

All Members of the Reading Standing  
Advisory Council on Religious Education

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15 November 2013

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NOTICE OF MEETING - READING STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION -  
27 NOVEMBER 2013

A meeting of the Reading SACRE will be held on **Wednesday 27 November 2013 at 6.30 pm in  
Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, Reading.**

The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

AGENDA

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	• 3 March 2014 at 6.30 pm	

READING STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MINUTES -  
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**Present:**

Rabbi Zvi Solomons	Jewish Faith (Group A)
Anne Cheeseman	Church of England (Group B)
Robin Sharples	Church of England (Group B)
Michael Freeman	ATL (Group C)
Councillor Ennis	Reading Borough Council (Group D)
Councillor Hopper	Reading Borough Council (Group D)
Councillor McElligott	Reading Borough Council (Group D)
Councillor O'Connell	Reading Borough Council (Group D)

**Also in Attendance:**

Jamie Howell	Berkshire Humanist
Jan Lever	RE Consultant
Richard Woodford	Reading Borough Council

**Apologies:**

Ashok Khare	Hindu Faith (Group A)
Mustafa Chaudhary	Islam (Group A)
Jo Fageant	Church of England (Group B)
Vera Bodman	NUT (Group C)

**1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

Rabbi Solomons was elected as Chair of the SACRE for the Municipal Year 2013/2014.

**2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

Anne Cheeseman was elected as Vice-Chair of the SACRE for the Municipal Year 2013/2014.

**3. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

Further to Minute 3 of the last meeting, Other Business - DVD: Who am I ?, Rabbi Solomons informed the members of the SACRE that he had yet to take forward the suggestion that the DVD should be made available to all schools.

Further to Minute 4 of the last meeting, Draft Annual Report, the introduction to the report had to be written by the Chair and although examination results had been received from some schools they had not been received from all of them.

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**5. MEMBERSHIP - APPOINTMENT OF NEW MEMBERS/CONFIRMATION OF EXISTING MEMBERS**

The SACRE discussed the current membership and vacancies following the appointment of new members and confirmation being sought from faith groups by existing members regarding their continuing membership of the SACRE.

Although membership of Groups A and B had increased there were now very few members of Group C, Associations representing teachers, and it was suggested that rather than specifying the unions from which members had to be sought the SACRE Constitution should be amended so that up to five representatives from any teaching union could be members.

Jan Lever told the SACRE that a request for Headteacher representatives could be included in an article that was to appear in a future Schools Bulletin.

The SACRE agreed that the issue should be discussed at the next meeting.

**AGREED:**

- (1) That the position be noted;
- (2) That Jan Lever arrange for a request for Headteacher representatives be included in a future Schools Bulletin;
- (3) That the Membership of the SACRE be discussed at the next meeting.

**6. RE: THE TRUTH UNMASKED - REPORT BY THE ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Jan Lever, submitted a copy of a report by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Religious Education: RE The Truth Unmasked - The supply and support for Religious Education teachers.

Jan told the SACRE that there were two significant findings from the report relating to the supply of RE teachers and training, issues that applied to the teaching of RE across the country.

With regard to the supply of RE teachers the inquiry had found that in over half of the 300 primary schools that had participated in the inquiry some or all pupils had been taught RE by someone other than their class teacher and in a quarter of these schools RE had been taught by teaching assistants. The report stated that this was unacceptable and in many cases had a detrimental impact on the quality of RE. In Reading there were occasions when RE was taught by teaching assistants and higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) who had not been trained in teaching RE and it was suggested that this should be monitored and that training should be offered to all those, both teachers and teaching assistants, who were teaching RE.

The inquiry had also found that about half of primary school teachers and trainee teachers lacked confidence in teaching RE, about half of subject leaders in primary schools lacked the experience to undertake their role effectively and there was a wide variation in the extent of initial teacher training in RE. Jan informed the

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SACRE that teachers in Reading had said that they wanted more training and opportunities to learn together and suggested that the SACRE could assist in providing training.

The SACRE discussed the report and it was acknowledged that the issues that had been identified were not unique to RE as the focus was on core subjects such as maths, English and science.

**AGREED:** That the position be noted.

## **7. WESSEX JOINT SACRES MEETING**

Jan Lever, submitted a report providing the SACRE with a summary of the Wessex Joint SACRES meeting that had taken place on 11 March 2013; a copy of the minutes from the meeting were attached to the report.

Jan explained that the aim of the meetings were to strengthen RE in the light of there being reduced support from local authorities and for concerns to be raised and discussed. There was a willingness to share training and Hampshire County Council had said that they were happy for members of the SACRE to take part in the training they were providing.

Jan reported that although some authorities did not have an officer to support RE Reading was in a good position and was well supported.

**AGREED:** That the position be noted.

## **8. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL: SUBJECT REVIEW OF RE**

Jan Lever, submitted a copy of the Phase One Subject Review of RE in England Report which had been published in January 2013 by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales and the Draft Programme of Study for Key Stages 1 to 3 that had been launched in June 2013 and had been based on the extensive work by the Phase One Task Group and the project's Steering Group.

The Draft Programme of Study had been launched on 7 June 2013 and responses had been asked for by 5 July 2013. The project had looked at the national picture for RE and had come up with recommendations as to how RE could move forward.

Nationally there were 150 locally agreed syllabuses but, there still appeared to be confusion over what RE was trying to achieve from the teachers point of view.

With regard to the Reading syllabus the core content suggested in the draft programmes of study would not mean changing the syllabus as it was in line with the suggested programmes, other than the new recommendation that non-religious belief systems should be taught alongside Christianity at each key stage as a requirement. This was currently an option in the pan-Berkshire agreed syllabus.

The 8-level scale assessment process was discussed and it was thought that many teachers still find this difficult to implement and there were issues around how children's learning could be more effectively assessed. A better tool was therefore needed to understand the level of children's learning;

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- Exam Syllabi - The content of the exam syllabus up to GCSE and A Level needed to be reviewed in order to get consistency and this was something the RE review was currently working on.

A table setting out the implementation of the Phase One Recommendations in Phase Two was included with the papers.

**AGREED:** That the position be noted.

**9. RE NETWORK MEETINGS: FEEDBACK**

Jan Lever informed the SACRE that Network Meetings for Primary and Secondary Schools continued to be held with the Secondary School meetings being held jointly with Wokingham. The Primary School meetings had been better attended than the Secondary School meetings and it was planned to review the position after the next network meeting for Secondary Schools that would take place in autumn 2013.

Teachers who had attended the meetings had found them very useful as it provided them with an opportunity to share ideas and concerns; teachers from schools that had never attended a meeting would be identified and encouraged to attend. The dates for the next session of meetings would be advertised in the Education Bulletin and emails would be sent directly to RE coordinators.

The SACRE discussed the position and a number of points were raised including the following:

- Thought needed to be given as to how RE could be promoted as a benefit to schools and how it could be linked to other skills and subjects;
- It was suggested that a faith leader could be invited to the meetings to talk about their faith, it was also suggested that teachers could be asked to present how a successful lesson was taught and children could be asked to attend to talk about what they were learning from RE;
- It was also suggested that the meetings could be held at places of worship and could be linked to welcome days;
- It was acknowledged that the SACRE could also have a roll to play in advertising and promoting the network meetings.

**AGREED:** That the position be noted.

**10. DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROGRESS INCLUDING RE DIRECTORY PROJECT**

Jan Lever informed the SACRE that she had reorganised the Development Plan to follow the financial year so that it could be kept in-line with the budget.

There were three aspects to the plan which were as follows:

Section A - The responsibilities of the SACRE

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With regard to members presenting aspects of their faith/beliefs to the SACRE it was suggested that Leanne Campbell, the new Muslim representative should be asked to give a presentation about her faith at the next SACRE meeting.

Section B - Supporting Teachers

Jan explained that everything that had been included in sections B and C of the Development Plan had come from what teachers had asked for in the RE Network meetings.

Further to Minute 6 of the meeting held on 21 November 2012, 15 schools were using the Discovery scheme of learning for RE that had been developed by Jan and supported them to plan well so that they were able to deliver more than just the minimum requirement when teaching RE. To support teachers further a web site was in the process of being set up for the Discovery Scheme and would be available in September 2013. The web site would include examples of children's work and teaching ideas.

Section C - Supporting the Implementation of the Syllabus

Jan informed the SACRE that a project plan had been put together to provide a directory of speakers/places of worship and artefacts. It would include details of the age group and aspect of the syllabus that the speaker could focus on. A training session had been arranged for volunteers on 18 July 2013 that would be run jointly with REInspired. Schools understood that there would be a process of continual feedback as a form of quality assurance for both the speakers and the schools that would inform the syllabus as the sessions took place. Details of welcome days at places of worship would also be included in the directory.

Teachers had asked for a RE Resource Centre similar to one at Easthampstead Park in Bracknell Forest. Jan informed the SACRE that she would contact Bracknell Forest and ask if the resource centre could be made available to teachers in Reading. A list of artefacts teachers would like access to but were unable to buy had been put together and it was suggested that there might be people in the faith communities who could donate artefacts.

Teachers had also asked for organised trips to local places of worship so that they could increase their knowledge and involve pupils and additional budget monies had been received to enable this to happen.

Finally, Jan informed the SACRE that the budget for April 2013 to March 2014 had been approved.

**AGREED:**

- (1) That the position be noted;
- (2) That Leanne Campbell, Muslim representative on the SACRE, be asked to give a presentation on her faith at the next SACRE meeting.

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11. REPORT FROM THE JOINT SACRE CONFERENCE EASTHAMPSTEAD PARK - 5  
JUNE 2013

Jan Lever provided the SACRE with an update on the Joint SACREs Conference that had taken place at Easthampstead Park on 5 June 2013 and submitted a copy of the slides from a presentation that had been given by Alan Brine, National Lead for RE/Chief Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) Inspector, on RE: Realising the Potential.

The Conference had also discussed the idea of asking children from across Berkshire to become faith ambassadors; schools had been asked to volunteer and training would be provided.

The future sustainability of the Conference had also be considered as the attendance had not been good and it was suggested that this could be discussed at a future meeting.

**AGREED:**

- (1) That the position be noted;
- (2) That the future of the Joint SACREs Conference be discussed at a future meeting.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Future Meetings

Rabbi Solomons suggested that of the three meetings of the SACRE that took place during the Municipal Year the first should be held at the Civic Offices, the second in a school and the third in a place of worship.

**AGREED:** That the first meeting of the SACRE in the Municipal Year be held at the Civic Offices, the second in a school and the third in a place of worship.

13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETINGS

Wednesday 27 November 2013

Monday 3 March 2014

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and finished at 8.05 pm).



## Report summary

# Religious education: realising the potential

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Religious education (RE) should make a major contribution to the education of children and young people. At its best, it is intellectually challenging and personally enriching. It helps young people develop beliefs and values, and promotes the virtues of respect and empathy, which are important in our diverse society. It fosters civilised debate and reasoned argument, and helps pupils to understand the place of religion and belief in the modern world.

The past 10 years have seen some improvements in RE in schools. More pupils recognise its value and nearly two thirds of them left school with an accredited qualification in the subject in 2012. The range and quality of resources to support teaching in this subject are much better than they were.

However, evidence from the majority of schools visited for this survey shows that the subject's potential is still not being realised fully. Many pupils leave school with scant subject knowledge and understanding. Moreover, RE teaching often fails to challenge and extend pupils' ability to explore fundamental questions about human life, religion and belief.

Ofsted's previous report on RE in 2010, *Transforming religious education*, highlighted key barriers to better RE and made recommendations about how these should be overcome. The current survey found that not enough has been done since 2010.

The structures that underpin the local determination of the RE curriculum have failed to keep pace with changes in the wider educational world. As a result, many local authorities are struggling to fulfil their responsibility to promote high-quality religious education. In addition, other changes to education policy, such as the introduction in 2010 of the English Baccalaureate (the EBacc), have led to a decline in RE provision in some schools.

Part A of this report discusses eight major areas of concern:

- low standards
- weak teaching

- problems in developing a curriculum for RE
- confusion about the purpose of RE
- weak leadership and management
- weaknesses in examination provision at Key Stage 4
- gaps in training
- the impact of recent changes in education policy.

Part B of this report provides examples of effective practice in using enquiry as a basis for improving pupils' learning, high-quality leadership and management in primary and secondary schools, and effective approaches in special schools. Overall, however, such good practice is not sufficiently widespread.

The report is based on evidence drawn from 185 schools visited between September 2009 and July 2012. It also draws on evidence from a telephone survey of a further 30 schools, examination results, other reports published by Ofsted, extended discussions with teachers, members of standing advisory councils on religious education (SACREs) and other RE professionals, and wider surveys carried out by professional associations for RE. The sample of schools did not include voluntary aided schools or academies with a religious designation, for which separate inspection arrangements exist.

## Key findings

- Weaknesses in provision for RE meant that too many pupils were leaving school with low levels of subject knowledge and understanding.
- Achievement and teaching in RE in the 90 primary schools visited were less than good in six in 10 schools.
- Achievement and teaching in RE in the 91 secondary schools visited were only good or better in just under half of the schools. The picture was stronger at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3.
- Most of the GCSE teaching seen failed to secure the core aim of the examination specifications: that is, to enable pupils 'to adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion'.
- The provision made for GCSE in the majority of the secondary schools surveyed failed to provide enough curriculum time for pupils to extend and deepen their learning sufficiently.
- The teaching of RE in primary schools was not good enough because of weaknesses in teachers' understanding of the subject, a lack of emphasis on subject knowledge, poor and fragmented curriculum planning, very weak assessment, ineffective monitoring and teachers' limited access to effective training.

- The way in which RE was provided in many of the primary schools visited had the effect of isolating the subject from the rest of the curriculum. It led to low-level learning and missed opportunities to support pupils' learning more widely, for example, in literacy.
- The quality of teaching in the secondary schools visited was rarely outstanding and was less than good in around half of the lessons seen. Common weaknesses included: insufficient focus on subject knowledge; an over-emphasis on a limited range of teaching strategies that focused simply on preparing pupils for assessments or examinations; insufficient opportunity for pupils to reflect and work independently; and over-structured and bureaucratic lesson planning with a limited focus on promoting effective learning.
- Although the proportion of pupils taking GCSE and GCE examinations in RE remains high, in 2011 nearly 250 schools and academies did not enter any pupils for an accredited qualification in GCSE.
- Around half of the secondary schools visited in 2011 and 2012 had changed, or were planning to change, their curriculum provision for RE in response to changes in education policy. The impact of these changes varied but it was rarely being monitored carefully.
- Assessment in RE remained a major weakness in the schools visited. It was inadequate in a fifth of the secondary schools and a third of the primary schools. Many teachers were confused about how to judge how well pupils were doing in RE.
- Access to high-quality RE training for teachers was poor. Training had a positive impact on improving provision in only a third of the schools visited; its impact was poor in a further third. Many of the schools surveyed said that support from their local authority and SACRE had diminished.
- Leadership and management of RE were good or better in half the schools visited; however, weaknesses were widespread in monitoring provision for RE and in planning to tackle the areas identified for improvement.
- The effectiveness of the current statutory arrangements for RE varies considerably. Recent changes in education policy are having a negative impact on the provision for RE in some schools and on the capacity of local authorities and SACREs to carry out their statutory responsibilities to monitor and support it.

**Main report published 6 October 2013**  
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No. 130068



# Religious education: realising the potential

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Religious education (RE) makes a significant contribution to pupils' academic and personal development. It also plays a key role in promoting social cohesion and the virtues of respect and empathy, which are important in our diverse society. However, the potential of RE was not being realised fully in the majority of the schools surveyed for this report.

The report identifies barriers to better RE and suggests ways in which the subject might be improved. The report is written for all those who teach RE, for those who lead the subject, and for headteachers of primary and secondary schools.

**Age group:** 5–18

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**Published:** October 2013

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## Executive summary

Religious education (RE) should make a major contribution to the education of children and young people. At its best, it is intellectually challenging and personally enriching. It helps young people develop beliefs and values, and promotes the virtues of respect and empathy, which are important in our diverse society. It fosters civilised debate and reasoned argument, and helps pupils to understand the place of religion and belief in the modern world.

The past 10 years have seen some improvements in RE in schools. More pupils recognise its value and nearly two thirds of them left school with an accredited qualification in the subject in 2012. The range and quality of resources to support teaching in this subject are much better than they were.

However, evidence from the majority of schools visited for this survey shows that the subject's potential is still not being realised fully. Many pupils leave school with scant subject knowledge and understanding. Moreover, RE teaching often fails to challenge and extend pupils' ability to explore fundamental questions about human life, religion and belief.

Ofsted's previous report on RE in 2010, *Transforming religious education*, highlighted key barriers to better RE and made recommendations about how these should be overcome. The current survey found that not enough has been done since 2010.

The structures that underpin the local determination of the RE curriculum have failed to keep pace with changes in the wider educational world. As a result, many local authorities are struggling to fulfil their responsibility to promote high-quality religious education. In addition, other changes to education policy, such as the introduction in 2010 of the English Baccalaureate (the EBacc), have led to a decline in RE provision in some schools.<sup>1</sup>

Part A of this report discusses eight major areas of concern:

- low standards
- weak teaching
- problems in developing a curriculum for RE
- confusion about the purpose of RE
- weak leadership and management
- weaknesses in examination provision at Key Stage 4

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<sup>1</sup> The DfE describes the EBacc as follows: 'The English Baccalaureate... is not a qualification in itself. The measure recognises where pupils have secured a C grade or better across a core of academic subjects – English, mathematics, history or geography, the sciences and a language.' For further information, see:

[www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/englishbac/a0075975/the-english-baccalaureate](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/englishbac/a0075975/the-english-baccalaureate).



- gaps in training
- the impact of recent changes in education policy.

Part B of this report provides examples of effective practice in using enquiry as a basis for improving pupils' learning, high-quality leadership and management in primary and secondary schools, and effective approaches in special schools. Overall, however, such good practice is not sufficiently widespread.

The report is based on evidence drawn from 185 schools visited between September 2009 and July 2012.<sup>2</sup> It also draws on evidence from a telephone survey of a further 30 schools, examination results, other reports published by Ofsted, extended discussions with teachers, members of standing advisory councils on religious education (SACREs)<sup>3</sup> and other RE professionals, and wider surveys carried out by professional associations for RE. The sample of schools did not include voluntary aided schools or academies with a religious designation, for which separate inspection arrangements exist.

## Key findings

- Weaknesses in provision for RE meant that too many pupils were leaving school with low levels of subject knowledge and understanding.
- Achievement and teaching in RE in the 90 primary schools visited were less than good in six in 10 schools.
- Achievement and teaching in RE in the 91 secondary schools visited were only good or better in just under half of the schools. The picture was stronger at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3.
- Most of the GCSE teaching seen failed to secure the core aim of the examination specifications: that is, to enable pupils 'to adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion'.
- The provision made for GCSE in the majority of the secondary schools surveyed failed to provide enough curriculum time for pupils to extend and deepen their learning sufficiently.
- The teaching of RE in primary schools was not good enough because of weaknesses in teachers' understanding of the subject, a lack of emphasis on subject knowledge, poor and fragmented curriculum planning, very weak assessment, ineffective monitoring and teachers' limited access to effective training.
- The way in which RE was provided in many of the primary schools visited had the effect of isolating the subject from the rest of the curriculum. It led to low-level

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<sup>2</sup> For details of the schools visited, see Annex B.

<sup>3</sup> Every local authority must set up a standing advisory council on religious education (SACRE) to advise the authority on matters connected with RE.

learning and missed opportunities to support pupils' learning more widely, for example, in literacy.

- The quality of teaching in the secondary schools visited was rarely outstanding and was less than good in around half of the lessons seen. Common weaknesses included: insufficient focus on subject knowledge; an over-emphasis on a limited range of teaching strategies that focused simply on preparing pupils for assessments or examinations; insufficient opportunity for pupils to reflect and work independently; and over-structured and bureaucratic lesson planning with a limited focus on promoting effective learning.
- Although the proportion of pupils taking GCSE and GCE examinations in RE remains high, in 2011 nearly 250 schools and academies did not enter any pupils for an accredited qualification in GCSE.
- Around half of the secondary schools visited in 2011 and 2012 had changed, or were planning to change, their curriculum provision for RE in response to changes in education policy. The impact of these changes varied but it was rarely being monitored carefully.
- Assessment in RE remained a major weakness in the schools visited. It was inadequate in a fifth of the secondary schools and a third of the primary schools. Many teachers were confused about how to judge how well pupils were doing in RE.
- Access to high-quality RE training for teachers was poor. Training had a positive impact on improving provision in only a third of the schools visited; its impact was poor in a further third. Many of the schools surveyed said that support from their local authority and SACRE had diminished.
- Leadership and management of RE were good or better in half the schools visited; however, weaknesses were widespread in monitoring provision for RE and in planning to tackle the areas identified for improvement.
- The effectiveness of the current statutory arrangements for RE varies considerably. Recent changes in education policy are having a negative impact on the provision for RE in some schools and on the capacity of local authorities and SACREs to carry out their statutory responsibilities to monitor and support it.

## Recommendations

The Department for Education (DfE) should:

- review the current statutory arrangements for RE in relation to the principle of local determination to ensure these keep pace with wider changes in education policy, and revise or strengthen these arrangements as appropriate
- ensure that the Key Stage 4 examination specifications for RE promote better learning by focusing more strongly on deepening and extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of religion and belief
- ensure that the provision for religious education is monitored more closely, particularly in secondary schools.

The DfE should work in partnership with the professional associations for RE to:

- clarify the aims and purposes of RE and explore how these might be translated into high-quality planning, teaching and assessment
- improve and coordinate the provision for training in RE, both nationally and locally.

Local authorities, in partnership with SACREs and agreed syllabus conferences, should:

- ensure that sufficient resources are available for SACREs and agreed syllabus conferences to carry out their statutory functions with regard to RE and provide schools with high-quality guidance and support
- review their expectations about arrangements for RE, particularly at Key Stage 4, to ensure that schools have sufficient flexibility to match their provision more effectively to pupils' needs
- work in partnership with local schools and academies to build supportive networks to share best practice.

All schools should:

- ensure that learning in RE has a stronger focus on deepening pupils' understanding of the nature, diversity and impact of religion and belief in the contemporary world
- improve lesson planning so that teaching has a clear and straightforward focus on what pupils need to learn and engages their interest.

Primary schools should:

- raise the status of RE in the curriculum and strengthen the quality of subject leadership by improving the arrangements for developing teachers' subject expertise, sharing good practice, and monitoring the quality of the curriculum and teaching

- improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum to increase opportunities for pupils to work independently, make links with other subjects and tackle more challenging tasks.

Secondary schools should:

- ensure that the teaching of RE at GCSE level secures good opportunities for pupils to discuss and reflect on their learning, and extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of religion and belief
- ensure that the overall curriculum provision for RE is challenging and has greater coherence and continuity
- improve their monitoring of RE to ensure that any changes in provision are carefully evaluated in terms of their impact on pupils' progress and attainment.

## **Part A: Religious education in schools – the eight key challenges**

### **Low standards**

**Too many pupils leave school with scant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.**

1. In three fifths of the lessons seen, both in primary schools and throughout Key Stage 3, a key weakness was the superficial nature of pupils' subject knowledge and understanding. While pupils had a range of basic factual information about religions, their deeper understanding of the world of religion and belief was weak. For example, as pupils moved through primary and secondary education, inspectors noted that most pupils had had insufficient opportunity to develop:
  - an ability to offer informed responses to a range of profound religious, philosophical or ethical questions
  - an understanding of the way in which the beliefs, practices, values and ways of life of specific religions and non-religious world views are linked
  - an understanding and interpretation of the distinctive nature of religious language
  - a deepening understanding of the diverse nature of religion and belief in the contemporary world
  - a more sophisticated understanding of the impact, both positive and negative, that religion and belief can have on individuals and society.
2. The heavy focus on philosophical, social and moral issues in GCSE and GCE A-level RE meant that, in most of the schools visited, pupils at Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form did not redress this weakness in subject knowledge. As a result, too many pupils were leaving school with a very low level of religious literacy.

3. The weaknesses in pupils' achievement that were highlighted in the 2010 report were also evident in the schools visited for this survey.
  - Pupils rarely developed their skills of enquiry into religion: to ask more pertinent and challenging questions; to gather, interpret and analyse information; and to draw conclusions and evaluate issues using good reasoning.
  - Pupils' understanding was fragmented and they made few connections between different aspects of their learning in RE.
  - Evidence that pupils were making any meaningful links between 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion was very limited.
4. The 2010 report highlighted the concern that too many pupils were leaving school with a very limited understanding of Christianity. Many of the schools visited for the previous report 'did not pay sufficient attention to the progressive and systematic investigation of the core beliefs of Christianity'. The development of this understanding remains one of the weakest aspects of achievement. The current survey included a specific focus on the teaching of Christianity in 30 of the primary schools inspected, and the evidence suggests this is still a major concern. Inspectors judged pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity to be good or outstanding in only five of the schools. It was judged to be inadequate in 10 of them, making teaching about Christianity one of the weakest aspects of RE provision.
5. The lack of knowledge and understanding of religion inhibited pupils in considering how the study of religion and belief might have implications for exploring purpose, meaning and value in their own lives.
6. Local authorities are required by law to produce an agreed syllabus for RE for their schools. A key objective of many agreed syllabuses is to foster pupils' ability to 'learn from' their study of religion and belief. This includes reflecting on and responding to their own and others' experiences in the light of their learning about religion and belief. A key indicator of pupils' success in meeting this objective is that they can bring a deepening subject knowledge and understanding to their reflections. Where this depth was lacking, the principle that pupils should 'learn from' religion and belief was impoverished.

## **Weaknesses in teaching**

### **Too much RE teaching lacks challenge and does not extend pupils' thinking sufficiently.**

7. RE teaching in primary schools was less than good in six in 10 schools visited because of:
  - weaknesses in teachers' understanding of the subject
  - poor and fragmented curriculum planning

- weak assessment
  - ineffective monitoring
  - limited access to effective training.
8. In the secondary schools visited, the quality of teaching was rarely outstanding and, at Key Stage 3, was less than good in around half of the lessons observed. Common weaknesses included:
- an over-emphasis on a limited range of teaching strategies, which focused mainly on preparing pupils for assessments or examinations
  - limited opportunities for pupils to reflect and work independently
  - over-structured and bureaucratic lesson planning with insufficient stress on promoting effective learning.
9. The previous report highlighted the skills of enquiry as key to improving teaching in RE. Inspectors saw some evidence that enquiry was being used more, but the teachers using such approaches were not always aware of their purpose.
10. Inspectors noted a number of factors that inhibited the use of enquiry in enhancing pupils' learning.
- **Not capitalising on a good start.** Elements of enquiry were used at the start of a topic but were not sustained. For example, pupils were asked to identify questions but teachers rarely extended these into a genuine investigation.
  - **Rushing too quickly to 'learn from' religion.** Teachers had gained the impression that every lesson should include some element of personal reflection, so the opportunity to sustain the enquiry was limited by rushing pupils towards a personal response before they had investigated it properly.
  - **Not taking risks.** Teachers were unwilling to open up enquiry in case pupils asked challenging or controversial questions with which they felt ill-equipped to deal.
  - **Not being clear enough about the focus of the enquiry.** Teachers adopted an enquiry approach but did not intervene to make sure that the pupils maintained a focus on the key questions driving the enquiry.
  - **Not giving pupils enough time to process their findings and extend their enquiry.** Teachers provided opportunities for gathering and summarising factual information but then moved the pupils quickly to a superficial summary instead of extending and deepening their understanding of the material.
  - **Limiting enquiry by directing pupils to a 'happy end'.** Teachers signalled to pupils that they wanted a positive 'right answer' about the value

of religion, limiting the opportunity to explore more controversial possibilities.

- **Focusing too much on the product of the enquiry rather than the process.** Teachers drew attention to the way in which the pupils presented what they had found out rather than extending the enquiry into more challenging areas of evaluation and reflection.
11. In the secondary schools visited inspectors identified a wider range of factors that limited the effectiveness of teaching, including the following.
- **Learning objectives communicated mechanistically.** At the beginning of many of the RE lessons observed, teachers expected the pupils to copy the objectives for the lesson into their books. Too often this process was highly formulaic and took up too much time. Rather than opening up the 'story' of the learning, it reduced pupils' interest. Frequently, teachers did not tell the pupils how the lesson would develop. In the best practice, however, the teacher and pupils discussed what the lesson would be about and where it was leading.
  - **Over-complex lesson planning.** Many teachers used a generic form for lesson planning. While seeking consistency is understandable, many of the plans seen required teachers to refer to a large number of cross-curricular and whole-school issues. Because teachers were more anxious to complete the plan than concentrate on securing high-quality RE learning, the focus on RE was often sacrificed. One lesson plan seen, for example, required teachers to provide information on: reading and literacy strategies, including key words and literacy objectives; numeracy skills; links to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; higher-order Bloom's questions; and progress indicators.
  - **Over-use of assessment levels to review progress in lessons at the expense of genuine reflection on learning.** A common weakness, allied to the mechanistic use of learning objectives, was teachers' constant requests to pupils to review their progress by referring to RE levels or sub-levels of attainment, rather than asking them to reflect on and discuss whether they had gained a deeper insight into the topic. Assessment for learning became formulaic: simply the checking of progress against the level descriptions.
  - **Learning driven by too many tasks.** The most recent Ofsted report on English, *Moving English forward*, noted that: 'some teachers appear to believe that the more activities they can cram into the lesson, the more effective it will be'.<sup>4</sup> This was also common in many RE lessons seen. Superficially, pupils were active throughout the lesson, but the tasks did not build their understanding progressively. The purpose of, and links between, tasks were often not made clear.

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<sup>4</sup> *Moving English forward* (110118), Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110118](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110118).

- **Narrow use of digital technology.** Teachers were using digital technology increasingly, especially presentation slides. While sometimes this technology was used effectively to engage and focus pupils, too often it left pupils little scope to think for themselves. In many cases the presentation slides defined the outcome of the lesson, leaving little or no opportunity for pupils to explore their own ideas or questions independently: all the thinking had already been done for them. Generally, technology in secondary schools was limited to the teacher's use, with little use of it by the pupils for research or presentation.
- **Too much unstructured discussion and group work.** Providing opportunities for discussion was a common feature of many of the RE lessons seen. However, too often the tendency was to allow any opinion or viewpoint to stand unopposed, reinforcing a view among pupils that, in matters related to religion or morality, one opinion was as valid as any other. There was insufficient focus on exploring weaker or stronger lines of argument. It was rare to find teachers establishing a climate in which pupils recognised that their opinions needed to be underpinned by good reasoning, and that some points of view were better supported and argued for than others.

