organised differed. In schools where RE was solely taught through special RE days, the quality of RE was weaker. However, such days sometimes enhanced the quality of RE in schools where there were also timetabled weekly lessons.

57. In over 30% of schools, RE was taught fortnightly or in blocked half terms, alternating with PSHE. RE was weaker in these schools. Where RE was not taught weekly, pupils remembered less. Pupils did not have the opportunities that they needed to return to important content and recall it.

58. In nearly 70% of schools in the sample, RE had at least a weekly timetabled lesson. In almost all cases, these lessons were taught by the class teacher.

59. In almost a third of primary schools, RE was taught in other ways. These included fortnightly lessons, a half-termly rotation with PSHE or drop-down days. Where RE was not as strong, these ways of organising the timetable for RE were more prevalent.

Teacher education and professional development in RE

Summary of the research review in relation to developing teachers' knowledge and expertise

Although there are clearly strong practitioners within the RE subject community, it is likely that school leaders will have teachers who do not have qualifications in RE. About half of primary school teachers lack confidence in teaching RE. Many primary teachers' views about RE are significantly shaped by the variability of RE they observe in schools during their training. School leaders can mitigate some of these factors by carefully considering the professional development needed to improve teachers' subject knowledge. Areas of professional development for teachers include: RE policy knowledge, RE content knowledge, RE pedagogical content knowledge, and research in RE.

60. Some schools recognised the importance of professional development. In many cases, professional development took place when an agreed syllabus was launched or a new curriculum adopted. This training was often only for the subject leader. Some subject leaders used this knowledge to support staff when new curriculums were introduced. Some had time at the beginning of the year to give an overview of what teachers needed to cover. Teachers appreciated the support. However, this was usually in response to individual requests, rather than following a systematic plan.

61. Over 60% of teachers in the primary schools sampled had not received any professional development in RE about what they were supposed to teach or the way in which they should teach it. Teachers explained that this meant that they sometimes did not understand what they had to teach well enough. One said: 'It's a good framework, but we don't necessarily know which RE concepts we are trying to develop.'

62. It was rarely the case that teachers received any professional development that developed their knowledge of RE policy or research. In schools where RE was stronger, staff had benefited from some professional development. In most cases, this was focused on developing their knowledge of the content of the curriculum and pedagogies appropriate to RE.

63. A few subject leaders had visited classes as a way of supporting their colleagues. However, most did not receive any dedicated leadership time to improve the quality of RE in their school.

Secondary

Curriculum: what pupils need to know and do

Summary of the research review relevant to the curriculum

Through the RE curriculum, pupils should build knowledge of the religious and non-religious traditions that have shaped the world: substantive content and concepts. This knowledge includes knowledge of artefacts, texts, concepts and the diverse lived experiences of individuals who are part of living traditions. Pupils increase their depth of knowledge about such traditions, which provides them with detail on which to build ideas, concepts and theories about religion. At the same time, high-quality RE curriculums should accurately portray the diversity and complexity of religion and non-religion, such as the fluid boundaries between different traditions.

Pupils also need to learn ways of knowing. In high-quality RE, substantive knowledge and disciplinary knowledge are not treated as separate. Leaders might ensure that pupils learn not only selected content, but also tools with which to explore that content. This may include knowledge of well-established methods, processes and tools of scholarship, and of different types of conversation that academic communities use to learn about religion and non-religion.

When pupils learn both substantive content and concepts and ways of knowing, they do so from a position: that of personal knowledge. Pupils come to see the relationship between what they learn on the RE curriculum and their own lives, as they build awareness of the assumptions that they bring to discussions about religious and non-religious traditions. This kind of knowledge also occurs through tensions between their own perspectives and the perspectives of others.

Our research review highlighted a range of factors that affect quality in RE, such as what is included in the RE curriculum, which we call 'curriculum intent', and how that curriculum is taught and assessed, which we call 'curriculum implementation'. When pupils have, in fact, learned and remembered what was planned and taught, we call this 'curriculum impact'. Weaker RE would leave pupils with scant subject knowledge, leaving them ill-prepared to engage with the kinds of diversity and complexity of lived traditions in the modern world and their histories.

Substantive knowledge – knowledge of religious and non-religious traditions

Summary of the research review relevant to substantive knowledge

There are many religious and non-religious traditions that leaders of RE could include within their curriculums. It would be impossible to cover them all. Leaders therefore have to choose to include some content and leave other content out. The RE curriculum can be considered to include collectively enough RE content when what is included enables pupils to be prepared to engage in a complex multi-religious and multi-secular world.

In high-quality RE, pupils work towards these ambitious end goals over time. For example, leaders might consider the mix of content that would be suitable to give pupils an accurate overall conception of religion and non-religion in the world by the end of the curriculum journey. A high-quality curriculum may build towards greater nuance in stages. For example,

leaders may aim to develop pupils' knowledge over time towards theories about religion and non-religion developed by communities of experts. These examples illustrate how the curriculum is the progression model. By the end of the curriculum, pupils should possess accurate knowledge of the complexity and diversity of global religion and non-religion.

A high-quality RE curriculum will also be well sequenced, in such a way that it identifies the specific prior content that is needed for of future content. This is crucial when introducing particularly sensitive or controversial issues in RE, such as topics that relate to perceptions of religion and terror, or the way in which the Holocaust (or Shoah) has shaped Jewish traditions. Pupils will likely need many knowledge components – political, social, emotional, intellectual – in order to study topics such as these in a meaningful way.

64. Given the quality of curriculums found in the majority of schools sampled, it is unlikely that their pupils would build up an overall diverse and rich conception of religion and non-religion. This is because most curriculums lacked collectively enough content to achieve it. Most lacked depth of study in specific religious traditions, which meant that there was a weak conceptual basis for pupils to make links with other traditions.

65. With a handful of exceptions where RE was not taught at all, key stage 3 was the main or only place in the secondary school curriculum where all pupils studied RE content. Fewer than a fifth of schools visited included any discernible RE content at key stages 4 and in sixth form, for those pupils who had not chosen to study the subject at GCSE or A level. This is despite RE being a statutory subject for pupils throughout their schooling.

Key stage 3

66. In this phase, the religious tradition most studied in depth was Christianity. This is not surprising, given that Christianity is the only religious tradition specifically named in law. The next most frequently studied tradition was Buddhism.

67. Most school curriculums in the secondary schools visited covered a range of Abrahamic and dharmic traditions at key stage 3. Dharmic traditions were taught as discrete units, mainly towards the start of the key stage. In most cases, these traditions were not then referenced again at a later stage in the curriculum, so pupils did not have the chance to deepen their knowledge. If the key stage 4 curriculum then concentrated only on the Abrahamic faiths, this would prevent it from giving a balanced view of the variety of world religions.

68. Beyond the top-level headings (such as 'Buddhist practices'), subject leaders in about half of schools had identified some important content that they wanted pupils to learn, such as existentialism or meditation in Buddhism. They specified central tenets of faith in Abrahamic traditions, such as the 10 commandments or the concept of the law and mitzvot. So, pupils might have

met the ideas of morality and sin and the belief in the omniscient nature of God before they undertook work about the problem of evil. However, curriculums did not typically identify the important concepts that connected content. For example, pupils would benefit from knowing how the concept of ahimsa was understood by Gandhi in the context of the struggle for Indian independence or how it might influence what followers of Hindu traditions thought about how animals should be treated.

69. In schools where concepts were identified, pupils rarely had the opportunity to return to them to see how they connected with similar or contrasting concepts in other traditions. So, for example, pupils in one school learned about 'stewardship' when they studied Sikh traditions in Year 7. They learned about the concept of 'sewa' or selfless service. However, they did not then revisit any of this knowledge in the rest of key stages 3 or 4. Although there is no obligation for those traditions to be studied again, in this school there were plenty of other topics or opportunities within the RE curriculum that would have allowed pupils to revisit this concept through contrasting it with comparable concepts from other traditions. Without this linking, pupils were unable to build up a connected conceptual framework about religion and non-religion.

70. In this phase in particular, if pupils studied a particular belief system during one year, they did not usually return to it in the next to deepen their understanding. In some schools, pupils studied dharmic faiths one year and the Abrahamic faiths the next. When links between traditions were emphasised, they were too superficial. Some schools had identified what they thought were 'comparable' elements, such as religions having festivals, holy books or founders. However, these elements do not actually apply to all religious traditions. Examples of those elements that could be compared between different traditions, such as ummah in Islam and the idea of the Khalsa in Sikhism were not always specified in curriculum plans.

71. In around half the secondary schools visited, RE curriculums did not include non-religious worldviews. Some schools commented that this was because of a lack of time. Others stated that they limited their curriculums to what they thought that pupils needed to know to be successful in public examinations at the end of key stage 4. For example, one comment included: 'The exam board doesn't call for it.' Some curriculums were specifically designed to focus on key stage 3 content that mirrors the specifications of the religious studies GCSE. This narrows the scope of the curriculum. Some exposure to curriculum content that is not set out in an exam specification can be helpful. This is true of both religious and non-religious traditions. For instance, learning content about non-religious worldviews at key stage 3 can help prepare pupils to learn how different groups approach social ideas about equality, marriage and the end of life, which they may study at key stage 4. Alternatively, learning about the significance of the characters of Isaac and Ishmael in Jewish traditions at key stage 3 can help with the study of Islam later, even if Judaism is not part of the key stage 4 course.

72. Most curriculums lacked end goals that captured the diversity, fluidity and complexity of global religion and non-religion. Some pupils said that the curriculum did not reflect the place that religious and non-religious experience and thinking actually holds in people's lives.

73. Notably, in 4 schools, pupils told inspectors that the curriculum did not reflect their experience of living in a complex world. Some pupils said that they recognised the importance of learning about a variety of religious traditions. However, they commented on the need to make sense of more complex, contemporary expressions of human experience, such as being spiritual but not religious. For example, one pupil said: 'We learn what the Pope thinks about something, and that's fine. But what about other thinkers, such as Humanists? Or other thinkers? It's not like I'm not interested in learning about Christianity. I am, and I understand why it's important. We're a majority Christian country. But it's not the only way that people think. We're all far more interested when we get to discuss what people are thinking now.'

74. In schools where RE was strongest, pupils recalled what they had been taught and made clear links between what they had learned before and what they were learning then. They could:

- explain the complexity within individual religious traditions as well as the diversity of religious and non-religious traditions
- use a range of sources, from interviews to textual analysis, to make sense of how different people see religion
- explain how they had spent time exploring significant concepts such as 'prophethood' or 'trinity'
- recall how what they had learned about philosophy developed from Year 7 and could explain particular philosophers' points of view
- give examples of how stereotypes have been challenged, such as the misconception that scientific professions are incompatible with belief in God

75. However, in approximately half the secondary schools in the sample, there were significant weaknesses in the curriculum. In these schools, pupils, including those with SEND, had limited recall of what they had been taught. They found it difficult to explain what they had learned about diverse expressions of religious traditions, such as Christian denominations. In these schools, where RE was taught in thematic units, pupils could not distinguish between followers of dharmic and Abrahamic faiths.

How one school went about selecting collectively enough content to include in the RE curriculum

Leaders wanted pupils to understand that the breadth and diversity in religious experience. They made sure that pupils had a strong prior knowledge of monotheistic faiths and, in particular, Christian traditions.

On this basis, in Year 7, the curriculum included an introduction to the dimensions of religions. Leaders wove in further examples of traditions, such as Paganism and Zoroastrianism, to illustrate different aspects. Pupils had the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of how religion could be categorised by considering how well these applied to the variety of traditions examined. Pupils also revisited what they knew about Abrahamic faiths when they encountered Rastafarianism.

The curriculum also included non-religious worldviews. For example, pupils learned about a non-religious worldview systematically in Year 8. They learned how Humanists decide what to believe and their views on death, discrimination and God. They revisited some of this content in Year 9, when they learned about theories of the problem of evil.

Leaders had selected sufficient traditions to ensure that the curriculum amounted to a high-quality subject education, collectively enough. Leaders organised the curriculum so that pupils had the chance to deepen their knowledge year on year.

76. In around half the schools visited, the curriculum was organised so that pupils revisited component elements. All pupils, including those with SEND, accessed this curriculum. For example, in one school, the Year 7 curriculum included an introduction to philosophy framed around the question 'Does God exist?' It also contained a focused study of Christian and Buddhist traditions about life and death. The curriculum built on this in Year 8 through pupils exploring the problem of evil and religious responses to suffering. This gave pupils the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the events of Holy Week in Christian traditions and the concept of attachment in Buddhist traditions.

77. In some schools, the curriculum covered many Abrahamic and dharmic faiths in one year. In some cases, this meant that pupils gained a superficial understanding of the diversity and complexity within religious traditions. For example, in one school, pupils did not have secure and broad enough prior knowledge of Islamic traditions to be able to comment knowledgeably about issues relating to the participation of Muslim women in sport.

78. Only about a third of curriculums included content that addressed the complexity and variation in religious and non-religious traditions. This led to inaccurate representations of traditions.

79. Pupils were presented with stereotypes. This was evidenced through the kinds of claims and statements that pupils made, such as 'Jesus was like a saint'.

80. In many cases, pupils were taught generalisations about, for example, Christianity and Islam, rather than how different Christians and Muslims have constructed ideas about Christianity and Islam. This was revealed when dealing

with moral issues about sexuality. Pupils in one school had developed misconceptions, such as 'Christians don't like gay things'.