## Curriculum problems

### Weaknesses in the curriculum limited the effectiveness of RE

12. A recurring theme from the survey visits was that many subject leaders found it difficult to develop a curriculum for RE that was effective in securing progression, continuity, coherence, breadth and balance in pupils' learning.
13. The quality of the curriculum was less than good in nearly two thirds of the primary schools visited. It was good or better in just under two fifths of the secondary schools and inadequate in 11.
14. Almost half of the primary schools visited had tried to develop new approaches towards RE, often through a more creative approach to curriculum planning that was also being developed to teach other subjects, such as history or geography. However, for a number of reasons, headteachers and subject leaders found it difficult to incorporate RE within this approach. They rarely chose RE content to drive a topic and the subject was therefore always trying to fit in with the other subjects. In addition, the schools often found it difficult to incorporate the prescription of the locally agreed syllabus within their more integrated curriculum.
15. The reasons for the lack of progress in improving the RE curriculum in primary schools included the following.
  - **Providing RE teaching through short topics led to fragmented rather than sustained learning.** This was reported in detail in the 2010 report and it remains a factor that inhibited progress in improving the



primary RE curriculum. The majority of the primary schools visited organised RE in six half-termly units a year, taught in weekly 45-minute or 60-minute sessions. Few schools could explain clearly why they had adopted this provision.

- **The selection and sequencing of RE topics often lacked a clear rationale.** Many of the primary schools visited did not use clear criteria when planning the RE curriculum. They frequently relied on published schemes of work, but these varied in quality and were not always easy to understand. Teachers were rarely able to explain how any unit of work built on previous learning. The narrow content of too many units failed to engage pupils in broader key ideas or questions. It was common for older pupils to say that they were repeating work they had done previously. Greater challenge in the learning was not obvious.
- **Many RE topics lacked a clear structure.** Weak planning commonly meant units of work lacked coherence. This usually reflected the lack of subject expertise of those involved in planning or the tendency for teachers to choose tasks at random from the scheme of work. It often involved confusion about how to link and integrate 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion.
- **Very little thought was given to assessment when planning the curriculum.** In the schools where the RE curriculum was not good enough, it was rare to find any consideration of how pupils' progress would be assessed. As a result, teachers were often unclear about the level of challenge they needed to provide and how this might extend pupils' earlier learning.
- **RE was sometimes confused with the school's wider contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.** Some schools still confused RE with other subjects or aspects. It was not uncommon, for example, to find schools presenting evidence in RE portfolios about pupils 'learning from' religion that included work from the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, charity activities, visits to old people's homes, Christmas pantomimes or literacy work on topics such as 'feelings'. While these were worthwhile activities, they were not evidence of 'learning from' religion.
- **Many agreed syllabuses and guidance did not provide effective models of curriculum planning.** Some recent agreed syllabuses and their accompanying guidance provided examples of good practice in using enquiry, but these were not sufficiently widespread and it was taking time for them to have an impact. While some new syllabuses aspired towards an enquiry-based approach, they lacked the necessary detail and guidance. Some examples of planning that accompanied agreed syllabuses were poor, often compounding teachers' confusion about RE.

16. In the secondary schools, weaknesses in the curriculum often related to a lack of clarity about the purpose of the subject at Key Stage 3. A persistent problem

was that planned work was not sufficiently challenging. Too often it failed to capitalise on the higher levels of thinking that pupils can bring to their learning from Key Stage 2. Pupils frequently commented that the work they did when studying religions was not challenging enough.

17. In order to tackle this, an increasing number of departments visited were moving towards a Key Stage 3 curriculum which concentrated more heavily on GCSE-style, 'issues-based', social, moral or philosophical topics such as 'Rights and Responsibilities' or 'The Environment'. However, these changes often resulted in a lack of balance and continuity in the overall secondary RE curriculum. In practice, it meant that pupils were not developing a sufficient level of knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. As a result, when they came to try to apply religious perspectives to various moral or social issues they did not have the depth of knowledge they needed.
18. Many RE subject leaders to whom inspectors spoke commented that they did not have enough guidance about ways of developing more challenging topics about religion and belief. Too often they moved to study social and ethical issues because they could not see a way of making the direct study of religion challenging and engaging. It was rare to find topics related to, for example, the study of deeper aspects of religious belief, the controversial nature of religion, or the changing patterns of religion and belief in the contemporary world.

## **A confused sense of purpose**

### **Confusion about the purpose and aims of RE had a negative impact on the quality of teaching, curriculum planning and the effectiveness of assessment.**

19. The 2010 report highlighted that a key factor limiting the effectiveness of RE teaching was many teachers' uncertainty about the rationale for, and the aims and purposes of, RE. In particular, the report noted the need to produce further guidance for teachers about defining attainment and progress in RE, and how to structure learning and assessment.
20. The current survey found further evidence of teachers' confusion about what they were trying to achieve in RE and how to translate this into effective planning, teaching and assessment. In many of the schools visited, the subject was increasingly losing touch with the idea that RE should be primarily concerned with helping pupils to make sense of the world of religion and belief.
21. The confusion about the purpose of RE is exemplified in a number of ways.
  - Many primary teachers, including subject leaders, were finding it difficult to separate RE from the more general, whole-school promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
  - Many schools showed a strong tendency to detach learning in RE from the more in-depth study of religion and belief. Too often teachers thought they

could bring depth to the pupils' learning by inviting them to reflect on or write introspectively about their own experience rather than rigorously investigate and evaluate religion and belief.

- In the primary schools visited, considerable weaknesses in teaching about Christianity frequently stemmed from a lack of clarity about the purpose of the subject. For example, Christian stories, particularly miracles, were often used to encourage pupils to reflect on their own experience without any opportunity to investigate the stories' significance within the religion itself.
  - Much GCSE and, increasingly, Key Stage 3 work focused primarily on the study of philosophical, moral and social issues. The work lacked any significant development of pupils' understanding of religion and belief – and frequently distorted it.
22. Assessment of RE was inadequate in a third of the primary schools and a fifth of the secondary schools visited. A key reason for this was a lack of clarity about defining attainment and progress in RE. Widespread misunderstanding of the levels of attainment led to poor practice in assessing pupils' progress.
23. Inspectors found that the rationale for RE in much of the guidance teachers were using lacked coherence and was too complex or blurred. A key factor preventing RE from realising its potential was the tension between, on the one hand, the academic goal of extending and deepening pupils' ability to make sense of religion and belief and, on the other, the wider goal of contributing towards their overall personal development. Teachers will struggle to plan and teach the subject effectively while this tension remains unresolved.
24. There is still an urgent need to clarify the purpose of RE for teachers and to promote this through straightforward guidance. Such guidance should set out, clearly and coherently, the subject's rationale, its core aims, the content to be studied, appropriate approaches to learning, and the way in which attainment and progress are defined.

## Limitations in leadership and management

**The leadership and management of RE are not strong enough to secure the improvements that are needed.**

25. The effectiveness of the leadership of RE was a crucial factor affecting standards and the quality of provision. However, inspectors also found that too many schools were not giving a high enough priority to RE and this was having an impact on the progress that pupils were making.
26. Many schools showed some strengths in the leadership of RE. Subject leaders often had a high level of commitment and many headteachers, notably in primary schools, saw RE as playing a key role in promoting their school's values. However, too often, this aspiration was not translated into high-quality provision. In practice, RE often had a very low priority, and its provision and effectiveness were not carefully monitored and improved.

27. The low priority given to RE in many of the primary schools visited was reflected in a variety of ways.
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching was often superficial and did not focus sufficiently on the quality of the pupils' learning.
  - RE lessons were often squeezed out by other curriculum areas. It was not uncommon for inspectors to find long gaps in pupils' RE books when no work had been done. However, monitoring of the teaching of RE frequently did not identify or tackle this problem.
  - Very little provision was made for staff training in RE or for subject leaders to work alongside colleagues to develop their practice.
  - In over half of the schools visited, some or all of the RE was taught by someone other than the class teacher.
  - Subject leaders often had no clear idea about the relative strengths and weaknesses of pupils' progress in RE. As a result, improvement plans for RE rarely focused on raising standards.
  - RE was often isolated from developments in the wider curriculum.
28. The effectiveness of the leadership and management of RE in many of the secondary schools visited was also a concern. Inspectors found too much variability in the nature, quality and effectiveness of their provision for RE. The overall allocation of time for RE and the deployment of staff and resources to the subject were being reduced in around a quarter of the schools visited. This is considered in more detail later in the report.
29. There were also weaknesses in the quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning. There was a more positive picture of subject leaders' use of data to track pupils' progress at Key Stage 4; most of the schools visited had detailed evidence about performance at GCSE. However, in most cases, these data were not being analysed or used effectively; very often the subject leader had not had enough guidance in interpreting the information. There was little effective use of data to evaluate the quality of provision at Key Stage 3.
30. Improvement planning often focused on identifying ways of boosting the examination results of specific groups of pupils at GCSE. However, it failed to identify more fundamental problems in teaching and the curriculum that needed to be tackled in order to improve provision and raise standards.
31. A standard model for timetabling RE within the curriculum of secondary schools no longer existed: schools were exploring a variety of models. However, few of the schools had a clear rationale for the changes they made in their provision or had a robust programme of monitoring to evaluate the impact of the changes on pupils' progress and attainment.

## Weaknesses in examination provision at Key Stage 4

**Most GCSE teaching in RE failed to achieve the core aim of the examination specifications, that is, to enable pupils to 'adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion'.**

32. The 2010 report highlighted concerns that the GCSE specifications and examinations were not providing a good enough platform for extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of religion. The findings of this survey confirm that this remains a significant concern.
33. Many of the GCSE specifications in religious studies focus heavily on the study of philosophical, moral and social issues, with pupils being expected to apply religious perspectives to them. This approach frequently leads pupils to a superficial and often distorted understanding of religion. In the schools visited, work related to investigating religions and beliefs was often too easy. One pupil expressed a common view: 'We don't really need to understand the fundamental beliefs and practices of a religion in order to take this exam; we just have to repeat what the religion teaches about various issues.'
34. Often, pupils' understanding was not only superficial but involved a distorted understanding of religious life. While pupils could usually identify, for example, that Catholics and Protestants had different views about a range of ethical issues, they could rarely explain why these differences existed, discuss how a member of each denomination would approach a moral decision, or describe the diversity within the traditions.
35. Teaching in many of the GCSE lessons observed placed too much emphasis on ways of passing the examination rather than focusing on extending pupils' learning about religion and belief. Two related factors contributed to this.
  - Curriculum provision for GCSE in many of the schools left insufficient time to deepen pupils' understanding of the subject. A number of the schools visited had recently switched to providing a full-course qualification in the time they had previously allocated to a short course.
  - Many course specifications and examination questions encourage formulaic learning because of the superficial connections pupils are forced to make between religious perspectives and philosophical, ethical or social issues.
36. The current reforms to qualifications at Key Stage 4 provide an opportunity to reshape the examination specifications for RE to ensure they provide a better, more rigorous basis for extending and deepening pupils' subject knowledge and understanding. Schools need to consider carefully the time they allocate to examination study in RE to protect this important aim.

## Gaps in training

### **The quality of specialist expertise and access to training to support teachers' professional development in RE are often weak.**

37. The 2010 report highlighted concerns about the low level of subject expertise and the limited training opportunities in RE in many of the schools surveyed. The evidence from this survey indicates that access to high-quality training in RE is a continuing – and growing – concern. Training had a positive impact on improving provision in just over a quarter of the schools surveyed, and was inadequate in about a third.
38. The high proportion of non-specialist teaching of RE in secondary schools remains a problem. In around a third of the schools visited, a lack of subject expertise limited the effectiveness of the teaching of RE.
39. The National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) survey of RE in secondary schools, carried out in July 2012, found a quarter of the 625 schools responding to its survey reported a decline in the level of specialist RE staffing.<sup>5</sup> It also found that, in nearly half of the schools that responded, at least one in 10, and in some cases one in five, RE lessons were taught by teachers whose main time was spent in another curriculum area. The most recent DfE workforce survey also reported that only 73% of RE lessons in secondary schools were taught by teachers with a subject-related post-A-level qualification, compared with 87% in history and 84% in geography.<sup>6</sup>
40. In many of the primary schools visited, the senior leadership or RE subject leader acknowledged that the level of subject expertise among the staff was generally weak. Many of the teachers to whom inspectors spoke did not feel confident about teaching RE. They were often worried they might 'say the wrong thing' or were unsure about what they were trying to achieve in RE. Discussion with newly qualified or recently qualified primary teachers confirmed that very few had had any significant RE training during their initial training and sometimes had had little opportunity to teach RE in their placement schools.
41. Some primary headteachers openly acknowledged that because of a lack of confidence about RE, some staff preferred to take their planning, preparation and assessment time during these lessons, handing responsibility for the subject to a qualified teaching assistant or supply teacher.

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<sup>5</sup> *An analysis of a survey of teachers on the impact of the EBacc on student opportunity to study GCSE RS*, NATRE, 2012; [www.natre.org.uk/free.php](http://www.natre.org.uk/free.php).

<sup>6</sup> Full data can be found in the Statistical First Release (see table 14) ; [www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001062/index.shtml](http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001062/index.shtml).

42. The evidence indicates a link between access to training in RE and the overall effectiveness of the subject, particularly in primary schools. In the majority of cases, this was directly linked to the capacity of the local authority to provide such training and support. In nearly every case where such support was not available, it had a direct and negative impact on the effectiveness of the teaching and subject leadership. RE was generally better where the locally agreed syllabus was well conceived with clear accompanying guidance, but too often the capacity of local authorities to provide this support was diminishing.
43. These findings about weaknesses in access to training to support teachers of RE are reflected in the conclusions of the 2013 report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on RE. Its report, *RE: the truth unmasked*, noted:
- ‘in nearly 40% of schools RE teachers have inadequate access to continuing professional development.’<sup>7</sup>

## Impact of recent education policy changes on RE in schools

### Recent changes in education policy have significant negative implications for the provision and support of RE.

44. Since 2011, a range of RE professional associations including the RE Council for England and Wales (REC), National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE), the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE), and the Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) have expressed concerns to Ofsted that recent changes in education policy have been having a negative impact on the provision of and support for RE, both nationally and locally. These concerns have been reinforced by the 2013 APPG report which concluded:

RE has been the unintended victim of a combination of major policy changes rather than the subject of a deliberate attack. Nevertheless, the combined impact of so many severe setbacks in such a short time has been to convey the message that, even though it is a statutory subject, RE is of less value than other subjects.

45. The policies referred to have included:
- the decisions to exclude RE from the list of EBacc subjects and to remove short courses from the headline measures of school performance
  - the reduction in teacher training places for RE and, in 2013, the withdrawal of bursaries for RE trainee teachers

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<sup>7</sup> The All Party Parliamentary Group on Education, *RE: the truth unmasked – the supply of and support for religious education teachers*, Religious Education Council of England and Wales, 2013; <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/appg/news/2013-03-18/appg-re-final-report-the-truth-unmasked>.

- the way in which the roles and responsibilities of local authorities and SACREs for RE have not kept pace with wider changes: these include the expansion of the academies programme and reductions in local government spending
  - the decision not to fund an RE subject review in England to run in parallel with the DfE review of the National Curriculum and the loss of publicly funded national support for curriculum development work in the subject.
46. The professional associations and the APPG cited a range of evidence to support their concerns that these changes were having a considerable and detrimental impact on RE. For example, the 2012 NATRE survey reported widespread concerns about secondary schools that were reducing GCSE provision, failing to meet their statutory responsibilities for the subject, and reducing curriculum time and staffing for RE.<sup>8</sup>
47. Ofsted's current survey of RE and an analysis of recent GCSE data have substantiated some of these concerns, although the evidence is not always conclusive, partly because of the relatively small sample of schools visited. In addition, Ofsted does not directly monitor the work of SACREs and local authorities in relation to RE. However, in around half of the secondary schools visited between January 2011 and July 2012 headteachers described pressures to reduce provision for RE because of what they perceived were the demands of recent changes in education policy.
48. In relation to the exclusion of RE from the list of EBacc subjects and the removal of short courses from the headline measures of school performance, it is too early to come to a definitive conclusion about their impact on GCSE entries. Ofsted's survey evidence is inconclusive. However, the overall numbers entered for a GCSE qualification in religious studies in England fell from around 427,000 in 2012 to 390,000 in 2013. There has also been a significant shift away from short-course to full-course GCSE. In 2013 full-course GCSE numbers in England rose by around 10% in 2013 to nearly 240,000, but short-course numbers fell by almost 30% to 150,000.
49. There is evidence, however, of a more significant reduction in the provision for RE in some schools. The headteachers of these schools cited decisions about the EBacc and short-course GCSEs as reasons for the changes they were making.
- In school A, pupils taking the full range of EBacc subjects were no longer taught any RE; this failure to meet statutory requirements was coupled with reduced staffing for RE. The result was that more pupils in Key Stage 3 were taught RE by non-specialists and the quality of the teaching had declined.

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<sup>8</sup> *An analysis of a survey of teachers on the impact of the EBacc on student opportunity to study GCSE RS, NATRE, 2012; <http://www.natre.org.uk/free.php>.*



- In school B, RE was no longer a timetabled subject. It had been replaced by the tracking of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum.
  - In school C, provision for RE at Key Stage 4 had been reduced by two thirds and pupils could no longer take a full-course GCSE as an option.
  - In school D, RE at Key Stage 4 had been removed from the curriculum and replaced by termly RE conferences. Planned visits to places of worship in Years 8 and 9 had been dropped because pupils would no longer be taking RE at GCSE level.
  - Throughout school E, RE was no longer taught by specialists; instead it was taught by tutors in tutorial time, along with PSHE and citizenship, with a negative impact on the quality of the pupils' learning.
50. In addition, a growing number of schools were adjusting their curriculum to increase the number of pupils taking a full-course GCSE, but without considering the impact on the pupils' learning and the overall balance of the RE curriculum, as in the following examples.
- In some schools pupils were being prepared for the full-course GCSE in the time previously given to a short course. This time was insufficient to deepen and extend pupils' subject knowledge and understanding.
  - Other schools were starting GCSE early – in Year 8, in one school. This gave insufficient time for the subject at Key Stage 3, meaning that many of the pupils did not have the necessary maturity and basic subject knowledge to engage effectively with some of the challenging issues at GCSE level.
51. The capacity and effectiveness of SACREs to undertake their pivotal role in determining, supporting and monitoring RE is under increasing pressure in many local authorities.
52. The successful expansion of the academies programme means that a growing number of schools are moving outside local authority control and are therefore no longer required to follow the locally agreed syllabus. Some authorities now have very few, if any, secondary schools but they are still required to resource and produce a locally agreed syllabus for Key Stages 3, 4 and 5.
53. Many SACRE members have reported deterioration in the quality of professional expertise they receive as well as declining financial support from their local authority. The National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) reports that financial pressures make it increasingly difficult for many SACREs to find the expertise and resources to fulfil their statutory duties for RE effectively. A 2012 survey by NASACRE found that an increasing number of SACREs described reduced professional development opportunities in RE, a loss of professional advice and consultant posts for RE in local authorities, and a reduced number of advanced

skills teachers for the subject. These were among the major challenges facing the SACREs.<sup>9</sup>

54. In addition, the loss of publicly funded national support for curriculum development work in RE has further isolated RE from wider changes in education and reduced the support for SACREs in addressing the need for curriculum development work highlighted in the previous Ofsted report.
55. The reduced capacity of SACREs was reflected in the increasing difficulties faced by many of the schools visited in obtaining guidance and support from their SACRE. Schools in a number of local authorities reported that they had had no support or guidance for implementing their new agreed syllabus.
56. The 2013 APPG report found, similarly:

The ability of SACREs to provide support for teachers at a local level has been dramatically reduced by local authority funding decisions and the impact of the academisation programme.<sup>10</sup>

57. Ofsted's 2010 report recommended a review of the current legal arrangements to ensure that they provided the best basis for securing high-quality RE. In particular, the report questioned whether the principle of local determination was working effectively. It also recommended that if the current arrangements were maintained, stronger mechanisms should be established for supporting local authorities and SACREs, and holding them to account for their work in relation to RE.
58. The DfE has reaffirmed its policy that RE is locally determined, but has taken no specific action in relation to the 2010 recommendations. However, the gulf between local authorities that support and monitor RE effectively and those that find this role impossible continues to widen. Whether local determination still provides the best basis for improving the quality of RE in schools should therefore be reviewed urgently.

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<sup>9</sup> NASACRE survey of local authority support for SACREs, 2012; [www.nasacre.org.uk/media/file/NASACRE\\_QtoS\\_apl11.pdf](http://www.nasacre.org.uk/media/file/NASACRE_QtoS_apl11.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Education, *RE: the truth unmasked – the supply of and support for religious education teachers*, Religious Education Council of England and Wales, 2013; <http://religionseducationcouncil.org.uk/appg/news/2013-03-18/appg-re-final-report-the-truth-unmasked>.

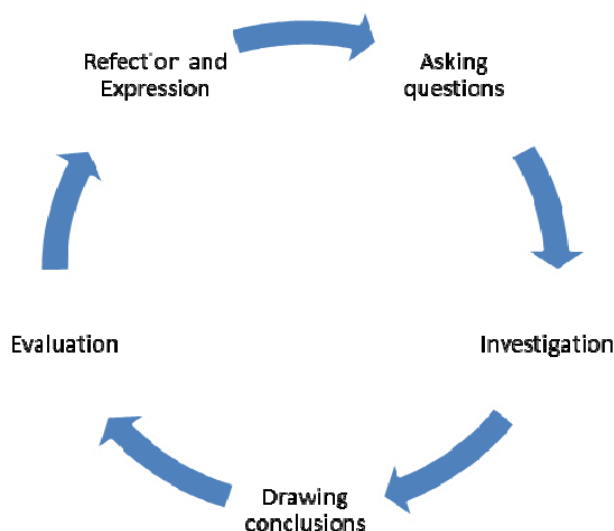
## Part B: Learning from the best

59. Underlying the eight challenges in Part A of this report is the fundamental need to improve the teaching, curriculum and leadership of RE in schools to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. Part B provides examples of good practice in four key areas:

- placing enquiry at the heart of learning – as a key to improving teaching
- high-quality leadership and management in primary schools – as a key to improvement and raising the status of RE
- forward-thinking leadership and management in secondary schools – as a key to securing provision for RE for the future
- effective RE in special schools – adapting RE to meet the distinctive needs of pupils who have learning difficulties.

### Placing enquiry at the heart of learning

60. The current report highlights, as did the 2010 report, that in the most effective RE teaching, enquiry is placed at the heart of learning. However, few of the schools visited had a well-defined approach to this. Enquiry was most effective and consistent where it was based on a straightforward model – for example:



61. Effective enquiry in RE:

- **is not age limited** – effective enquiry was found at all ages
- **involves sustained learning** – in which pupils set up the enquiry, carry it out, evaluate their learning and revisit the questions set
- **starts by engaging pupils in their learning** – making sure they can see the relevance and importance of the enquiry and how it relates to their own concerns

- **allows pupils time to gather information and draw conclusions before asking them to reflect on or apply their learning** – the focus on ‘learning from’ usually comes later as they ask the key question – so what?
- **enables pupils to reconsider their initial thinking and extend their enquiry as they begin to see new levels of possibility** – if pupils have identified key questions at the outset, they reconsider these, add more, or re-prioritise them
- **allows pupils to use their creativity and imagination** – ensuring that experiential learning and opportunities to foster spiritual and creative development are built into the process of enquiry
- **emphasises ‘impersonal evaluation’** – asking pupils to give well-founded reasons and justify their conclusions or views rather than simply expressing their personal feelings or responses to the enquiry.

Good examples of learning based on enquiry are described in the case studies below.

### Using ‘big questions’ to give a context for enquiry

62. Engaging pupils from the outset in ‘big questions’ provides a context for carrying out an investigation.

In history, **Year 5** pupils had been studying the impact of a sea disaster on a fishing community. In RE they used a worry box to record any things that distressed them about life today. This led to a discussion about bereavement and how different religions make sense of death. The teacher used a range of resources (such as Michelangelo’s *Last Judgement*) to stimulate questions about life after death. One pupil said, ‘I thought heaven was supposed to be nice!’ Pupils investigated the response of two religions (Christianity and Hinduism) to the question: ‘What happens when we die?’ They showed exceptional independence in completing the task, quickly gained a good range of viewpoints about life after death, and engaged seriously and sensitively when sharing their ideas and findings.

A **Year 7** class with lower-attaining pupils was investigating the five pillars of Islam. The teacher used the game of Jenga to explore the idea of creating strong foundations and introduced the question: ‘Why are pillars so important to Muslims?’ The pupils were introduced to the idea of being a detective – looking for clues, trying to work out motives, weighing up evidence, in-depth investigations – to set up mini-research tasks into the five pillars. The pupils engaged themselves with this very effectively and made excellent progress. By the end they were able to explain how the pillars related to the idea of strong foundations, how commitment was important, how duties can be enjoyed, and understood the idea of the ‘power of five’.

## Using reflection and creativity effectively to deepen pupils' understanding of religious material

63. The most effective RE teaching integrated opportunities for reflection and creativity effectively within the process of enquiry which arose directly from pupils' engagement with religious material.

In a **Year 3 class** studying the topic of angels, the teacher gave the pupils a range of images to help them decide on words they would use to describe an angel. Their ideas included 'shy', 'secretive', 'protective', 'powerful' and 'frightening'. An atmosphere of reflection was skilfully created using music and silence. Pupils were given a series of scenarios to extend their ideas: how would they greet an angel; what questions would they ask an angel? The topic led to an extended study of the idea of angels.

A **Year 8 class** focused on why Buddha is often portrayed sitting down. After examining a series of *mudras* (bodily postures of the Buddha), pupils considered their initial responses: 'What can I see?' 'What might it mean?' This task was undertaken in an atmosphere of stillness which prompted the pupils to move beyond their initial ideas to offer observations such as 'he appears tranquil', 'a good listener', and so on. Subsequent discussion probed these ideas further in terms of pupils' ideas about peace and tranquillity, and explored the symbol of the lotus, ideas of darkness and light, and the imagery of the Bodhi tree. The session set the scene for subsequent study of the life and impact of the Buddha by engaging pupils' interest through personal responses to Buddhist imagery.

## Using enquiry effectively when investigating religions

64. Where RE worked well, teachers gave pupils carefully structured opportunities to find out for themselves, make their own connections and draw their own conclusions.

In a highly effective **Year 2 lesson** on Diwali, following work on the story, the teacher distributed a wide range of resources (including artefacts, DVD clips, books, ICT links) about the festival across a number of work stations. The pupils' task was to visit each work station to find out as much as they could about the festival, seeing if they could make links between the different resources and the story they had been studying. The pupils found the tasks exciting and quickly worked together using a wide range of skills. They were able to speculate about possible meanings of objects (for example, the templates for mehndi patterns) and then revise their ideas when they gathered more information. They made important links between the features of the celebration and the story (diva lamps and the celebration of Sita's return), and identified the symbolism of the artefacts (the way Rama is shown to be a god).

## Using enquiry approaches to promote questioning and discussion about religious material

65. Using the approach of philosophical enquiry can deepen and extend pupils' investigation into religion.

One school successfully employed a Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach in the teaching of aspects of RE. Pupils were set problems to solve as a feature of work in RE. For example, in a topic on ritual, Year 4 pupils generated key questions for further investigation, including: 'Would it matter if you missed a ritual?'; 'What is the difference between a ritual and a routine?'; 'What rituals are important to me?'; 'Are there any bad rituals?'; 'How would I feel if my ritual was taken away from me?'<sup>11</sup>

In another school, a Year 7 class used a similar approach to explore the design argument for the existence of God. Pictures of a flower and a computer were used to explore the idea of 'design'. What do we mean by 'designed'? Are only human products designed? Is the natural world designed? The approach was developed with pupils building on each other's ideas ('I agree/disagree with you because ...'). The story of Paley's watch led a further discussion of God as a designer. Pupils made outstanding progress, were very engaged throughout the lesson and demonstrated high levels of insight into the argument.

## Using digital technology to support enquiry

66. Particularly in primary schools, teachers were increasingly using high-quality, web-based resources to stimulate pupils' learning and provide examples of living religious practice. Similarly, pupils made greater use of technology to research RE topics and present their findings.

In one school, **Year 6** pupils had laptops with access to the school's Wi-Fi and intranet. They used the laptops for a task on Judaism, a religion which they had not studied before. Each of six groups had a named Jewish artefact connected to Shabbat. The task was to carry out a mini enquiry into its nature and use. Each group was challenged to research information and produce a digital presentation to summarise its findings. The technology was integral to the learning, easily accessed, and provided information that the pupils could not have found from books.

## Building the skills of effective argument into the process of enquiry

67. In the following example, the processes of enquiry were built systematically into GCSE work.

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<sup>11</sup> More details about this example can be found on the Ofsted good practice website. [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-enquiry-based-religious-education-%E2%80%98philosophy-for-children%E2%80%99-practice](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-enquiry-based-religious-education-%E2%80%98philosophy-for-children%E2%80%99-practice).

In a school where GCSE provision was highly effective, the teaching focused strongly on developing the skills of argument, embedding these skills into pupils' thinking rather than simply asking them to practise examination techniques. Pupils used the WAWOS technique, described below, to sharpen their learning. This involved a five-stage approach:

**What do you think and why?**

**Apply religious teaching as an example.**

**What is another point of view?**

**Offer religious teachings for another point of view.**

**Suggest how your response might impact on your life or learning.**

This five-fold approach was used to shape class discussions, develop written work, focus assessment and set targets for improvement.

68. Despite these and many other examples of effective practice, teachers need further support to translate the principles of good enquiry into curriculum planning, teaching and assessment. In particular, guidance is needed on:
- a clear rationale for the place of enquiry in RE – for example, how the principle of asking open-ended critical questions about religion is balanced with the need to respect differences of opinion and lifestyle
  - breadth and balance in selecting enquiries, based on a clear, shared understanding of the rationale for RE
  - an appropriate repertoire of approaches to learning that match different types of enquiry, for example:
    - using experiential and creative activities where pupils need to develop their insight into the 'experience' of religion
    - using reasoned argument and debate when pupils are exploring controversial issues
    - using investigative and interpretative skills when pupils need to gather, analyse and present information
  - how to sequence enquiries to make sure pupils build effectively on prior learning and can see the relevance of their investigations
  - how the process of enquiry can be built into the way pupils' progress in RE is defined and assessed.