81. The great majority of secondary RE curriculums did not equip pupils for controversial or sensitive content in RE through prior, well-sequenced preparatory content. In about 40% of the schools visited, the curriculum focused on developing pupils' knowledge of religious and non-religious perspectives on ethical issues. However, this did not guarantee that they had sufficient prior knowledge to handle controversial or sensitive content. In most of the schools, pupils lacked vital background knowledge about relevant aspects of different traditions. For example, in one school, pupils did not know enough about foundational beliefs within Christian traditions to be able to knowledgeably consider Christian perspectives on moral issues such as abortion. One notable exception was a school where leaders had ensured that pupils had completed an in-depth study of Jewish traditions before they welcomed a Holocaust survivor to speak to pupils. Leaders said that this meant that pupils had a more mature grasp of the subject and were able to ask questions that built on this knowledge.

How one school went about sequencing content to ensure that pupils were well prepared for controversial and sensitive content

Subject leaders developed a sequence of learning that developed pupils' thinking over time.

In early key stage 3, the study of ethical questions was introduced alongside an introduction to arguments about the existence of God. The curriculum included clear content around the in-depth study of Judaeo-Christian traditions, including moral codes such as the 10 commandments. This was built on again at the end of key stage 3, as pupils revisited learning about philosophical and religious thinkers when considering the problem of evil. Pupils secured deep knowledge of both religious traditions and philosophical enquiry.

This was built on in key stages 4 and 5 with questions that required pupils to consider the possible tensions between the rights of an individual and particular religious perspectives. This knowledge became embedded, so that pupils in Year 13 understood the complexity of sensitive issues, such as euthanasia and – specifically – the rights of an individual in a persistent vegetative state.

Key stages 4 and 5

82. In schools that offered a qualification in religious studies at key stage 4, the 2 most common traditions studied were Christianity and Islam.

83. In approximately one third of schools, all pupils followed either the short or full religious studies GCSE course.

84. Of the approximately two thirds of schools in which pupils did not take a qualification in religious studies, very few continued to give pupils specific RE lessons at key stage 4. Most of these curriculums were weak and did not typically build on the knowledge that pupils had gained in key stage 3.

85. Most of the above schools combined RE with PSHE on the timetable. When inspectors considered these curriculums, RE formed a very small proportion of the content. Schools had not clearly defined what pupils should be able to do and know in RE by the end of key stage 4. In some cases, it was indiscernible. These sessions were typically taught during tutor time. In a very few cases, it was part of a clearly planned curriculum. In most, it was not. It was not clear how pupils would get better at RE during these sessions.

86. In schools where there was no statutory RE timetabled at key stage 4, pupils retained little of what they had learned during key stage 3. This was particularly the case for content about dharmic traditions.

87. Sixty per cent of the secondary schools visited had a sixth form. Provision in these varied in quality. In one third of schools, there was no provision at all for the teaching of RE. In another third, leaders said that RE was considered to be in the same part of the curriculum as other subjects such as PSHE or careers education, information, advice and guidance. In some cases, these curriculums built on what pupils had learned before, for example through topics such as stereotypical representations of religions in the media, or Islamophobia. However, in other cases, there was little content that was identifiable as RE. Some schools said that RE was taught during tutor time. However, there was very little evidence that demonstrated how these sessions developed pupils' knowledge in RE.

88. Curriculums in examination classes were better planned, and those who taught RE in the sixth form demonstrated secure subject knowledge. Pupils who were studying for A levels in religious studies or philosophy made secure links with their prior learning. For example, pupils could recall what they had learned about the Eightfold Path (magga) to nibbana/nirvana and the 5 moral precepts (as part of Buddhist ethical teaching) when they considered the difference between the intentions of lay people and monks.

Ways of knowing – learning how to know about religion and non-religion

Summary of the research review relevant to ways of knowing

Ways of knowing is about being scholarly in RE. When pupils learn ways of knowing in RE, they can build knowledge of scholarly tools, methods and processes. They may also build knowledge of types of conversations that academics have about religious and non-religious traditions. They can then develop awareness of how these are connected: that conversations about religion and non-religion carry with them certain assumptions which link to methods and processes and contain certain criteria about what is considered valuable.

In high-quality RE, leaders are precise about what constitutes appropriate evidence or purpose for constructing different types of arguments. When leaders plan for pupils to learn ways of knowing in RE, this can help overcome misconceptions, such as: 'Later ideas in some religious traditions are deviations from an original pure tradition', 'Science is about facts; religion is about opinions' or 'Only loving religion is true religion'.

89. About half the schools visited did not have curriculums that would enable pupils to make sense of the global diversity and complexity of religious and non-religious traditions.

90. Most schools had not identified even the simplest ways of knowing that could illustrate how different knowledge about religion and non-religion could be constructed. Most did not use sources of information, such as interviews with followers of different religious traditions, to show how different people express ideas about religion and non-religion.

91. Some schools' expectations of what pupils would be able to do were low. For example, they did not expect pupils to be able to analyse and interpret texts, including longer portions of religious texts, beyond simple 'proof texts'. In around a third of schools, pupils had limited opportunities to contextualise passages or understand the wider traditions in which they were based.

92. In schools where pupils' disciplinary knowledge was well developed, teachers had taught pupils the different methods that scholars used from Year 7. Opportunities to gain different forms of knowledge were woven in alongside substantive content.

93. Occasionally, misconceptions were communicated to pupils through the curriculum. These tended to take the form of unsustainable generalisations or over-simplifications, for example: 'Christians believe that people should be humble', or 'Religion is a belief in God'. Pupils then developed misconceptions, such as 'Jews think that Jesus is the Messiah' (when not referring to forms of messianic Judaism). Similarly, pupils were not always corrected when they used imprecise terminology.

94. Curriculums in around 40% of schools used enquiry questions. For example, a curriculum question that pupils in one school studied was 'What is

religion?’ The topic was constructed so that pupils could develop knowledge from a sociological perspective, with strong links to ethnographic sources. This informed pupils as they were taught about a range of religions over the key stage. In one school, pupils began to learn stories about different ancient Greek philosophers in order to answer the curriculum enquiry question ‘What does it mean to live a good life?’ Pupils then used this knowledge to begin to learn about epistemology through questions such as ‘What is real?’. This was developed further the following year when pupils explored non-religious worldviews through the question ‘How do Humanists decide what to believe?’

How one school went about developing ways of knowing in the RE curriculum

Leaders had thought carefully about how to weave in disciplinary knowledge. Contextual knowledge that pupils gained in Year 7 framed the discourses that they had in Year 9 about the Genesis narrative. Pupils learned about doctrinal development within Christianity, which gave historical context to how textual interpretation developed over time. Pupils used the questions that scholars from different disciplines, such as philosophy or social science, ask. They also analysed the data relating to the distribution of different religions as they began to consider global patterns of belief.

Personal knowledge – pupils’ awareness of the presuppositions and values they bring to studying religious and non-religious traditions

Summary of the research review relevant to personal knowledge

Pupils bring to the RE classroom a ‘position’, which is their viewpoint or perspective on the world: personal knowledge. Pupils develop their personal knowledge when their assumptions about religious or non-religious traditions are drawn out through the content they study. Content relating to meaning and purpose, human nature, justice in society, values, community and self-fulfilment can all illuminate pupils’ own self-knowledge.

In high-quality RE curriculums, leaders are precise in how they select content to develop pupils’ personal knowledge. For example, leaders may identify a specific concept such as *sewa* (selfless service) in Sikh traditions, together with rich detail about how this may form part of Sikh ways of life. Pupils can reflect on these specific concepts and consider how they might value them in similar or different ways – or may not value them at all. This is

particularly important because pupils may not see the immediate significance of that content. In RE, pupils are free to express their own religious or non-religious identities. These may or may not change because of their studying RE – although of course there is no obligation for them to change.

95. Schools stated that they valued the role that RE plays in developing personal knowledge. They considered that it was part of the broader school curriculum. However, not all could explain how they had planned this in the curriculum or what content they used to develop pupils' personal knowledge.

96. Some schools explained that they thought that personal knowledge formed a part of the curriculum because pupils were asked to give their own views at the end of the unit of teaching. There was a disparity between what leaders thought was in the curriculum to develop personal knowledge and what was evident through speaking to pupils or scrutinising their work.

97. Inspectors found that some schools gave pupils the opportunity to reflect on the content of the RE curriculum. However, in some cases, pupils did not use the knowledge that they had previously gained in RE to help them do this. For example, some pupils knew that many Christians might believe that God had given them dominion over animals. They knew about factory farming and free-range farming. However, they did not use this knowledge when trying to explain the ethical issues of the treatment of animals and how they felt about these. They had not connected the prior learning with the reflection task that they were asked to complete.

How one school went about developing pupils' personal knowledge

Leaders carefully planned the substantive knowledge that pupils would gain. Pupils learned about Jewish messianic expectations and revisited this concept when they learned about different Christian beliefs. Teachers skilfully wove in the opportunity for pupils to develop their personal knowledge once they had secured this component knowledge.

Pupils said that they use this knowledge to reflect. One said: 'We explored the idea of what a messiah is and also our own viewpoint about what we might think that this would mean.' Another pupil added: 'I don't think my views have changed, but it's given me the opportunity to see the world from a Christian perspective, and I can see the possibility for how there could be a God. So, I think it's brilliant to be able to see another point of view.'

Pupils were able to understand the significance of messianic expectations being fulfilled for Christians. However, they did not need to believe this themselves to have deepened their personal knowledge of ideas of hope,

expectation and redemption, which have different connotations for many in a diverse and pluralistic world.

Teaching the curriculum

Summary of the research review in relation to teaching the curriculum

High-quality teaching in RE enables pupils to remember the curriculum in the long term. Well-chosen approaches to classroom teaching enable pupils to build the forms of knowledge that are distinctive to RE. A 'fit-for-purpose' teaching approach (including teachers' selections of procedures, methods and strategies in RE) depends on the subject matter being taught and whether it supports pupils to remember the RE curriculum. Suitable methods are appropriate for the RE curriculum object, are well matched to pupils' prior knowledge (whether pupils have the requisite knowledge to be able to succeed at a task) and support pupils' recall of the curriculum. Without such well-judged teaching approaches, classroom activities may well be enjoyable for pupils but may not lead to curriculum impact.

98. In approximately half the schools visited, the teaching activities chosen were appropriate because they were well suited to pupils' existing knowledge bases. For example, in one lesson, pupils had appropriate knowledge before they answered the question: 'If God was omniscient, what would be the purpose of a test?' Pupils had learned about the Job narrative when they had studied Jewish traditions as well as teachings from Buddhist traditions about suffering and attachment. Skilful teaching built on this through developing pupils' knowledge of the terminology of 'moral evil' and 'natural evil'. Teachers had made sure that pupils' knowledge was broad enough and deep enough to be able to tackle the question.

99. These schools also developed activities to enable pupils to use concepts well. Teachers encouraged pupils to see the connections between concepts, such as 'atonement' and 'forgiveness'. This meant that pupils were able to refine their thinking through using increasingly precise terms. For example, one pupil wrote about beliefs held within the Christian tradition with increasing precision. Following discussion with the teacher, they corrected their work, so that 'Jesus was killed by crucifixion and he came back to life, which was a miracle' was changed to 'Jesus was killed by crucifixion and ascended to heaven after being resurrected'.

100. Sometimes, pedagogical choices were inappropriate. For example, pupils were asked to make posters about ethical issues. However, they did not know

enough about the topics, nor about religious perspectives, to make this a meaningful activity. Pupils did not find this engaging or interesting.

101. In one school, lessons were skilfully adapted for pupils with SEND. Teachers had identified precisely which specialist vocabulary they needed to understand. The pupils studied content that was similar to the expectations of the GCSE course, but in a simpler way. This helped pupils to concentrate on the principles of the design argument more closely. The pupils who needed extra practice in using these words precisely, got it.

102. In the majority of schools, pupils lacked background knowledge to engage with sensitive or controversial content in an informed way. Pupils did not have the knowledge needed to answer questions or debate issues competently. For example, in one school, pupils were asked to summarise how followers of specific religious traditions might view contraception. Pupils did not know enough about methods of contraception or how they worked; nor did they know enough about religious beliefs about the sanctity of life. This prevented them from answering well. There were notable exceptions, however. In one school, pupils were taught about moral codes and ethical issues in Years 7 and 8 before they discussed whether the death penalty should be used. This prepared pupils well for wider discussions about war and conflict at key stage 4.

How one school approached teaching controversial and sensitive issues

This example shows why teaching activities need to be appropriate for the curriculum goal.

A single lesson in the Year 8 curriculum was given to the topic of religion and abortion. In the lesson visited, the curriculum goal was for pupils to learn different religious attitudes to abortion. The teacher chose an activity that explored how the legal status of abortion in England applies at different stages of pregnancy. As much of this was new information for pupils, most of the lesson was taken up by the teacher responding to pupils' questions on the scientific details about what abortion is and what happens. Very little time was given to exploring religious attitudes.

In this instance, the curriculum goal was not to develop pupils' scientific or legal knowledge, but to learn how values and ideas (such as the sanctity of life) shape the attitudes that different religious people hold. The teacher did not take into account the natural curiosity and predictable interest of pupils when planning this activity. This should have been a particularly important consideration for them, especially as this was the only lesson on the topic. Although it was stimulating, the teaching activity was not appropriate because it did not help pupils to reach the curriculum goal.

This example also shows how the RE curriculum should supply pupils with sufficient prior knowledge to learn new content in a meaningful and

nuanced way. In this example, the curriculum was implemented as leaders had intended. Earlier in the curriculum, pupils had studied a topic on inspirational religious figures (such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King), and had one lesson on the Holocaust, one lesson on religion and human life, and one lesson on euthanasia. However, this sequence did not prepare pupils well for each lesson. Their knowledge of specific religious traditions was scant, and so what they knew about different religious attitudes towards all stages of human life was very limited.

103. When teaching concepts within specific religious and non-religious traditions, not all teachers made sure that pupils had the core knowledge that they needed. In the weakest cases, teachers taught specific content in a way that was artificially separated from its in-depth context. For example, in one lesson, pupils were asked to create their own 10 commandments when they did not know anything about the Torah, or where it came from.

104. In a significant minority of RE lessons that inspectors visited, there was little discernible RE content being taught. In some schools, this was because RE curriculum time was used to teach non-RE content, such as relationships, sex and health education (RHSE), study skills or other aspects of personal development.

105. In around a third of the schools visited, teaching focused on developing exam technique prematurely. In the majority of these schools, this practice began in key stage 3. Pupils did not always have the substantive knowledge that they would need to answer a question well. This approach limited the scope of the curriculum and the opportunities to deepen pupils' knowledge. One pupil commented: 'We have to write what we have been taught – [there's] less time for thinking. We are writing to a mark scheme. We have to write "In conclusion I think this" to get the marks, when actually we don't [think this].'

Assessment

Summary of the research review in relation to types of assessment and assessing types of knowledge

There has been an overall lack of clarity about what exactly is being assessed in RE. This confusion has led to, among many things, unreliable assessment practices. For assessment to be fit for purpose, leaders and teachers need to be clear about what they are testing and why. Literature categorises RE assessment into 2 kinds: the 'knowing kind' and the 'personal qualities, beliefs and values kind'. We focus on the first kind of assessment, because this is appropriate for checking the forms of knowledge pupils build through the RE curriculum. High-quality RE uses

assessment sufficiently, but not excessively.

Assessment has different purposes in the RE curriculum, as outlined in the primary school section on [types of assessment and assessing types of knowledge in RE](#).

106. The great majority of schools visited had some form of summative assessment in place at key stage 3. Yet a handful had no meaningful assessment system at all. This was problematic as it meant that leaders and teachers had no way of checking whether the curriculum was being learned.

107. Summative assessments in key stage 3 were typically written by teachers to assess the knowledge that pupils had secured. They checked pupils' use of specialist vocabulary and knowledge of important concepts. These assessments usually took place at the end of the unit. However, they rarely included prior knowledge from previous units. In this way, few schools revisited this in subsequent assessments to see what pupils had remembered over a longer period. This meant that assessments did not actually check how much of the curriculum pupils had learned over time. Therefore, in most cases, assessments were unlikely to provide valid information about pupils' progress through the curriculum.

108. Many schools used 'low stakes' quizzes. Teachers stated that they used them to check what pupils had recalled. However, in about a third of schools, many pupils' knowledge was insecure, and they were not always able to use this information well. This indicates that low stakes quizzes are not a guarantee of pupils remembering the curriculum.

109. Some pupils had a shallow recollection of specific terminology because they lacked in-depth knowledge of the place of that terminology within religious and non-religious traditions. This led to pupils remembering some information but only being able to construct superficial answers to questions. For example, pupils struggled to explain why followers of Hindu traditions might avoid meat, simply saying 'religious reasons'.

Relating assessment expectations to the RE curriculum

Summary of the research review relevant to assessment approaches that use the curriculum as the progression model

The curriculum maps out the journey of what it means 'to get better' at RE. So, teachers want to know whether pupils have made progress in RE and need to ask as a summative question: Have pupils learned and remembered the RE curriculum? If pupils have learned this curriculum, then

they have made progress.

This can be achieved by sampling from the knowledge that teachers expect pupils to retain from earlier parts of the curriculum, as well as checking what has most recently been taught. Assessment models in RE that use 'scales', 'ladders' or 'levels' of generic skills to determine progress are not valid assessment models to assess specific RE curriculums. Assessment practices that report to parents, which are based on something other than checking whether pupils have learned the curriculum, or tasks that do not enable pupils to demonstrate what they have learned from earlier in the curriculum, are not useful. Good-quality assessment in RE relates assessment expectations precisely to the RE curriculum.

110. Positively, most schools sampled no longer used a skills-based ladder as a framework for assessment at key stage 3. A minority of them assessed 'skills'. Some used an assessment framework that was totally disconnected from the curriculum journey, for example an assessment scale of generic skills, such as recounting, explaining, evaluating or analysing.

111. In most of the schools, assessment was related to the intended curriculum. In schools where RE was stronger, leaders had thought carefully about how they would check whether pupils had learned the curriculum, including ways of knowing. In one school, leaders spoke about changing assessment questions from questions like 'What are the 5 Ks?' to questions like 'Why might the life of Guru Nanak impact the lives of Sikhs today?' The former question is more limited in its scope and is far less orientated toward the kind of meaningful questions that scholars might ask about religion and non-religion than the latter. The latter question enables pupils to apply a range of substantive knowledge and to consider the kind of knowledge that would be needed to be able to answer the question appropriately.

Assessment tasks in RE

Summary of the research review relevant to assessment tasks

Summative assessment often includes composite tasks (such as extended writing) to assess learning. These tasks do not separate types of RE knowledge. For example, RE teachers can assess ways of knowing through the ways that pupils use substantive content and concepts to respond to a subject question. These sorts of composite assessment tasks are fit for purpose when they are based on RE curriculum content. In this way, teachers' use of assessment is based on curriculum-related expectations.

At key stages 3, 4 and 5, a common assessment task is for pupils to construct an argument. When teachers are unclear about what is appropriate evidence, purpose and backing for that specific argument, this assessment practice is not as effective as it could be.

Further, there are significant limitations and problems with applying exam-style questions (such as GCSE religious studies exam questions) in non-qualification contexts, including key stage 3. First, pupils will not have had the opportunity to learn the domain of the programme of study. Second, the specific RE curriculum cannot be assessed effectively by generic exam skills. Finally, these types of questions too often promote a narrow 'oppositional' approach to thinking about religious and non-religious traditions.

112. The majority of schools visited used composite tasks as a form of assessment. Typically, this took place at the end of a term or a unit of work. In schools where strong RE was evident, this was closely linked to the ways of knowing that were woven into the curriculum. For example, pupils knowledgeably used textual sources, understanding the context from which they came, or referenced the philosophical thinkers whose arguments they were using.

113. Positively, many schools had moved away from using GCSE assessment criteria in key stage 3. However, approximately one fifth of schools visited applied these assessment approaches prematurely to key stage 3. This approach skewed the curriculum. Some assessment practices led to pupils developing stereotypical ideas based on oversimplifications of what followers of different traditions might think. One school, for example, used excessive and imprecise 'proof texts'. Pupils learning to use a particular quote did not encounter the wider text from which it was derived. As a result, they did not understand that followers of the same faith might interpret texts in different ways.

114. In these schools, not all pupils had developed a detailed knowledge base to draw on before being asked GCSE-style questions. Yet leaders did not identify this as an issue. For example, one leader commented: 'We've tried to provide the skills for GCSE as early as possible. Then it's about developing the knowledge.' This approach is problematic. It does not consider the rich body of knowledge that pupils need to draw on in order to answer complex questions meaningfully. Exam-style questions are designed for pupils who have had the opportunity to learn the domain of the GCSE programme of study.

115. In about one fifth of the schools visited, leaders thought carefully about how to build towards more complex assessments within units of learning. Teachers used a variety of formative tasks to check pupils' security with content. Once pupils had acquired sufficient depth of knowledge, teachers introduced more complex assessment tasks, allowing them to use this knowledge. In one school, an assessment question such as 'What is it like to be

a Muslim in the UK today?’ was not asked until pupils had gained secure knowledge of the concept of ummah, as well as a range of accounts written by young Muslims.

Systems, culture and policies at subject and school level

Summary of the research review in relation to systems, culture and policies

All schools that are state-funded, including free schools and academies, are legally required to provide RE as part of their curriculum. They are required to teach RE to all pupils at all key stages (including sixth form), except those who have been withdrawn. The way in which school leaders organise this is one indication of the quality of education.

Prioritising RE in the school curriculum

Summary of the research review in relation to prioritising school RE

How the RE curriculum appears on the timetabled curriculum (how it is ‘classified’) may be an indication of the extent to which a school prioritises RE. Problems can emerge when the subject is too weakly classified (for example, teaching RE through tutor times or assemblies, or in conjunction with PSHE education where the format limits the curriculum that pupils can learn).

What limits the quality of RE can be a lack of scope: there is not enough time to teach a high-quality subject curriculum. Research by subject organisations suggests that about a quarter of secondary schools gave no dedicated curriculum time to RE. About a third of academies reported no timetabled RE at all. This increases to just under a half of all academies at key stage 4. Staffing decisions can also affect the quality of RE. This may depend on the type of state-funded school. For example, a much greater percentage of RE lessons are taught by a qualified subject specialist in schools of a religious character than in academies.

At key stage 3:

116. In about four fifths of the secondary schools visited, RE occupied, on average, at least a weekly timetabled lesson.

117. In about one fifth of the schools, RE was not strongly 'classified'. It was timetabled in a range of ways, including half-yearly blocks. In 2 schools, what leaders asserted to be the 'RE curriculum' contained, in the main, PSHE content.

118. In just under a third of the schools, leaders had shortened the length of key stage 3 RE. Often, this was the only subject that was timetabled in this way

At key stage 4

119. About four fifths of the schools visited offered a religious studies qualification. In approximately half these schools, all pupils at key stage 4 were required to take either a short or long GCSE in religious studies. In the other half, pupils were given the option to take a GCSE in religious studies.

120. In almost a third of schools with a shortened key stage 3, pupils took their GCSE qualification at the end of Year 10. In most cases, these schools did not provide RE in Year 11.

121. Two thirds of the schools taught statutory RE through a timetabled lesson for all pupils. However, one third of schools offered no timetabled statutory RE lessons at key stage 4. In those schools, leaders said that they taught RE content through other means. Examples of these included assemblies, tutor time and drop-down days. In these schools, the RE curriculum was rarely ambitious enough.

At key stage 5

122. Fifteen of the 25 secondary schools visited had a sixth form. In these schools, just under two thirds offered a qualification in religious studies or a related subject such as philosophy. Most taught statutory RE content through tutor time or PSHE. The RE content was rarely defined clearly or suitably rigorous.

Teacher education and professional development in RE

Summary of the research review in relation to developing teachers' knowledge and expertise

Although there are clearly strong practitioners within the RE subject community, it is likely that school leaders will have teachers who do not have qualifications in RE. More than half of secondary school RE teachers

do not have a qualification or appropriate expertise in the subject. This is a higher proportion than in other subjects. School and subject leaders can mitigate some of these factors by carefully considering the professional development needed to improve teachers' subject knowledge. Areas of professional development for RE teachers include: RE policy knowledge, RE content knowledge, RE pedagogical content knowledge, and research in RE.

123. Over half the schools visited used non-specialist teachers to teach RE. In the majority of these schools, teachers had not had any subject-specific professional development. These teachers did not have the training that they needed to be able to develop their subject knowledge (content knowledge) or to teach subject content (pedagogical content knowledge).

124. In about 90% of the schools, teachers did not have regular access to research in RE. In these cases, specialist RE teachers were unable to keep up to date with developments in their subject.

125. In schools where the quality of RE was stronger, teachers had access to regular professional development. They used research to help them evaluate the strengths and areas for development in the curriculum. They used subject expertise, both in-house and externally sourced, to make sure that the curriculum was suitably ambitious and taught well. These schools said that they valued their links with other schools and with national associations.

How one school developed teachers' subject knowledge

Leaders developed a subject network with other schools in their trust. They used this to exchange knowledge about recent research and to share their different specialist knowledge.

Leaders identified that teachers had less subject knowledge about defined non-religious worldviews and how to teach these systematically. They organised a day when they could work with experts to increase their knowledge and incorporate new professional knowledge into their curriculums. Staff from all the schools were able to work together and deepen collaboration across the RE departments.

Teachers used the knowledge that they had gained when they revised the curriculum. They included a new scheme of work at Year 7. They adapted existing planning in Year 8.

Annex A: Methodological note

This report draws on findings from 50 visits to schools in England. We carried out the visits between September 2021 and April 2023. They took place as part of scheduled school inspections under the education inspection framework and also as specific research visits.

The inspectors who made the visits had relevant expertise in RE and were trained for this work. They carried out a deep dive as part of our methodology for evaluating the quality of education. Inspectors gathered a rich range of data by speaking to senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and pupils, and visiting RE lessons. They also reviewed pupils' work in RE.

Schools were not compelled to take part in the research visits or additional deep dives. It is possible, therefore, that this had an impact on the findings. Schools that thought that RE was weaker may have chosen not to take part.

We identified some criteria for the sample that risked being under-represented. These criteria were: region, inspection outcome, disadvantage quintile, size of school, and rural or urban location. We made sure that the sample was broadly representative of the national picture and that there was some representation from schools with different characteristics. The visits were split evenly between primary and secondary schools. The sample only included schools in which the inspection of RE falls within Ofsted's legal purview.

Inspectors gathered qualitative evidence about RE in the schools they visited. The evidence gathered across these visits enabled us to identify common themes in RE that are likely to be relevant in a wide range of schools.

Inspectors focused on gathering evidence that related to the following areas:

- curriculum
- pedagogy
- assessment
- school-level systems and their impact on RE

When analysing this evidence, we drew on the conception of quality in RE that we outlined in our [RE research review](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education>). This enabled us to consider how RE in English schools relates to our best evidence-based understanding of how schools can ensure high-quality RE for all pupils.