## High-quality leadership and management in primary schools

69. Effective RE in primary schools was invariably the result of high-quality leadership and management.

## Effective subject leadership

70. Senior leaders took an active interest in RE, discussed priorities with the subject leader and provided a wider whole-school context to promote improvement. Effective subject leaders had a clear vision for RE. They kept themselves fully abreast of current developments and maintained strong links with local support networks. They took an active approach to planning, monitoring and improving the subject, and they routinely briefed senior leaders and governors about it.

In a school judged 'satisfactory' by Ofsted in its whole-school inspection, teaching and learning had been identified as priorities for improvement. The headteacher chose RE as a context for development work to promote pupils' independence and more effective discussion. The subject leader undertook training in thinking skills, introduced these within RE and then shared them more widely across the school. As a result, the pupils' RE improved significantly and the subject took the lead in promoting good learning across the school.

In another school where RE was highly effective, the subject leader had worked closely with the staff to identify a set of 'Top Ten' expectations so there would be a shared understanding of the key features of effective RE teaching:

- encouraging pupils to ask 'why' questions
- posing challenging questions
- insisting on openness and understanding
- seeking to challenge stereotypes
- promoting 'subject dispositions'<sup>12</sup> throughout the day
- having high expectations about discussion
- using key vocabulary
- using previously assessed work to plan learning
- giving pupils time to discuss gritty [sic] issues
- providing opportunities to talk about spirituality.

As a result, the quality of RE provision was highly consistent across the school.

## Effective monitoring, self-evaluation and improvement planning

71. Monitoring and improvement were effective when they focused clearly on raising standards and improving provision. Staff and pupils were actively involved in evaluating the subject and identifying improvement priorities.

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<sup>12</sup> This term was used by the school, reflecting a feature of their local Agreed Syllabus.



Responding to the 2010 Ofsted report, a subject leader identified the need to evaluate the quality of the pupils' understanding of Christianity and the effectiveness of the provision for teaching about it. Monitoring activities had this as their focus. The outcome of the evaluation was shared with the staff and led to significant improvements in the teaching about Christianity across the school.

In another school, the subject leader carried out an annual 'mind-mapping' exercise with all the staff to explore the subject's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) and identify areas for improvement. A small group of pupils met regularly to discuss their experience of RE and contribute to improvement.

## Effective professional development

72. Where professional development was effective, the subject leader discussed training priorities with the senior leadership team and ensured that these were incorporated into the subject improvement plan. A strategic approach was adopted towards training for RE, capitalising effectively on opportunities as they arose.

The subject leader had identified that the provision for RE (six mini-units a year, taught weekly) tended to fragment learning and isolated the subject from the rest of the curriculum. She recognised a professional development need in terms of helping staff rethink their approach to planning RE. She worked in collaboration with two colleagues who were confident about teaching RE to trial a different approach for one term. They taught RE as a single topic over three weeks. This led to much more sustained learning and forged stronger cross-curricular links. The outcomes were shared at a staff meeting as part of wider staff training in RE.

In another school, the subject leader recognised that the newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and other new staff often arrived at the school expressing low levels of confidence about teaching RE. In response, she targeted the CPD opportunities on these staff, building a strong RE component into their induction programme and, as a result, strengthening subject expertise across the school.

## Effective curriculum planning

73. The subject leader established a clear approach to planning RE which was discussed by and agreed with the staff. They were clear about their responsibilities for planning and assessment. Planning was carefully monitored and discussed routinely with the relevant staff.

The subject leader worked with the staff to develop an agreed enquiry-based approach to planning the RE curriculum. The principles behind effective enquiry were shared to ensure staff understood how to build

these into their teaching of RE. The principles were then translated into a model for planning, with examples of good practice to guide the staff.

The initiative was followed up, both with regular meetings with year groups to discuss the emerging planning and also at staff meetings where good practice was shared. As a result, teachers' confidence about planning independently rose sharply and the overall quality of RE improved across the school.

In another school the subject leader met the year-group teams each term to discuss the following term's plans; to identify, for example, how RE would link to other areas of the curriculum and to ensure the focus for any topic was clearly defined and understood. The focus of the meetings was to ensure that varied opportunities to incorporate RE within the curriculum were understood and exploited. Well-coordinated, rich and imaginative RE developed across the school as a result, including:

- focus days when the whole school took time out to concentrate on an RE theme, often related to a festival
- specific RE topics taught weekly or in a short block
- wider topics where RE-related work could be effectively integrated such as work on Judaism as part of a World War 2 history-led topic.

## Effective assessment

74. Assessment was effective when:

- RE subject leaders had agreed clear procedures and practices to support it
- arrangements were manageable and realistic
- planning clearly identified expectations and opportunities to assess pupils' progress.

The subject leader clearly identified assessment opportunities, both formal and informal, in each unit of work. All plans had a set of clearly identified and differentiated expectations for what pupils would be able to do by the end of the topic. Pupils had 'I can' statements and routinely assessed their own RE work. Teachers recorded pupils' progress by annotating the plans with evidence of pupils' achievement, including their oral contributions. A carefully annotated portfolio of work in RE was maintained to exemplify standards. A wide variety of monitoring strategies was used, including scrutiny of RE books, checks of marking and planning, and pupil voice surveys, as well as direct observations of teaching and learning. These all helped to ensure consistency and provided a way of evaluating the impact of the arrangements on provision. The findings were summarised to provide 'the big picture', thus sharing good practice as well as raising points for improvement.

## Forward-thinking leadership and management in secondary schools

75. Part A of the report highlights concerns about the provision for RE in secondary schools. Schools are being encouraged to design a curriculum flexibly to best meet the needs of their pupils. RE needs to explore this flexibility, since leaders and managers who look ahead are key to securing the provision of RE in the future.
76. In responding to recent education policy, almost half of the 51 secondary schools visited between January 2011 and July 2012 had changed or were in the process of changing how they provided RE. Many of these changes were not well thought through and represented a deterioration in the quality of RE. However, a number of the schools visited had responded to the challenges by developing innovative approaches. Not all of these would work in all circumstances, but each one worked well in the context of the individual school.
77. In all cases, two factors were crucial:
- Decisions about the RE curriculum were based on a carefully considered rationale, taking account of the school's distinctive context, the needs of its pupils and the subject.
  - The school monitored and reviewed the impact of the changes on standards and the quality of the pupils' learning.

### Creating a coherent approach to RE

78. A characteristic of good leadership in RE was a clear and consistent approach.

A school that wanted to ensure that RE at Key Stage 3 was more challenging and coherent used the publication of a revised agreed syllabus as a springboard for developing a more rigorous approach towards the study of religion and belief.

For example, a well-structured unit in Year 7 enquired into the idea of Jesus as the son of God and explored a variety of viewpoints. In Year 8, a unit exploring the place of religion in the contemporary world led pupils to a task in which they investigated whether religions could get on well together. Work in Year 9 included a unit on liberation theology, investigating whether the church should campaign actively for social justice in the modern world.

The pupils explained how each unit of work built on their previous learning and they clearly grasped the idea that RE involved developing their ability to ask questions, find things out, evaluate different opinions and draw conclusions. They became more enthusiastic about the subject, valuing the significant opportunities it provided to develop their skills of argument and express their own opinions.

## Developing new models of curriculum provision

79. Some subject leaders were successfully exploring different ways of organising RE within the curriculum.

One school had combined a number of different approaches to construct a highly innovative curriculum for RE.

In Year 7 it was taught by a team of primary-trained teachers as part of an integrated programme incorporating three themes: Believing in God, The Origins of the World, and a study of the teachings of Jesus. In Year 8 it was taught as a discrete subject with a focus on the study of world religions. In Years 9 and 10 all pupils followed a Humanities GCSE course which included work on Islam in the West, Judaism and the Holocaust, and Christianity and Apartheid. In Year 11 all pupils took a short-course GCSE in RE as part of English and taught by the English team.

The students were enthusiastic about how RE helped them to clarify and think through their own beliefs and values; to begin to deal with moral dilemmas that they faced in everyday life; to show respect for other people's views, as well as to challenge those with which they disagreed; and, to value and celebrate diversity as an opportunity rather than to regard it as a problem.

## Rejuvenating RE

80. Inspectors visited a number of schools where the subject leadership had successfully revitalised RE.

A school which had limited previous success in RE went about renewing the subject by resetting the vision for it, establishing a new name – 'Social and Religious Studies' (SRS) – and a set of key aims to spell out what they wanted students to achieve by the time they left.

The curriculum started from the social context of the pupils' learning to aid their understanding and engagement. The RE department produced a strapline to reflect this – 'One world where we all fit in' – and the curriculum was designed to take this vision forward. It moved into the study of religions and how they have an impact on the world, personally, locally, nationally and globally. It showed the valuable contribution religion can make and how it might challenge pupils' thinking.

Each year had a key question, prominently displayed in classrooms and driving the learning, with GCSE taking the lead from Year 9 onwards.

- Year 7: Where does community fit?
- Year 8: How does religion fit in locally, nationally and globally?
- Year 9: Where do we look for meaning? In God? In the world? In suffering? In others?

- Year 10: Where does religion fit in... to conflict... to society... to medicine?

### Creating effective examination provision at Key Stage 4

81. A number of the schools visited were exploring new ways of securing GCSE provision for RE.

One school decided to restructure its provision to secure RE in the Key Stage 4 curriculum. Previously, all pupils had taken a short-course GCSE, but the success of this was limited. The school decided to balance the priorities of sustaining high-quality GCSE RE provision for a substantial cohort of pupils with securing a reasonable level of provision for core RE for all pupils.

Key Stage 3 was reduced to two years and the school introduced a series of substantial 40-hour taster courses in Year 9 across a range of optional GCSE subjects, including RE. Many pupils opted to take the RE taster, which focused on GCSE-style topics. The quality of teaching on the taster course was excellent. The school predicted that, on the basis of pupils' early option choices, a cohort of over 60 pupils was likely to take full-course GCSE in Year 10.

Pupils not taking the taster course or the GCSE course did not study RE in Year 9, but would have the equivalent of one period a fortnight of core provision across Years 10 and 11 as part of a 'carousel' of PSHE, citizenship and RE.

### Developing positive attitudes towards RE

82. Inspectors visited a number of schools that had developed new and effective approaches to RE.

A school which had been in special measures, with a very challenging set of improvement priorities, took the bold step of developing a new approach to RE. Pupils' attitudes towards RE had been very negative, particularly at Key Stage 4, where GCSE results in the subject had been very poor.

The school decided to introduce a series of 'Viewpoint' day conferences on RE-related topics throughout Years 10 and 11 to rebuild the subject and forge links with a range of local religious communities. When inspectors visited, the Year 10 pupils had just been involved in a highly successful Viewpoint day on prejudice and persecution. They spoke very positively about the event as a memorable experience which had opened their eyes to issues they had not thought about much before. A representative from a local religious community who contributed to the day was very impressed by the pupils' high levels of interest: they were not afraid to ask very searching questions.

83. Inspectors found some of the most innovative thinking about the future of RE within the secondary curriculum in academies, where the freedom to develop new models of provision was evident. This finding highlights the value of local authorities, and SACRES, working with academies to strengthen local support networks to share good practice.
84. A theme that ran through discussions with senior leaders in secondary schools related to the requirement in some, but not all, locally agreed syllabuses that all pupils should follow an accredited course of study as part of the statutory requirements for RE at Key Stage 4. Some senior leaders saw this as inflexible. In an educational climate that encourages the tailoring of a school's curriculum to the needs of its pupils, this was seen as unhelpful and as stifling innovation.

### Effective RE in special schools

85. A key strength in all the special schools visited was the recognition of RE's potential to contribute considerably to pupils' learning and personal development.
86. Leadership of RE was a strength in most of the special schools visited and in particular:
- the commitment and enthusiasm of the subject leader
  - strong training and professional development
  - effective and creative teaching approaches, with an emphasis on experiential and practical learning
  - the good use of links with local religious communities to enrich the pupils' learning.
87. In one school, for example, the inspector reported:

Pupils enjoy RE very much. They are encouraged to be active partners in learning. This ensures the subject makes a powerful contribution to pupils' personal development, including their self-knowledge and self-esteem. They grow in confidence and respond positively to learning about and from religion.

The use of a wide range of resources, particularly sensory artefacts, contributes significantly to pupils' good progress in lessons. The provision of practical, visual and first-hand experiences enables pupils to engage effectively with the material and ideas they are exploring. Teachers use a variety of approaches to enable pupils to communicate their thoughts and feelings, and demonstrate what they know and understand. Interactive whiteboards enliven learning and good use is made of photographic evidence to record pupils' learning in RE.

88. A key limiting factor was the difficulty of adapting the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus to ensure that it met the pupils' specific learning needs,

particularly where their needs were complex and profound. Subject leaders found this process very challenging. The principle of 'making it simpler' did not work effectively. Although, in most of the schools, subject leaders attended RE training or support groups, they reported that these did not usually provide effective guidance about adapting the syllabus.

89. However, the 'good practice' visit to a secondary special school provided an example of a more radical approach to the teaching of RE which placed the distinctive needs of the pupils at the heart of learning. The subject leader had developed 'Five Keys into RE': a structure for planning the subject for pupils who have special needs.<sup>13</sup> This placed the pupil rather than the mainstream agreed syllabus content at the centre of what was taught. The subject leader said:

'As pupils in our school need time to process RE themes, we should select only the pure essence of what should be taught.'

90. The Five Keys help teachers to focus their planning.

**Key 1: Connection – what links can we make with our pupils' lives?**

A bridge is created between the religious theme and the child, meaning that learning is deeper: 'The story of Diwali begins with the idea that sometimes we go away, but it is good to be back home. We establish the link between pupils' experiences of respite care, their daily journeys home, and the story of Rama returning from exile.'

**Key 2: Knowledge – what is the burning core of the faith?**

It is important to look into the heart of the religious theme to understand precisely what needs to be taught: 'Key knowledge includes pupils' understanding that Jesus loved everyone, especially if they were poor or unhappy; or that Sikhs have special teachers called gurus. By cutting out peripheral information and going straight to the core, we teach what is central and powerful.'

**Key 3: Senses – what sensory elements are in the religion?**

It is important to include sensory experiences that are linked to RE. For example, a theme about Jewish prayer could involve wrapping a child in a large *tallit*, taking Makaton signs from the Shema, such as 'heart', 'gate', 'children', 'love'; and signing these to Jewish liturgical music, or touching a favourite picture between the eyes to show its importance.

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<sup>13</sup> Details of the good practice visit can be found on Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-inclusive-approach-religious-education-special-school-little-heath-school](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-inclusive-approach-religious-education-special-school-little-heath-school).

**Key 4: Symbols – what are the symbols that are most accessible?**

Symbols are an important way of conveying the spirituality of religion. They can be held like a brass *Ek Onkar* (the Sikh idea of the unity of God). They can be the focus of art work or experienced directly using a hoop to represent the *kara* (the Sikh bracelet), and travelling around it again and again by walking or in a wheelchair. This would show the eternity of God.

**Key 5: Values – what are the values in the religion that speak to us?**

While pupils who have special needs may face many challenges, like other young people they have a strong sense of values. They are aware of others helping them in their lives and the importance of saying thank you. So, for example, a unit on the life of the Buddha might use a traditional Buddhist story to focus on the importance of patience. This links with pupils needing to wait for help with their work, or waiting for the school transport to arrive.

The 'Five Keys' reflect the fact that some pupils who have special needs need time to discover the deeper meaning of RE.



## Notes

### The survey

The report is based on evidence from inspections of RE between September 2009 and July 2012 in 90 primary schools, 91 secondary schools, including six special schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, hearing impairment, complex learning needs, or profound and multiple learning difficulties. In addition, evidence was gathered from five visits made to schools in which good practice in RE had been identified, including a secondary special school. In all, inspectors observed 659 lessons, or parts of lessons.

The sample did not include schools that had been judged to require special measures or had been given a notice to improve. The number of schools in the survey that had been judged satisfactory at their previous section 5 inspection was also limited, because a proportion of such schools were being monitored by inspectors and were therefore not available for subject inspections. In autumn 2012, a telephone survey was undertaken of 30 secondary schools which had not entered any pupils for a GCSE qualification in RE in 2011. The survey explored the reasons for this.

The report also refers to evidence from other reports published by Ofsted, extended discussions with teachers, members of SACREs and other RE professionals, examination results, and wider surveys carried out by RE professional associations.

### Examination data

The past four years have seen a continued rise in the number of pupils entered for A- and AS-level examinations in religious studies (RS), building on the success of the subject at GCSE. In 2013, around 19,000 pupils in England took A-level GCE RS compared to just over 17,000 in 2009. Nearly 30,000 pupils were entered for AS-level courses in 2013 compared with around 22,000 in 2009. The performance of pupils in these examinations has remained fairly stable over that time and results compare well with other subjects. In 2013, 25.8% of A-level pupils gained A\* to A grades and around 21% of AS-level pupils gained a grade A.

The past four years have seen a change in the number and pattern of entries for GCSE courses in RS in England. In 2009 just over 425,000 pupils were entered for a GCSE in RS. Of these around 165,000 were entered for the RS full course and just over 261,000 for the RS short course. In 2013, the number of pupils taking an RS GCSE had fallen to around 390,000 and the balance had changed. Full-course entries had risen significantly to nearly 240,000 while numbers taking the short course had fallen to around 150,000. The most significant change occurred between 2012 and 2013 when short-course GCSE numbers fell by nearly 30%. GCSE results are broadly similar to those reported in 2010. In 2013 in England, 72.1% of full-course pupils gained A\* to C grades, with 30.6% receiving the highest A\* or A grades. In the short course in England in 2013, 53.5% gained A\* to C grades with 18.3% achieving the highest A\* or A grades.

## Summary of inspection data

### Primary

#### Judgement (number of schools)

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness (90)	2	36	50	2
Achievement (90)	2	34	53	1
Teaching (90)	1	42	45	2
Assessment (87)	1	16	42	28
Curriculum (90)	2	30	55	3
Leadership and management (90)	5	42	41	2
Subject training (85)	1	21	38	25

### Secondary

#### Judgement (number of schools)

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness (91)	4	40	37	10
Achievement (91)	4	40	36	11
Teaching (91)	5	44	36	6
Assessment (77)	5	18	40	14
Curriculum (91)	5	29	46	11
Leadership and management (91)	6	40	37	8
Subject training (81)	2	20	31	28

## Further information

### Ofsted publications

*Making sense of religion* (070045), Ofsted, 2007;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070045](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070045).

*Moving English forward* (110118), Ofsted, 2012;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110118](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110118).

*Transforming religious education* (090215), Ofsted, 2010;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090215](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090215).

### Other publications

*An analysis of the impact of the EBacc on student opportunity to study GCSE RS*, National Association of Teachers of Religious Education, 2012;  
[www.natre.org.uk/free.php](http://www.natre.org.uk/free.php).

*Face to face and side by side: a framework for partnership in our multi-faith society* (9781409803157), Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008;  
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/facetofaceframework>.

*NASACRE survey of local authority support for SACREs*, National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education, 2011;  
[www.nasacre.org.uk/media/file/NASACRE\\_QtoS\\_apl11.pdf](http://www.nasacre.org.uk/media/file/NASACRE_QtoS_apl11.pdf).

*RE: the truth unmasked – the supply of and support for religious education teachers*, report from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Education, Religious Education Council of England and Wales, 2013;  
<http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/appg/news/2013-03-18/appg-re-final-report-the-truth-unmasked>.

*Religious education in English schools: non-statutory guidance 2010* (DCSF-00114-2010), Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010;  
[www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00114-2010](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00114-2010).

*Religious education: the non-statutory framework*, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004;  
[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090605160101/qca.org.uk/qca\\_7886.aspx](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090605160101/qca.org.uk/qca_7886.aspx).

## Annex A: Context and recent developments in religious education

The legal requirements governing RE were set out in the Education Reform Act of 1988 and confirmed by the Education Acts of 1996 and 1998. Although RE is a statutory subject, it is not part of the National Curriculum. The content of RE in maintained schools is determined at local authority level and each authority must review its agreed syllabus every five years. An agreed syllabus should 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian while taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'.<sup>14</sup>

Each local authority must set up a standing advisory council on religious education (SACRE) to advise the authority on matters connected with RE. Each council comprises four representative groups: Christian and other religious denominations, the Church of England, teachers' associations and the local authority.

RE must be provided for all registered pupils in maintained schools and academies, including those in Reception classes and sixth forms.

Academies must provide RE in accordance with their funding agreements. The model funding agreements broadly reflect the provisions that apply to local authorities and schools in the maintained sector. In the case of academies that do not have a religious designation, this means they must arrange for RE to be taught to all pupils in accordance with the general requirements for agreed syllabuses. In other words, they should also 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian while taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'. Academies are not, however, required to follow any specific locally agreed syllabus.

RE in voluntary aided schools must be provided in accordance with the trust deed of the school and the wishes of the governing body. In community and voluntary controlled schools, it must be provided in accordance with the local agreed syllabus. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RE and this right should be identified in the school prospectus.

The survey evidence on which this report is based includes academies, community and voluntary controlled schools, but does not include voluntary aided schools with a religious character, for which there are separate inspection arrangements for RE. It is for the governing body of voluntary aided schools with a religious character to ensure that their RE is inspected under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.<sup>15</sup> The

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<sup>14</sup> Education Reform Act 1988, section 8 (3);

[www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40/section/8/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40/section/8/enacted).

<sup>15</sup> Education Act 2005, section 48; [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/section/48/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/section/48/enacted).

GCSE and GCE examination statistics quoted in this report relate to all schools in England.

In 2004, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority produced, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, *The non-statutory national framework for religious education*.<sup>16</sup> Its purpose was to support those with responsibility for the provision and quality of RE in maintained schools. The intention of the Framework was to give local authorities, SACREs and relevant authorities with responsibility for schools with a religious character a shared understanding of the knowledge and skills that pupils should gain through their religious education at school.

The Framework incorporated two attainment targets: 'learning about' religion and belief (AT1) and 'learning from' religion and belief (AT2). These set out the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils of different abilities and maturities are expected to have at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. The majority of local authorities, but not all, incorporated these targets into their locally agreed syllabuses.

In January 2010, the then Department for Children, Schools and Families published new non-statutory guidance on RE entitled *Religious education in English schools*.<sup>17</sup> Although the publication is still available, following the change of government in May 2010, the Department for Education's website states that it is no longer deemed to be a definitive statement of the Department's guidance on RE.

In 2011 the Religious Education Council for England and Wales (REC)<sup>18</sup> introduced a strategic plan designed to:

- promote high-quality RE
- influence public policy and understanding of RE
- promote a coherent professional development strategy for RE
- secure adequate and sustainable resources for RE.

In 2012, as part of this strategy, the REC launched an RE subject review in England to run in parallel with the DfE review of the National Curriculum.

Also in 2012, an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on RE was formed to provide a medium for parliamentarians and organisations with an interest in RE to discuss the current provision of RE, press for continuing improvement, promote public understanding and advocate rigorous education for every young person in religious

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<sup>16</sup> *Religious education: the non-statutory framework*, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004; [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090605160101/qca.org.uk/qca\\_7886.aspx](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090605160101/qca.org.uk/qca_7886.aspx).

<sup>17</sup> *Religious education in English schools: non-statutory guidance 2010* (DCSF-00114-2010), Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010; [www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00114-2010](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00114-2010).

<sup>18</sup> The Religious Education Council of England and Wales was established in 1973 to represent the collective interests of a wide variety of professional associations and faith communities in deepening and strengthening provision for religious education.

and non-religious world views. The APPG's first major area of investigation has been into the supply of, and support for, teachers of RE.

## Annex B: Providers visited

### Primary schools

Adel Primary School  
 Anderton Park Primary School  
 Annesley Primary and Nursery School  
 Aston Springwood Primary School  
 Bathampton Primary School  
  
 Beamont Community Primary School  
 Bevington Primary School  
 Bigland Green Primary School  
 Bilton Grange Community Primary School  
 Brackenbury Primary School  
 Brandhall Primary School  
 Brettenham Primary School  
 Brook Field Primary School  
 Broughton Primary School  
 Brown Clee CofE Primary School  
 Burnley Brow Community School  
 Chiltern Primary School  
 Churchtown Primary School  
 Clayton Village Primary School  
 Cotwall End Primary School  
 Courtney Primary School  
 Crackley Bank Primary School  
 Darley Churchtown CofE Primary School  
 Digby the Tedder Primary School  
 Eastcombe Primary School  
 Eden Park Primary School Academy  
 Elson Junior School  
 Fairburn Community Primary School  
 Farmilo Primary School and Nursery  
 Farnborough Road Junior School  
 Farsley Springbank Junior School  
 Ford Primary School

### Local authority

Leeds  
 Birmingham  
 Nottinghamshire  
 Rotherham  
 Bath and North East Somerset  
 Warrington  
 Kensington and Chelsea  
 Tower Hamlets  
 North Yorkshire  
 Hammersmith and Fulham  
 Sandwell  
 Enfield  
 Swindon  
 Northamptonshire  
 Shropshire  
 Oldham  
 Kingston upon Hull City of Sefton  
 Bradford  
 Dudley  
 South Gloucestershire  
 Staffordshire  
 Derbyshire  
 Lincolnshire  
 Gloucestershire  
 Torbay  
 Hampshire  
 North Yorkshire  
 Nottinghamshire  
 Sefton  
 Leeds  
 Plymouth

Forest View Junior School	Nottinghamshire
Frodsham Manor House Primary School	Cheshire West and Chester
Galton Valley Primary School	Sandwell
Ghyllside Primary School*	Cumbria
Godwin Junior School	Newham
Gomeldon Primary School	Wiltshire
Gotham Primary School	Nottinghamshire
Grange Junior School	Swindon
Greatham Primary School	Hampshire
Greenacres Junior Infant and Nursery School	Oldham
Heron Cross Primary School	Stoke-on-Trent
Hérons Moor Community Primary School*	North Somerset
Holbeach Bank Primary School	Lincolnshire
Holden Lane Primary School	Stoke-on-Trent
Hollyfield Primary School	Birmingham
Hope Primary School	Derbyshire
Hutton Rudby Primary School	North Yorkshire
James Watt Primary School	Birmingham
Kempsey Primary School	Worcestershire
Kentmere Primary School	Rochdale
King Charles Primary School	Cornwall
Kings Worthy Primary School	Hampshire
Ladybrook Primary School	Stockport
Long Row Primary School	Derbyshire
Lostock Primary School	Bolton
Mayfield Primary School	Cambridgeshire
Middlewich Primary School	Cheshire East
Morton Primary School	Derbyshire
Mossfield Primary School	Salford
Normanton Junior School	Wakefield
Queen Victoria Primary School	Dudley
Rhyl Primary School	Camden
Richard Durning's Endowed Primary School	Lancashire
Rillington Community Primary School	North Yorkshire
Salisbury Road Primary School	Plymouth



Scout Road Primary School*	Calderdale
Seaham Trinity Primary School	Durham
Seaton Primary School	Devon
South Wonston Primary School	Hampshire
Spooner Row Primary School, Wymondham	Norfolk
St John's CofE Primary School	Salford
St Paul's Church of England Primary School	Gloucestershire
St Thomas Community School	Manchester
Stivichall Primary School	Coventry
Tirlebrook Primary School	Gloucestershire
Trewidland Community Primary School	Cornwall
Ugborough Primary School	Devon
Walesby CofE Primary School	Nottinghamshire
Wensley Fold (VC) Church of England Primary School*	Blackburn with Darwen
Westfield Primary School	Halton
White Rock Primary School	Torbay
Wilberforce Primary School*	Westminster
Worsley Mesnes Community Primary School	Wigan

### **Secondary schools**

Abraham Moss High School
Alder Community High School
Alderman White School and Language College*
Banbury School*
Bartley Green School A Specialist Technology and Sports College
Beckfoot School*
Belgrave High School*
Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School*
Bournemouth School for Girls
Bramhall High School
Broadoak Mathematics and Computing College
Calderstones School
Canons High School
Capital City Academy
Carlton Bolling College

### **Local authority**

Manchester
Tameside
Nottinghamshire
Oxfordshire
Birmingham
Bradford
Staffordshire
Hertfordshire
Bournemouth
Stockport
North Somerset
Liverpool
Harrow
Brent
Bradford

Cheney School*	Oxfordshire
Cheslyn Hay Sport and Community High School	Staffordshire
Chesterfield High School*	Sefton
Chipping Campden School	Gloucestershire
Clayton Hall Business and Language College	Staffordshire
Countesthorpe Community College*	Leicestershire
Crown Woods School	Greenwich
Didcot Girls' School*	Oxfordshire
Dorcan Technology College*	Swindon
Downend Comprehensive School*	South Gloucestershire
Finham Park School*	Coventry
Fitzharrys School	Oxfordshire
Fullbrook School	Surrey
Goffs School*	Hertfordshire
Grangefield School and Technology College	Stockton-on-Tees
Hamilton Community College	Leicester
Hasland Hall Community School	Derbyshire
Haven High Technology College*	Lincolnshire
Haybridge High School and Sixth Form*	Worcestershire
Highfield Humanities College	Blackpool
Highfields School	Derbyshire
Hyde Technology School and Hearing Impaired Resource Base	Tameside
James Calvert Spence College	Northumberland
John Cabot Academy	South Gloucestershire
John Ruskin School	Cumbria
John Spendluffe Technology College	Lincolnshire
Joseph Swan School*	Gateshead
Kenton School*	Newcastle upon Tyne
King's Grove School	Cheshire East
Lutterworth College*	Leicestershire
Marsh Academy	Kent
Martley, the Chantry High School*	Worcestershire
Maryhill High School*	Staffordshire
Monkwearmouth School	Sunderland
Moreton Community School	Wolverhampton

Mount Grace School	Hertfordshire
Myers Grove School*	Sheffield
New College Leicester	Leicester
Oasis Academy Immingham	North East Lincolnshire
Park High School*	Harrow
Portchester Community School	Hampshire
Prospect School*	Reading
Queen Elizabeth's Community College*	Devon
Quintin Kynaston School*	Westminster
Ralph Thoresby School	Leeds
Redcar Community College A Specialist Visual and Performing Arts Centre*	Redcar and Cleveland
Regents Park Community College	Southampton
Severn Vale School*	Gloucestershire
Shireland Collegiate Academy	Sandwell
Sir Thomas Rich's School	Gloucestershire
Smestow School	Wolverhampton
St James School	Devon
Stockport School	Stockport
Sutton Centre Community College*	Nottinghamshire
Tarporley High School and Sixth Form College*	Cheshire West and Chester
The Bishop David Brown School	Surrey
The Bulmershe School	Wokingham
The Burton Borough School	Telford and Wrekin
The Chauncy School*	Hertfordshire
The Corsham School A Visual Arts College*	Wiltshire
The Dearne High – A Specialist Humanities College	Barnsley
The Heath School	Halton
The Nobel School	Hertfordshire
The Tiffin Girls' School*	Kingston upon Thames
The Warwick School	Surrey
The Wye Valley School	Buckinghamshire
Thomas Mills High School	Suffolk
Thurston Community College	Suffolk
Tytherington High School	Cheshire East
Wardle High School*	Rochdale

West Park School\*  
Whickham School  
William de Ferrers School  
Wrockwardine Wood Arts College\*

Derby  
Gateshead  
Essex  
Telford and Wrekin

**Special schools**

Ashgate Croft School  
Northern House School\*  
Phoenix Primary EBD School  
Royal Cross Primary School  
Stanley School  
Windlehurst School

**Local authority**

Derbyshire  
Oxfordshire  
Walsall  
Lancashire  
Wirral  
Stockport

**Good practice case study**

Little Heath School  
Rushey Mead School  
Smannell and Enham Church of England (Aided) Primary School  
The Bankfield School

**Local authority**

Redbridge  
Leicester  
Hampshire  
Halton

\* The provider has closed or converted to an academy since it was visited.



# **A Review of Religious Education in England**

The Religious Education Council of  
England and Wales

**October 2013**



## Member bodies of the RE Council October 2013

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Accord Coalition	Independent Schools Religious Studies Association
Al-Khoei Foundation	Institute of Jainology
All Faiths and None	Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom
Association of Christian Teachers (ACT)	ISKCON Educational Services
Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC)	Islamic Academy
Association of University Lecturers in Religion and Education (UK)	Jewish Teachers' Association
Barnabas in Schools (BRF)	Keswick Hall Trust
Bloxham Project	The Methodist Church
Board of Deputies of British Jews	Muslim Council of Britain
British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR)	National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on RE
British Humanist Association	National Association of Teachers of RE
The Buddhist Society	National Council of Hindu Temples (UK)
Cambridge Muslim College	NBRIA National Board of (Catholic) RE Inspectors and Advisers
Catholic Association of Teachers, Schools and Colleges	National Society (Church of England) for Promoting Religious Education
Catholic Education Service	National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom
Christian Education / RE Today	Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK)
Church of England Board of Education	Network of Sikh Organisations
Church in Wales Division for Education	The Oxford Foundation
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	Pagan Federation
Churches Together in England	REEP: The Religious Education and Environment Programme
Clear Vision Trust (Buddhist)	Religious Education Movement, Wales
Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches	St Luke's College Foundation
Culham St Gabriel's	Shap Working Party
Deanery of Great Britain and Ireland	Stapleford Centre
The Farmington Institute	Theology and Religious Studies UK (TRS UK)
FBFE: The National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education	3FF, Three Faiths Forum
Federation of RE Centres	Tony Blair Faith Foundation
Free Church Education Committee	United Sikhs
Hindu Council (UK)	Wales Association of SACREs (WASACRE)
Hindu Forum of Britain	World Congress of Faiths
Hockerill Educational Foundation	Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

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# FOREWORD

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The place of RE on the basic curriculum has always been clear and local determination of its curriculum has been part of the statutory arrangements for RE over many years. I welcome *Religious education: a national curriculum framework* as a national benchmark document for use by all those responsible for the RE curriculum locally. I also welcome the wider Review of RE in England of which it is part.

The RE Review, an initiative of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales, takes account of wider educational aims, including the aims of the new national curriculum. In particular, it embodies respect for the law and the principles of freedom, responsibility and fairness. It demonstrates a commitment to raising expectations and standards of the RE received by all children and young people.

All children need to acquire core knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the religions and worldviews which not only shape their history and culture but which guide their own development. The modern world needs young people who are sufficiently confident in their own beliefs and values that they can respect the religious and cultural differences of others, and contribute to a cohesive and compassionate society.

RE's place on the curriculum will be strong if its role and importance are communicated effectively and widely understood. RE in England compares favourably with equivalent curricula in high performing jurisdictions around the world, but this reputation can only be maintained with a rigorous model of RE.

This RE curriculum framework and the RE Review of which it is part provides for such a model. It has the endorsement of a very wide range of professional organisations and bodies representing faiths and other worldviews. I hope the document will be useful to all those seeking to provide RE of the highest quality for young people in our schools.



**Michael Gove**

Secretary of State for Education

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This review of RE in England was undertaken by the RE Council of England and Wales (REC) as part of its strategic plan to enable the RE community to adjust to the major changes being made to education in England by the Coalition government. The Review was funded by donations and grants from REC member bodies and other trusts. The REC was founded in 1973 and is the umbrella body for RE with over 60 member organisations, including major RE professional bodies and faith and belief communities in England and Wales.

The REC was determined to carry out the review in a collaborative and consultative manner. It began with a scoping report in early 2012, followed by a report from an expert panel, mirroring the DfE's National Curriculum Review, in December 2012. In 2013, task groups took forward the panel's recommendations, and consultations were held at some points with the whole REC membership and at others with a Steering Group which represented the diversity of the REC. The final text of the Review was agreed by the REC Board on 2 October 2013 and launched at Westminster on 23 October 2013.

## **The Review provides:**

1. a non-statutory national curriculum framework for RE (NCFRE) to complement the new national curriculum programmes of study (2013) resulting from the DfE's review of the school curriculum, in which RE was not included
2. an analysis of the wider context in which RE finds itself, including the opportunities and challenges that face the implementation of the new curriculum framework.

There is also a major appendix containing the recommendations of the expert panel.

## **The NCFRE sets out:**

- the purpose and aims of RE
- the contribution of RE to the school curriculum
- the breadth of study for RE
- the place of RE in the early years
- the knowledge, understanding and skills of RE for key stages 1 – 3
- a framework for RE in key stage 4 and 16-19
- a note on assessment.

The analysis of the wider context reviews current issues in RE with recommendations for future discussion and resolution.

Both 1 and 2 above are available together, and 1 is available as a stand-alone document, both in hard copy and on the REC website [www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk](http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk)

# INTRODUCTION

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## Why a review of RE?

Every child and young person who goes to school is entitled to an experience of religious education (RE) that is both academically challenging and personally inspiring. To that end, the RE Council of England and Wales (REC) has undertaken a review of the subject in England (referred to in this document as 'the Review'). It has drawn as widely as possible on the expertise of the RE community to develop a benchmark curriculum that promotes high quality learning and teaching in all schools in the coming years, and to map out issues for further development. School structures are becoming increasingly diverse in England. It is important that within this diversity, schools' RE curricula give all young people the opportunity to gain an informed understanding of religious beliefs and worldviews.<sup>1</sup>

The REC undertook to lead a Review of RE in England early in 2012, as part of its wider strategic plan<sup>2</sup> for developing the subject. This decision was supported by the then Minister of State for Schools, Nick Gibb MP, who described the REC as 'well placed' to do so in a letter to John Keast, REC Chair, on the 25th January 2012. The REC is uniquely fitted for this task, with its wide membership, the range of views from both faith-based groups and education professionals and its commitment to an inclusive approach to RE.

The main catalyst for the Review was the extensive review of the national curriculum for schools in England, undertaken by the Department for Education (DfE) from January 2011 to July 2013. RE was not part of the DfE review as it is not one of the national curriculum subjects. The REC was clear that a review of RE in England was needed for reasons of equity with other subjects. Large changes to the curriculum have implications for all subjects<sup>3</sup>, including RE. From September 2014, teachers with responsibility for RE in schools in England will be expected to plan lessons, assess pupil progress, and have their performance held to account, as other teachers do. School leaders will expect them to use the same or similar criteria to those deployed in other subjects in the curriculum. For this reason alone, a new RE curriculum document is needed to support those teachers and schools, laid out in the same style as the documents for the national curriculum.

Beyond the need for parity, a wider set of challenges for RE has arisen in the past three years, mainly as the result of large-scale changes in education made by the Coalition government. These include the introduction of the English Baccalaureate, towards whose achievement GCSE Religious Studies cannot be counted, significant reforms of GCSE and A Level qualifications, the extension of the academies programme and introduction of free schools, all of which have implications for the way in which RE and its curriculum are decided and supported. Local authority cuts have also led to the reduction of local support for RE, and the number of new trainee teachers has been slashed. The total number of GCSE Religious Studies entries has started to decline after many years of growth.

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<sup>1</sup> The REC recognises that in schools with a religious character, there is likely to be an aspiration that RE (and other aspects of school life) will contribute to pupils' faith development.

<sup>2</sup> <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/about/strategic-plan>

<sup>3</sup> The RE curriculum is set locally, not nationally. Broadly speaking, it is set for community and voluntary controlled schools by local agreed syllabus conferences, advised by local SACREs, and by governing bodies in the case of academies, free schools and voluntary aided schools.

The RE community has felt a sense of crisis despite government assurance. This assurance has been challenged by many stakeholders in RE and the threats to RE confirmed in a report of the RE All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), *RE: The Truth Unmasked* in 2013. The adverse consequences of government policy on RE's place in schools were recognised subsequently by the Secretary of State for Education on 3rd July 2013. Addressing an event at Lambeth Palace, Michael Gove conceded that RE had been an 'unintended casualty' of recent curriculum reforms, and acknowledged that in thinking that RE's 'special status' was protected 'he had not done enough'. He expressed willingness to enter conversations to rectify the situation. This Review serves to help the RE community deal with these wider challenges.

Furthermore, successive triennial Ofsted reports for RE have argued, and the APPG inquiry has confirmed, that there are significant and well-founded concerns about the uneven quality of learning and teaching in RE across the country. In this context, a review presented the RE community with an opportunity not only to reflect again on the nature and purpose of the subject and its distinctive contribution to the curriculum, and to find better ways of articulating these to a general audience, but also to seek ways of raising standards. At its best, RE is an inspirational subject for pupils, as the REC's Young Ambassadors project has revealed.<sup>4</sup>

No public money has been allocated to support this Review, even though RE is a subject required on the curriculum of all state funded schools in England. Instead, the Review has been made possible by generous donations from REC members, charitable trusts and other interested organisations. A full list of those donors is given at the end of this document.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://religioueducationcouncil.org.uk/young-ambassadors>

# The Review process

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An initial scoping report<sup>5</sup> for the Review was approved by the REC's Board in March 2012. Four specific foci for the Review were identified, in the light of the current policy climate at that time:

- The aims of RE
- The RE curriculum
- Exemplification of good RE practice
- Assessment in RE, including qualifications.

To manage the work, and also to ensure a wide and responsive consultative approach to which the REC was committed, the Review was conducted in four phases over a period of about fifteen months. An action plan was drawn up in June 2012 and developed alongside a budget for the project. Final versions of these plans were approved by a Steering Group for the Review (the REC's Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications Committee) and by the REC Board.

## a) Phase One

An expert panel (EP) for RE was appointed, mirroring the approach taken by the National Curriculum Review. The EP analysed the current strengths and weaknesses of RE in relation to the four foci agreed by the REC Board, drawing on a variety of evidence including both published research and oral evidence from a range of witnesses with authoritative standing in the field of RE. The EP identified nine recommendations for future action, each supported by a balanced argument assessing the current state of play. Following consultation, a final report was produced. The EP's findings were widely welcomed, and in January 2013, the REC Board accepted the recommendations it made with just minor amendments.

## b) Phase Two

The EP recommendations for the Review were divided up in Phase Two with two task groups, each of four people appointed following an open and competitive selection process, to take the Review forward. Task Group 1 considered recommendations concerned with the curriculum and was given the remit of developing a programme of study for RE which mirrored that of other curriculum subjects. It was particularly concerned with the aims of RE, the knowledge, understanding and skills distinctive to the subject and their assessment. The group's proposals took account of a wider review of the national curriculum and were the subject of open consultation.

Task Group 2 was given a wider brief of exploring the contextual factors that would impact on a new RE curriculum. Issues identified by the EP had included: building influential links with the DfE and lobbying government to improve RE; seeking maximum influence with examination Awarding Bodies in order to promote coherence and progression between key stages; pursuing issues around the existing 'settlement' for RE; and identifying ways of bringing about greater collaboration between individuals and groups in the RE community. The proposals from Task Group 2 also took into account the new work on assessment being undertaken by the DfE.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://resubjectreview.recouncil.org.uk/media/file/REC\\_final\\_scoping\\_report.pdf](http://resubjectreview.recouncil.org.uk/media/file/REC_final_scoping_report.pdf)

It was held back by delays to two reports highly relevant to the remit it had been given, one of which, the triennial Ofsted report for RE, was published in October 2013 as the Review report was about to go to press, and the other - an Ofqual report on Religious Studies - which has still not been published. The findings of Task Group 2's work were discussed and reviewed extensively by the Steering Group in the summer of 2013.

### **c) Phase Three**

Two writers with specific expertise in curriculum development and policy analysis respectively were appointed through an open and competitive selection process to develop the findings of the task groups. Each writer worked with a support group of four members of the Steering Group to shape the task groups' material into a form suitable for final publication.

### **d) Phase Four**

During this final phase of the Review, the report was compiled and presented to a joint meeting of the Steering Group and REC Board for approval and publication in September and October 2013. Plans were made to launch the Review at the Houses of Parliament in October 2013, to be followed by public dissemination events across England in Bristol, Liverpool, London, Oxford and York during November 2013.

## **Outcomes from the Review**

The Review has produced a new, non-statutory programme of study for RE: *Religious education: a national curriculum framework* (NCFRE; see pp 10-29), written to parallel the new national curriculum. It contains a statement of the purpose of study in RE, identifies its aims and sets out a model for progression in RE, by offering examples of subject content for key stages 1-3. The NCFRE also provides a statement on RE for the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) and for pupils aged 14-19. It succeeds the *Non-statutory national framework for RE* (QCA and DCSF 2004) and supplements current government guidance for RE contained in the document *Religious education in English schools: non-statutory guidance 2010* (DfE 2010). Work on assessment has also been put in hand but is not yet complete. This is contained in Appendix 2.

As well as producing the NCFRE, the Review has examined the wider context in which RE as a subject finds itself, and has identified a series of opportunities and challenges for the subject. In each case it looks at a range of perspectives held by various stakeholders and offers some new thinking on matters where there may not yet be a consensus, as well as proposals for moving forward together (see pp 29-45). It tries to avoid providing simple solutions to what are often deeply rooted issues of disagreement at the level of principle and conscience; rather it sets out the issues in as balanced a manner as possible and poses questions for discussion and resolution.

The starting point of the Review was that the entitlement to good RE of children and young people must come first. Individuals and groups, of course, interpret 'good RE' differently. Such difference has to be accepted as healthy in a democratic society. Throughout, the Review hoped that 'every argument would be a constructive argument'. The outcomes of the Review may fall short of perfection but they constitute a significant development of RE in England, far greater than the sum of their parts.

# FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

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The findings of the Review are contained in three sections:

## 1. Religious education: a national curriculum framework

This is a national curriculum framework for RE (NCFRE) comprising a non-statutory programme of study designed to:

- I. **Complement the government’s National Curriculum Review, the aims of which are:**
  - to ensure that the new curriculum embodies rigour and high standards and creates coherence in what is taught in schools
  - to ensure that all children are taught essential knowledge in the key subject disciplines
  - beyond that core, to allow teachers greater freedom to use their professionalism and expertise to help all children realise their potential.
- II. **Promote high-quality RE, which will inspire young people in the years ahead.**
- III. **Provide a basis for developing locally agreed syllabuses and RE syllabuses in academies and free schools.**
- IV. **Support RE provided in schools with a religious character.<sup>6</sup>**

The NCFRE sets out:

- the purpose and aims of RE
- the contribution of RE to the school curriculum
- the breadth of study of RE
- the place of RE in the early years
- the knowledge, understanding and skills of RE for key stages 1 – 3
- RE in key stage 4 and 16-19
- a note on assessment.

## 2. Religious education: the wider context

This is an analysis of current issues in RE with recommendations for future discussion and resolution (pp 29-45).

### The appendices

The appendices contain more detailed material relating to the findings.

1. The ‘Recommendations of the expert panel’, drawn up in the early phases of the Review and based on research and oral evidence from experts in the field, provide an authoritative picture of RE and its strengths and weaknesses. These recommendations set the parameters for the later stages of the Review. (pp 48-63)
2. A note on assessment and progression (p 64)
3. A note on the evaluation of the Review project (p 69)

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<sup>6</sup> Examples would include voluntary aided schools with a religious character and academies that teach a denominational syllabus.

# 1. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: A NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

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## Introduction

The national curriculum states the legal requirement that:

*Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based, and which:*

- *promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, and*
- *prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life*

*and*

*All state schools... must teach religious education... All schools must publish their curriculum by subject and academic year online.*

(‘The national curriculum in England: Framework document’, September 2013, p.4).

This national curriculum framework for RE (NCFRE) in England has been developed by the RE Council of England and Wales, through a review of RE parallel to the Department for Education’s National Curriculum Review, published in September 2013. The key audience is the range of bodies which have responsibility for making RE syllabuses in England. This includes local authority SACREs (which have responsibility for the RE curriculum through an agreed syllabus for local authority schools), academies, free schools, faith and belief communities which run schools and governing bodies in some individual schools. The REC also commends this framework as a contribution to teachers’ thinking, and to public understanding of RE’s role and place in schools today.

The NCFRE does not claim to be an exhaustive or final description of the place, value and scope of RE in 2013, and it is not an official document. However, the breadth of the RE Council’s membership (over 60 national bodies listed inside the front cover), representing professional religious educators and national organisations of religion and belief, gives this document wide currency. The extensive consultation about draft versions of this framework means the document provides a widely supported platform for RE which can encourage a coherent range of RE syllabuses.



The NCFRE follows the structure of the DfE's National Curriculum Review, so that RE has documentation that parallels the subjects of the national curriculum. RE is described in terms of purpose, aims and programmes of study for each age group. It also gives clear guidance on RE in the early years and RE for students aged 14-19. As RE is a core subject of the curriculum the Review has largely followed the ways in which English, Mathematics and Science are described in the national curriculum, including examples and notes for key stages 1-3.

In describing progression in RE, the NCFRE illustrates how pupils will develop increasing understanding of wide areas of RE subject knowledge, and also how pupils can develop religious literacy, including the skills of:

- investigating religions and worldviews through varied experiences, approaches and disciplines;
- reflecting on and expressing their own ideas and the ideas of others with increasing creativity and clarity;
- becoming increasingly able to respond to religions and worldviews in an informed, rational and insightful way.

# Religious education

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## Purpose of study

Religious education contributes dynamically to children and young people's education in schools by provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose in life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human. In RE they learn about and from religions and worldviews<sup>7</sup> in local, national and global contexts, to discover, explore and consider different answers to these questions. They learn to weigh up the value of wisdom from different sources, to develop and express their insights in response, and to agree or disagree respectfully. Teaching therefore should equip pupils with systematic knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews, enabling them to develop their ideas, values and identities. It should develop in pupils an aptitude for dialogue so that they can participate positively in our society with its diverse religions and worldviews. Pupils should gain and deploy the skills needed to understand, interpret and evaluate texts, sources of wisdom and authority and other evidence. They learn to articulate clearly and coherently their personal beliefs, ideas, values and experiences while respecting the right of others to differ.

## Aims

The curriculum for RE aims to ensure that all pupils:

### A. Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews, so that they can:

- describe, explain and analyse beliefs and practices, recognising the diversity which exists within and between communities and amongst individuals;
- identify, investigate and respond to questions posed, and responses offered by some of the sources of wisdom<sup>8</sup> found in religions and worldviews;
- appreciate and appraise the nature, significance and impact of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.

### B. Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews, so that they can:

- explain reasonably their ideas about how beliefs, practices and forms of expression influence individuals and communities;
- express with increasing discernment their personal reflections and critical responses to questions and teachings about identity, diversity, meaning and value, including ethical issues;
- appreciate and appraise varied dimensions of religion or a worldview<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup>The phrase 'religions and worldviews' is used in this document to refer to Christianity, other principal religions represented in Britain, smaller religious communities and non-religious worldviews such as Humanism. The phrase is meant to be inclusive, and its precise meaning depends on the context in which it occurs, eg in terms of belief, practice or identity.

<sup>8</sup>The sources of wisdom found in religions and worldviews will include the key texts, the teachings of key leaders, and key thinkers from different traditions and communities. Examples include the Bible, the Torah and the Bhagavad Gita; the Buddha, Jesus Christ, the Prophet Muhammad, Guru Nanak and humanist philosophers. Other sources of wisdom might come from texts, thinkers, leaders and scientists in the contemporary world as well as from experience and informed personal reflection and conscience.

<sup>9</sup>The RE programme of study usually refers to 'religions and worldviews' to describe the field of enquiry. Here, however, the aim is to consider religion and belief itself as a phenomenon which has both positive and negative features, and is open to many interpretations: in this aspect of the aims, pupils are to engage with the concept of religion and non-religious belief, not merely with individual examples, and similar critiques should apply to both.

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**C. Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews, so that they can:**

- find out about and investigate key concepts and questions of belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, responding creatively;
- enquire into what enables different individuals and communities to live together respectfully for the wellbeing of all;
- articulate beliefs, values and commitments clearly in order to explain why they may be important in their own and other people's lives.

**RE in the school curriculum**

RE is a statutory subject of the school curriculum of maintained schools. Academies and free schools are contractually required through the terms of their funding to make provision for the teaching of RE to all pupils on the school roll. Alongside the subject's contribution to pupils' mental, cognitive and linguistic development, RE offers distinctive opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. RE lessons should offer a structured and safe space during curriculum time for reflection, discussion, dialogue and debate. Lessons should also allow for timely and sensitive responses to be made to unforeseen events of a religious, moral or philosophical nature, whether local, national or global.

**The breadth of RE**

The law requires that local authority RE agreed syllabuses and RE syllabuses used in academies that are not designated with a religious character 'must 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'. This means that from the ages of 5 to 19 pupils in schools<sup>10</sup> learn about diverse religions and worldviews including Christianity and the other principal religions. Some schools with a religious character will prioritise learning about and from one religion, but all types of school need to recognise the diversity of the UK and the importance of learning about its religions and worldviews, including those with a significant local presence.

**Attainment target\***

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

*\* Note: the wording of the attainment target for RE follows the same form of words found in the programmes of study of the national curriculum subjects*

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<sup>10</sup>Except those withdrawn by their parents (or by themselves if aged over 18).

# Subject content

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## RE in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Pupils should encounter religions and worldviews through special people, books, times, places and objects and by visiting places of worship. They should listen to and talk about stories. Pupils can be introduced to subject specific words and use all their senses to explore beliefs, practices and forms of expression. They ask questions and reflect on their own feelings and experiences. They use their imagination and curiosity to develop their appreciation of and wonder at the world in which they live. Religious education is a legal requirement for all pupils on the school roll, including all those in the reception year.

In line with the DfE's 2013 EYFS Profile RE should, through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity, provide these opportunities for pupils.

### **Communication and language:**

- children listen with enjoyment to stories, songs and poems from different sources and traditions and respond with relevant comments, questions or actions;
- use talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events;
- answer 'who', 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences in response to stories, experiences or events from different sources;
- talk about how they and others show feelings;
- develop their own narratives in relation to stories they hear from different traditions.

### **Personal, social and emotional development:**

- children understand that they can expect others to treat their needs, views, cultures and beliefs with respect;
- work as part of a group, taking turns and sharing fairly, understanding that groups of people, including adults and children, need agreed values and codes of behaviour to work together harmoniously;
- talk about their own and others' behaviour and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable;
- think and talk about issues of right and wrong and why these questions matter;
- respond to significant experiences showing a range of feelings when appropriate;
- have a developing awareness of their own needs, views and feelings and are sensitive to those of others;
- have a developing respect for their own cultures and beliefs, and those of other people;
- show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships.

### **Understanding the world**

- children talk about similarities and differences between themselves and others, among families, communities and traditions;
- begin to know about their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people;
- explore, observe and find out about places and objects that matter in different cultures and beliefs.

### **Expressive arts and design**

- children use their imagination in art, music, dance, imaginative play, and role-play and stories to represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings;
- respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and taste.

### **Literacy**

- children are given access to a wide range of books, poems and other written materials to ignite their interest.

### **Mathematics**

- children recognise, create and describe some patterns, sorting and ordering objects simply.

**These learning intentions for RE are developed from relevant areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (DfE 2013). RE syllabus makers will want to provide detailed examples.**

## Key stage 1

Pupils should develop their knowledge and understanding of religions and worldviews<sup>11</sup>, recognising their local, national and global contexts. They should use basic subject specific vocabulary. They should raise questions and begin to express their own views in response to the material they learn about and in response to questions about their ideas.

More specifically pupils should be taught to:

Requirements	Examples and notes
<p>A1. Recall and name different beliefs and practices, including festivals, worship, rituals and ways of life, in order to find out about the meanings behind them.</p>	<p>Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils enact stories and celebrations from Easter, Divali or Id ul Fitr, finding out about what the stories told at the festivals mean, e.g. through welcoming visitors to talk about their festivals</li> <li>• Pupils experience thanking and being thanked, praising and being praised, and notice some ways Christians or Jewish people believe they can thank and praise God</li> <li>• Linking to English and computing, pupils recount a visit to a local church using digital photographs and find out about the meanings of symbols for God that they saw there.</li> </ul>
<p>A2. Retell and suggest meanings to some religious and moral stories, exploring and discussing sacred writings and sources of wisdom and recognising the traditions from which they come.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils choose their favourite 'wise sayings' from different sources or key leaders and talk about what makes these sayings wise, and what difference it would make if people followed them</li> <li>• Pupils retell (for example through drama) two different stories about Jesus considering what they mean. They compare the stories and think about what Christians today could learn from the stories</li> <li>• Linking to English, pupils respond to stories from Hindu, Muslim or Jewish sources by identifying the values which different characters in the stories showed, and recognising the religions from which the stories come</li> <li>• Pupils ask and answer 'who', 'where', 'how' and 'why' questions about religious stories and stories from non-religious worldviews.</li> </ul>
<p>A3. Recognise some different symbols and actions which express a community's way of life, appreciating some similarities between communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils choose to find out about the symbols of two different religious traditions, looking for similarities between the ways they use common symbols such as light, water, trees or rock</li> <li>• Pupils discover how and why Muslims wash, bow and pray in a daily pattern, noticing similarities to another religion or worldview</li> <li>• Pupils select examples of religious artefacts from Christianity or Judaism that interest them, raising lists of questions about them and finding out what they mean and how they are used in festivals and worship</li> <li>• Pupils hear three moral stories, for example from Christians, Hindus and humanists, and think about whether they are saying the same things about how people should behave.</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup>Breadth: in line with the law and the statement about breadth of learning on p15, good practice should enable pupils to study Christianity and at least one other example of a religion or worldview through key stage 1 in a coherent way.

## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

B1. Ask and respond to questions about what individuals and communities do, and why, so that pupils can identify what difference belonging to a community might make.

B2. Observe and recount different ways of expressing identity and belonging, responding sensitively for themselves.

B3. Notice and respond sensitively to some similarities between different religions and worldviews.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

- Pupils find out about what people with different religions and worldviews do to celebrate the fruitfulness of the earth (e.g. in Harvest festivals, and in generosity to those in need), responding to questions about being generous
- Pupils discuss reasons why some people go to mosques, synagogues or churches often, but other people never go to holy buildings, and why some people pray every day, but others not at all
- Linking to PSHE, pupils make lists of the different groups to which they belong and consider the ways these contribute to human happiness.
- Pupils learn about the daily life of a Muslim or Jewish child (eg from a teacher's use of persona dolls), and make an illustrated list of signs of belonging including using special food, clothing, prayer, scripture, family life, worship and festivities. Pupils make a list of the ways they show how they belong as well
- Pupils express creatively (e.g. in art, poetry or drama) their own ideas about the questions: Who am I? Where do I belong?
- Pupils watch a short film about the Hindu creation story and talk about different stages of the cycle of life.
- Pupils use a set of photos or a list of religious items they have encountered in key stage 1 RE to sort and order, saying which items are connected to a particular religion and which are connected to more than one religion
- Linking to English, pupils use key words (e.g. holy, sacred, scripture, festival, symbol, humanist) to present ideas or write about two different religions or worldviews about which they have learned.

## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

<p>C1. Explore questions about belonging, meaning and truth so that they can express their own ideas and opinions in response using words, music, art or poetry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils work in groups to use art, music and poetry to respond to ideas about God from different religions and worldviews, expressing ideas of their own and commenting on some ideas of others</li> <li>• Pupils ask and answer a range of 'how' and 'why' questions about how people practise their religion</li> <li>• Linking to 'Philosophy for Children', pupils think about and respond to 'big questions' in a classroom enquiry using a story of Adam and Eve or a video clip of children asking questions about God as a stimulus.</li> </ul>
<p>C2. Find out about and respond with ideas to examples of co-operation between people who are different.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils discuss stories of co-operation from different traditions and sources and make a 'Recipe for living together happily' or a 'Class charter for more kindness and less fighting'</li> <li>• Linking to English and PSHE pupils could play some collaborative games, and talk about how the games put the teaching of the 'Golden Rule' into action</li> <li>• Pupils notice and talk about the fact that people come from different religions, responding to the questions- 'How can we tell? How can we live together when we are all so different?'</li> </ul>
<p>C3. Find out about questions of right and wrong and begin to express their ideas and opinions in response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils respond to a quiet reflection or a guided visualisation by choosing one value they think the world needs more of today from a list of values, and by illustrating their choice in different media</li> <li>• Linking to English, pupils could ask questions about goodness, and write sentences that say what happens when people are kind, thankful, fair or generous, and what happens when people are unkind, ungrateful, unfair or mean</li> <li>• Pupils look at how different people have expressed their ideas about God, and think and talk about their own ideas about God.</li> </ul>



## Key stage 2

Pupils should extend their knowledge and understanding of religions and worldviews<sup>12</sup>, recognising their local, national and global contexts. They should be introduced to an extended range of sources and subject specific vocabulary. They should be encouraged to be curious and to ask increasingly challenging questions about religion, belief, values and human life. Pupils should learn to express their own ideas in response to the material they engage with, identifying relevant information, selecting examples and giving reasons to support their ideas and views.