Annex B: Key terms used in this report

Throughout this report, we use the same terminology to describe the forms of knowledge that pupils learn in RE as we did in our [RE research review](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education>). These are not day-to-day terms that we would expect pupils or teachers to necessarily use. Rather, we use them here to recognise at least 3 important types of knowledge that pupils build in RE throughout their time at school.

- **Substantive knowledge** refers to knowledge of the religious and non-religious traditions that have shaped the world: the substantive content and concepts. It includes knowledge of different ways that people express religion and non-religion, as well as artefacts, texts, concepts and narratives found within traditions. Some of these are connected by geographical location and conceptual knowledge. For example, the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam share the figure of Abraham and all regard him as a prophet. Some other faiths, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism, originated in the Indian subcontinent and share some similarities in core beliefs. These are referred to in this report as dharmic faiths. There are, of course, other religious and non-religious traditions, such as e, that may be part of the RE curriculum.
- **Ways of knowing** refers to pupils gaining disciplinary knowledge in RE. This is when pupils learn how knowledge about religious and non-religious traditions is constructed. This is part of 'being scholarly' in RE. It includes both the knowledge of what scholars use to make sense of religion and non-religion and how debates and discussions add to this. So, pupils might learn about what ethnographic information tells them about the Jewish diaspora. They might consider how debates within different orthodox and reformed traditions have an impact on how Jewish people keep the Shabbat.
- **Personal knowledge** refers to pupils' awareness of their own assumptions, presuppositions and reflections that they bring to studying religious and non-religious traditions. This sort of knowledge is similar to academic reflections in higher education.
- **Collectively enough** refers to a curriculum that covers substantive content and concepts collectively, rather than covering excessive amounts of content superficially. Content is sufficient for pupils to grasp a bigger picture about the place of religion and non-religion in the world.

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NATIONAL CONTENT STANDARD FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

JULY 2023
First Edition

National Content Standard for Religious Education

This document sets out a National Content Standard for the subject within the context of National Plan for Religious Education (RE) which would embed the standard into the planning and delivery of the subject in England.

This document draws on The Religious Education Council of England and Wales Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom project, as well as other relevant national publications from the last 5 years. The Draft Resource, published by the RE Council's project, proposes a standard (called a National Entitlement Statement). This document is set out in the style of the National Curriculum and outlines how a National Content Standard for the subject might apply in different types of school. The appendices summarise relevant sources and evidence that have been considered when developing this National Content Standard.

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What is a National Plan for Religious Education?

The proposed National Plan for RE builds on the principles set out in the Commission on RE (2018) and reflects changes that have impacted the education sector since that time, including to initial teacher training and early career development, the expansion of the academy schools programme and a further decline in the level and quality of provision for RE, evidenced for example, in DfE school workforce data and the Ofsted Research Review (2021).

This proposal calls on the government to take action to secure:

1. A refreshed vision for the subject, based on a religion and worldviews approach. So through careful selection of knowledge for the curriculum (see page 6), the subject will explore the nature of religion and worldviews, and the important role that religious³ and non-religious⁴ worldviews play in all human life. This means enabling all pupils to become knowledgeable, open-minded, critical participants in public discourse, who make academically informed judgements about important matters of religion or belief which shape the global landscape. It is a subject for all pupils, whatever their own family background or personal beliefs and practices.
2. high quality teaching for all pupils, in whatever school they attend, planned and delivered by those with a secure knowledge of their curriculum area.

For this reason, it is proposed that:

3. a **National Content Standard** for RE/an education in religion and worldviews be established to set a benchmark for what constitutes high quality in this subject (see page 4)
 - a. Where Academies are free to determine their own curriculum, the Funding Agreement should be amended to specify the nature of the provision required to secure the expected quality of RE/education in religion and worldviews, with the effect that the published syllabus for the subject in these contexts must demonstrate due regard to the National Content Standard.
 - b. systems are established, including through the inspection process, **to hold more effectively to account**, those schools that are failing to have due regard to a National Content Standard.

To support the above two recommendations, a sustained programme of investment in teacher education, linked to the early career framework and ongoing professional development is required. For this reason, is it proposed:

- a. that the proportion of lessons of secondary RE/education in religion and worldviews taught by people who are trained to teach the subject is increased by **reintroducing bursaries and other measures** to recruit trainees
- b. that those training as primary teachers have **sufficient RE/education in religion and worldviews specific training** to feel confident in the classroom
- c. that financial investment is made in **regional RE/education in religion and worldviews hubs** to extend opportunities for schools and teachers to draw upon relevant expertise in their region including through local communities of religion or belief.

Towards a National Content Standard

At the heart of the National Plan for Religious Education is the need to establish a benchmark for what constitutes high quality in the subject – a National Content Standard. Such a benchmark could be used in clarification of regulations about the nature of provision required in Academy schools and may helpfully provide non-statutory guidance for the arms-length curriculum body, Oak National Academy, and its partners, in the upcoming development of a fully resourced curriculum in RE next academic year. Likewise, the National Plan and National Content Standard may support Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education and others with responsibility for RE to play their part in raising standards for all children.

In the first instance, we set out National Content Standard (page 5) drawing upon a range of sources and presented in the style of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. This approach recognises that, whilst the sources set out in the appendices establish that all state funded schools must teach RE, neither primary legislation nor supplementary documents such as academy funding agreements, provide a benchmark for the breadth, depth and level of ambition of the curriculum. Without a National Content Standard therefore, Religious Education lacks parity with the subjects of the National Curriculum despite its statutory place at the core of the basic curriculum (see Education Act 2002 S80 on page 16). This is followed by a reference section setting out the source selection which provides essential material for the creation of this National Content Standard.

Religious Education programmes of study

In the style of the National curriculum in England

NOTE: Whenever the term ‘worldviews’ is used in this document, it means religious and non-religious worldviews.

Purpose of study¹

An education in religion and worldviews should:

- introduce pupils to the rich diversity of religion and non-religion, locally and globally, as a key part of understanding how the world works and what it means to be human
- stimulate pupils’ curiosity about, and interest in, this diversity of worldviews, both religious and non-religious
- expand upon how worldviews work, and how different worldviews, religious and non-religious, influence individuals, communities and society
- develop pupils’ awareness that learning about worldviews involves interpreting the significance and meaning of information they study
- develop pupils’ appreciation of the complexity of worldviews, and sensitivity to the problems of religious language and experience
- induct pupils into the processes and scholarly methods by which we can study religion, religious and non-religious worldviews
- enable pupils, by the end of their studies, to identify positions and presuppositions of different academic disciplines and their implications for understanding
- give pupils opportunities to explore the relationship between religious worldviews and literature, culture and the arts
- include pupils in the enterprise of interrogating the sources of their own developing worldviews and how they may benefit from exploring the rich and complex heritage of humanity
- provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on the relationship between their personal worldviews and the content studied, equipping them to develop their own informed responses in the light of their learning.

Attainment targets

By the end of each key stage, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study.

¹ RE Council Worldviews Project: Draft Resource 2022, page 17

Selecting content

It is vital that syllabus writers and curriculum developers make wise decisions on the selection of knowledge for a curriculum. Time for RE is limited, and the religion and worldviews approach is intended to avoid a proliferation of content, not least because of the impossibility of comprehensive coverage of the diversity of religious and non-religious traditions. The criteria for deciding content include the following:

1. Legal Framework: The relevant legal requirement operates (see page 11), which for most schools and academies without a religious character is that RE 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (Education Act 1996 Section 375). For most schools and academies with a religious character RE is determined by the governors and in their trust deed or equivalent. This primary legislation along with case law, set an expectation that pupils will develop knowledge and understanding of the matters of central importance for the religious and non-religious worldviews studied.

2. Intention: The National Content Standard must frame the intent behind the content selection. The treatment of that content then contributes to the progression of understanding of the elements in the National Content Standard, and the links between them.

3. Inclusive Principle: Best practice in RE, as well as European and domestic legislation, has established the principle that RE in schools without a religious character should be inclusive of both religious and non-religious worldviews. Schools should ensure that the content and delivery of the RE curriculum are inclusive in this respect (noting that this does not imply equal time between religious and non-religious worldviews). All religious and non-religious worldviews studied must have fair and accurate representation.

4. Contextual Factors: Local context is important, including school character, local community character, pupil knowledge and experience, teacher knowledge and experience. Local context also includes the history of local areas, allowing opportunities for local studies that connect teaching and learning with the geographical and historical background.

5. Collectively Enough Principle: Pupils need to gain 'collectively enough' or 'cumulatively sufficient' knowledge (OFSTED 2021), not total coverage. In this context, 'collectively enough' needs to relate to the National Content Standard, with its three broad strands of content, engagement and position.

6. Coherency: Schools should be able to give a clear account of their curriculum choices and carefully consider how they will enable the construction of a coherent curriculum for pupils.

Subject Content

This exemplar content should be read within the context of the legal framework including the primary legislation cited above for different types of school, and case law which together set an expectation that pupils will develop knowledge and understanding of the matters of central importance for the religious and non-religious worldviews studied.

The material below is indicative of the breadth, depth and ambition of the curriculum content about religious and non-religious worldviews, that is required in a curriculum that would meet this National Content Standard. However, schools are not required by law to teach this exemplar content. The standard builds on the legal framework in its assumption that the content of a curriculum in this subject will be age appropriate and focus on religious and non-religious worldviews rather than on content which is the focus of a different curriculum subject. Likewise, for all pupils to have equal access to high quality education in religion and worldviews, the subject must be given adequate time and resources commensurate with its place as a core component of the basic curriculum.

In relation to religion and belief, pupils must be taught:

Content²

- **Nature/formation/expression:** What is meant by worldview and how people's worldviews are formed and expressed through a complex mix of influences and experiences
- **Organised/individual:** How people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or institutional worldviews
- **Contexts:** How worldviews have contexts, reflecting time and place, are highly diverse, and feature continuity and change.
- **Meaning and purpose:** How worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience
- **Values, commitments and morality:** How worldviews may provide guidance on how to live a good life
- **Influence and power:** How worldviews influence, and are influenced by, people and societies

Engagement

- **Ways of knowing:** The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing.
- **Lived experience:** The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people.

² RE Council Worldviews Project: Draft Resource 2022. Expanded statements in the table on page 19f of this document.

- **Dialogue/interpretation:** The field of study of worldviews is to be shown as a dynamic area of debate

Position

- **Personal worldviews reflexivity:** Pupils will reflect on and potentially develop their personal worldviews and make scholarly judgements in the light of their study in the light of their study of religious and non-religious worldviews.
- **Personal worldviews impact:** Pupils will reflect on how their worldviews affect their learning

Making good progress

NOTE: As was stated on page 5, whenever the term ‘worldviews’ is used in this document, it refers to religious and non-religious worldviews.

The National Content Standard is intended to set a standard and a benchmark for an education in religion and worldviews, although there is no single correct way to deliver it. Religious education is part of the statutory basic curriculum and not the National Curriculum. This means that, unlike the core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum, there is no single descriptor of the subject content which must be followed for schools to which the National Curriculum applies. Furthermore, the legal framework for RE in different types of school, means that responsibility for setting the curriculum content, rests with different authorities.

For all these reasons, the national content standard does not recommend one model for making good progress. Instead, one possible example is offered here which demonstrates the breadth, depth and ambition of subject content around which progression needs to build. Two further examples may be found in the Draft Resource pages 42-45.

Standards for EYFS

4-5 year olds might use photographs to observe home lives of some people from a religious tradition, from at least two different contexts. They notice some things that are the same in the homes and some that are different. They notice that some things in their own homes are the same and some are different, and that not everyone is the same. (a, c, g, h, j)*

Standards for Key stage 1

5-7 year olds might look at some religious artwork from a diverse range of contexts (such as pictures of Jesus from around the world) and connect them with some stories or texts that help to interpret the artwork (e.g. gospel accounts pictured). They notice how the different ways of expressing the stories in art are more or less familiar and think about why (e.g. according to their own contexts). They are introduced to a selection of voices to help them find out that such stories may be important in some people’s lives as part of organised worldviews, and find out why (e.g. they may include important people, and ideas about how to live). They find out that all kinds of different people may see the stories as important, but not everyone, and that sometimes this is to do with belief in God. (a, b, c, g, j)

Standards for Lower Key stage 2

7-9 year olds might ask questions about meaning and purpose in life, expressing their own ideas and saying where these ideas come from. They might explore how religious worldviews help some people make sense of life and affect how they live day to day. For example, they might talk to adherents about what it means to believe there is a God, or to believe in salvation, or submission, or karma and samsara – how these ideas can transform

a person's life. They might examine some texts and stories that illustrate these big concepts and find out ways in which they are interpreted. They may reflect on the difference it makes to these interpretations if someone is an adherent or not, including pupils' own perspectives. (a, c, d, g, h, j)

Standards for Upper Key stage 2

9-11 year olds might ask a question about the difference that context makes to one's worldview. For example, after thinking about their own context, they might use and interrogate data, interviews and visual images to examine the differences it makes to be a Muslim in a Muslim majority country (e.g. Indonesia) and a Muslim minority country (e.g. UK), including opportunities and challenges, and how these shape their lived experience – not just intellectual ideas. They might reflect on whether it is similar if someone is non-religious (e.g. Humanist) in a secular society or a religious society. They might reflect on their own context again and consider how it influences their own worldviews. (a, c, e, g, h, j, k)

Standards for Lower Key stage 3

11-12 year olds might ask a question such as 'what is religion?' They might examine a range of common features of religion and carry out some research into their importance in the lives of members of the school and local community, and reflect on the role any of these features play in their own lives. By analysing these, they get an insight into the flexible role of religion in people's lives and worldviews, including their own responses. Having looked at the diversity of expression of religion in people's lives, they can then analyse and evaluate a range of contested academic definitions of religion, reflecting on the impact of a person's worldview on their understanding of 'religion'. (a, b, c, g, h, i, j, k)

Standards for Upper Key stage 3

12-14 year olds might ask questions about how religions change over time. They might explore how significant concepts developed through the ages (e.g. using theological methods to understand Trinity as expressed in art, or theories of atonement in Christian traditions; or the miraculous nature of the Qur'an in Islamic traditions) and how practices develop in place (e.g. RS methods to explore how the Buddha's teaching was adapted as it spread to, for example, Sri Lanka, China, Tibet and the West, exploring how the importance of the story of the life of the Buddha varies across these contexts). They might use these studies to inform their understanding of how such ideas shape cultures and worldviews and enable them to examine questions of power and influence. They might reflect on which methods were most effective in getting to the heart of the matter, and examining why they think so, reflecting on the impact of their personal worldviews on their choices and responses. (a, c, f, g, j, k)

Standards for Key stage 4

Note: Religious education is statutory for all pupils at key stage 4, unless withdrawn by their parents, whether or not they study a course leading to an accredited qualification in the subject, such as GCSE Religious Studies. This National Content Standard assumes that all pupils will have the opportunity to make progress in RE, just as would be expected if they continued to study any other subject in the curriculum, and that teaching time will be provided commensurate with its status as part of the basic curriculum.