**More specifically pupils should be taught to:**

Requirements		Examples and notes
<p>Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.</p>		<p>Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column</p>
A1. Describe and make connections between different features of the religions and worldviews they study, discovering more about celebrations, worship, pilgrimages and the rituals which mark important points in life, in order to reflect on their significance.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils make some connections between Hajj for Muslims and pilgrimage to Lourdes, Iona or 'the Holy Land' for Christians, describing the motives people have for making spiritual journeys</li> <li>Pupils describe spiritual ways of celebrating different festivals, and reflect on the reasons why some people value such celebrations very highly, but others not at all</li> <li>Pupils compare how Christians, Muslims, Hindus or humanists celebrate a marriage and express and argue for ideas of their own about partnership, in discussions or in writing.</li> </ul>
A2. Describe and understand links between stories and other aspects of the communities they are investigating, responding thoughtfully to a range of sources of wisdom and to beliefs and teachings that arise from them in different communities.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linking to English, pupils consider how some texts from the Torah (e.g. the Shema), the Bible (e.g. 1 Corinthians 13) and the Qur'an (e.g. The 1st Surah, the Opening) are seen as sources of wisdom in different traditions. They respond to the ideas found in the texts with ideas of their own</li> <li>Pupils investigate aspects of community life such as weekly worship, charitable giving or beliefs about prayer, showing their understanding and expressing ideas of their own</li> <li>Pupils compare the texts in the Christian gospels that tell the stories of shepherds and wise men at Jesus' birth, exploring how they are remembered and celebrated in a range of Christmas festivities.</li> </ul>
A3. Explore and describe a range of beliefs, symbols and actions so that they can understand different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils pursue an enquiry into beliefs about worship, relating the meanings of symbols and actions used in worship such as bowing down, making music together, sharing food or speaking to God (e.g. in prayer) to events and teachings from a religion they study</li> <li>Pupils consider how the meanings of a parable of Jesus are expressed in poetry, video, stained glass and drama.</li> <li>Pupils describe the impact of Hindu teaching about harmlessness (ahimsa) on questions about what people eat and how people treat animals. They express their own ideas.</li> </ul>

<sup>12</sup>Breadth: in line with the law and the statement about breadth of learning on p15 above, good practice should enable pupils to study Christianity and at least two other examples of a religion or worldview through key stage 2 in a coherent and progressive way.

## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

<p>B1. Observe and understand varied examples of religions and worldviews so that they can explain, with reasons, their meanings and significance to individuals and communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking to History and Design Technology pupils consider how the architecture of churches, mosques, mandirs or gurdwaras expresses a community's way of life, values and beliefs</li> <li>• Pupils develop their understanding of beliefs about life after death in two religions and humanism through seeking answers to their own questions and articulating reasons for their own ideas and responses</li> <li>• Pupils use their detailed understanding of religious practice such as the Five Pillars of Islam and worship of a deity in a Hindu family and a mandir to describe the significance of being part of a religion.</li> </ul>
<p>B2. Understand the challenges of commitment to a community of faith or belief, suggesting why belonging to a community may be valuable, both in the diverse communities being studied and in their own lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils explore the lives of key leaders from Buddhist and Christian contemporary life, describing the challenges they have faced and the commitments by which they have lived</li> <li>• Pupils find out about how celebrating Diwali brings the Hindu or Sikh community together, and expresses commitment to values of interdependence and generosity</li> <li>• Linking to the expressive arts, pupils develop their own imaginative and creative ways of expressing some of their own commitments such as working hard at sport or music, caring for animals and the environment, loving their family or serving God.</li> </ul>
<p>B3. Observe and consider different dimensions of religion, so that they can explore and show understanding of similarities and differences within and between different religions and worldviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils use their thinking about stories of Moses and Jesus to explore how Jews and Christians today celebrate key events from their history (e.g. in Passover and Lent)</li> <li>• Pupils list and describe similarities and differences in the ways different traditions express what 'belonging' means to them</li> <li>• Linking to English, pupils find out about different forms of prayer and meditation in different religions and worldviews, and write some prayers or meditations suited to particular occasions and traditions. This is one point, among many, where RE can provide key opportunities for pupils' spiritual development.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> different dimensions of religion or worldview include, for example, narratives, beliefs, ethics, and social life</p>

## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

<p>C1. Discuss and present thoughtfully their own and others' views on challenging questions about belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, applying ideas of their own in different forms including (e.g.) reasoning, music, art and poetry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils discuss different perspectives on questions about the beginnings of life on Earth, so that they can describe different ways science and religions treat questions of origins</li> <li>• Linking with the expressive arts curriculum, pupils create works of art or music which express their understanding of what it means to belong to a religion or worldview</li> <li>• Pupils discuss and debate reasons why different people have different ideas about the divine e.g. whether God is real and what God is like.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> pupils are not required to express personal beliefs in any coercive way in RE; good RE encourages an open hearted and broad minded approach to different beliefs.</p>
<p>C2. Consider and apply ideas about ways in which diverse communities can live together for the well-being of all, responding thoughtfully to ideas about community, values and respect.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils discover and explore what Jewish people, humanists and Christians teach about how people can live together for the well-being of all</li> <li>• Pupils discuss and apply ideas from different religious codes for living (e.g. Commandments, Precepts or Rules), to compile a charter of their own moral values, applying their ideas to issues of respect for all</li> <li>• Linking to Mathematics and Geography, pupils use local and national census statistics to develop accurate understanding of the religious plurality of their locality and of Britain today.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> This work offers valuable opportunities for engagement with religions with a significant local presence: pupils may learn about the contributions of, for example, Jains, Zoroastrians or members of the Bahá'í faith to inter faith work. These communities can also be studied elsewhere in the RE curriculum.</p>
<p>C3. Discuss and apply their own and others' ideas about ethical questions, including ideas about what is right and wrong and what is just and fair, and express their own ideas clearly in response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils apply their own ideas about justice and fairness to the work of three development charities such as Christian Aid, Islamic Relief and Oxfam</li> <li>• Pupils write persuasively about the reasons why people who have a particular religious background or non-religious worldview try to help people who are vulnerable (eg victims of natural disasters or prejudice, people who live with disabilities or people affected by war)</li> <li>• Linking to Citizenship Education, pupils consider the Ten Commandments (Jewish) and the Five Precepts (Buddhist), expressing their ideas about right and wrong in the light of their learning.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> this is one point, among many, where RE can provide key opportunities for pupils' moral development.</p>

## Key stage 3

Students should extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews<sup>13</sup>, recognising their local, national and global context. Building on their prior learning, they learn to appreciate religions and worldviews in systematic ways. They should draw on a wide range of subject specific language confidently and flexibly, learning to use the concepts of religious study to describe the nature of religion. They should understand how beliefs influence the values and lives of individuals and groups, and how religions and worldviews have an impact on wider current affairs. They should be able to appraise the practices and beliefs they study with increasing discernment based on analysis, interpretation and evaluation, developing their capacity to articulate well-reasoned positions.

**More specifically students should be taught to:**

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<sup>13</sup>**Breadth:** in line with the law and the statement about breadth of learning on p15 above, good practice should enable pupils to study Christianity and at least two other examples of a religion or worldview through key stage 3 in a coherent and progressive way.

## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

<p>A1. Explain and interpret ways that the history and culture of religions and worldviews influence individuals and communities, including a wide range of beliefs and practices, in order to appraise reasons why some people support and others question these influences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking to History, students plan and report on an investigation into the impact of two key leaders, thinkers or founders of religions or worldviews on their communities or on individuals today</li> <li>• Students examine how spiritual experiences (such as sensing the presence of God, or the experience of answered prayer) have an impact on some members of different communities. They develop reasoned arguments to support their ideas about these kinds of claims or events</li> <li>• Linking to Geography, students investigate the demographics of Christianity, Judaism or Sikhism or 'No Religious belief' in their local area and wider region.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> this is an aspect of RE that provides many opportunities for students' social and cultural development.</p>
<p>A2. Explain and interpret a range of beliefs, teachings and sources of wisdom and authority including experience in order to understand religions and worldviews as coherent systems or ways of seeing the world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students develop their moral reasoning skills by studying moral ideas from Humanism about good ways to live. They compare these ideas with Christian sources of authority and wisdom, responding systematically</li> <li>• Students select and interpret texts from the Qur'an and Hadith to explain and exemplify their understanding of Muslim beliefs and ways of seeing the world</li> <li>• Students consider how sacred writings such as the Torah or the Bhagavad Gita, or other sources of wisdom, provide ethical guidance and spiritual nurture to members of different communities</li> <li>• Students consider why so many sources of wisdom and authority in religions and worldviews are men, and so few are women.</li> <li>• They appraise some sources of female wisdom, from within or beyond religions and worldviews</li> <li>• Students consider the importance of experience as a source of wisdom and authority including religious experience and everyday human experience.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> The focus on interpretation of religions and worldviews requires learners to be active in engaging with texts and issues and responding with reasoned ideas of their own.</p>
<p>A3. Explain how and why individuals and communities express the meanings of their beliefs and values in many different forms and ways of living, enquiring into the variety, differences and relationships that exist within and between them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students investigate the life, teaching and example of Jesus, responding to Christian theology and other views of his influence with their own interpretations and insights</li> <li>• Students plan an investigation into examples of daily practice of Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jewish people, Muslims and / or Sikhs in Britain, examining in particular some similarities and differences in spiritual practice, ethics, beliefs and community life</li> <li>• Students explore different ways of expressing beliefs and values in architecture, music, media and the arts, building their understanding of diversity within the religions and worldviews they study.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> The focus in this aim on expression and communication connects the ways people from different religious or non-religious backgrounds express their ideas to the ways learners themselves express their own ideas. Both are equally important in good RE learning.</p>

## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

<p>B1. Explain the religions and worldviews which they encounter clearly, reasonably and coherently; evaluate them, drawing on a range of introductory level approaches recognised in the study of religion or theology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students plan, write and deliver an illustrated talk about different views of life after death, from, for example, a humanist, a Buddhist and a Christian, using arguments from philosophy of religion and human experience to evaluate varied ideas thoughtfully</li> <li>• Students use ideas from the sociology of religion, the psychology of religion or the philosophy of religion to explain the appeal of a non-religious or a Buddhist, Islamic or Christian identity to millions of people in Britain and / or the wider world today</li> <li>• Students experience dialogue between members of different religions and those who hold a non-religious worldview. They consider theological questions about truth that arise, giving reasons for the ideas they hold.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> in working to meet this aim, students may encounter religions and worldviews with a significant local presence, even if their national numbers are small. Examples might include members of the Bahá'í faith, Jains, Zoroastrians, Latter Day Saints or Jehovah's Witnesses.</p>
<p>B2. Observe and interpret a wide range of ways in which commitment and identity are expressed. They develop insightful analysis and evaluation of controversies about commitment to religions and worldviews, accounting for the impact of diversity within and between communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students investigate and evaluate in an essay the influence of some contemporary 'great lives' on religious communities and the wider world, weighing up ways in which the commitment of key leaders can inspire whole communities. They also consider questions about possible dangers of commitment</li> <li>• Students use an ethnographic approach to interview believers representing diversity within a tradition about what makes religious living challenging in Britain today e.g. from Sunni and Shi'a Islam, Protestant and Catholic Christianity or Orthodox and Reform Judaism.</li> <li>• Students select a religious controversy in current affairs to investigate (examples: What rights can migrant religious community members expect in the UK with regard to their religious practice? Why do some people convert from one religion to another? Why might some people from different religious groups or worldviews think that protecting the environment is not a major priority?)</li> </ul> <p>Students present arguments from both sides of the controversy to show their ability to analyse issues from different perspectives.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Engagement with controversial issues is at the heart of good RE and one aim of the subject is to enable respectful disagreement.</p>
<p>B3. Consider and evaluate the question: what is religion? Analyse the nature of religion using the main disciplines by which religion is studied.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students consider the questions: What is religion? What is a worldview? They develop skills to interpret claims made by different religions and worldviews about the nature of reality and the value of religion</li> <li>• Students use methods of study from history, theology and philosophy to assemble a coherent case for their answer to the question: In the twenty first century world, is religion a force for good, or not?</li> <li>• Students examine questions about whether religion and spirituality are similar or different, about how different religions and worldviews relate to each other and about collaboration and conflict between individuals and communities, including inter faith.</li> <li>• Students consider questions about whether different religions are compatible or incompatible, in for example their ideas about God or the ultimate reality or deciding how to live a good life.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> it is in meeting this aim of RE that students build an understanding of religion itself as a phenomenon, rather than merely studying religions and worldviews one by one.</p>

## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

<p>C1. Explore some of the ultimate questions that are raised by human life, making well-informed and reasoned personal responses and expressing insights that draw on a wide range of examples including the arts, media and philosophy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking to Science, students examine arguments about questions of origins and purpose in life (Where do we come from? Why are we here?)</li> <li>• Students develop insight into and understanding of why some people argue that science and religion can be compatible and others argue that they cannot</li> <li>• Linking to expressive arts, students investigate the ways drama, broadcast media and visual artists explore questions about the meaning of life, selecting and explaining examples that they find compelling and relating these to the teaching of different religions and worldviews</li> <li>• Students develop their skills in reasoning and constructing arguments by debating questions and dilemmas about the nature of human life and the moral responsibilities of being human.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> this aim in RE connects philosophical reasoning with other forms of expression, using the varied talents students bring to the subject.</p>
<p>C2. Examine and evaluate issues about community relations and respect for all in the light of different perspectives from varied religions and worldviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students consider what religions and worldviews say about what makes people happy. They seek and articulate explanations for links between character, well-being and happiness, especially in relation to living with difference in our communities</li> <li>• Linking to Citizenship Education and History, students consider responses to genocide from different religions, for example studying the thought, theology and activism of Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel and Dietrich Bonhoeffer in response to Nazism.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> this aim of RE provides significant opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</p>
<p>C3. Explore and express insights into significant moral and ethical questions posed by being human in ways that are well-informed and which invite personal response, using reasoning which may draw on a range of examples from real life, fiction or other forms of media.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students consider the impact of ethical choices. They could create a 'multi-path narrative' about a contemporary moral issue, showing what the consequences of different choices might be and evaluating the impact of moral choices with discernment</li> <li>• Students make compelling and reasonable connections between what religions and worldviews teach and what they say about issues such as starvation around the world, the sanctity of life, environmental ethics, war or prejudice</li> <li>• Students consider philosophical, ethical and religious questions about what it means to be human, for example questions posed in relation to the development of new medical technologies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> this aim of RE provides significant opportunities for students' moral and social development.</p>

## Key stage 4 and RE 16-19

All students<sup>14</sup> should extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of religions and worldviews, reflecting local, national and global contexts. Building on their prior learning, they appreciate and appraise the nature of different religions and worldviews in systematic ways. They should use a wide range of concepts in the field of Religious Studies confidently and flexibly to interpret, contextualise and analyse the expressions of religions and worldviews they encounter. They should be able to research and investigate the influence and impact of religions and worldviews on the values and lives of both individuals and groups, evaluating their impact on current affairs. They should be able to appreciate and appraise the beliefs and practices of different religions and worldviews with an increasing level of discernment based on interpretation, evaluation and analysis, developing and articulating well-reasoned positions. They should be able to use some of the different disciplines of Religious Studies (eg textual study, philosophical and sociological approaches) to analyse the nature of religion.

### More specifically students should be taught to:

- investigate and analyse the beliefs and practices of religions and worldviews using a range of arguments and evidence to interpret and evaluate issues and draw balanced conclusions;
- synthesise their own and others' ideas and arguments about sources of wisdom and authority using coherent reasoning, making clear and appropriate reference to their historical, cultural and social contexts;
- analyse in a coherent and well informed way the forms of expression and ways of life found in different religions and worldviews;
- use different disciplines and methods by which religions and worldviews are studied to analyse their influence on individuals and societies;
- account for varied interpretations of commitment to religions and worldviews and for responses to profound questions about the expression of identity, diversity, meaning and value;
- argue for and justify their own positions with regard to key questions about the nature of religion, providing a detailed evaluation of the perspectives of others;
- enquire into and develop insightful evaluations of ultimate questions about the purposes and commitments of human life, especially as expressed in the arts, media and philosophy;
- use a range of research methods to examine and critically evaluate varied perspectives and approaches to issues of community cohesion, respect for all and mutual understanding, locally, nationally and globally;
- use ideas from phenomenological approaches to the study of religions and beliefs to research and present skilfully a wide range of well-informed and reasonable arguments which engage profoundly with moral, religious and spiritual issues.

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<sup>14</sup>All state funded schools must teach RE to all students on school rolls, including all those in 14-19 education, unless withdrawn by their parents (or by themselves if aged 18 or over). It is important that teaching enables progression from the end of key stage 3, in ways that meet the varied learning needs of all students. All students can reasonably expect their learning will be accredited. These modes of accreditation include nationally accredited courses in RE such as GCSE and A level RS. Good practice examples include many schools of different types where all students take GCSE RS or other accredited courses at 16. Requirements are different in FE and sixth form colleges (see:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/a0064886/religious-education-in-english-schools-non-statutory-guidance-2010>)



## 2. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: THE WIDER CONTEXT

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No curriculum document can of itself improve a subject and this section examines the contextual factors that are likely to affect the successful implementation of the NCFRE. These factors have been identified by the teams of people who have undertaken the Review, supported by evidence drawn in particular from *Transforming religious education* (Ofsted 2010), *RE: the truth unmasked* (APPG report 2013) and *RE: realising the potential* (2013).

### Positive opportunities for the implementation of NCFRE

A succession of rapid changes in education have created positive opportunities for RE as well as challenges. For example, the expansion of academies and free schools has provided opportunities for innovative thinking. The government's increasing commitment to encouraging schools and teachers to exercise greater freedom sends a clear message that subject associations and other groups with an interest in the curriculum are expected to act independently, taking account of the increasing variety of curriculum structures in schools. This message has been heard within the RE community and has already resulted in pioneering developments such as the RE Quality Mark and Young Ambassadors Scheme and regional projects, such as the *Teach, Learn, Lead* initiative in the south west of England.

RE has much to celebrate and the APPG report refers to the 'overall gradual improvement in the provision for and quality of RE'. Ofsted has reported that there is good and outstanding practice in both primary and secondary schools and in schools where RE is taught well pupils in general receive it with enthusiasm and respect. For the NCFRE to succeed awareness of this high quality provision needs to become more widespread, in particular among those school leaders, managers and curriculum planners whose expertise will be needed to implement NCFRE or develop an agreed syllabus based on it.

Moreover, the contribution of RE to school improvement more generally needs wider recognition at the level of whole school management. Teachers of RE have often made a strong contribution to the delivery of whole-school policies. These might include spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, community cohesion, the *Respect for All* initiative, critical thinking and citizenship. The REC and its member organisations proved their resourcefulness by organising a national campaign in protest against the omission of RE from the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). It has now been proposed that RE should be included in the list of subjects that will contribute to the 'best 8' headline accountability measure of secondary school performance.

The value of RE is recognised by the public at large. For example, research into attitudes to RE conducted by YouGov in 2012 on behalf of the REC showed that over half of all adults in England and Wales who gave an opinion either way said that RE should remain a compulsory subject. 58% agreed it was beneficial for all pupils to participate in RE lessons and this figure rose to 63% among 18-24 year olds.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <http://religioueducationcouncil.org.uk/public-engagement/media-releases/>

Furthermore examination entries in Religious Studies at GCSE and GCE A level have risen each year from 1998 to 2011, although in 2012 and 2013 short course GCSE entries dipped. The following chart gives the examination entry figures in Religious Studies for 2012 and 2013 in England.

Level	Entries 2012	Entries 2013	% difference
GCSE Full Course	216373	239409	+10.6%
GCSE Short Course	211269	150621	-28.7%
GCE AS	28682	29889	+3.7%
GCE A2	18950	19173	+1%

It will not be clear until 2014 whether the declining entries in the short course mark an overall wider downward trend or whether schools have stopped offering short course in favour of the full course.

## Challenges to the implementation of NCFRE

Two interrelated factors have the potential to limit the positive impact of NCFRE. These can be broadly identified as (1) the school context, and (2) key national policy issues.

### (1) The school context

While RE is high quality when it is well taught, the reverse is also true. The starting point for the implementation of the NCFRE is a low base in terms of standards and quality of provision in schools, as revealed by successive Ofsted reports and the APPG report. In 2010 Ofsted reported that achievement and teaching in RE were not good enough in six in ten primary and in half the secondary schools inspected. Of particular concern are the following conclusions.

- In primary schools the selection and sequencing of RE topics were often without a clear rationale. Many RE topics lacked a clear structure and RE was sometimes confused with the school's wider contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- In secondary schools, teachers' lack of clarity about the purpose of RE at key stage 3 impeded curriculum planning
- RE teachers have insufficient access to high-quality training. Training had a positive impact on improving provision in only a third of the schools visited; its impact was poor in a further third. Many of the schools surveyed said that support from their local authority and SACRE had diminished
- Leadership and management of RE were good or better in half the schools visited; however, weaknesses were widespread in monitoring provision for RE and in planning to tackle areas identified for improvement

- The effectiveness of the current statutory arrangements for RE varies considerably. Recent changes in education policy are having a negative impact on the provision for RE in some schools and on the capacity of local authorities and SACREs to carry out their statutory responsibilities to monitor and support it
- Most of the GCSE teaching seen failed to secure the core aim of the examination specifications, namely, to enable pupils ‘to adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion’.

## **(2) Challenges from key national policy issues**

The impact of recent policy changes in education has placed further pressure on RE in schools and the structures which are designed to support the subject. The effect of these changes, which is set out in the APPG report, is in brief:

- the loss of status for RE in many schools and the reduction of teaching time for the subject, in part as a result of the decision to exclude RE from the EBacc and to change the rules about counting short course results in the measure of school performance;
- the reduction in the number of specialist RE teachers entering the profession, which has extended the use of non specialists in secondary schools to teach the subject.

National policy changes have had an impact beyond schools. The absence of any publicly funded national support for RE to parallel the review of the NC has had the effect of marginalising RE from wider initiatives in curriculum development. The effectiveness of many SACREs and agreed syllabus conferences has been weakened by the reduction of funding and access to subject expertise. These public bodies underpin the key statutory principle of local determination for RE. In addition the successful expansion of the academies programme means that a growing number of schools are moving outside local authority control and are therefore no longer required to follow the locally agreed syllabus. One further challenge presented by the context within which RE finds itself is the very diverse nature of thinking about the subject. A key priority of the Review has been to work with this diversity in the interests of the future of the subject: some of the characteristics of this diversity are as follows.

- Much of the diversity promotes innovation and new thinking
- Some of the diversity reflects the differences in approaches to RE between schools with or without a religious character
- Other aspects of the diversity, however, reflect confusion and a lack of coherence in RE provision
- One of the consequences of poor access to subject training is that the diversity of thinking in RE can lead to confusion in some schools about the purpose of RE
- The review identified particular tensions in the relationship between the focus of RE in locally agreed syllabuses and in many of the GCSE specifications.

This section of the Review has considered the opportunities and challenges facing the implementation of the NCFRE. The next section examines not only some possible ways of addressing these challenges but also identifies strategies for tackling some key issues that face RE at this time.

## **Sustaining and structuring RE in the future**

This is the first full national review of religious education (RE) since 2004, when the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, later QCDA) published the *Non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education* (NSNF).

This Review goes beyond the publication of aims and programmes of study to an examination of core questions at the heart of the future RE provision in England. The time is right to do this because education is moving on apace and if RE is to be on an equal footing with foundation subjects, those who have responsibility for it must find ways of adjusting the subject to its new contexts.

This section makes six recommendations for structuring and sustaining RE in the 21st century, which, with their accompanying questions for discussion, suggest a way ahead. These recommendations are to:

- 1. support improvement by developing more effective and coherent mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of RE;**
- 2. pursue with policy makers the challenges around the existing ‘settlement’ for RE;**
- 3. promote coherence and progression between 4-14 programmes of study and 14-19 public examinations;**
- 4. ensure that there are more robust arrangements for training and supporting teachers of RE;**
- 5. develop new structures and networks within and across the RE community so that its expertise is co-ordinated and utilised more effectively in the interests of improving the subject;**
- 6. develop new assessment arrangements for RE.**

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### **Recommendation 1: Support improvement by developing more effective and coherent mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of RE**

Any initiative introduced to improve RE, such as the NCFRE, requires rigorous monitoring and evaluation over time to measure its actual impact on practice. Ofsted has ceased to carry out subject specific inspections in all subjects, yet the APPG evidence shows that DfE monitoring alone has not been effective in relation to teacher supply in RE. The APPG report also provides evidence that increasingly SACREs are losing their capacity to monitor and improve the subject. There is an urgent need for regular accurate evidence about the state of RE in all types of school, which will indicate improvement priorities in the subject whether for teachers, teacher trainers, consultants or policy makers and those who advise them.

One way in which monitoring and evaluation in RE can be developed systematically in the absence of regular inspections is through the development and extension of existing RE specific educational research. Studies might usefully focus on:

- I. RE provision: compliance, time for RE, the qualifications of RE teachers, examination entries and results;
- II. the positive contribution of RE to:
  - school effectiveness and improvement
  - social cohesion
  - pupils' standards and attainment
  - school ethos
  - behaviour;
- III. monitoring the impact of initiatives, such as the RE Quality Mark, on raising standards;
- IV. identifying and promoting new models of networking and professional development which are proving effective.

Research in RE is carried out at many levels. Important policy-focussed research has been undertaken during the past year, for example through the APPG report and NATRE surveys. Significant university-led research projects have been completed over the past three years, including the ESRC Religion and Society funded project, *Does RE Work?* RE has a proud tradition of small scale practitioner led action research too, including Farmington Fellowships, communities of practice including those attached to Warwick University and Kings College, London, and a wealth of MA and PhD research in Theology, Religious Studies and Religious Education at other HEIs and universities. However, much of this research and the outcomes it generates remain unknown to teachers and policy makers, even when it is focussed on matters which concern them. Furthermore, there is a widespread perception (not limited to RE) that the research concerns of too many academics are far removed from issues of national policy and the improvement of RE in schools. Whether or not this impression is justified, it is important to research, policy and practice in RE that a stronger relationship is fostered between academic work and classroom practice.

### Question Set 1

1a How might closer links be fostered between research and:

- the improvement of RE in schools ?
- gathering evidence to inform national policy?

1b How might:

- innovative activities (e.g. RE Young Ambassadors and the RE Quality Mark) and good practice be monitored and the outcomes of the monitoring shared?
- the work of researchers in RE be monitored and co-ordinated in a systematic way in order to encourage research into aspects of RE where evidence is both lacking and politically significant?
- researchers be persuaded to focus on those research priorities most likely to sway the opinion of policy makers and policy influencers?

1c How might the profile of published RE research be raised among RE teachers and professionals, particularly where the evidence produced has the potential to influence national policy or to improve learning, teaching and management of RE in schools?

1d How might existing projects be used to identify and share good practice?

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**Recommendation 2: To pursue with policy makers the challenges around the existing settlement for RE**

Many contributors to the Review suggested that a thorough appraisal of the existing settlement for RE is overdue.

There is a strongly held view that local determination is good in principle. SACREs and agreed syllabus conferences (ASCs) continue to provide unique opportunities for local stakeholders, from many walks of life, to become actively involved in RE. Should SACREs be abolished, some stakeholders might feel that they had lost their chance to contribute something of the understanding of their faith to RE. Agreed syllabuses give confidence to faith communities that the RE taught in local schools is fair and balanced. Some SACREs remain strong in the face of current challenges and are supporting RE through the provision of training programmes and resources.

But there is growing concern that with the declining role of local authorities and the reduction in public money funding them, many SACREs are no longer able to support teachers of RE adequately. Furthermore, legislation allowing academies and free schools to devise their own RE curriculum has greatly reduced the extent of SACREs' and ASCs' responsibilities. The increasing diversification of schools means that SACRE members are by no means the only 'stakeholders' in RE. On the other hand, the involvement of local teachers, faith communities and elected members in RE through a SACRE has in many areas been a source of strength and support and in some this continues to be the case.

So there is also a strongly held view that a new system is needed for organising RE nationally and locally that takes account of the needs of those teachers with responsibility for RE whose access to training and support is currently limited. Local determination excludes RE from national initiatives (such as the National Curriculum Review, which this project parallels) and changes in assessment (Ofsted 2010). If RE is a statutory subject then it needs to play a more connected role in the curriculum and it cannot do so at present because it is not included in the family of NC subjects. Many SACREs lack the capacity to implement or monitor the locally agreed syllabus. Currently, no formal arrangements exist for evaluating the quality and impact of different agreed syllabuses. In addition, there are currently no formal structures in place for monitoring whether local authorities, advisory councils and syllabus conferences are carrying out their functions effectively (Ofsted 2010).

An important part of the Education Act in 1944 was the dual system of voluntary schools (mainly Church schools) and community schools. That relatively straightforward system has evolved now into a much more complicated structure of schools - community schools, voluntary schools of different kinds, academies, free schools, many designated as religious but most not. It is likely that the new and unprecedented diversity of school types will remain for the foreseeable future.

The RE settlement in 1944 has changed relatively little in comparison with these structural changes, the most significant being in 2010 when academies with no religious designation (which are state funded and were mostly community schools before becoming academies) were able to develop their own RE syllabuses.

Within the increasingly diverse system, schools with a religious designation will continue to exist and are even likely to grow in number. These schools can often provide RE in accordance with the nature of the foundation or trust they are part of. In the short and medium term future, therefore, the RE curriculum is likely to become more diverse than ever, with local authority agreed syllabuses controlling RE in fewer and fewer schools, more academies having their own RE and some faith-based schools providing faith-based RE. The fact is that there is now a new kind of localism, and RE must learn to flourish within it.

What is important is that the RE curriculum used in all schools enables young people to develop an informed understanding of religions and worldviews. Schools with a religious designation have an important role to play alongside schools without such a designation in this common goal.

Further work is needed to consider these issues on the basis of the questions below.

**Question Set 2**

- 2a To what extent is it possible to reach agreement among those concerned with the promotion of effective RE as to whether the 1944 settlement for RE needs to be reviewed?
- 2b What are the major obstacles in the way of such an agreement?
- 2c What would be the irreducible minimum level of agreement necessary for the REC formally to request the government to review the RE settlement?
- 2d How might the REC encourage a debate about the theological, educational, political and social questions raised by RE in the curriculum?



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**Recommendation 3: Promote coherence and progression between 4-14 programmes of study and 14-19 public examinations.**

The last twenty years have seen a growing divide between the 4-14 RE curriculum and the 14-19 curriculum that leads to formal accreditation. In particular there is often a lack of continuity and progression between the RE curriculum in key stage 3 and programmes of study based on GCSE specifications.

The short course GCSE in Religious Studies has been a success story in providing motivation for students taking statutory RS courses and the number of students leaving school with a qualification in RE has risen as a result. The short course has also contributed to the increasing number of students taking AS and A2 exams in RS. However, many of the GCSE specifications in Religious Studies focus heavily on the study of philosophical, moral and social issues, with pupils being expected to apply religious perspectives to them. Ofsted has found that this approach frequently leads pupils to a superficial and distorted understanding of religion. The Review team noted that this approach created an artificial separation between such perspectives and the religions from which they arose. The focus on 'philosophy and ethics' at GCSE presupposes, often mistakenly, a depth of prior knowledge about religions. As a result, students have to learn by rote ways of explaining and evaluating those perspectives in order to meet examination requirements, and this tends to undermine the quality of their learning and distort their understanding of the meaning and significance of religions and beliefs. The reviewers recommended that the REC should find ways of working with Awarding Bodies in order to address these concerns.

The Review team also suggested, in the interests of securing coherence and progression, that new approaches to the RE curriculum were needed for key stage 4 and 6th form pupils (including those in FE) 'rather than leaving it as a vacuum simply to be filled by examinations'. Review team members suggested that the NCFRE should be extended to provide programmes of study for students who are not pursuing RE as an examination option, but for whom it is nevertheless a compulsory part of the curriculum. Similarly Ofsted praised schools that were developing a range of RE pathways, including full and short course GCSE and entry level qualifications, to ensure that the needs of different students were better met.

**Question Set 3**

- 3a In what ways might it be possible to ensure that 'the study of religions remains at the heart of RE', in order to secure continuity and progression in pupils' learning? What are the 'breadth and depth' issues involved?
- 3b Examination boards are independent companies with their own advisers. How might they be persuaded to work collaboratively with the REC?
- 3c How might a GCSE focused more strongly on the study of religions and beliefs retain its broad appeal?
- 3d How might the NCFRE be extended to include programmes of study for key stage 4 and the 6th form?

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**Recommendation 4: Ensure that there are more robust arrangements for training and supporting teachers of RE.**

The report of the RE APPG identified, as a cause for concern, the availability of and access to high quality continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers of RE at all key stages. The reviewers identified two training needs in particular:

- that new instruments for describing achievement in RE are created which teachers can use working alongside the DfE's new descriptions of achievement in subjects like English, Mathematics and Science;
- that guidance materials on pedagogy and learning methods in RE are developed for teachers and curriculum-shapers, in order to promote high quality teaching and learning in RE while allowing for diversity.

Currently the availability of CPD for RE teachers across England is uneven. Some SACREs still have sufficient resources to provide a local training programme and increasingly diocesan RE staff are making their courses available to teachers from local authority schools and academies. Overall the APPG report (3a-c) found that 'in nearly 40% of schools RE teachers have inadequate access to continuing professional development' and that 'teachers' access to CPD is a postcode lottery'. One possible response to this situation which has attracted support during the RE Review is that of establishing eight regional centres or 'hubs' for religious education, which would be centres of teacher training, CPD, curriculum design, piloting initiatives, research, dissemination and policy. Affiliated to the hubs and working collaboratively with them would be local universities, schools, SACREs, Diocesan Boards of Education (DBEs) and faith communities. Each hub would work as a beacon of excellence and as a focal point for engagement.

**These hubs would offer partial solutions to the other issues addressed in this Review by:**

- facilitating the exchange of information between teachers, policy makers and researchers;
- providing an alternative source of support for RE teachers who no longer have the support of SACREs;
- becoming regional centres for CPD in RE.

Hubs would challenge RE organisations as never before to collaborate in the greater interests of RE, those who teach and those who learn. Some organisations such as the Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) already have regional groups and these, while not losing their identity, might work with other groups to make available the very best local RE expertise.

**The advantages of hubs would be:**

- I. the opportunity to bring together the necessary local expertise in specific local projects;
- II. a regional 'centre' (real or virtual) for RE teachers in all schools (including academies and free schools) and in LAs where the SACRE no longer has the resources to provide support;
- III. close links through IT with local RE teachers, keeping them informed of regional and national developments and training opportunities;
- IV. enormous benefits to training schools and their trainees, particularly where no specialist RE staff are present;
- V. a regional resource bank, potentially reviving the regional RE centres, and
- VI. opportunities for teachers to maintain close links with university Theology, RS and RE departments, opening up opportunities for higher degrees and research partnerships.

The 'hubs' proposal is a positive initiative for restructuring RE at national level independently of government, and it is capable of existing alongside or instead of the current settlement. The fact of legislation does not preclude innovation; nor should it. RE is faced with a national infrastructure that has collapsed in some areas while remaining strong in others. The 'hubs' recommendation retains what is strong while introducing a new parallel national structure for RE that would provide support in schools where it is currently lacking.

**Question Set 4**

- 4a Are regional hubs desirable and/or viable? If not, what would the alternatives be?
- 4b Would regional hubs strengthen or weaken those SACREs that are continuing to meet teachers' needs?
- 4c Should hubs just be for RE professional organisations/individuals or should they enable wider participation including, for example, members of local faith communities who have an interest in RE but are not professionally involved in it?
- 4d How might hubs affect the implementation of the NCFRE?
- 4e Would regional hubs be effective in disseminating local research in RE? (see Rec 1).

**Recommendation 5: Develop new structures and networks within and across the RE community so that its expertise is co-ordinated and utilised more effectively in the interests of improving the subject.**

The reviewers identified as a priority the need for the main RE associations to speak on national issues with a clear and strong voice. There are probably more national organisations for RE than any other subject, most supporting the work of groups such as teachers, inspectors/advisers, university lecturers or interests such as those of SACREs or religious groups. At the time of publication, more than 60 organisations active in the field of RE are members of the REC.

For the last 20 years QCDA and its predecessors have led on curriculum development and have in many instances eased the way for members of the RE community to access government. Now that the education quangos have gone, for the foreseeable future at least, the RE community must bear that responsibility for itself.

The question has been mooted in the past whether the current system of several organisations, all with their own identities and strengths, is the most effective way of organising RE in the future. The present system has its advantages:

- People with an interest in RE can focus on the activities of the organisation that best suits their needs (NATRE for teachers; AREIAC for consultants etc)
- Organisations can hold conferences dedicated to their members' needs
- Some organisations have developed particular expertise in e.g. negotiating with government, that should not be lost;
- Several RE organisations have a long history, a strong identity and have considerable loyalty among their membership.

Likewise there might be advantages in creating a single national RE Association (REA) to match the Historical Association (HA) and Geographical Association (GA):

- A single national organisation may speak more powerfully for RE than several smaller ones
- Separation of interests is not always beneficial. Increasingly RE professionals require the support of more than one association; for example, some teachers are inspectors, consultants or academics. The separation of research from other aspects of RE (see Rec 1) is unhelpful
- It would be helpful to all members of the RE community to be able to access a single website for resources, news, research, journals etc.

The HA and GA websites offer insights into what an 'REA' could be and could achieve.

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The **Historical Association** is the single national organisation representing the case for an historical education to policy makers and ministers. It advises on curriculum issues at all levels, furthers the study and the investigation of history and campaigns for access to specialist historical knowledge and collections. It complements the Royal Historical Society, which is the foremost body for those engaged professionally in the study of the past (mainly in HE). The HA also welcomes to its membership other people who are interested in the study and teaching of history.

**Amongst its activities the HA:**

- has a high quality website with separate pages for primary, secondary, students and the public;
- includes a resources section on the website providing podcasts and other articles;
- provides free access to key journals for members;
- offers fellowships, prizes and bursaries;
- has over 50 branches nationwide which run over 300 walks, lectures and visits annually;
- offers advice to students on examinations, transition to university and careers in history;
- publicises local events around the country.

The **Geographical Association** is the national organisation for furthering geographical knowledge and understanding through education. It supports teachers, students, tutors and academics at all levels of education through journals, publications, training events, projects, websites and by lobbying government about the importance of geography. Among its activities the GA:

- has over 40 branches throughout the country offering lectures and presentations of general and local interest, teachers' conferences, teacher training workshops and social events;
- holds a register of regional speakers;
- includes on its website a news page, which keeps teachers up to date with all matters related to geography, offers advice on funding opportunities and lobbying MPs;
- runs a wide variety of projects for schools;
- includes a wide range of contemporary resources on its website;
- offers opportunities for volunteering, work experience and careers;
- has website pages for primary, secondary and teacher education;
- provides free access to key journals for members.

It is likely that many of these benefits could be found by membership of several RE organisations; but not of any one of them. Nevertheless, this debate will not be an easy one and will have to take account of existing loyalties.

**Question Set 5**

5a What would the members of existing RE organisations stand to lose and gain if their organisation were incorporated into an REA?

5b What would the existing RE organisations stand to lose and gain by incorporation into an REA?

5c What are the tangible obstacles to closer collaboration between RE organisations, and how could they be overcome?

5d How might regional hubs (rec 4) co-exist with an REA?

5e What other options could offer alternative solutions to the issues outlined?

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## Recommendation 6: Develop new assessment arrangements for religious education

The NCFRE has not included instruments for describing achievement in RE. The decision has been taken to wait for further information about how pupils' work will be assessed in national curriculum subjects before issuing guidance on assessing RE<sup>16</sup>. Nevertheless, teachers will need criteria for assessing pupils' progress and in the intervening period, it is important that teachers and policy makers consider the matters to be addressed.

The DfE expects schools to have a curriculum and assessment framework that meets a set of core principles and commends this advice to syllabus makers and teachers in RE as they plan particular ways of describing achievement in RE in those schools for which they have responsibility.

The core principles are that assessment should:

- set out steps so that pupils reach or exceed the end of key stage expectations in the new national curriculum;
- enable teachers to measure whether pupils are on track to meet end of key stage expectations;
- enable teachers to pinpoint the aspects of the curriculum in which pupils are falling behind, and recognise exceptional performance;
- support teachers' planning for all pupils;
- enable the teacher to report regularly to parents and, where pupils move, to other schools, providing clear information about each pupil's strengths, weaknesses and progress towards the end of key stage expectations.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup>However see Appendix 2 for some interim work in this area

<sup>17</sup>These 5 expectations upon schools come from *Primary assessment and accountability under the new national curriculum* a DfE consultation document published July 2013.

In the light of these DfE principles and in relation to RE, syllabus makers and teachers will need to consider these 5 questions, with reference to NCFRE:

**Question Set 6**

- 6a What steps within an assessment framework enable pupils to reach or exceed the end of key stage expectations in the RE curriculum?
- 6b How can teachers and schools measure whether pupils are on track to meet end of key stage expectations?
- 6c How can teachers of RE pinpoint aspects of the curriculum where pupils may be falling behind, and also recognise exceptional performance?
- 6d How can the descriptions of expectations for the end of each key stage in RE support teachers' planning for all pupils?
- 6e How can expectations for RE be used to report strengths and weaknesses of pupils' progress to parents, and to other schools and teachers upon transfer?



## Conclusion

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This part of the Review has examined the factors that are most likely to help or hinder the successful implementation of NCFRE. It has also taken stock of where RE currently lies in school and national contexts and asked how those organisations and individuals with management responsibilities for RE might structure and sustain the subject to meet the challenges of these changing times.

Change underpins that context; the overarching conclusion is that there can be no going back. Academies and free schools are here to stay; the examination system is changing; the eight level assessment scales are unlikely to return; the QCDA is unlikely to be reconstituted in the near future. What is often known as the 'RE community' or 'RE world' is also changing. New contributors include academy trusts and private companies who provide training for teachers and run examination boards. The 'RE world' needs to involve them as well as the established networks in their deliberations.

The NCFRE has the capacity to inspire and to provide a clear basis for agreed syllabuses and RE schemes of work. But in order to succeed it needs a supportive infrastructure and, in particular, sufficient curriculum time for it to impact positively on pupils' learning. RE has much strength and over the last twenty years it has become more established than ever before as a serious curriculum subject. It is respected and valued by many school leaders, teachers, pupils and parents, and over half of all pupils leave school with a GCSE in RS. These improvements have had a positive impact on public opinion and whilst a clear majority of all adults see the value of the subject, the proportion is still higher amongst 18 to 24 year olds who have experienced 'modern' RE themselves.

But there is more to be done and improving the overall quality of RE teaching is a critical factor for the successful implementation of NCFRE. Two of the six key recommendations this Review makes concern teachers. While some schools in England can boast good and outstanding teachers of RE, there are too many which cannot do so. Three factors contributing to this situation are the shortage of qualified subject specialists in secondary schools, the lack of time given to RE in primary teacher training courses and the limited access to continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers of RE. CPD must be made more accessible.

Another critical factor concerns assessment. Two further key recommendations focus on this theme. Coherence and progression in RE between key stage 3, key stage 4 and the 6th form must be addressed as a matter of urgency through closer working links between the REC and examination boards. In addition, new monitoring systems need to be developed and closer links forged between research, policymaking and practice in RE.

The last and possibly most controversial pair of recommendations addresses the ways in which RE is structured and organised. The first revisits the very foundations of RE in England, the 1944 settlement that enshrined local determination for the subject in law. The second looks to the national structures that support RE from within the profession and asks whether this support can be provided more efficiently and what might be the possibilities for closer collaborative working.

The questions accompanying these six recommendations will not be answered immediately or easily. However they deserve serious consideration among all who care for the future of religious education.

## RE REVIEW: AN AFTERWORD

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### John Keast, Chair of the REC

This Review, the first of its kind by the RE Council, forms part of the Strategic Plan of the REC adopted in 2011. It has taken a great deal of preparation and much hard work, particularly because it has been conducted in a deliberately consultative and collaborative manner – always harder than just getting a small group together! The REC is grateful not only to those individuals who have contributed in varying ways to this document, but also to the funders who made the Review possible.

The Review focuses, as intended, on a new curriculum framework for RE, parallel to the national curriculum, and the opportunities and challenges facing RE at the present time. The REC commends the new RE curriculum framework in this time of curriculum change to all local authorities and to schools of all kinds in England, as a benchmark for developing their own RE curriculum.

The Review also sets out the context of opportunities and challenges that this new curriculum faces. They follow a gradual improvement in the provision and quality of RE from 1994 until 2012, improvement that did not come about by accident. Rather, it is the result of constructive partnership work in RE between those responsible for the subject locally and national stakeholders in RE. Major educational reforms were introduced in 1988 and again in 1997. Each time the government had to be persuaded that RE also needed attention, despite its locally provided character. John Patten, a Conservative Secretary of State, authorised the national Model Syllabuses of 1994 and the GCSE Short Course in 1995; Charles Clarke, a Labour Secretary of State, authorised the publication of the non-statutory *National Framework for RE* in 2004.

The issues that RE faces today are identified clearly in this Review, the chief one being the inconsistent provision of good-quality RE and excessive variation of standards across schools. We know RE can be excellent and enjoyable; but we also know that this is an experience limited to far too small a proportion of pupils. The government and the RE community itself have a duty as well as an opportunity, in this period of wider educational change, to continue to work together and act on the recommendations of this Review. The RE Council hopes therefore that the current and future Secretaries of State act positively to support RE in 2014, the seventieth anniversary of the 1944 Education Act which still provides the legal and educational framework for RE, and beyond. If poor quality and inconsistent standards are the problem, teacher training, development and support are key to the solution. Both initial training and continuing development are sorely in need of improvement. This cannot happen in a vacuum. The structures currently governing RE, the priority given to it at a time when religion and belief is of such high profile and significance in the world, the public understanding and purpose of RE; these all need attention. They determine the policies that shape the recruitment of RE teachers, their role in the classroom and the resources they have to perform it.

Why is all this important? Religion and belief are an intrinsic part of human life, society and the modern world. Because children only get one chance to go to school, they should have the best RE they can get.

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## Appendix One: Recommendations of the expert panel report

### Context

In Phase One of the RE Review, an expert panel (EP) for RE was appointed, mirroring the approach taken by the national curriculum as a whole. Dr Bill Gent was appointed to chair this group. The other panel members were: Lat Blaylock, Professor Julian Stern and Dr Karen Walshe.

The EP analysed the current strengths and weaknesses of RE in relation to the four foci agreed by the REC Board at the time of the Scoping Report (March 2012), drawing on a variety of evidence supplied by a range of authoritative sources. On this basis, they identified nine recommendations for future action, each supported by a balanced argument assessing the current state of play.

The report was made available in draft form via the REC website for three weeks during November 2012 to allow for wider public consultation which was taken into account in the final EP report. The EP's findings were broadly welcomed; it was judged to have offered an accurate and comprehensive summary and the recommendations it made were accepted and ratified by the REC Board, with minor amendments, in January 2013.

The full text of the Phase One EP Report is available on the REC website:

<http://resubjectreview.recouncil.org.uk/phase-one/re-subject-review-phase-one-report>.

This appendix provides the final recommendations and the analysis which supports them.

### Focus 1: the aims of RE

#### Recommendation 1

- That clear and cogent aims for RE, applicable across the range of school settings, are proposed, as well as ways of communicating them to different stakeholders.

### Aims: background

1.1 The nature and purpose of RE are not easy to define in straightforward, unequivocal ways. The reasons for this are many. People's ideas about the role of both 'religion' and 'education' in society have changed over time. Moreover, religion itself is a complex concept, fundamental to the lives of some citizens whilst highly problematic for others, so that the issue of whether religion has a part to play in a nation's public education system at all is contested.

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- 1.2 A consistent feature in many of the submissions that the expert panel received was a strong perception that, despite the considerable amount written on the nature, purpose and aims of RE in all kinds of documentation, many people still don't 'get it'.<sup>18</sup> That this was often linked to a sense of persistent frustration on the part of members of the RE community was demonstrated well in the document reporting a meeting of key members of the RE community that took place in late 2011: 'A lack of consensus on the rationale and purpose of RE, and a failure to find a simple accessible way of explaining RE to the public, media and government, struck many present as the most serious weakness'.<sup>19</sup>
  - 1.3 A strong feeling persists, therefore, that both the purpose of RE as well as its aims need further articulation in ways and forms that people of all backgrounds can better understand and relate to. ('The issues are not in the aims themselves', said one expert witness, 'but in the communication of them'.) Is the RE community itself partly to blame for the confusion that exists? A recent major research project, *Does RE Work?* concluded bluntly that RE has tried to do too much<sup>20</sup>, re-inventing itself to include within its brief additional whole-school priorities – 'community cohesion', for example – and seeking to provide social, moral and values education so that the sense of a substantive core or essence of the subject has been eroded.
  - 1.4 There is some concern about the title of the subject itself. At a national level, the term 'religious education' has been enshrined in legislation since 1988 (superseding the term 'religious instruction' used in the 1944 Education Act). Some secondary school departments in particular have been experimenting with alternative titles which they judge to be more appealing to the pupils they teach. These new titles (such as 'Beliefs and Values', 'Philosophy and Ethics' and 'Religion and Belief') reflect the increasing emphasis on the study of philosophy and ethics in secondary school RE in recent times.
  - 1.5 The publication of the NSNF for RE in 2004 was a milestone in the history of English RE. In particular, its statement on 'the importance of RE'<sup>21</sup> was an attempt to provide coherence for the subject at a national level while respecting the value of the subject's adaptability to local needs and requirements without inappropriate and unhelpful levels of prescription. There have been criticisms of the NSNF; some, for example, have suggested that, no matter how 'educational' such guidelines are, there is still the assumption that it is better to be religious than not. Others criticise the NSNF for encouraging a single view of RE and undermining the independence of local determination. Nonetheless, the NSNF was groundbreaking because it gained the broad agreement across the full range of professional RE associations and faith communities. About 150 local agreed syllabuses have followed the NSNF or the adapted versions of the framework – for secondary (2008) and primary (2010) – in varying ways.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example: IPPR (2004) *What is Religious Education for? Getting the National Framework Right*.

<sup>19</sup> St Gabriel's (2011) RE Community Conference 2011, 16.

<sup>20</sup> See: [www.gla.ac.uk/schools/education/research/currentresearchprojects/doesreligiouseducationwork/](http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/education/research/currentresearchprojects/doesreligiouseducationwork/)

<sup>21</sup> NSNF, 7.

<sup>22</sup> The expert panel is aware of fewer than 10 local authorities and SACREs that have chosen not to use the NSNF to support the development of their locally agreed syllabus.

- 1.6 Although RE is a statutory requirement for all state schools, in schools with a religious character the understanding of the nature and purpose of RE might be promoted in slightly different ways from those in a community school. At worst – as one expert witness pointed out – this can lead to a kind of ‘us and them’ mentality with the underlying assumption that the only ‘proper’ RE is that which takes place in schools without a religious character. However, members of the expert panel agree that diversity of provision has considerable advantages; the purpose and aims of RE can be expressed in ways that respect the varied integrities of RE practice in different schools and different contexts.

### **Aims: main strengths**

- 1.7 A tradition of inclusive and multi-faith RE has developed over time in England so that it is held in high esteem internationally. An expert witness with strong international links pointed out that, ‘Specialists in religion and education from many countries appreciate the attempts in England, Wales and Scotland to have an inclusive form of religious education, which is ‘open’. They also appreciate the fact that Britain ... has regarded religion as a legitimate subject for public discussion, including within education.’
- 1.8 The wide acceptance of the 2004 NSNF indicates some broad agreement about the nature of RE in schools. As one expert witness commented: ‘Remarkably, it did provide an agreed reference point intended to be relevant not only for LA ASCs (Local Authority Agreed Syllabus Conferences) and SACREs (Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education) but also for those responsible for shaping RE in schools of a religious character’.
- 1.9 Teachers of RE have often made a strong contribution to the delivery of whole-school policies, including community cohesion and respect for all, critical thinking and citizenship. In its long subject report of 2010, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI) identified the contribution of RE to the promotion of community cohesion as a strength of the subject in most of the schools that had been visited.<sup>23</sup>
- 1.10 The existence of a widely based professional ‘RE community’ consisting of RE practitioners including teachers, advisers and consultants, professional bodies and interested faith community groups. Such groups and individuals represent a diverse group of people and organisations whose common bond is a commitment to supporting and promoting the educational aims of RE.
- 1.11 The legislative requirement that each local authority determines its own agreed syllabus for RE is considered a strength by some expert witnesses. At its best, this has meant that local groups of educational professionals, faith, and community representatives have thought through the purpose and aims of RE together and reached agreements about the best possible curriculum for children and young people in their particular areas. However, there is a need to take stock of localism and the increasing autonomy available to schools, and the impact of these policies on the local determination of RE.

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<sup>23</sup> Ofsted (2010) *Transforming religious education*, 47-49.

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**Aims: main weaknesses**

- 1.12 There is still widespread public uncertainty about the nature and purpose of RE. This is evident among a significant number of teachers<sup>24</sup> as well as the wider public. Some expert witnesses judged there to be too much diversity, complexity and variation in articulating the aims of RE. They went on to argue that this became more confusing still in aims statements that failed to distinguish between general aims of schooling, to which RE made a contribution, and particular aims specific to RE.
- 1.13 There is a lack of confidence and subject knowledge<sup>25</sup> among a significant number of teachers and practitioners. In increasing numbers of primary schools Higher Level Teaching Assistants are teaching and leading RE rather than teachers: their capacity to operate as fully functioning teaching professionals in the subject is severely limited. Furthermore, a lack of continuing professional opportunities in RE for all teachers and practitioners limits the scope for them to further develop their practice.
- 1.14 There is evidence of agreement that the development of knowledge and understanding of religion and belief is a core element of RE, and a widespread concern that pupils' knowledge and understanding is increasingly insecure. This point was made very strongly in the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) / Warwick University report, *Materials used to teach about world religions in schools in England (2010)* and commented on frequently by expert witnesses.
- 1.15 Though the NSNF was a milestone in the development of RE in England and Wales, it now needs to be updated and its usefulness extended in order to take account of the many changes that have taken place since 2004<sup>26</sup>, both within RE and the wider educational scene. Furthermore, its statement about the 'importance of RE' in particular is not yet sufficiently clear or direct to be fully fit for purpose.
- 1.16 The locally determined nature of the RE curriculum is regarded as a weakness by some commentators. For them, this is a matter of urgency; they believe that the future well-being of RE is dependent upon radical reform of the legislation governing RE. The need to review this issue is heightened by recent radical revisions of local authority control over education. With increasing numbers of schools moving to academy status, thus outside local authority control and the requirement to follow the local agreed syllabus for RE, the future viability of SACREs is under threat, particularly in smaller districts and areas.

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<sup>24</sup> See, for instance: Ofsted (2010) *Transforming religious education*, 51, n147.

<sup>25</sup> As one of the expert witnesses pointed out, this would include 'pedagogical knowledge' – that is, an understanding of why and how I am teaching RE so that pupils make progress.

<sup>26</sup> Including subsequent key projects and documents from Government and its agencies which largely follow the settlement that the framework achieved.

## Focus 2: the RE curriculum

### Recommendation 2

- That clear accounts that re-evaluate the core knowledge and understanding in RE, appropriate to pupils in particular age groups and stages, are produced.

### Recommendation 3

- That guidance on pedagogy and learning methods in RE are developed for teachers and curriculum-shapers that promote high quality teaching and learning in RE while allowing for diversity.

### Curriculum: Background

- 2.1 As a result of progress made in recent decades, many parents and teachers now think of RE as a 'subject', alongside other subjects of the curriculum. However, questions remain about what is and what ought to be taught in the RE curriculum. On the one hand, there appears to be a relatively widespread expectation that the key focus of a subject called 'RE' will be on studying 'religion/s', particularly Christianity and the other principal religions represented in Great Britain (usually named as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism). On the other, a further relatively well-established expectation is that the RE children receive in school will equip them for living in a plural society made up of people who, to a lesser or greater extent, follow one or other of the many patterns of religion and belief. Beyond this, agreement is less certain. Hence the various meanings of 'religious education' and its associated concepts have been the legitimate subject of often intense debate within the RE community and beyond. This was apparent in many of the key documents and submissions received from expert witnesses.
- 2.2 Sometimes, these debates reflect wider concerns about how to structure learning and teaching which affect the curriculum as a whole. For instance, the need for a school curriculum to be organised around traditional 'subjects' has been challenged at the level of principle<sup>27</sup> as anachronistic, and in practice because it leads to needless repetition of certain topics which do not fit neatly into any one subject's schemes of work. Experienced primary school teachers who began their careers using a 'theme'- or 'topic'-based model to plan the curriculum, were then later encouraged to focus on 'subjects'. Later still, they were encouraged to use more 'creative' styles of planning which, in spite of official rhetoric to the contrary, seemed to some to be a reintroduction of topics and themes, albeit under another name and to be 'delivered' with more 'rigour'.

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<sup>27</sup>See: White, J (2004), Wright, A (2004), and material related to the 2008 New Secondary Curriculum.



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- 2.3 Within RE, the idea that the principal focus of teachers should be on the RE 'curriculum' has been challenged on a number of levels. Some have pointed to an undue emphasis on subject content resulting in 'curriculum overload'. A number of expert witnesses were of the view that there has been too much emphasis on 'curriculum' at the expense of 'pedagogy'. This begs the questions, of course, as to what both the words 'curriculum' and 'pedagogy' mean and their relationship, there being evidence that there is often a lack of clarity in the use of both of these terms.<sup>28</sup>
- 2.4 There is strong evidence that, particularly since the publication of the NSNF in 2004, there has been a greater uniformity across local agreed syllabuses for RE – in their adoption, for instance, of the notion that the dynamic of RE is bound up with the twin processes of 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion which provides a basis for describing pupils' 'levels of attainment' across their school careers. However, there is still substantial variation across local agreed syllabuses with a small number of notable examples which enshrine a very particular or original approach to RE: that, in essence, for example, RE aims at the development of individuals and of society across a range of 'dispositions'.<sup>29</sup> In another example, RE is framed as an exploration of the question, 'what does it mean to be human?'<sup>30</sup>
- 2.5 Even when the assumption that RE is primarily concerned with the study of 'religion and belief' is broadly agreed, both the meaning of the concept of 'religion' and the most fruitful way of studying it are hotly contested. Within the English RE community, there has been an on-going debate between those academics who regard 'religions' as 'substantial social facts' and those who regard 'religion' as a flawed, outmoded concept. Those of the former view regard the concept of 'religion' as helpful in discussing such things as religious truth claims. Those of the latter view are wary of the term in that they think that it encourages people to think of 'religions' as fixed entities disregarding real life evidence that 'religions' are changing, internally diverse and have blurred boundaries.<sup>31</sup>
- 2.6 It follows from the identification of the principal religions to be included in RE (see 2.1 above), that there will be some dissatisfied by apparent exclusion. Members of religious communities that are globally significant, but have small numbers of members in the UK would like to see study of their faith traditions included in the curriculum. Atheists and agnostics – of whom those in the British Humanist Association (BHA) are the most visibly well-organised – draw attention to the fact that religious practice in the UK is a minority occupation, with many or most living as practically non-religious, and urge the more focused study of, for example, non-religious ways of living and arguments for atheism in the classroom.

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<sup>28</sup> One expert witness suggested that the title of Michael Grimmitt's well-known book, *Pedagogies of Religious Education* (Great Woking: McCrimmons, 2000), was really about 'methods' rather than 'pedagogies'.

<sup>29</sup> See the 2007 Birmingham Agreed Syllabus: [www.faithmakesadifference.co.uk](http://www.faithmakesadifference.co.uk)

<sup>30</sup> See the 2011 Lancashire Agreed Syllabus: [www.lancsngfl.ac.uk/curriculum/re/index.php?category\\_id=136](http://www.lancsngfl.ac.uk/curriculum/re/index.php?category_id=136)

<sup>31</sup> See: Wright (2008) & Jackson, R (2008).

- 2.7 In terms of the historical and social phenomenon of 'religion', the once common Western idea that religion will gradually 'die out' has been increasingly challenged by research into what has been called 'the persistence of faith'.<sup>32</sup> In its place, religion is increasingly seen as a key global phenomenon which is expressed in many and varied ways. A number of key documents<sup>33</sup> and expert witnesses expressed concern that the concept of religion as used in RE has not kept pace with such developments.
- 2.8 In addition to the challenges to any simple notion of a straightforward RE 'curriculum' already highlighted, contemporary changes (or emerging changes) in the national educational field need to be taken into account: the insistence of the DfE 2010-2012 that schools should have greater freedom to innovate and to devise their own curricula at school and community level, for instance. Expert witnesses commented that not only may a subject such as RE be left to wither in some schools, but also, the very idea of organising the curriculum into subjects will be set aside by others. So RE in the future will have to rely less on being a mandatory subject for all pupils by legislation, and much more on the intrinsic worth of the learning opportunities it offers. For example, academies will need to be convinced of the merit of the locally agreed syllabus if they are to choose to use it. The RE subject review should take these radical insights seriously.