14-16 year olds³ might examine the relationship between institutional and individual religious and non-religious worldviews by exploring ethical issues (e.g. Roman Catholic doctrines on sanctity of life and data on Catholic people's attitudes to birth control), or by considering how religion/non-religion is presented in RE in comparison with lived realities (e.g. textbook presentations of religions alongside sociological data on the diverse adherence and practice of religions in India; data on the permeable boundary between religion and non-religion in the UK). They suggest different explanations for these relationships, reflecting on questions of tradition, continuity, change, power and culture. They select and apply appropriate disciplinary tools to evaluate the explanations, recognising the impact of context. Throughout the unit, they reflect on the sources of their own worldviews in the light of their learning. (b, c, e, f, g, j)

Standards for Key Stage 5

Note: Religious education is statutory for all pupils at key stage 5, whether or not they study a course leading to an accredited qualification in the subject, such as A level Religious Studies. The exception to this rule is that pupils may choose to withdraw themselves from the subject once they reach 18 years of age or parents may withdraw them before this age.

16-19 year olds⁴ might reflect on the legal and political dimensions of worldviews, in relation to religious, ethical and social concerns. They might examine the influence of religious and non-religious traditions on attitudes to the environment, to medical advances, to justice and equality in relation to gender, sex and race, and account for the changes across different contexts, using theological and philosophical methods and applying ethical theories (e.g. changing interpretation and application of ancient texts/ teachings to accommodate technological advances and societal changes; contrasting responses between secular and religious contexts to the growth of Pentecostalism in, for example, the USA, Britain, Africa or East Asia). Students might examine their own worldview assumptions and how they affect their responses to these issues, with a growing awareness of the impact of context on their own and others' worldviews. (b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j)

³ and ⁵ Adapted from RE Council Worldviews Project: Draft Resource 2022, page 44 Note: Three models are provided in the Draft Resource and each serve as an example of what progress might look like using the National Content Standard (NCS).

How the National Content Standard would be applied in different types of school.

Content Standard sets a benchmark for the minimum standard of Religious education that all parents can expect following an education in a state funded school. Schools with the freedom to plan their own syllabus for Religious education would be expected to ensure that their syllabus was similar in breadth, depth and ambition to the national content standard. The following table shows how this Standard would be applied in different types of school.

Type of school	Curriculum Legislation as it relates to Religious Education	Standard		
		Standards set out by their governors and in their trust deed or equivalent.	Church of England Statement of Entitlement on Religious Education, Religious Education Directory (CES) Other entitlement statements for schools with a religious character	National content standard for RE
(a) Community, foundation and VA or VC schools without a religious character that follow an Agreed Syllabus	Statutory	Not applicable	Not applicable	Recommended to the Agreed Syllabus Conference as a benchmark for high quality RE
(b) Academies and Free Schools without a religious character	Statutory	Not applicable	Not applicable	Comparable in breadth, depth and ambition to the NCS
(c) Academies which are former VC or Foundation schools with a religious character that followed an Agreed Syllabus	Statutory	Not applicable	Expected	Comparable in breadth, depth and ambition to the NCS
(d) Academies with a religious character, current and former VA schools with a religious character	Statutory	Statutory	Expected	Comparable in breadth, depth and ambition to the NCS
(e) Foundation and Voluntary Controlled Schools with a religious character that follow an Agreed Syllabus	Statutory	Statutory	Expected	Recommended to the Agreed Syllabus Conference as a benchmark for high quality RE

[End of the National Content Standard]

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Appendix A: Sources and Evidence

These sources are quoted for reference in their original form, and do not form part of the National Content Standard.

1. Primary Legislation and Funding Agreements on RE in different types of school

A. Introduction: Religious Education in English Schools (2010)

This section is an extract from the most recent government guidance on Religious education.

The RE curriculum in different types of schools

In all maintained schools RE must be taught according to either the locally agreed syllabus or in accordance with the school's designated religion or religious denomination, or in certain cases the trust deed relating to the school.

Community, foundation and voluntary-aided or voluntary-controlled schools without a religious character

RE must be taught according to the locally agreed syllabus adopted by the LA by which the school is maintained.

Foundation and voluntary-controlled schools with a religious character

RE provision in foundation and voluntary-controlled schools with a religious character is to be provided in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. However, where the parent of any pupil at the school requests that RE is provided in accordance with provisions of the trust deed relating to the school (or, where there is no provision in the trust deed, in accordance with the religion or denomination mentioned in the order designating the school as having a religious character), then the governors must make arrangements for securing that RE is provided to the pupil in accordance with the relevant religion for up to two periods a week unless they are satisfied that there are special circumstances which would make it unreasonable to do so.²⁶

Voluntary-aided schools with a religious character

In these schools RE is to be determined by the governors and in accordance with the provisions of the trust deed relating to the school or, where there is no provision in the trust deed, with the religion or denomination mentioned in the order designating the school as having a religious character.

However, where parents prefer their children to receive RE in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus, and they cannot reasonably or conveniently send their children to a school where the syllabus is in use, then the governing body must make arrangements for RE to be provided to the children within the school in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus unless they are satisfied that there are special circumstances which would make it unreasonable to do so. If the LA is satisfied that the governing body is unwilling to make such arrangements, the LA must make them instead.²⁷

Academies

Academies are all-ability, state-funded schools managed by independent sponsors, established under Section 482 of the Education Act 1996. Some academies have a religious character.

All academies are required, through their funding agreements (see page 17), to teach RE.

26 Schedule 19(3), School Standards and Framework Act 1998

27 Schedule 19(2), School Standards and Framework Act 1998

B. Primary Legislation on Religious Education

A Education Act 1996, Section 375

(3) Every agreed syllabus shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

B School Standards and Framework Act 1998 Schedule 19

Required provision for religious education.

Introductory

1(1) In this Schedule “the required provision for religious education”, in relation to a school, means the provision for pupils at the school which is required by [F1section 80(1)(a) or 101(1)(a) of the Education Act 2002] to be included in the school’s basic curriculum.

(2) In this Schedule “agreed syllabus” has the meaning given by section 375(2) of [F2the Education Act 1996].

Community schools and foundation and voluntary schools without a religious character

2(1) This paragraph applies to—

(a) any community school; and

(b) any foundation or voluntary school which does not have a religious character.

(2) Subject to sub-paragraph (4), the required provision for religious education in the case of pupils at the school is provision for religious education in accordance with an agreed syllabus adopted for the school or for those pupils.

(3) If the school is a secondary school so situated that arrangements cannot conveniently be made for the withdrawal of pupils from it in accordance with section 71 to receive religious education elsewhere and the [F3local authority] are satisfied—

(a) that the parents of any pupils at the school desire them to receive religious education in the school in accordance with the tenets of a particular religion or religious denomination, and

(b) that satisfactory arrangements have been made for the provision of such education to those pupils in the school, and for securing that the cost of providing such education to those pupils in the school will not fall to be met from the school’s budget share or otherwise by the authority,

the authority shall (unless they are satisfied that because of any special circumstances it would be unreasonable to do so) provide facilities for the carrying out of those arrangements.

(4) If immediately before the appointed day the school was a grant-maintained school (within the meaning of the Education Act 1996), and in relation to the school or any pupils at the school the appropriate agreed syllabus as defined by section 382 of that Act was a syllabus falling within subsection (1)(c) of that section, then until—

(a) the end of such period as the Secretary of State may by order prescribe, or

(b) such earlier date as the governing body may determine,

the required provision for religious education in the case of the school or (as the case may be) those pupils is provision for religious education in accordance with that syllabus.

(5) No agreed syllabus shall provide for religious education to be given to pupils at a school to which this paragraph applies by means of any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of a particular religious denomination (but this is not to be taken as prohibiting provision in such a syllabus for the study of such catechisms or formularies).

Foundation and voluntary controlled schools with a religious character

3(1) This paragraph applies to any foundation or voluntary controlled school which has a religious character.

(2) Subject to sub-paragraph (4), the required provision for religious education in the case of pupils at the school is provision for religious education—

(a) in accordance with any arrangements made under sub-paragraph (3), or

(b) subject to any such arrangements, in accordance with an agreed syllabus adopted for the school or for those pupils.

(3) Where the parents of any pupils at the school request that they may receive religious education—

(a) in accordance with any provisions of the trust deed relating to the school, or

(b) where provision for that purpose is not made by such a deed, in accordance with the tenets of the religion or religious denomination specified in relation to the school under section 69(4),

the foundation governors shall (unless they are satisfied that because of any special circumstances it would be unreasonable to do so) make arrangements for securing that such religious education is given to those pupils in the school during not more than two periods in each week.

(4) If immediately before the appointed day the school was a grant-maintained school (within the meaning of the Education Act 1996), and in relation to the school or any pupils at the school the appropriate agreed syllabus as defined by section 382 of that Act was a syllabus falling within subsection (1)(c) of that section, then until—

(a) the end of such period as the Secretary of State may by order prescribe, or

(b) such earlier date as the governing body may determine,

that syllabus shall be treated for the purposes of sub-paragraph (2)(b) as an agreed syllabus adopted for the school or (as the case may be) those pupils.

Voluntary aided schools with a religious character

4(1) This paragraph applies to any voluntary aided school which has a religious character.

(2) The required provision for religious education in the case of pupils at the school is provision for religious education—

(a) in accordance with any provisions of the trust deed relating to the school, or

(b) where provision for that purpose is not made by such a deed, in accordance with the tenets of the religion or religious denomination specified in relation to the school under section 69(4), or

(c) in accordance with any arrangements made under sub-paragraph (3).

(3) Where the parents of any pupils at the school—

(a) desire them to receive religious education in accordance with any agreed syllabus adopted by the [F3]local authority], and

(b) cannot with reasonable convenience cause those pupils to attend a school at which that syllabus is in use,

the governing body shall (unless they are satisfied that because of any special circumstances it would be unreasonable to do so) make arrangements for religious education in accordance with that syllabus to be given to those pupils in the school.

(4) Religious education under any such arrangements shall be given during the times set apart for the giving of religious education in the school in accordance with the provision for that purpose included in the school's basic curriculum by virtue of [F4]section 80(1)(a) or 101(1)(a) of the Education Act 2002].

(5) Any arrangements under sub-paragraph (3) shall be made by the governing body, unless the [F3]local authority] are satisfied that the governing body are unwilling to make them, in which case they shall be made by the authority.

(6) Subject to sub-paragraph (3), the religious education given to pupils at the school shall be under the control of the governing body.

C. Education Act 2002 Section 80

Basic curriculum for every maintained school in England

(1) The curriculum for every maintained school in England shall comprise a basic curriculum which includes—

(a) provision for religious education for all registered pupils at the school (in accordance with such of the provisions of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (c. 31) as apply in relation to the school),

(b) a curriculum for all registered pupils at the school [F1]who have ceased to be young children for the purposes of Part 1 of the Childcare Act 2006] but are not over compulsory school age (known as "the National Curriculum for England")

D. Extracts from relevant Case Law (text in bold added for clarity)

[Fox versus the Secretary of State for Education \(2015\)](#) and [Bowen versus Kent County Council \(2023\)](#)

A. The key paragraph in **the Fox case** in relation to this document is as follows:

*The Strasbourg jurisprudence shows that the duty of impartiality and neutrality owed by the state do not require equal air-time to be given to all shades of belief or conviction. An RE syllabus can quite properly reflect the relative importance of different viewpoints within the relevant society. The same would seem to follow for a region or locality. The duty might therefore be described as one of “due” impartiality. No criticism can be or is made therefore of s 375(3) of the 1996 Act. In addition, of course, a generous latitude must be allowed to the decision-maker as to how that works out in practical terms. But **the complete exclusion of any study of non-religious beliefs for the whole of Key Stage 4, for which the Subject Content would allow, would not in my judgment be compatible with A2P1.(74)***

B. The Bowen case builds on the Fox judgment and Justice Constable takes Justice Warby’s conclusions a step further. He states:

*“it is plain from Fox that a religious education curriculum must, in order to be compliant with the HRA 1998, cover more than religious faith teaching. **The content of religious education teaching must include, at least to some degree, the teaching of non-religious beliefs (such as humanism)**” [68].*

C. It is important also to note Justice Warby’s description of the application of his judgment as follows:

*“I should make clear, for the avoidance of doubt, that the above conclusions have been arrived at with reference to the position of **schools or academies which do not have a religious character**. Schedule 19 of the 1998 Act makes different provision as to RE in schools that do have a religious character (see paras 3 and 4).” (82)*

2. Academy Funding Agreements:

The Funding Agreement is the contract between the Secretary of State for Education and the academy that sets out the terms on which the academy is funded. The Funding Agreement specifies how the academy is run, its duties and the powers the Secretary of State has over the academy. The model funding agreements up to 2010, included the following statement in relation to RE in Academies that were previously required to follow the local agreed syllabus:

“subject to clause 27 , the Academy Trust shall ensure that provision shall be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph 2(5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, [and having regard to the requirements of the QCDA’s national framework for religious education in schools]”

After the closure of QCDA, the section in italics above was removed, with the consequence that the only expectation on Academy Schools was that they provide RE in each year group but with no definition of what constitutes RE or the standards that should be expected.

Mainstream Supplemental Funding Agreement Curriculum

- 2.U The Academy Trust must provide for the teaching of religious education and a daily act of collective worship at the Academy.
- 2.V The Academy Trust must comply with section 71(1)-(6) and (8) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as if the Academy were a community, foundation or voluntary school, and as if references to “religious education” and “religious worship” in that section were references to the religious education and religious worship provided by the Academy in accordance with clause [2.W]/[2.X]/[2.Y] ***select as appropriate***.

[Clauses 2.W – 2.Y reflect the requirements for religious education and daily collective worship – mark the clauses that do not apply as ‘Not used’]

- 2.W **[This clause applies where an academy is designated with a religious character but was not previously a VC school or a foundation school designated with a religious character. Please also use this clause if an academy was previously a VC school but has gone through a significant change process to adopt VA characteristics in parallel with converting to an academy]** Subject to clause 2.V, **where the Academy is designated with a religious character** (in accordance with section 124B of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 or further to section 6(8) of the Academies Act 2010):
- a) provision must be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the tenets of the Academy’s specified religion or religious denomination. This is subject to paragraph 4 of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which applies as if the Academy were a voluntary aided school with a religious character;
 - b) the Academy Trust must comply with section 70(1) of, and Schedule 20 to, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as if the Academy were a foundation school with a religious character or a voluntary school, and as if references to “the required collective worship” were references to collective worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Academy’s specified religion or religious denomination;
 - c) the Academy Trust must ensure that the quality of religious education given to pupils at the Academy and the contents of the Academy’s collective worship given in accordance with the tenets and practices of its specific religion or religious denomination are inspected. The inspection must be conducted by a person chosen by the Academy Trust, and the Academy Trust must ensure that the inspection complies with the statutory provisions and regulations which would apply if the Academy were a foundation or voluntary school designated as having a religious character.
- 2.X Subject to clause 2.V, **where the Academy has not been designated with a religious character** (in accordance with section 124B of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 or further to section 6(8) of the Academies Act 2010):
- a) provision must be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph 2(5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998;
 - b) the Academy must comply with section 70(1) of, and Schedule 20 to, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as if it were a community school or foundation school without a religious character, except that paragraph 4 of that Schedule does not apply. The Academy may apply to the Secretary of State for consent to be relieved of the requirement imposed by paragraph 3(2) of that Schedule.
- 2.Y ***[This clause only applies where an academy was previously a VC school or foundation school designated with a religious character. If an academy was previously a VC school but has gone through a significant change process to adopt VA characteristics in parallel with converting to an academy then please use clause 2.W instead]*** Subject to clause 2.V, the requirements for religious education and collective

worship are as follows:

- a) subject to paragraph 3 of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which will apply as if the Academy were a foundation school or voluntary controlled school with a religious character, provision must be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996;
 - b) the Academy Trust must comply with section 70(1) of, and Schedule 20 to, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as if the Academy were a foundation school with a religious character or a voluntary school, and as if references to “the required collective worship” were references to collective worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Academy’s specified religion or religious denomination;
 - c) ***[Additional sub-clause to be added if the academy is designated with a denominational religious character - CE etc. rather than ‘Christian’]*** the Academy Trust must ensure that the quality of the religious education given to pupils at the Academy and the contents of the Academy’s collective worship, given in accordance with the tenets and practices of its specific religion or religious denomination, is inspected. The inspection must be conducted by a person chosen by the Academy Trust and the Academy Trust must secure that the inspection complies with statutory provisions and regulations which would apply if the Academy were a foundation or voluntary school designated as having a religious character.
- 2.Z The Academy Trust must comply with paragraph 2A of the Schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 in relation to the provision of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education.
- 2.AA The Academy Trust must prevent political indoctrination, and secure the balanced treatment of political issues, in line with the requirements for maintained schools set out in the Education Act 1996, and have regard to any Guidance.

3. Summary of a National Statement of Entitlement

The following summary was developed by the Religion Education Council of England and Wales Education Committee and the RE Policy Unit in 2020. It aimed to provide a summary of the Commission on RE (2018) National Statement of Entitlement. It was included in public documentation in what was commonly known as ‘[CoRE on a Page](#)’. It has been used between 2020 and 2022 by teachers, advisers and other stakeholders to explain the basis of a religion and worldviews approach. It has largely been superseded by the Draft Resource (see p.14)

A summary of the proposed National Entitlement to Religion and Worldviews

Pupils are entitled to be taught, by well qualified and resourced teachers, knowledge and understanding about:

- a. what religion is and worldviews are, and how they are studied;
- b. the impact of religion and worldviews on individuals, communities and societies;
- c. the diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews in society;
- d. the concepts, language and ways of knowing that help us organise and make sense of our knowledge and understanding of religion and worldviews;
- e. the human quest for meaning, so that they are prepared for life in a diverse world and have space to recognise, reflect on and take responsibility for the development of their own personal worldview

4. Ofsted Research Review Series: Religious Education

The purpose of this review [published in 2021](#), was to identify factors that contribute to high-quality school RE curriculums, the teaching of the curriculum, assessment and systems. Ofsted stated that it would then use this understanding of subject quality to examine how RE is taught in England's schools where RE falls under Ofsted's inspection remit. Both in terms of evidence-led policy making and the inspection process, this would suggest that, a National Content Standard would need to be informed by the findings set out below.

Summary of features that may be found in high-quality RE according to recent research:

1. Curriculum progression and debates about knowledge in RE

- A consideration of the knowledge that pupils build through the RE curriculum, because accurate knowledge about religion and non-religion can be beneficial for achieving different purposes and aims for RE.
- High expectations about scholarship in the curriculum to guard against pupils' misconceptions. What is taught and learned in RE is grounded in what is known about religion/non-religion from academic study (scholarship).
- Carefully selected and well-sequenced substantive content and concepts.
- 'Ways of knowing' are appropriately taught alongside the substantive content and are not isolated from the content and concepts that pupils learn.
- A consideration of when pupils should relate the content to their own personal knowledge (for example, prior assumptions).

2. Substantive content and concepts in RE

- 'Collectively enough' substantive content and concepts in the RE curriculum to enable pupils to grasp the complexity of a multi-religious, multi-secular world. This substantive knowledge is a representation and reconstruction of religious and non-religious traditions and concepts.
- Representations of religious and non-religious traditions that are as accurate as possible. Leaders and teachers might use scholarship to construct representations so that pupils do not learn misconceptions.
- Depth of study in certain areas of the RE curriculum to provide pupils with detailed content that is connected with the concepts and ideas that they learn. Without this, more complex discussions about religion and non-religion will be superficial. Leaders and teachers can make intelligent selections for depth of study to indicate a range of religious and non-religious ways of living.
- Detailed knowledge of specific religious and non-religious traditions (such as their stories, narratives, texts and testimonies) in the RE curriculum to enable pupils to make useful connections between content.
- A well-sequenced RE curriculum that prepares pupils with the prior knowledge (including content, concepts and vocabulary) they need for subsequent topics. The importance of this is very clear in the case of controversial and sensitive topics. Leaders and teachers might identify the necessary background knowledge that pupils need to learn for a topic and make sure that the curriculum is ordered to accommodate this.

3. 'Ways of knowing' in RE

- A curriculum design that includes 'ways of knowing' as a form of knowledge that pupils build through the RE curriculum. This helps pupils learn about the construction of substantive knowledge, its accuracy, its reliability and how provisional that knowledge is. Pupils are therefore prepared to think in critical and scholarly ways about the representations of religion and non-religion that they learn through the curriculum and encounter in the world beyond.
- A sequenced RE curriculum that includes scholarly methods and tools that pupils learn.

- Subject leaders and teachers who make good decisions about which ‘ways of knowing’ pupils need to learn and who match the ‘ways of knowing’ to the substantive content.
- Curriculum impact that includes pupils recognising the type of specialist discourse they are engaging in when asking questions, using methods and making claims about different content in the RE curriculum. This might have been achieved, for example, because pupils have learned how disciplinary discourses construct knowledge about religion/non-religion or how groups or families of methods explore religious and non-religious traditions.

4. ‘Personal knowledge’ in RE

- An RE curriculum that does not induct pupils into any religious tradition (in settings where the EIF applies to RE).
- A curriculum that builds pupils’ awareness of their own assumptions and values about the content that they study (‘personal knowledge’).
- Precise, detailed and fruitful content (substantive content and concepts) that subject leaders and curriculum designers have selected to build pupils’ ‘personal knowledge’. Not all substantive content is equally appropriate to select as the basis for developing pupils’ ‘personal knowledge’.
- Subject leaders and teachers who adeptly identify specific content for the development of ‘personal knowledge’ because they recognise that some pupils may not otherwise see the immediate value of that content.

5. Interplay, end goals and competencies

- A curriculum that focuses pupils’ learning on ambitious subject-specific end goals, rather than covers excessive amounts of content superficially.
- Curriculum impact that is achieved by pupils building up accurate knowledge about the complexity and diversity of global religion and non-religion. This provides pupils with many of the ingredients for cultural and civic competencies that are important to many RE teachers.
- Clear curriculum content that subject leaders and curriculum designers have planned to illustrate ‘ways of knowing’ and to develop pupils’ ‘personal knowledge’.
- A clear connection between the ‘ways of knowing’ that pupils learn, the ‘personal knowledge’ that pupils develop through the curriculum and the substantive content and concepts on which both depend.
- Subject leaders of RE who are aware of the ways that the RE curriculum can be susceptible to distortion and have ensured that it does not become distorted.

6. Teaching the curriculum

- Leaders and teachers who consider, when they select classroom activities, how the activities will enable pupils to remember the RE curriculum in the long term.
- Teachers whose judgement about classroom activities is informed by insights from cognitive science about learning, as well as subject-specific insights about the nature of the RE content to be learned. These 2 insights are more important than generic concerns about whether activities are superficially ‘engaging’.
- Leaders and teachers of RE who ensure that, in choosing an appropriate classroom activity, they are clear about what pupils are supposed to learn from it (the curriculum object).
- Teachers who recognise that the success of classroom strategies, methods and procedures depends, to an extent, on whether pupils have sufficient prior RE knowledge (from the curriculum) to succeed at the activity.
- Teaching activities that will continue to draw on, and to remind pupils of, parts of the RE curriculum that pupils have already covered. This enables pupils to learn the RE curriculum in the long term.

7. Assessment

- Different types of assessments are used appropriately:

- Formative assessments can help teachers identify which pupils have misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge, and what those specific misconceptions or gaps are. This can inform teachers about common issues, so they can review or adapt the curriculum as necessary. Formative assessments are less useful in making judgements about how much of the whole curriculum has been learned and remembered.
- Where summative assessments are used for accountability purposes, leaders can ensure that they are sufficiently spaced apart to enable pupils to learn the expanding domain of the curriculum.
- The purpose of the test should guide the type of assessment, the format of the task and when the assessment is needed.
- RE assessment needs to relate to the curriculum, which sets out what it means to 'get better' at RE.
- Leaders and teachers can consider whether existing assessment models in RE do in practice treat the curriculum as the progression model.
- Leaders and teachers can design RE assessments that are fit for purpose, in that they are precisely attuned to the knowledge in the RE curriculum that they intend for pupils to learn.
- Leaders who ensure that assessments are not excessively onerous for teachers.
- Professional development opportunities for leaders and teachers to reflect on how different assessment questions and tasks in RE can frame teachers' and pupils' expectations about engaging with religious and non-religious traditions.