### **Curriculum: main strengths**

- 2.9 The 2004 NSNF provides an outline of the RE curriculum in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills to which most RE professionals could consent and from which almost all local agreed syllabus conferences have drawn in devising their own agreed syllabuses. Really weak agreed syllabuses appear less common, post-NSNF, than they were before.
- 2.10 Though the continuing usefulness of the terms 'learning about' and 'learning from' religions has been challenged<sup>34</sup>, they have nevertheless become embedded in the thinking of many primary and secondary teachers who, as a result, understand that RE consists of more than just 'content'. This recognition of the need for balance is particularly significant in the context of the current national emphasis on the need for the identification of 'bodies of core knowledge' within subjects.
- 2.11 Evidence suggests that, since Ofsted began inspecting RE in 1994, more and better RE is being taught in more primary schools. Provision remains patchy, but inspection reports suggest a decline in the once common total neglect of the subject in many schools, and this improvement may have been helped by the five-yearly cycle of agreed syllabus review.

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<sup>32</sup> See: Sacks, J (1990) *The Persistence of Faith* (London: Continuum).

<sup>33</sup> See, for instance: Ofsted (2007) *Making Sense of Religion*, 7.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example: Ofsted (2007), 38

2.12 One way the strength of the RE teaching force has been developed and shown is through the 2008-2010 RE contribution to the New Secondary Curriculum through which 1016 secondary schools, involving over 1500 teachers, received professional development from 25 regional RE subject advisers.

### Curriculum: main weaknesses

- 2.13 The lack of curriculum time made available to RE in many schools combined with the use of 'creative curriculum planning'. In some primary schools, for instance, teaching assistants<sup>35</sup> (or Higher Level Teaching Assistants) have been used to teach RE, sometimes in PPA time<sup>36</sup>, lowering the status and the probable impact of RE in the school (REC 2007). Many teachers have identified a lack of understanding of, and support for, RE among senior school leaders and policy-makers as a significant cause of weakness in RE provision.
- 2.14 Within the secondary phase, the recent decision of the DfE not to include RE as one of the humanities subjects of the 'English Baccalaureate' ('EBacc') may have compromised the future of RE in secondary schooling. A series of National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) surveys of English secondary school RE departments<sup>37</sup> revealed widespread unsettlement, reporting a general feeling that RE had been unfairly 'downgraded' within, the October 2012 Ipsos Mori report, *The Effects of the English Baccalaureate* reported that 'Almost all case study schools questioned the exclusion of RE as an EBacc subject'.<sup>38</sup>
- 2.15 The limited opportunities for teachers and other practitioners to increase their professional knowledge, understanding and expertise through RE-specific initial and continuing professional development. Many local authorities and SACREs no longer make any provision for continuing professional development in RE, due to reduced resources and/or a lack of subject-based advisory support.
- 2.16 The frequent misrepresentation of religion in both teaching and the literature produced to support RE in schools.<sup>39</sup> There is often concern with 'coverage of religions', noted one expert witness, 'rather than a commitment to understanding and impact'. Another pointed to the tendency to 'sanitise' religions leading to an avoidance of diversity and controversy.

<sup>35</sup> REC (2007) *Religious Education Teaching and Training in England: current provision and future improvement*, p35, identified a need for training for teaching assistants in RE.

<sup>36</sup> The Workload Agreement guarantees teachers in maintained schools in England and Wales ten per cent of their timetabled teaching to be set aside as preparation, planning and assessment (PPA) time during the school day.

<sup>37</sup> See NATRE website: [www.natre.org.uk](http://www.natre.org.uk)

<sup>38</sup> DfE (September 2012) *The effects of the English Baccalaureate*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> See, in particular: DCSF/Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (2010) *Materials used to Teach about World Religions in Schools in England*.

## Focus 3: exemplification of good RE

### Recommendation 4

- That evaluative principles are developed and published that enable teachers to make sound professional judgements about what constitutes good professional practice, promoting high standards of learning in RE.

### Recommendation 5

- That strategies are explored through which the collective efforts and wisdom of the individuals and groups which make up the RE community can be brought together and made known effectively for the benefit of the subject and the young people studying it.

### Exemplification: background

- 3.1 Good quality RE grows when best practice is identified, widely shared and understood. The term ‘exemplification of good practice’ is far-reaching, however, and the panel therefore took a broad view of what this category required it to address. With more time, the panel would have attempted to define the field more tightly.
- 3.2 Primary teachers have often looked to local SACREs and agreed syllabuses as well as commercially-published resources for their classroom approaches; notions of good practice have often been drawn from practice in other subjects. At the same time, poor subject knowledge and understanding and low confidence have often undermined the quality of primary RE practice.
- 3.3 Secondary teachers, in those schools in which teachers with other specialisms are in a majority, can be more influenced than they realise by the quest for parity with history and geography at both key stages 3 (11-14) and 4 (14-16). Advantages and disadvantages stem from these comparisons. Secondary schools have generally been less concerned than primary schools to implement their local agreed syllabus. In the case of new-style academies, the link with local arrangements for RE (including resources) is currently loosely defined.
- 3.4 In the last eight years, guidance produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA)<sup>40</sup> has been widely used, though this has improved good practice less than would have been wished. The marginal position of RE within the curriculum and small amounts of curriculum time account for much of the weakness of teaching and learning which HMI observe in RE.

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<sup>40</sup> Such as the New Secondary Curriculum Initiative and work on Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) in Foundation Subjects to define and exemplify levels.

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- 3.5 There are many national projects which provide high-quality exemplification, some originating in research, some funded and supported by RE's major donors, funders and agencies. Various REC member bodies have also produced exemplification material, such as the Islamic Council of Britain's package for learning about Islam, the BHA's 'Humanism for Schools' website, and the Jewish Way of Life exhibition. In general, these are less well known than they deserve and probably lack widespread impact, even where they would meet needs widely.
- 3.6 An increasing amount of material is available digitally via the Internet and, in the context of increased globalisation, from a wide range of international sources. However, such material is unregulated and raises issues – particularly for those lacking subject knowledge or confidence – about resource selection, balance and quality. Furthermore, best practice would suggest that such material has to be tailored to the particular situation in which it is going to be applied; an exercise that requires professional judgement, flair and expertise.
- 3.7 RE has relied on agencies of government for exemplification of good practice. Key examples include HMI, QCDA, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTa). Local agencies – SACREs being the key example – have also often made a contribution to exemplification. Following the closure of some of these agencies<sup>41</sup> and in view of the current austerities which affect many (though not all) SACREs, the RE community must look to other sources for the support of exemplification of good practice.
- 3.8 One particularly significant factor has been the reduction in the number and availability of 'experts' (including specialist RE advisers, advisory teachers and advanced skills teachers<sup>42</sup>) to support teachers and schools. Where they continue to exist, local subject-specific groups of teachers have been a lifeline for many with meetings often focused on sharing examples of good practice. Some faith communities, such as Roman Catholic and Anglican dioceses, have continued to offer support to their own networks, sometimes beyond. However, many teachers of RE do report feeling isolated.
- 3.9 Some 'pull factors' have been having a good impact, but usually only on schools numbered in their hundreds at best.<sup>43</sup> These include quality marks and awards (such as the RE Quality Mark<sup>44</sup> and the Hockerill/NATRE prize for Innovation in RE Teaching<sup>45</sup>); competitions (such as those associated with 'Spirited Arts'<sup>46</sup>); and projects and initiatives (such as the
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<sup>41</sup> BECTa, for example, was closed down on 31 March 2011.

<sup>42</sup> See recent NASACRE *Survey of Local Authority Support for SACREs*, [www.nasacre.org.uk](http://www.nasacre.org.uk).

<sup>43</sup> The evaluation report on the REsilience Project, for example, noted that, 'The number of English schools that chose to participate was disappointing. This was due in part to external factors but the final number fell far short of the revised aspirational target of 400'. *An Evaluation of Resilience/At Gyfnerthu 2009-2011*, 25.

<sup>44</sup> A recently introduced award aimed at 'recognising outstanding learning in religious education'. See: [www.reqm.org](http://www.reqm.org)

<sup>45</sup> Now in its third year. See: [www.hockerillfoundation.org.uk/Prize.aspx](http://www.hockerillfoundation.org.uk/Prize.aspx)

<sup>46</sup> Including 'Art in Heaven', an annual art competition which, since 2004, has involved 250,000 pupils. See: [www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts/](http://www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts/)

Celebrating RE month held in March 2011<sup>47</sup> and developing students as ‘ambassadors of faith and belief’<sup>48</sup>). These initiatives, which require opting into, often feature schools who already exhibit good practice in RE.

- 3.10 Many schools and teachers, lacking trust in their own ability to be curriculum innovators and evaluators, turn to commercially published schemes of planning and resources. While some of these provide professional guidance ‘on tap’, others are insufficiently coherent to please faith community groups and insufficiently creative to please pupils.
- 3.11 Published research projects into RE-specific learning methods and pedagogy have been influential. These methods, based on enquiry, ethnography, interpretation, religious literacy, experiential approaches, conceptual development and the quest for human meaning, are all used in some classrooms; at best, each is effective largely in relation to its own version of RE’s aims. Many teachers make eclectic use of these learning methods, often driven by the desire to make RE lively or relevant. The quest for ‘relevance’ in RE is sometimes pursued superficially, however: featuring a story of a Muslim boxer or a Christian pop star may in itself do little, if anything, to improve the quality of learning.

### **Exemplification: main strengths**

- 3.12 There has never been a ‘golden age’ for RE, and it is a reasonable conjecture that there is a much stronger base of practice at a sound standard than ever before in both primary and secondary school RE. In a significant number of schools – primary, secondary and special – RE is identified by HMI as a subject that makes an important contribution to whole school priorities.
- 3.13 The capacity - despite a sense of being marginalised by central government decisions and a persistent belief that the subject is under-funded relative to other subjects - for RE-related groups, locally and nationally, to organise innovative and exciting projects and initiatives which both promote and bring together a wide range of exemplary practice and material.
- 3.14 The number and range of professional associations and other organisations which have exemplified their vision of RE in accessible ways through resources from which schools and teachers can benefit. While sometimes these are for sale, others are heavily subsidised and some are freely available.
- 3.15 Though there is widespread concern about the diminishing amount of initial and continuing professional development opportunities available to teachers, where good quality subject-specific training does exist it is valued highly and can have an impact. A significant number (though not enough) of teachers benefit annually from this sort of provision from SACREs, professional associations and commercial providers.

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<sup>47</sup> See: [www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/content/blogcategory/51/81/](http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/content/blogcategory/51/81/)

<sup>48</sup> See, for example: [www.redbridgeafab.org.uk](http://www.redbridgeafab.org.uk)

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3.16 Best practice in RE is simultaneously alert both to pupils' own interests and questions and to the academic disciplines of theology and religious studies (in some cases, biblical studies or philosophy). Linking these two poles through learning about spirituality, ethics and religion and belief enables learners in RE to get a strong sense of how the subject encourages them to think deeply about their own questions of identity, meaning and value and of what it means to be human.

**Exemplification: main weaknesses**

3.17 Even after 10-15 years of solid progress, there are still too many schools which do not take RE seriously; it may still be treated in tokenistic ways by school leaders who are unaware of (or unreceptive to) the potential of the subject. Too many schools continue to deliver RE from a sense of legal duty rather than an appreciation of its value. Such schools have never seen best practice exemplified in ways that might inspire them to seek to replicate it in their own setting.

3.18 Though researchers have contributed to the exemplification of good teaching and learning in RE, primary and secondary teachers have not always known about this and/or have had difficulty persuading others of its value. The circle of well-informed and practically skilled users of RE learning methods accruing from research is small.

3.19 Clear criteria by which to judge what makes RE practice or resources 'good' or 'outstanding' are not readily available either to many teachers of RE or other stakeholders.

3.20 The time allocated to beginning primary teachers during initial teacher education is too limited – in many cases this is less than five hours tuition or even self-study to prepare primary graduates for teaching RE. The move to locate initial teacher education in schools (in which there can be no guarantee that beginning teachers will see good practice in RE exemplified) is worrying.

3.21 Despite good take-up of those CPD opportunities that are available, overall the amount of subject-specialist professional development available to subject leaders and specialist RE teachers is inadequate.



## Focus 4: assessment (including qualifications)<sup>49</sup>

### Recommendation 6

- That new instruments for describing achievement in RE are created that teachers can use working alongside the DfE's new descriptions of achievement in subjects like English, mathematics and science.

### Recommendation 7

- That maximum influence is sought with the relevant examination Awarding Bodies in order to promote:
  - A. coherence and progression between 4-14 programmes and public examinations used at 14- 19;
  - B. the study of religions in religious studies qualifications 14-19, in appropriate relation to studies of, for example, ethics and philosophy;
  - C. discussion of the importance and viability of adding an RE / SMSC element to future vocational qualifications.

### Assessment: background

4.1 There has been substantial work on assessment in RE in recent years, to which many expert witnesses have drawn attention. The most recent reference point is the Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) assessment working group. The work of the HMI and of QCDA's Assessing Pupil Progress in RE work is also pertinent. Though there is clearly 'unfinished business' in the area of assessment and RE, there is evidence that, with skilful and knowledgeable handling, the use of levels can promote progress in RE but that, generally, too few teachers and schools have the confidence or expertise to use assessment techniques well. From the pool of schools that has been visited in recent years, HMI judges assessment in RE overall to be relatively weak in relation to other subjects<sup>50</sup>. There is also divided opinion over the usefulness of the 'learning about' and 'learning from' dichotomy as a means of carrying out assessment. At best, it has been suggested, it gives people a good sense of the subtle nature of RE and 'learning from religion' provides a strong starting point for higher order thinking in RE, including skills of critical and personal evaluation. At worst, however, it leads to a narrow interpretation of each element so that "learning about' becomes synonymous with 'facts' and 'learning from' with 'feelings'. Many expert witnesses stated that some teachers are confused about what the terms actually mean.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> The title of the fourth focus as given to the expert panel was 'qualifications and assessment of RE'. Following discussion, however, panel members decided that it was helpful to reword this as 'assessment (including qualifications)' and to interpret 'qualifications' as applying predominantly to the GCSE and GCE public examinations in religious studies (RS) available to pupils at school.

<sup>50</sup> See the two long Ofsted reports (2007, 2010) on RE in schools visited.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example: Teece, G (2010).



- 4.2 A review of qualifications in RE/RS<sup>52</sup> also presents a mixed picture. On the one hand, there has been a spectacular increase in the number of students taking RE/RS public examinations in recent years,<sup>53</sup> both at GCSE and GCE levels, with solid rates of achievement being recorded. Evidence suggests that the worth of RE/RS examinations has risen in the esteem of students, many of them seeing the kinds of issues-based RE/RS examinations that have developed as being helpful for living in the modern, plural world. The increased popularity of RE/RS examinations has also meant that they have become a significant commercial factor for the examination Awarding Bodies: RE/RS has, in short, attained a strong market position. On the other hand, there are currently significant and fast-moving changes taking place in the national examination scene, some expert witnesses voicing concerns that there is a danger the RE community will not be able to respond quickly enough so as to influence decisions that will impact on the future of RE/RS as an examination subject.
- 4.3 There is also evidence, however, that the rapid growth in the number of candidates for RE/RS public examinations has come at a cost. For example, concerns have been expressed by some expert witnesses that: the GCSE short courses lack rigour and challenge; the full GCSE courses are too content-based so that they encourage ‘teaching to the exam’; and that the popularity with students of A level philosophy and ethics-type RE/RS courses has led to a belief that ‘anything goes’ (in terms of argument) and that ‘philosophy’ and ‘philosophy of religion’ (which usually means Western philosophy) have become conflated so that both become distorted. There is also a much-repeated concern that, all through the school years – but particularly in Key Stages 4 and 5 when examinations predominate – pupils exhibit a diminishing understanding of the nature of religion in general as well as of the basic theological positions of particular religious traditions and the questions that they raise. In the words of one expert witness: ‘The focus on so-called ‘philosophy and ethics’ has reduced religions at Key Stage 4 to providers of proof texts, learnt by heart, to illustrate religious attitudes to “issues”’.
- 4.4 If the above factors are, to a lesser or greater extent, within the control of RE/RS and examination professionals, the same cannot be said for changes that emanate from decisions made at government level and which can leave educational professionals feeling helpless, frustrated and often angry. Such has been the case with the decision not to include RE/RS as one of the humanities subjects which combine with others to form the measure of school examination performance termed the ‘EBacc’. Recent surveys<sup>54</sup> have demonstrated that this one move has done much to undermine the status and staffing of RE in a significant number of English secondary schools. It is, many have claimed, a cruel example of damaging RE ‘by default’; that is, educational decisions not specifically related to RE nevertheless having a negative impact on RE, thereby undermining its position in schools. Some expert witnesses also expressed concern at RS not being listed as a ‘facilitating subject’ by the Russell Group of universities, saying that this has fuelled negative perceptions of RE amongst some pupils and members of the wider public.

<sup>52</sup> The term RE/RS has been used in this section as a reminder that, at public examination level, RE is termed ‘religious studies’ (RS).

<sup>53</sup> Over 450,000 students have been certificated at GCSE each year in the last six years. In the last 15 years, over 25,000 students have sat the AS level in Religious Studies.

<sup>54</sup> Particularly the four surveys, each of which attracted a significantly high number of responses from English secondary schools, which were conducted by NATRE 2010-2012.

- 4.5 The pattern of recent years through which students have gained teaching qualifications through a course in initial teacher education is also currently undergoing fundamental change with the number of post-graduate students being accepted for RE-related courses being reduced (resulting in some long-established university post-graduate certificate of education (PGCE) RE courses folding) and a clear national government-led preference for initial teacher education taking place ‘on site’ in schools themselves. Those currently involved in initial teacher education work, the quality of whose work is regularly monitored, have voiced concerns about there being no apparent safeguards to ensure that the school RE that beginning teachers will experience will be of an appropriately high standard. Taking a wider perspective, questions are continually asked about how school and university courses prepare future teachers to engage professionally in informed and engaging RE teaching, whether at primary or secondary level.

#### **Assessment: main strengths**

- 4.6 The quality and use of the RE eight-level scale from the Framework is not without problems, but is perceived to be a strength of the subject by many teachers and syllabus-makers. By offering a common platform with subjects such as history and geography, the eight-level scale has led to greater coherence and rigour in the ways that teachers describe achievement and progression in RE for 5-14s.<sup>55</sup> It has also been suggested that self-assessment and peer-assessment has become more popular in RE, giving pupils greater agency and ownership.
- 4.7 It is a strength that RE has for over a decade shared parity of language and structures for describing assessment with, for example, history, geography and art. This has had a benefit for the strength of the subject’s assessment work and for the status of RE in the eyes of teachers, parents and pupils.
- 4.8 The spectacular increase in recent years in the number of students taking examination courses at both GCSE and GCE levels, the short course GCSE being particularly strategic in helping schools to fulfil the legislative requirement for all students to take RE (unless withdrawn by parents or carers) at Key Stage 4.
- 4.9 The raised status of RE amongst 14-18 pupils, particularly with the popularity of issues-based/philosophy and ethics-type GCSE and GCE courses.

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<sup>55</sup> One example of the impact of the scale is that over 2,600 teachers have benefitted from continuing professional development courses on assessing RE organised by RE Today.

## Assessment: main weaknesses

- 4.10 The general standard of assessment in RE is relatively weak in relation to other subjects. Contributory factors include lack of teacher confidence, decreasing opportunities for initial and continuing professional development, lack of curriculum time, the unrealistic amount of assessment required of some teachers, the lack of clarity about the aims of RE, and variant and muddled understanding of how to use ‘learning about’ and ‘learning from’.
- 4.11 The debilitating impact of RE not being included as one of the humanities subjects of the EBacc, evidence suggesting that it is making some schools question the value of running RS short/full GCSE courses or even to eliminate such courses entirely. In such schools, the negative impact on the perception of RE’s value and on the morale of teachers can be marked.
- 4.12 There is widespread concern that the popularity of philosophy and ethics examination courses post-14, at the expense of a study of world religions or religious texts, has led to a shallower understanding of the nature of religion/s. This, in turn, will impact on the knowledge and understanding of future entrants into the teaching profession.
- 4.13 Since 1997, the GCSE short course in religious studies has been the most popular of all short courses, meeting a real need to certificate the core learning in legislatively required RE. If it were to continue, reform is needed because of a perceived lack of rigour<sup>56</sup> (a perception that is also widely applied to the full GCSE course), There is a need to clarify the relationship of the short course with other qualifications (such as, presently, the full RS GCSE course, or any successor qualification). But, if the short course in RS were to be abolished, then another way of accrediting the learning entitlement of the RE required by legislation will be needed. The accreditation of learning at 16 or in Key Stage 4 (14-16) is currently a weakness in RE provision.

## Two further recommendations

### Recommendation 8

- That the 2004 Non-Statutory National Framework for RE is reviewed and replaced with an updated and recast document.

### Recommendation 9

- That increasingly influential links are built and used with the DfE in order to promote RE in all schools, in line with the REC subject review’s work and recommendations (above), challenging and encouraging government to act to improve RE.

<sup>56</sup> See, for instance: Ofsted (2010), 5.

## Appendix Two

### Expectations, progression and achievement in religious education: a contribution to current discussion.

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This appendix provides an interim response to the REC's expert panel report, which recommended that 'new instruments for describing achievement in RE are created, that teachers can use working alongside the DfE's new descriptions of achievement in subjects like English, Mathematics and Science.'

Mirroring the subjects of the national curriculum, RE syllabus makers and teachers have used an eight level scale to describe learning intentions, expectations and achievements for many years. The effectiveness of such scales has been a contested area in RE as in other subjects, and as the DfE has set aside 8 level scales for other subjects, this document does not offer an 8 level scale for RE. Consultations on the RE Council's draft materials suggested a wide consensus about the need for further future national work in this area, but mixed professional views about this: many teachers will wish to continue to use RE levels, while others will not.

The NCFRE includes this statement: '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.' This statement is also included in the programmes of study for each subject of the national curriculum. There is a clear expectation that pupils' achievements will continue to be weighed up by teachers using criteria arising from the programmes of study.

The RE Council notes that the DfE expects schools to have a curriculum and assessment framework that meets a set of core principles<sup>57</sup> and commends this advice to syllabus makers and teachers in RE as they plan particular ways of describing achievement in RE in those schools for which they have responsibility.

#### The core principles are that assessment should:

1. set out steps so that pupils reach or exceed the end of key stage expectations in the new national curriculum;
2. enable teachers to measure whether pupils are on track to meet end of key stage expectations;
3. enable teachers to pinpoint the aspects of the curriculum in which pupils are falling behind, and recognise exceptional performance;
4. support teachers' planning for all pupils;
5. enable the teacher to report regularly to parents and, where pupils move to other schools, providing clear information about each pupil's strengths, weaknesses and progress towards the end of key stage expectations.

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<sup>57</sup> These 5 expectations upon schools are drawn from *Primary assessment and accountability under the new national curriculum*, a DfE consultation document published July 2013.

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In the light of these DfE concerns and in relation to RE, syllabus makers and teachers will need to consider these 5 questions, to which we provide answers from the subject review below.

### **What steps within an assessment framework enable pupils to reach or exceed the end of key stage expectations in the RE curriculum?**

In RE, at 7, 11 and 14, pupils should show that they know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the programme of study. This should enable teachers to plan, assess and report on progress in RE as outlined in the principles above.

### **Areas of enquiry to be included**

The programme of study enables pupils to increase and deepen their knowledge and understanding of key areas of enquiry in RE. These relate to the religions and worldviews studied. The range of key areas of enquiry in RE can be described like this:

- beliefs, teachings, sources of wisdom and authority;
- ways of living;
- ways of expressing meaning;
- questions of identity, diversity and belonging;
- questions of meaning, purpose and truth;
- questions of values and commitments.

While this list bears a close relation to previous versions of RE curriculum guidance (e.g. the QCA non statutory National Framework for RE of 2004), the purpose of its inclusion here is to provide a checklist of areas in which pupils will make progress in RE and also to guide syllabus makers in developing appropriate statements of attainment for different groups of pupils. This task will require further work within the RE community.

### **Gaining and deploying skills**

The programme of study also illustrates progression in skills across the 5-14 age range. In relation to the religions and worldviews they study, pupils are increasingly enabled to develop both their knowledge and understanding and their expression and communication through the skills that they gain and deploy. While the programme of study makes clear the skills that are expected of learners at the end of each key stage, progress towards these outcomes will need careful planning in schemes of learning.

The progression in understanding and skills that the programmes of study envisage are made explicit in the grid below. This is presented for syllabus makers to consider as they approach the task of designing instruments that will enable fair, valid and manageable assessment for learning in RE.

## Aims in RE: a progression grid

<b>A: Know about &amp; understand</b>		<b>At the end of key stage 1 pupils will be able to:</b>	<b>At the end of key stage 2 pupils will be able to:</b>	<b>At the end of key stage 3 pupils will be able to:</b>
A1. Describe, explain and analyse beliefs, and practices, recognising the diversity which exists within and between communities	Recall and name different beliefs and practices, including festivals, worship, rituals and ways of life, in order to find out about the meanings behind them	Describe and make connections between different features of the religions and worldviews they study, discovering more about celebrations, worship, pilgrimages and the rituals which mark important points in life, in order to reflect on their ideas	Explain and interpret ways that the history and culture of religions and worldviews influence individuals and communities, including a wide range of beliefs and practices, in order to appraise reasons why some people support and others question these influences	
A2. Identify, investigate and respond to questions posed by, and responses offered by, some of the sources of wisdom found in religions and worldviews	Retell and suggest meanings to some religious and moral stories, exploring and discussing sacred writings and sources of wisdom and recognising the communities from which they come	Describe and understand links between stories and other aspects of the communities they are investigating, responding thoughtfully to a range of sources of wisdom and to beliefs and teachings that arise from them in different communities	Explain and interpret a range of beliefs, teachings and sources of wisdom and authority in order to understand religions and worldviews as coherent systems or ways of seeing the world	
A3. Appreciate and appraise the nature, significance and impact of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning	Recognise some different symbols and actions which express a community's way of life, appreciating some similarities between communities	Explore and describe a range of beliefs, symbols and actions so that they can understand different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning	Explain how and why individuals and communities express the meanings of their beliefs and values in many different forms and ways of living, enquiring into the variety, differences and relationships that exist within and between them	

**B: Express & communicate**

**At the end of key stage 1 pupils will be able to:**

**At the end of key stage 2 pupils will be able to:**

**At the end of key stage 3 pupils will be able to:**

<p>B1. Explain reasonably their ideas about how beliefs, practices and forms of expression influence individuals and communities</p>	<p>Ask and respond to questions about what communities do, and why, so that they can identify what difference belonging to a community might make</p>	<p>Observe and understand varied examples of religions and worldviews so that they can explain, with reasons, their meanings and significance to individuals and communities</p>	<p>Explain the religions and worldviews which they encounter clearly, reasonably and coherently; evaluate them, drawing on a range of introductory level approaches recognised in the study of religion or theology</p>
<p>B2. Express with increasing discernment their personal reflections and critical responses to questions and teachings about identity, diversity, meaning and value</p>	<p>Observe and recount different ways of expressing identity and belonging, responding sensitively for themselves</p>	<p>Understand the challenges of faith commitment to a community of faith or belief, suggesting why belonging to a community may be valuable, both in the diverse communities being studied and in their own lives</p>	<p>Observe and interpret a wide range of ways in which commitment and identity are expressed. They develop insightful evaluation and analysis of controversies about commitment to religions and worldviews, accounting for the impact of diversity within and between communities</p>
<p>B3. Appreciate and appraise varied dimensions of religion<sup>58</sup></p>	<p>Notice and respond sensitively to some similarities between different religions and worldviews</p>	<p>Observe and consider different dimensions of religion, so that they can explore and show understanding of similarities and differences between different religions and worldviews</p>	<p>Consider and evaluate the question: what is religion? Analyse the nature of religion using the main disciplines by which religion is studied</p>

<sup>58</sup> The RE programme of study usually refers to 'religions and worldviews' to describe the field of enquiry. Here the aim is to consider religion and belief itself as a phenomenon which has both positive and negative features, and is open to many interpretations: in this aspect of the aims, pupils are to engage with the concept of religion and non-religious belief, not merely with individual examples, and similar critiques should apply to both.



The content in Aims A and B will be the vehicle through which the skills in Aim C will be developed

<b>C: Gain &amp; deploy skills</b>		<b>At the end of key stage 1 pupils will be able to:</b>	<b>At the end of key stage 2 pupils will be able to:</b>	<b>At the end of key stage 3 pupils will be able to:</b>
C1. Find out about and investigate key concepts and questions of belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, responding creatively;	Explore questions about belonging, meaning and truth so that they can express their own ideas and opinions in response using words, music, art or poetry	Discuss and present their own and others' views on challenging questions about belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, applying ideas of their own thoughtfully in different forms including (e.g.) reasoning, music, art and poetry	Explore some of the ultimate questions that are raised by human life in ways that are well-informed and which invite reasoned personal responses, expressing insights that draw on a wide range of examples including the arts, media and philosophy	
C2. Enquire into what enables different communities to live together respectfully for the well-being of all	Find out about and respond with ideas to examples of co-operation between people who are different	Consider and apply ideas about ways in which diverse communities can live together for the well-being of all, responding thoughtfully to ideas about community, values and respect	Examine and evaluate issues about community cohesion and respect for all in the light of different perspectives from varied religions and worldviews	
C3. Articulate beliefs, values and commitments clearly in order to explain reasons why they may be important in their own and other people's lives.	Find out about questions of right and wrong and begin to express their ideas and opinions in response.	Discuss and apply their own and others' ideas about ethical questions, including ideas about what is right and wrong and what is just and fair, and express their own ideas clearly in response.	Explore and express insights into significant moral and ethical questions posed by being human in ways that are well-informed and which invite personal response, using reasoning which may draw on a range of examples from real life, fiction or other forms of media.	



## Appendix Three: Note on evaluation

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An independent external evaluator, Dr Lorraine Foreman-Peck, an honorary research fellow at the Department of Education, University of Oxford, undertook evaluation of the Review process. On the recommendation of the Phase One expert panel and with the agreement of the Steering Group, Dr Foreman-Peck carried out a responsive form of evaluation. This ensured that consultation was undertaken during the Review rather than at the end of the process.

This ensured that members of the Review team benefited from the insights revealed in the wider consultation process as they arose. They were able to act on these when patterns in the responses emerged and on the recommendation of the Steering Group. Consultation responses also affected the progress of the Review when feedback was received that was judged to be unusually insightful by the Steering Group. Although more traditional forms of evaluation have other advantages, they only provide data after the event. Responsiveness was an important quality in the RE Review, given the wide range of often conflicting views that needed to be taken into account when the final versions of the various documents were being prepared.