8. Systems, culture and policies

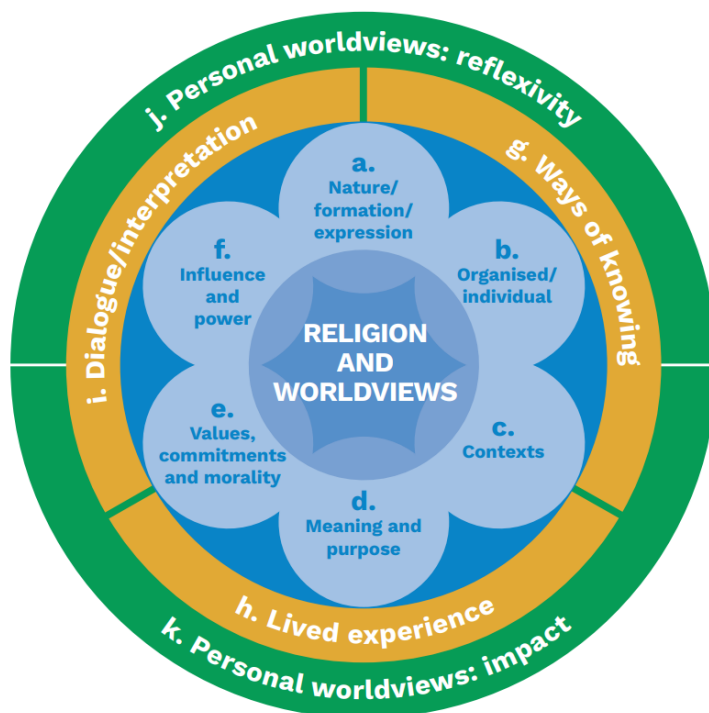
- Sufficient curriculum time allocated to RE in order for leaders to deliver an ambitious RE curriculum.
- Subject-specialist staffing, so that pupils are taught RE by teachers with appropriate subject professional knowledge.
- Access to high-quality in-service training for leaders and teachers of RE to develop their professional subject knowledge.
- Subject leadership that can identify high-quality sources of training (for example, through subject associations and organisations) to further their RE knowledge in policy, subject content, subject pedagogy and RE research.

5. Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom: developing a worldviews approach. A Draft Resource for curriculum developers

The Draft Resource sets out a rationale for a religion and worldviews approach, building on the developments since the 2018 Commission report. It was primarily written to inform three Framework Development Teams, working over 18 months to apply the Handbook guidance to their own contexts. During this process, the Draft Resource is being tested and revised as necessary, before the publication, scheduled for 2024, of a final Handbook, three example frameworks, sample units of work and pupil responses.

At the heart of the Commission on RE final report, was a National Statement of Entitlement indicating that all children in schools are entitled to an education in religion and worldviews. This national statement of entitlement provides a shared vision for the subject that will be interpreted for, and applied in, a variety of different contexts by syllabus writers and curriculum designers.

- reflects the changing religious and secular non-religious diversity of the UK and the world
- is inclusive of, and relevant to, children and young people, whose worldviews may range across the secular religious and non-religious
- approaches the subject from the perspective of worldviews (incorporating religious and non-religious worldviews, personal and communal, individual and organised, plural and diverse) to help pupils navigate the diverse, complex world around them, in relation to religion and belief. The place for this education in religion and worldviews is the subject currently called Religious Education in legislation in England.



To meet this entitlement, pupils must be taught to understand the nature of worldviews, in relation to religion and belief, including:

CONTENT	
<i>Core statements</i>	<i>Expanded statements</i>
a. Nature/formation/expression What is meant by worldview and how people's worldviews are formed and expressed through a complex mix of influences and experiences	The nature and variety of worldviews, and how people's worldviews are formed through a complex mix of influences and experiences, including (for example) rituals, practices, texts, teachings, stories, inspiring individuals, the creative arts, family, tradition, culture, and everyday experiences and actions. How these may also act as ways of expressing and communicating worldviews.
b. Organised/individual How people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or institutional worldviews	How people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or institutional worldviews (e.g. how individual worldviews may be consciously held or tacit; how individual and organised worldviews are dynamic; how individual worldviews may overlap to a greater or lesser extent with organised worldviews)
c. Contexts How worldviews have contexts, reflecting time and place, are highly diverse, and feature continuity and change.	How worldviews have contexts, reflecting their time and place, shaping and being shaped by these, maintaining continuity and also changing; how they are highly diverse and often develop in interaction with each other. (This applies to organised worldviews as well as to individual worldviews.)
d. Meaning and purpose How worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience	How worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience, such as questions of existence, meaning, purpose, knowledge, truth, identity and diversity. How worldviews may play different roles in providing people with ways of making sense of existence and/or their lives, including space for mystery, ambiguity and paradox.
e. Values, commitments and morality How worldviews may provide guidance on how to live a good life	How worldviews may provide a vision of, and guidance on, how to be a good person and live a good life, and may offer ideas of justice, right and wrong, value, beauty, truth and goodness. How individuals and communities may express their values through their commitments.
f. Influence and power How worldviews influence, and are influenced by, people and societies	How worldviews influence people (e.g. providing a 'grand narrative' or story for understanding the world) and influence the exercise of power in societies (e.g. on social norms for communities, or in relation to conflict or peace-making). How society and people can also influence and shape worldviews.

ENGAGEMENT	
<i>Core statements</i>	<i>Expanded statements</i>
g. Ways of knowing The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing.	The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing. Questions and methods should be carefully chosen, recognising that there are different understandings of what knowledge is deemed reliable, valid, credible, truthful etc.
h. Lived experience The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people.	The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people (e.g. religious, non-religious, embodied, diverse, fluid, material, experiential) in relation to local and global contexts, recognising the complex reality of worldviews as they are held, shared and expressed by people in real life.
i. Dialogue/interpretation The field of study of worldviews is to be shown as a dynamic area of debate.	The field of study of worldviews is to be encountered as a dynamic area of dialogue and debate, and one which engages with practices of interpretation and judgement within and between religious and non-religious communities.
POSITION	
<i>Core statements</i>	<i>Expanded statements</i>
j. Personal worldviews: reflexivity Pupils will reflect on and potentially develop their personal worldviews in the light of their study.	Pupils will come to understand their own worldview in greater depth, and how it relates to the worldviews of others, becoming more reflective and reflexive. As they develop this awareness of their positionality in relation to that of others, they will make informed judgements on how (far) this understanding prepares them for life in a diverse world
k. Personal worldviews: impact Pupils will reflect on how their worldviews affect their learning	Pupils will develop their understanding of how their encounters with the subject content of RE are affected and shaped by their worldviews, whether conscious or not, and that this is also true for everyone else. They will reflect on how (far) their learning may have an impact on their worldview.

6. Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Toledo Guiding Principles

The following is taken from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office website:

Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) is a human right which has been guaranteed under international law within the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#) since 1966. Article 18 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, states that ‘everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion’.

FoRB is not just the freedom to hold personal thoughts and convictions, but also being able to express them individually or with others, publicly or in private. It includes the freedom to:

- subscribe to different schools of thought within a religion
- change one’s religion or beliefs, including to leave or abandon religions
- hold non-religious beliefs

No-one should experience discrimination for exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief. This right prohibits the use of coercion to make someone hold or change their religion or belief. It also protects a person from being required to state an affiliation with any particular religion or belief.

As with all human rights, FoRB belongs to people, whether alone or as members of a group, and not to the religion or belief itself. This means that it does not protect religions, or religious figures, from criticism.

In July 2022, the FCDO hosted an International Ministerial on FoRB. At this conference a Statement on FoRB and Education was made, of which the UK Government was a signatory. The full statement is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-education-statement-at-the-international-ministerial-conference-2022/statement-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-education>

This statement says that signatories will commit to:

- prioritising inclusive curricula and teaching, matched to all students' needs, regardless of their background, that provides foundational skills for all. In addition, curricula should provide positive and accurate information about different faith and belief communities and combat negative stereotypes
- support teaching that promotes the equality of all individuals, regardless of their religion
- protecting education establishments and ensuring all students have access to education regardless of their faith or any other characteristic. This includes ensuring access to safe alternative spaces for education in emergencies and protracted crises
- promoting international efforts to support education reform, emphasising the benefits of pluralism and the importance of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief. Regular evaluation of education materials and practices should be carried out to ensure that these standards are always maintained

In addition, the Toledo Guiding Principles (2007) published by the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) and ODOHR (Organisation for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) are relevant in this context. The introduction to the principles states that:

The Guiding Principles are designed to assist not only educators but also legislators, teachers and officials in education ministries, as well as administrators and educators in private or religious schools to ensure that teaching about different religions and beliefs is carried out in a fair and balanced manner.

The Key Guiding Principles set out in the document are:

Whenever teaching about religions and beliefs in public schools is provided in OSCE participating States, the following guiding principles should be considered:

1. Teaching about religions and beliefs must be provided in ways that are fair, accurate and based on sound scholarship. Students should learn about religions and beliefs in an environment respectful of human rights, fundamental freedoms and civic values.
2. Those who teach about religions and beliefs should have a commitment to religious freedom that contributes to a school environment and practices that foster protection of the rights of others in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding among members of the school community.
3. Teaching about religions and beliefs is a major responsibility of schools, but the manner in which this teaching takes place should not undermine or ignore the role of families and religious or belief organizations in transmitting values to successive generations.
4. Efforts should be made to establish advisory bodies at different levels that take an inclusive approach to involving different stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of curricula and in the training of teachers.

5. Where a compulsory programme involving teaching about religions and beliefs is not sufficiently objective, efforts should be made to revise it to make it more balanced and impartial, but where this is not possible, or cannot be accomplished immediately, recognizing opt-out rights may be a satisfactory solution for parents and pupils, provided that the opt-out arrangements are structured in a sensitive and non-discriminatory way.

6. Those who teach about religions and beliefs should be adequately educated to do so. Such teachers need to have the knowledge, attitude and skills to teach about religions and beliefs in a fair and balanced way. Teachers need not only subject-matter competence but pedagogical skills so that they can interact with students and help students interact with each other in sensitive and respectful ways.

7. Preparation of curricula, textbooks and educational materials for teaching about religions and beliefs should take into account religious and non-religious views in a way that is inclusive, fair, and respectful. Care should be taken to avoid inaccurate or prejudicial material, particularly when this reinforces negative stereotypes.

8. Curricula should be developed in accordance with recognised professional standards in order to ensure a balanced approach to study about religions and beliefs. Development and implementation of curricula should also include open and fair procedures that give all interested parties appropriate opportunities to offer comments and advice.

9. Quality curricula in the area of teaching about religions and beliefs can only contribute effectively to the educational aims of the Toledo Guiding Principles if teachers are professionally trained to use the curricula and receive ongoing training to further develop their knowledge and competences regarding this subject matter. Any basic teacher preparation should be framed and developed according to democratic and human rights principles and include insight into cultural and religious diversity in society.

10. Curricula focusing on teaching about religions and beliefs should give attention to key historical and contemporary developments pertaining to religion and belief, and reflect global and local issues. They should be sensitive to different local manifestations of religious and secular plurality found in schools and the communities they serve. Such sensitivities will help address the concerns of students, parents and other stakeholders in education.

7. Statutory requirements for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development and Fundamental British Values.

All maintained schools must meet the requirements set out in section 78 of the Education Act 2002 and promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of their pupils. Through ensuring pupils' SMSC development, schools can also demonstrate they are actively promoting fundamental British values.

Accountability

As part of a section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors must consider pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development when forming a judgement of a school. However this advice should not be read as guidance for inspection purposes. Ofsted publish their inspection framework and handbook, which set out how schools are assessed in relation to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Schools should refer to Ofsted's documents to understand what inspectors look for in assessing this."

[Ofsted School inspection handbook EIF 2022](#) - Updated 11 July 2022

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

299. Inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This is a broad concept that can be seen across the

school's activities, but draws together many of the areas covered by the personal development judgement.

300. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils includes developing their:

- ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life
- knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths, feelings and values
- sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them
- use of imagination and creativity in their learning
- willingness to reflect on their experiences

8. Statutory Guidance: What schools must publish online

This guidance places a responsibility on schools to ensure that parents and carers have access to information about what their children are learning in each subject of the curriculum. The publication of the curriculum can also be accessed by Ofsted inspection teams as an aspect of making judgements about the breadth, balance and ambition of the curriculum or, if concerns are raised, lead to a decision to carry out a section 8 inspection (See extract from the Ofsted Handbook for inspection below.)

The guidance is copied below:

Curriculum

You must publish:

- the content of your school curriculum in each academic year for every subject - this includes mandatory subjects such as religious education, even if it is taught as part of another subject or subjects, or is called something else

[Ofsted Handbook for inspection extract](#)

37. As is the case for all schools, a good or outstanding school may still receive an urgent inspection (carried out under section 8) at any time in certain circumstances (see part 4). For example, we may decide that we should inspect a school earlier than its next scheduled inspection if:

- concerns are identified about the breadth and balance of the curriculum (including whether the statutory requirement to publish information to parents is not met).

Latest news and updates from NASACRE

[View this email in your browser](#)



National Association of
Standing Advisory Councils
on Religious Education

SACRE BRIEFING

Issue: 38

This issue includes:

- **Introduction**
- **Conference**
- **Business Meeting**
- **National Content Standard (NCS)**
- **REady for Work Campaign**
- **RE Hubs**
- **Closure of the Inter Faith Network**
- **Subscribing to NASACRE**
- **Webinar programme**
- **Website update**
- **Items for your next Agenda**

Introduction

We are very pleased that the 'in conversation' events hosted by the RE Hubs and the Executive were so well attended and lively. We are working to take on board suggestions arising from those meetings and to secure charitable funding to support further events.

In this Briefing we are delighted to share information about our upcoming Conference and AGM.

As you know our Executive is made up of volunteers, who seek to work together in the best interests of all member SACREs. Executive members have busy 'other' lives and as our work has grown over the last few years, this has stretched everyone working on the Executive.

arrangement by becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), which means that NASACRE will at long last become a legal entity! This will enable us to apply for funding to finance projects and other areas of work for the benefit of our members. The work towards this has taken a lot longer than we had first hoped. We will, of course, continue to update you on progress.

David Levien who was elected as Vice Chair in 2023, has resigned from the Executive to focus on his work with SACREs in the North West. We thank him for his work over the past year.

At the next AGM, Linda - our current Chair - will step into the Assistant to the Chair role as planned in line with our current constitution, which leaves us without a Chair.

Bill Moore is currently acting as Vice Chair until the AGM, where we hope that we will be able to elect a new Vice Chair nominated by a SACRE.

We are proposing that 3 former Chairs on the Exec (Bill, Denise and Paul) might act as Co-Chairs until the newly-elected Vice Chair is ready to fill the Chair role in a year or two, either solo or as a job share.

Be assured we have a great Conference planned for May, with an ongoing extensive CPD offer, and we continue to work to represent all SACREs on the national stage. We are grateful for your continued support.

Conference

How can SACREs support high quality RE & Collective Worship?

Download the [conference programme](#).

How can SACREs support high quality RE & Collective Worship?

Monday 20 May 2024, 10:30-15:30
Hilton York



X handle: [@NASACRE](#)
Tag us: [#NASACRE24](#)

Time	Details
10:15 10:30	Arrival, refreshments and networking Registration desk
11:00	Welcome and introduction from the Chair - Linda Rudge Message from Our Patron - Charles Clarke
11:10	Session 1: A year in the world of RE - Paul Smalley & Dr Kathryn Wright
11:30	Table discussions 
11:45	Session 2: The Big Ambition: the importance of high-quality RE for happy, healthy and successful childhoods Keynote speaker: Dame Rachel de Souza Children's Commissioner for England <i>Dame Rachel was appointed as Children's Commissioner in 2021. In this role she has unique legislative powers, is an advocate for children across the country, and represents children's needs across Government. As a teacher, head and multi-academy trust founder, Dame Rachel built a reputation for turning around failing schools in deprived parts of the country.</i>
12:15	Qs to keynote speaker from Young Ambassadors for RE
12:30	Table discussions Opportunity for Q/A/comments from the floor 
12:50 LUNCH	<i>There is a space available for prayer during lunchtime</i>
13:45	Session 3: 30 ideas about how activist SACREs can make a positive difference for the future of RE Keynote speaker: Lat Blaylock <i>Lat has been an RE adviser to several SACREs over the years. He is the former editor of REtoday magazine. He has written many RE resources including 'Picturing Christianity', 'Big, Big Questions' and 'Spiritual Engagement' (a folder of ideas for 16-19 RE), training many thousands of teachers.</i>
14:15	Table discussions Opportunity for Q/A/comments from the floor 
14:40	Westhill Awards 2024 - winners announced
14:50	Business meeting AOB (notified by 5pm, Friday 10 May 2024)
15:25	Closing comments from the Chair followed by refreshments

Every SACRE can send a maximum of 2 delegates, after which delegates will go on a waiting list.

Subscribed SACREs: Conference fee is £120 per delegate to include a choice of 2 online workshops in June.

Subscribed SACREs can pay an extra £50 so that another 2 of their members can each attend 2 workshops.

Non-subscribed SACREs: £160 per delegate which also enables them to attend 2 workshops.

Delegates have a choice of **online workshops** running over 4 days.

How can SACREs support high quality RE & Collective Worship?

National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education

Virtual Workshops		
5-6 pm		
7-8 pm		
Twitter handle: @NASACRE Tag us using: #NASACRE24		
Mon 3rd June	1 of 2 workshops 5-6 pm	<p>The RE Council's National Content Standard - how it might support the work of SACREs & Agreed Syllabus Conferences</p> <p>Presenter: Deborah Weston</p> <p>Brief: <i>This workshop aims to explore the potential of the National Content Standard (NCS) for RE in England to help raise standards in RE. The NCS is designed to work within the current legislative framework for RE in different types of schools, including Academies, LA maintained schools and those with or without a religious character. It does not prescribe a set of content, but rather suggests a set of principles for the selection of content and a benchmark for what constitutes 'high-quality RE'. SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences can then choose to evaluate their work whilst remaining free to devise a syllabus for their context.</i></p>
	2 of 2 workshops 7-8 pm	<p>Analysis of annual SACRE reports 2024</p> <p>Presenter: Dr David Hampshire</p> <p>Brief: <i>This is the third year running that David has analysed data from the SACRE annual reports with the DfE; he will be presenting the findings and provide SACREs with the opportunity to reflect on their own practice.</i></p>
Tues 4th June	1 of 2 workshops 5-6 pm	<p>SACRE Chairs: Membership of your SACRE</p> <p>Presenter: Catherine Hughes</p> <p>Brief: <i>This workshop is especially for SACRE Chairs and Vice Chairs who want to think about and reflect on effective strategies to ensure their SACRE has the active membership it needs to function well. The workshop will also benefit Chairs who are new to the role, in leading meetings and ensuring an active membership.</i></p>
	2 of 2 workshops 7-8 pm	<p>Making your SACRE work for you</p> <p>Presenter: Claire Clinton</p> <p>Brief: <i>This workshop will provide plenty of case studies, examples and practical ideas of how a SACRE can support RE & CW in schools, whatever your SACRE budget!</i></p>

		7-8 pm	
		Twitter handle: @NASACRE Tag us using: #NASACRE24	
Wed 5 th June	1 of 2 workshops 5-6 pm	<p>NASACRE & Westhill grants: winners 2022-2023 <i>The Leicester Schools Peace Project - SACRE and peace education in the new Leicester RE Agreed Syllabus</i></p> <p>Presenter: Leicester SACRE</p> <p>Brief: <i>This project began in 2020 by discovering local peace stories - partnerships with peace groups, University of Leicester, RE teachers and Leicester SACRE, together with fundraising and adding peace studies as an additional dimension in the city's new agreed syllabus.</i></p>	
	2 of 2 workshops 7-8 pm	<p>How RE Hubs can provide support for your SACRE</p> <p>Presenters: RE Hub Leads with Claire Clinton</p> <p>Brief: <i>A chance to find out more about RE Hubs UK's aims, website and how the programme can support the work of your SACRE. From our Kite-marked training for Places of Interest and school speakers, to high quality resources and training for RE teachers.</i></p>	
Thurs 6 th June	1 of 2 workshops 5-6 pm	<p>How SACREs can create their own tables using DfE data to support their monitoring role</p> <p>Presenter: Deborah Weston</p> <p>Brief: <i>This will be a practical workshop demonstrating how you can find Department for Education school level data and create tables for your specific local authority. You can record information such as GCSE attainment for Religious Studies at 9-4 and 9-5, compare attainment for boys and girls, check performance for other subjects and with national averages. This information will give you the basis for a conversation with schools as part of SACRE's monitoring role and present opportunities to celebrate success in individual schools or to ask questions about apparent under-performance.</i></p>	
	2 of 2 workshops 7-8 pm	<p>To Ofsted and beyond! Some thinking about, and sharing a toolkit for, developing whole school SMSC</p> <p>Presenter: Bill Moore</p> <p>Brief: <i>SMSC is more than an Ofsted tick-box, though the Ofsted criteria do provide a helpful tool for development. In this webinar, we will explore a deeper educational rationale for SMSC and how you can support schools to see it as a central aspect of improving schools. We will consider a toolkit that you can share with schools to identify, monitor and develop whole school provision and how this sits within a wider – and deeper – vision for education.</i></p>	

Whilst we hope that you will join us in York in person, we also offer an online Zoom option for up to 25 delegates (at the same price). Please state this on the booking form.

When **booking**, please let us know your **dietary needs**.

Click for further information about getting to **Hilton York**

Business Meeting

The NASACRE AGM will not be held at Conference this year. Instead, we'll have a Business Meeting to outline our plans taking NASACRE forward as a CIO, and to consider a draft CIO constitution. Other future plans are under discussion - we'll keep the **Conference webpage** updated with the new documentation.

Eventually, when we finally hold the AGM later in the year, we'll need to elect new Exec/Board members. Please be proactive in your SACRE to begin considering which of your members may have the time and the skill-set to join our NASACRE team.

National Content Standard (NCS)

Entitlement Statement for syllabus writers/creators, ensuring they develop a broad and balanced curriculum.

The NCS has been endorsed by many RE professional organisations; NASACRE has agreed to recommend the NCS to SACREs as a document for Agreed Syllabus Conferences to consider.

REady for Work Campaign

This new project is being led by **Lord Karan Bilimoria, CBE, DL, FCA**.

Employers are being urged to **sign a Call to Action** pledging support for students who have expressed an interest in a high quality education in religion and worldviews as preparation for the future workplace.

RE Hubs

Aims of RE Hubs Project



Improve connections: "Subject leadership that can identify high-quality sources of training to further their RE knowledge in policy, subject content, subject pedagogy and RE research." (*Ofsted RE Research Review 2021*)



Improve confidence in teaching: "Confidence was particularly low for those teaching Religious Education (38%)". (*Working lives of teachers and leaders 2023*) "Half of primary school teachers lacked confidence in teaching RE and more than half of secondary school RE teachers had no qualification or appropriate expertise in the subject." (*Ofsted RE Research Review 2021*)



Improve communication: "RE in primary and secondary schools enables pupils to take their place within a diverse multi-religious and multi-secular society. At its best, it is intellectually challenging and personally enriching. It affords pupils both the opportunity to see the religion and non-religion in the world, and the opportunity to make sense of their own place in that world" (*Ofsted RE Research Review 2021*)



Information exchange platform: Championing ambitious Religious Education/Religion, Values & Ethics/Religion & Worldviews (RE/RVE/R&W), in order to support schools to deliver brilliant lessons to every child. Sharing best, evidenced-based, researched teaching practices from experts. (*Adapted from Opportunity for all 2022*)



Create a long-term model for subject specialist teachers: "At primary and secondary level, pupils should be taught by teachers who have secure subject and curriculum knowledge, who foster pupils' interest in the subject and who are equipped to address pupils' misunderstandings." (*Ofsted RE Research Review 2021*)

A reminder that your SACRE can advertise FREE monthly kite-marked training (by RE Hubs) for places of interest and school speakers, to ensure they are up-to-date with high quality practice in education. If you run training in your LA, please contact director@re-hubs.uk to find out how you can gain our kite-mark for those completing your training. Click [here](#) to access our flyer which details training dates and times.

RE Hubs, working with NATRE and AREIAC, have 2 upcoming meetings you might be interested to highlight to your schools and teachers:

1. **MAT leads in RE network** - 25 April, 4-5:30pm. Click [here](#) for further details and a flyer. FREE for NATRE & AREIAC members.
2. **Leading a local RE network** - 17 April, 4-5:30pm. Click [here](#) for further details and a flyer. FREE virtual CPD.

great support and resources for RE.

If you would like us to link to a resource that isn't up on our site yet, please do get in touch with **Claire Clinton**, the lead director.

Closure of the Inter Faith Network

It is with great sadness that I write this piece on the **closure of the Inter Faith Network**. Many will be aware that government funding for the organisation has been withdrawn. IFN's Board has now agreed a solvent closure date of 30 April; the office will remain open until Monday 29 April.

For more than thirty years the organisation has worked diligently to fulfil its aims to work through 'education, advocacy, and creation of opportunities for meeting, to:

- widen public awareness of the religious traditions in the UK, including their distinctive features and their common ground
- increase inter-faith understanding and cooperation and good relations at all levels of society.

Engagement between the IFN and bodies such as the REC (Religious Education Council) NASACRE and individual SACREs has provided a useful conduit for exploring ideas about interfaith in educational contexts. This has resulted in, for example, helpful publications to aid teachers in the classroom.

The organisation's web content is testimony to its inspiration and success in these ideals, whether it's in celebrating Inter Faith Week, providing ideas for good practice (locally and nationally) or encouraging youth interaction through, for example, sport.

For further interest:

Statements and messages - News - The Inter Faith Network (IFN)

Inter faith activity - The Inter Faith Network (IFN)

Resources - The Inter Faith Network (IFN)

News - The Inter Faith Network (IFN)

I cannot but agree with a participant attending one of the organisation's Annual Meetings who said, given our current context, "If we did not have an IFN, we would desperately need to invent it for the work it undertakes!"

Jo Backus, Exec Member

Subscribing to NASACRE

Is your SACRE a subscribed member of NASACRE?

If not, you will be missing out on the subscriber only content on the webpage and a range of other benefits:

- answers to FAQs about SACREs' work
- opportunity to take advantage of a generous **virtual training** package for any number of your SACRE members
- access to training resources
- opportunity, at reduced cost, to attend NASACRE conference and other meetings.

The rates for the current year are:

Annual subscription: **£105**

Additional training package: **£50**

Contact admin@nasacre.org.uk to update your subscription.

Webinar programme

The next in our successful series of webinars is hosted by Exec members for those who are new to SACRE.

Wednesday 26th June 2024, 6:30-8pm:

So, you've joined your local SACRE...

A rerun of the September session, to help new SACRE members to understand their role, how SACRE works, its statutory responsibilities and how members make their contribution to SACRE's work.

FREE session - for further details please contact admin@nasacre.org.uk

Website update

Exec members have been reorganising and streamlining the **NASACRE website**. Please encourage your SACRE members to access the site, check out new pages, the **Noticeboard** and how subscribing SACREs can **share their documents**.

Items for your next Agenda

- Sign up for **NASACRE Webinars**
- Consider who to nominate for election to the Exec and who to book for the **York Conference** (by 10 May)
- Discuss the **NCS**
- Submit your SACRE Annual Report (2022-23) if you've not already done so
- Familiarise yourself with the changes made to the **NASACRE website** and consider whether you have any documents you can share (subscriber SACREs only)
- Consider how your SACRE can draw the attention of employers to the **REady for Work campaign** for employers and business leaders



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