### **The evaluation material comprises:**

- A. Consultation responses to the Review expert panel Report from the web based survey in November 2012 (Dr Lorraine Foreman-Peck)
- B. Extended responses from the same consultation received by letter (EP Chair + three Steering Group members)
- C. Consultation responses to the draft programmes of study, Phase Two from the web based survey in July 2013 (Dr Lorraine Foreman-Peck)
- D. Extended responses from the same survey (Dr Lorraine Foreman-Peck).

**This material can be viewed on the RE Council website<sup>59</sup>.**

In addition, 28 extended responses to the draft programmes of study in Phase Two were received by letter. The limited resources available to the Review meant that the external evaluator could not consider these, hence there is no analysis of these presented in the evaluation report. However, they were all considered carefully in Phase Three of the RE Review and their influence can be seen in the final NCFRE document.

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<sup>59</sup>[www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk](http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk)



## DONORS

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Grateful thanks are extended to the following organisations for their generosity in supporting the review.



Hockerill Educational Foundation



**For further information, please contact the  
Religious Education Council of England & Wales:**

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[info@religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk)  
[www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk](http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk)





# **A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England**

The Religious Education Council of  
England and Wales

**October 2013**



## Member bodies of the RE Council October 2013

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Accord Coalition	Independent Schools Religious Studies Association
Al-Khoei Foundation	Institute of Jainology
All Faiths and None	Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom
Association of Christian Teachers (ACT)	ISKCON Educational Services
Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC)	Islamic Academy
Association of University Lecturers in Religion and Education (UK)	Jewish Teachers' Association
Barnabas in Schools (BRF)	Keswick Hall Trust
Bloxham Project	The Methodist Church
Board of Deputies of British Jews	Muslim Council of Britain
British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR)	National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on RE
British Humanist Association	National Association of Teachers of RE
The Buddhist Society	National Council of Hindu Temples (UK)
Cambridge Muslim College	NBRIA National Board of (Catholic) RE Inspectors and Advisers
Catholic Association of Teachers, Schools and Colleges	National Society (Church of England) for Promoting Religious Education
Catholic Education Service	National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom
Christian Education / RE Today	Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK)
Church of England Board of Education	Network of Sikh Organisations
Church in Wales Division for Education	The Oxford Foundation
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	Pagan Federation
Churches Together in England	REEP: The Religious Education and Environment Programme
Clear Vision Trust (Buddhist)	Religious Education Movement, Wales
Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches	St Luke's College Foundation
Culham St Gabriel's	Shap Working Party
Deanery of Great Britain and Ireland	Stapleford Centre
The Farmington Institute	Theology and Religious Studies UK (TRS UK)
FBFE: The National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education	3FF, Three Faiths Forum
Federation of RE Centres	Tony Blair Faith Foundation
Free Church Education Committee	United Sikhs
Hindu Council (UK)	Wales Association of SACREs (WASACRE)
Hindu Forum of Britain	World Congress of Faiths
Hockerill Educational Foundation	Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

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# FOREWORD

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The place of RE on the basic curriculum has always been clear and local determination of its curriculum has been part of the statutory arrangements for RE over many years. I welcome *Religious education: a national curriculum framework* as a national benchmark document for use by all those responsible for the RE curriculum locally. I also welcome the wider Review of RE in England of which it is part.

The RE Review, an initiative of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales, takes account of wider educational aims, including the aims of the new national curriculum. In particular, it embodies respect for the law and the principles of freedom, responsibility and fairness. It demonstrates a commitment to raising expectations and standards of the RE received by all children and young people.

All children need to acquire core knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the religions and worldviews which not only shape their history and culture but which guide their own development. The modern world needs young people who are sufficiently confident in their own beliefs and values that they can respect the religious and cultural differences of others, and contribute to a cohesive and compassionate society.

RE's place on the curriculum will be strong if its role and importance are communicated effectively and widely understood. RE in England compares favourably with equivalent curricula in high performing jurisdictions around the world, but this reputation can only be maintained with a rigorous model of RE.

This RE curriculum framework and the RE Review of which it is part provides for such a model. It has the endorsement of a very wide range of professional organisations and bodies representing faiths and other worldviews. I hope the document will be useful to all those seeking to provide RE of the highest quality for young people in our schools.



**Michael Gove**

Secretary of State for Education

# INTRODUCTION

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Every child and young person who goes to school is entitled to an experience of religious education (RE) that is both academically challenging and personally inspiring. To that end, the RE Council of England and Wales (REC) undertook a review of the subject in England (referred to as 'the Review'). It has drawn as widely as possible on the expertise of the RE community to develop a benchmark curriculum that promotes high quality learning and teaching in all schools in the coming years, and to map out issues for further development. School structures are becoming increasingly diverse in England. It is important that within this diversity, schools' RE curricula give all young people the opportunity to gain an informed understanding of religious beliefs and worldviews.<sup>1</sup>

The REC began the Review early in 2012, as part of its wider strategic plan<sup>2</sup> for developing the subject. This decision was supported by the then Minister of State for Schools, Nick Gibb MP, who described the REC as 'well placed' to do so in a letter to John Keast, REC Chair, on the 25th January 2012. The REC is uniquely fitted for this task, with its wide membership, the range of views from both faith-based groups and education professionals and its commitment to an inclusive approach to RE.

The main catalyst for the Review was the extensive review of the national curriculum for schools in England, undertaken by the Department for Education (DfE) from January 2011 to July 2013. RE was not part of the DfE review as it is not one of the national curriculum subjects. The REC was clear that a review of RE in England was needed for reasons of equity with other subjects. Large changes to the curriculum have implications for all subjects<sup>3</sup>, including RE. From September 2014, teachers with responsibility for RE in schools in England will be expected to plan lessons, assess pupil progress, and have their performance held to account, as other teachers do. School leaders will expect them to use the same or similar criteria to those deployed in other subjects in the curriculum. For this reason alone, a new RE curriculum document is needed to support those teachers and schools, laid out in the same style as the documents for the national curriculum.

Beyond the need for parity, a wider set of challenges for RE has arisen in the past three years, mainly as the result of large-scale changes in education made by the Coalition government. These include the introduction of the English Baccalaureate, towards whose achievement GCSE Religious Studies cannot be counted, significant reforms of GCSE and A Level qualifications, the extension of the academies programme and introduction of free schools, all of which have implications for the way in which RE and its curriculum are decided and supported. Local authority cuts have also led to the reduction of local support for RE, and the number of new trainee teachers has been slashed. The total number of GCSE Religious Studies entries has started to decline after many years of growth.

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<sup>1</sup> The REC recognises that in schools with a religious character, there is likely to be an aspiration that RE (and other aspects of school life) will contribute to pupils' faith development.

<sup>2</sup> <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/about/strategic-plan>

<sup>3</sup> The RE curriculum is set locally, not nationally. Broadly speaking, it is set for community and voluntary controlled schools by local agreed syllabus conferences, advised by local SACREs, and by governing bodies in the case of academies, free schools and voluntary aided schools.

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The RE community has felt a sense of crisis despite government assurance. This assurance has been challenged by many stakeholders in RE and the threats to RE confirmed in a report of the RE All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), *RE: The Truth Unmasked* in 2013. The adverse consequences of government policy on RE's place in schools were recognised subsequently by the Secretary of State for Education on 3rd July 2013. Addressing an event at Lambeth Palace, Michael Gove conceded that RE had been an 'unintended casualty' of recent curriculum reforms, and acknowledged that in thinking that RE's 'special status' was protected 'he had not done enough'. Furthermore, successive triennial Ofsted reports for RE have argued, and the APPG inquiry has confirmed, that there are significant and well-founded concerns about the uneven quality of learning and teaching in RE across the country. In this context, a review presented the RE community with an opportunity not only to reflect again on the nature and purpose of the subject and its distinctive contribution to the curriculum, and to find better ways of articulating these to a general audience, but also to seek ways of raising standards. At its best, RE is an inspirational subject for pupils, as the REC's Young Ambassadors project has revealed.<sup>4</sup>

No public money has been allocated to support this Review, even though RE is a subject required on the curriculum of all state funded schools in England. Instead, the Review has been made possible by generous donations from REC members, charitable trusts and other interested organisations. A full list of those donors is given at the end of this document.

The REC was determined to carry out the review in a collaborative and consultative manner. It began with a scoping report in early 2012, followed by a report from an expert panel, mirroring the DfE's National Curriculum Review, in December 2012. In 2013, task groups took forward the panel's recommendations, and consultations were held at some points with the whole REC membership and at others with a Steering Group that represented the diversity of the REC. The final text of the Review was agreed by the REC Board on 2 October 2013 and launched at Westminster on 23 October 2013.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/young-ambassadors>

The Review as a whole resulted in:

1. This document - a non-statutory national curriculum framework for RE (NCFRE) to complement the new national curriculum programmes of study (2013) resulting from the DfE's review of the school curriculum, in which RE was not included
2. Available in the full version of the report – see below - an analysis of the wider context in which RE finds itself, including the opportunities and challenges that face the implementation of the new curriculum framework.

The NCFRE sets out:

- the purpose and aims of RE
- the contribution of RE to the school curriculum
- the breadth of study for RE
- the place of RE in the early years
- the knowledge, understanding and skills of RE for key stages 1 – 3
- RE in key stage 4 and 16-19
- an appendix on assessment.

Both 1 and 2 above are available together, and 1 is available as a stand-alone document, both in hard copy and on the REC website [www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk](http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk)

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: A NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

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## Introduction

The national curriculum states the legal requirement that:

*Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based, and which:*

- *promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, and*
- *prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life*

*and*

*All state schools... must teach religious education... All schools must publish their curriculum by subject and academic year online.*

(‘The national curriculum in England: Framework document’, September 2013, p.4).

This national curriculum framework for RE (NCFRE) in England has been developed by the RE Council of England and Wales, through a review of RE parallel to the Department for Education’s National Curriculum Review, published in September 2013. The key audience is the range of bodies which have responsibility for making RE syllabuses in England. This includes local authority SACREs (which have responsibility for the RE curriculum through an agreed syllabus for local authority schools), academies, free schools, faith and belief communities which run schools and governing bodies in some individual schools. The REC also commends this framework as a contribution to teachers’ thinking, and to public understanding of RE’s role and place in schools today.

The NCFRE does not claim to be an exhaustive or final description of the place, value and scope of RE in 2013, and it is not an official document. However, the breadth of the RE Council’s membership (over 60 national bodies listed inside the front cover), representing professional religious educators and national organisations of religion and belief, gives this document wide currency. The extensive consultation about draft versions of this framework means the document provides a widely supported platform for RE which can encourage a coherent range of RE syllabuses.

The NCFRE follows the structure of the DfE's National Curriculum Review, so that RE has documentation that parallels the subjects of the national curriculum. RE is described in terms of purpose, aims and programmes of study for each age group. It also gives clear guidance on RE in the early years and RE for students aged 14-19. As RE is a core subject of the curriculum the Review has largely followed the ways in which English, Mathematics and Science are described in the national curriculum, including examples and notes for key stages 1-3.

In describing progression in RE, the NCFRE illustrates how pupils will develop increasing understanding of wide areas of RE subject knowledge, and also how pupils can develop religious literacy, including the skills of:

- investigating religions and worldviews through varied experiences, approaches and disciplines;
- reflecting on and expressing their own ideas and the ideas of others with increasing creativity and clarity;
- becoming increasingly able to respond to religions and worldviews in an informed, rational and insightful way.

# Religious education

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## Purpose of study

Religious education contributes dynamically to children and young people's education in schools by provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose in life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human. In RE they learn about and from religions and worldviews<sup>7</sup> in local, national and global contexts, to discover, explore and consider different answers to these questions. They learn to weigh up the value of wisdom from different sources, to develop and express their insights in response, and to agree or disagree respectfully. Teaching therefore should equip pupils with systematic knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews, enabling them to develop their ideas, values and identities. It should develop in pupils an aptitude for dialogue so that they can participate positively in our society with its diverse religions and worldviews. Pupils should gain and deploy the skills needed to understand, interpret and evaluate texts, sources of wisdom and authority and other evidence. They learn to articulate clearly and coherently their personal beliefs, ideas, values and experiences while respecting the right of others to differ.

## Aims

The curriculum for RE aims to ensure that all pupils:

### A. Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews, so that they can:

- describe, explain and analyse beliefs and practices, recognising the diversity which exists within and between communities and amongst individuals;
- identify, investigate and respond to questions posed, and responses offered by some of the sources of wisdom<sup>8</sup> found in religions and worldviews;
- appreciate and appraise the nature, significance and impact of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.

### B. Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews, so that they can:

- explain reasonably their ideas about how beliefs, practices and forms of expression influence individuals and communities;
- express with increasing discernment their personal reflections and critical responses to questions and teachings about identity, diversity, meaning and value, including ethical issues;
- appreciate and appraise varied dimensions of religion or a worldview<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup>The phrase 'religions and worldviews' is used in this document to refer to Christianity, other principal religions represented in Britain, smaller religious communities and non-religious worldviews such as Humanism. The phrase is meant to be inclusive, and its precise meaning depends on the context in which it occurs, eg in terms of belief, practice or identity.

<sup>8</sup>The sources of wisdom found in religions and worldviews will include the key texts, the teachings of key leaders, and key thinkers from different traditions and communities. Examples include the Bible, the Torah and the Bhagavad Gita; the Buddha, Jesus Christ, the Prophet Muhammad, Guru Nanak and humanist philosophers. Other sources of wisdom might come from texts, thinkers, leaders and scientists in the contemporary world as well as from experience and informed personal reflection and conscience.

<sup>9</sup>The RE programme of study usually refers to 'religions and worldviews' to describe the field of enquiry. Here, however, the aim is to consider religion and belief itself as a phenomenon which has both positive and negative features, and is open to many interpretations: in this aspect of the aims, pupils are to engage with the concept of religion and non-religious belief, not merely with individual examples, and similar critiques should apply to both.

**C. Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews, so that they can:**

- find out about and investigate key concepts and questions of belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, responding creatively;
- enquire into what enables different individuals and communities to live together respectfully for the wellbeing of all;
- articulate beliefs, values and commitments clearly in order to explain why they may be important in their own and other people's lives.

## **RE in the school curriculum**

RE is a statutory subject of the school curriculum of maintained schools. Academies and free schools are contractually required through the terms of their funding to make provision for the teaching of RE to all pupils on the school roll. Alongside the subject's contribution to pupils' mental, cognitive and linguistic development, RE offers distinctive opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. RE lessons should offer a structured and safe space during curriculum time for reflection, discussion, dialogue and debate. Lessons should also allow for timely and sensitive responses to be made to unforeseen events of a religious, moral or philosophical nature, whether local, national or global.

## **The breadth of RE**

The law requires that local authority RE agreed syllabuses and RE syllabuses used in academies that are not designated with a religious character 'must 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'. This means that from the ages of 5 to 19 pupils in schools<sup>10</sup> learn about diverse religions and worldviews including Christianity and the other principal religions. Some schools with a religious character will prioritise learning about and from one religion, but all types of school need to recognise the diversity of the UK and the importance of learning about its religions and worldviews, including those with a significant local presence.

## **Attainment target\***

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

*\* Note: the wording of the attainment target for RE follows the same form of words found in the programmes of study of the national curriculum subjects*

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<sup>10</sup>Except those withdrawn by their parents (or by themselves if aged over 18).



# Subject content

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## RE in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Pupils should encounter religions and worldviews through special people, books, times, places and objects and by visiting places of worship. They should listen to and talk about stories. Pupils can be introduced to subject specific words and use all their senses to explore beliefs, practices and forms of expression. They ask questions and reflect on their own feelings and experiences. They use their imagination and curiosity to develop their appreciation of and wonder at the world in which they live. Religious education is a legal requirement for all pupils on the school roll, including all those in the reception year.

In line with the DfE's 2013 EYFS Profile RE should, through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity, provide these opportunities for pupils.

### Communication and language:

- children listen with enjoyment to stories, songs and poems from different sources and traditions and respond with relevant comments, questions or actions;
- use talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events;
- answer 'who', 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences in response to stories, experiences or events from different sources;
- talk about how they and others show feelings;
- develop their own narratives in relation to stories they hear from different traditions.

### Personal, social and emotional development:

- children understand that they can expect others to treat their needs, views, cultures and beliefs with respect;
- work as part of a group, taking turns and sharing fairly, understanding that groups of people, including adults and children, need agreed values and codes of behaviour to work together harmoniously;
- talk about their own and others' behaviour and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable;
- think and talk about issues of right and wrong and why these questions matter;
- respond to significant experiences showing a range of feelings when appropriate;
- have a developing awareness of their own needs, views and feelings and are sensitive to those of others;
- have a developing respect for their own cultures and beliefs, and those of other people;
- show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships.

### **Understanding the world**

- children talk about similarities and differences between themselves and others, among families, communities and traditions;
- begin to know about their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people;
- explore, observe and find out about places and objects that matter in different cultures and beliefs.

### **Expressive arts and design**

- children use their imagination in art, music, dance, imaginative play, and role-play and stories to represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings;
- respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and taste.

### **Literacy**

- children are given access to a wide range of books, poems and other written materials to ignite their interest.

### **Mathematics**

- children recognise, create and describe some patterns, sorting and ordering objects simply.

**These learning intentions for RE are developed from relevant areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (DfE 2013). RE syllabus makers will want to provide detailed examples.**

## Key stage 1

Pupils should develop their knowledge and understanding of religions and worldviews<sup>11</sup>, recognising their local, national and global contexts. They should use basic subject specific vocabulary. They should raise questions and begin to express their own views in response to the material they learn about and in response to questions about their ideas.

More specifically pupils should be taught to:

Requirements	Examples and notes
<p>Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.</p> <p>A1. Recall and name different beliefs and practices, including festivals, worship, rituals and ways of life, in order to find out about the meanings behind them.</p>	<p>Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils enact stories and celebrations from Easter, Divali or Id ul Fitr, finding out about what the stories told at the festivals mean, e.g. through welcoming visitors to talk about their festivals</li> <li>• Pupils experience thanking and being thanked, praising and being praised, and notice some ways Christians or Jewish people believe they can thank and praise God</li> <li>• Linking to English and computing, pupils recount a visit to a local church using digital photographs and find out about the meanings of symbols for God that they saw there.</li> </ul>
<p>A2. Retell and suggest meanings to some religious and moral stories, exploring and discussing sacred writings and sources of wisdom and recognising the traditions from which they come.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils choose their favourite 'wise sayings' from different sources or key leaders and talk about what makes these sayings wise, and what difference it would make if people followed them</li> <li>• Pupils retell (for example through drama) two different stories about Jesus considering what they mean. They compare the stories and think about what Christians today could learn from the stories</li> <li>• Linking to English, pupils respond to stories from Hindu, Muslim or Jewish sources by identifying the values which different characters in the stories showed, and recognising the religions from which the stories come</li> <li>• Pupils ask and answer 'who', 'where', 'how' and 'why' questions about religious stories and stories from non-religious worldviews.</li> </ul>
<p>A3. Recognise some different symbols and actions which express a community's way of life, appreciating some similarities between communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils choose to find out about the symbols of two different religious traditions, looking for similarities between the ways they use common symbols such as light, water, trees or rock</li> <li>• Pupils discover how and why Muslims wash, bow and pray in a daily pattern, noticing similarities to another religion or worldview</li> <li>• Pupils select examples of religious artefacts from Christianity or Judaism that interest them, raising lists of questions about them and finding out what they mean and how they are used in festivals and worship</li> <li>• Pupils hear three moral stories, for example from Christians, Hindus and humanists, and think about whether they are saying the same things about how people should behave.</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup>Breadth: in line with the law and the statement about breadth of learning on p15, good practice should enable pupils to study Christianity and at least one other example of a religion or worldview through key stage 1 in a coherent way.

## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

B1. Ask and respond to questions about what individuals and communities do, and why, so that pupils can identify what difference belonging to a community might make.

B2. Observe and recount different ways of expressing identity and belonging, responding sensitively for themselves.

B3. Notice and respond sensitively to some similarities between different religions and worldviews.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

- Pupils find out about what people with different religions and worldviews do to celebrate the fruitfulness of the earth (e.g. in Harvest festivals, and in generosity to those in need), responding to questions about being generous
- Pupils discuss reasons why some people go to mosques, synagogues or churches often, but other people never go to holy buildings, and why some people pray every day, but others not at all
- Linking to PSHE, pupils make lists of the different groups to which they belong and consider the ways these contribute to human happiness.
- Pupils learn about the daily life of a Muslim or Jewish child (eg from a teacher's use of persona dolls), and make an illustrated list of signs of belonging including using special food, clothing, prayer, scripture, family life, worship and festivities. Pupils make a list of the ways they show how they belong as well
- Pupils express creatively (e.g. in art, poetry or drama) their own ideas about the questions: Who am I? Where do I belong?
- Pupils watch a short film about the Hindu creation story and talk about different stages of the cycle of life.
- Pupils use a set of photos or a list of religious items they have encountered in key stage 1 RE to sort and order, saying which items are connected to a particular religion and which are connected to more than one religion
- Linking to English, pupils use key words (e.g. holy, sacred, scripture, festival, symbol, humanist) to present ideas or write about two different religions or worldviews about which they have learned.

## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

<p>C1. Explore questions about belonging, meaning and truth so that they can express their own ideas and opinions in response using words, music, art or poetry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils work in groups to use art, music and poetry to respond to ideas about God from different religions and worldviews, expressing ideas of their own and commenting on some ideas of others</li> <li>• Pupils ask and answer a range of 'how' and 'why' questions about how people practise their religion</li> <li>• Linking to 'Philosophy for Children', pupils think about and respond to 'big questions' in a classroom enquiry using a story of Adam and Eve or a video clip of children asking questions about God as a stimulus.</li> </ul>
<p>C2. Find out about and respond with ideas to examples of co-operation between people who are different.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils discuss stories of co-operation from different traditions and sources and make a 'Recipe for living together happily' or a 'Class charter for more kindness and less fighting'</li> <li>• Linking to English and PSHE pupils could play some collaborative games, and talk about how the games put the teaching of the 'Golden Rule' into action</li> <li>• Pupils notice and talk about the fact that people come from different religions, responding to the questions- 'How can we tell? How can we live together when we are all so different?'</li> </ul>
<p>C3. Find out about questions of right and wrong and begin to express their ideas and opinions in response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils respond to a quiet reflection or a guided visualisation by choosing one value they think the world needs more of today from a list of values, and by illustrating their choice in different media</li> <li>• Linking to English, pupils could ask questions about goodness, and write sentences that say what happens when people are kind, thankful, fair or generous, and what happens when people are unkind, ungrateful, unfair or mean</li> <li>• Pupils look at how different people have expressed their ideas about God, and think and talk about their own ideas about God.</li> </ul>

## Key stage 2

Pupils should extend their knowledge and understanding of religions and worldviews<sup>12</sup>, recognising their local, national and global contexts. They should be introduced to an extended range of sources and subject specific vocabulary. They should be encouraged to be curious and to ask increasingly challenging questions about religion, belief, values and human life. Pupils should learn to express their own ideas in response to the material they engage with, identifying relevant information, selecting examples and giving reasons to support their ideas and views.

**More specifically pupils should be taught to:**

Requirements	Examples and notes
<p>Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.</p> <p>A1. Describe and make connections between different features of the religions and worldviews they study, discovering more about celebrations, worship, pilgrimages and the rituals which mark important points in life, in order to reflect on their significance.</p>	<p>Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils make some connections between Hajj for Muslims and pilgrimage to Lourdes, Iona or 'the Holy Land' for Christians, describing the motives people have for making spiritual journeys</li> <li>• Pupils describe spiritual ways of celebrating different festivals, and reflect on the reasons why some people value such celebrations very highly, but others not at all</li> <li>• Pupils compare how Christians, Muslims, Hindus or humanists celebrate a marriage and express and argue for ideas of their own about partnership, in discussions or in writing.</li> </ul>
<p>A2. Describe and understand links between stories and other aspects of the communities they are investigating, responding thoughtfully to a range of sources of wisdom and to beliefs and teachings that arise from them in different communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking to English, pupils consider how some texts from the Torah (e.g. the Shema), the Bible (e.g. 1 Corinthians 13) and the Qur'an (e.g. The 1st Surah, the Opening) are seen as sources of wisdom in different traditions. They respond to the ideas found in the texts with ideas of their own</li> <li>• Pupils investigate aspects of community life such as weekly worship, charitable giving or beliefs about prayer, showing their understanding and expressing ideas of their own</li> <li>• Pupils compare the texts in the Christian gospels that tell the stories of shepherds and wise men at Jesus' birth, exploring how they are remembered and celebrated in a range of Christmas festivities.</li> </ul>
<p>A3. Explore and describe a range of beliefs, symbols and actions so that they can understand different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils pursue an enquiry into beliefs about worship, relating the meanings of symbols and actions used in worship such as bowing down, making music together, sharing food or speaking to God (e.g. in prayer) to events and teachings from a religion they study</li> <li>• Pupils consider how the meanings of a parable of Jesus are expressed in poetry, video, stained glass and drama.</li> <li>• Pupils describe the impact of Hindu teaching about harmlessness (ahimsa) on questions about what people eat and how people treat animals. They express their own ideas.</li> </ul>

<sup>12</sup>Breadth: in line with the law and the statement about breadth of learning on p15 above, good practice should enable pupils to study Christianity and at least two other examples of a religion or worldview through key stage 2 in a coherent and progressive way.



## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

B1. Observe and understand varied examples of religions and worldviews so that they can explain, with reasons, their meanings and significance to individuals and communities.

- Linking to History and Design Technology pupils consider how the architecture of churches, mosques, mandirs or gurdwaras expresses a community's way of life, values and beliefs
- Pupils develop their understanding of beliefs about life after death in two religions and humanism through seeking answers to their own questions and articulating reasons for their own ideas and responses
- Pupils use their detailed understanding of religious practice such as the Five Pillars of Islam and worship of a deity in a Hindu family and a mandir to describe the significance of being part of a religion.

B2. Understand the challenges of commitment to a community of faith or belief, suggesting why belonging to a community may be valuable, both in the diverse communities being studied and in their own lives.

- Pupils explore the lives of key leaders from Buddhist and Christian contemporary life, describing the challenges they have faced and the commitments by which they have lived
- Pupils find out about how celebrating Diwali brings the Hindu or Sikh community together, and expresses commitment to values of interdependence and generosity
- Linking to the expressive arts, pupils develop their own imaginative and creative ways of expressing some of their own commitments such as working hard at sport or music, caring for animals and the environment, loving their family or serving God.

B3. Observe and consider different dimensions of religion, so that they can explore and show understanding of similarities and differences within and between different religions and worldviews.

- Pupils use their thinking about stories of Moses and Jesus to explore how Jews and Christians today celebrate key events from their history (e.g. in Passover and Lent)
- Pupils list and describe similarities and differences in the ways different traditions express what 'belonging' means to them
- Linking to English, pupils find out about different forms of prayer and meditation in different religions and worldviews, and write some prayers or meditations suited to particular occasions and traditions. This is one point, among many, where RE can provide key opportunities for pupils' spiritual development.

**Note:** different dimensions of religion or worldview include, for example, narratives, beliefs, ethics, and social life

## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

<p>C1. Discuss and present thoughtfully their own and others' views on challenging questions about belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, applying ideas of their own in different forms including (e.g.) reasoning, music, art and poetry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils discuss different perspectives on questions about the beginnings of life on Earth, so that they can describe different ways science and religions treat questions of origins</li> <li>• Linking with the expressive arts curriculum, pupils create works of art or music which express their understanding of what it means to belong to a religion or worldview</li> <li>• Pupils discuss and debate reasons why different people have different ideas about the divine e.g. whether God is real and what God is like.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> pupils are not required to express personal beliefs in any coercive way in RE; good RE encourages an open hearted and broad minded approach to different beliefs.</p>
<p>C2. Consider and apply ideas about ways in which diverse communities can live together for the well-being of all, responding thoughtfully to ideas about community, values and respect.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils discover and explore what Jewish people, humanists and Christians teach about how people can live together for the well-being of all</li> <li>• Pupils discuss and apply ideas from different religious codes for living (e.g. Commandments, Precepts or Rules), to compile a charter of their own moral values, applying their ideas to issues of respect for all</li> <li>• Linking to Mathematics and Geography, pupils use local and national census statistics to develop accurate understanding of the religious plurality of their locality and of Britain today.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> This work offers valuable opportunities for engagement with religions with a significant local presence: pupils may learn about the contributions of, for example, Jains, Zoroastrians or members of the Bahá'í faith to inter faith work. These communities can also be studied elsewhere in the RE curriculum.</p>
<p>C3. Discuss and apply their own and others' ideas about ethical questions, including ideas about what is right and wrong and what is just and fair, and express their own ideas clearly in response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils apply their own ideas about justice and fairness to the work of three development charities such as Christian Aid, Islamic Relief and Oxfam</li> <li>• Pupils write persuasively about the reasons why people who have a particular religious background or non-religious worldview try to help people who are vulnerable (eg victims of natural disasters or prejudice, people who live with disabilities or people affected by war)</li> <li>• Linking to Citizenship Education, pupils consider the Ten Commandments (Jewish) and the Five Precepts (Buddhist), expressing their ideas about right and wrong in the light of their learning.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> this is one point, among many, where RE can provide key opportunities for pupils' moral development.</p>



## Key stage 3

Students should extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews<sup>13</sup>, recognising their local, national and global context. Building on their prior learning, they learn to appreciate religions and worldviews in systematic ways. They should draw on a wide range of subject specific language confidently and flexibly, learning to use the concepts of religious study to describe the nature of religion. They should understand how beliefs influence the values and lives of individuals and groups, and how religions and worldviews have an impact on wider current affairs. They should be able to appraise the practices and beliefs they study with increasing discernment based on analysis, interpretation and evaluation, developing their capacity to articulate well-reasoned positions.

**More specifically students should be taught to:**

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<sup>13</sup>**Breadth:** in line with the law and the statement about breadth of learning on p15 above, good practice should enable pupils to study Christianity and at least two other examples of a religion or worldview through key stage 3 in a coherent and progressive way.

## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

<p>A1. Explain and interpret ways that the history and culture of religions and worldviews influence individuals and communities, including a wide range of beliefs and practices, in order to appraise reasons why some people support and others question these influences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking to History, students plan and report on an investigation into the impact of two key leaders, thinkers or founders of religions or worldviews on their communities or on individuals today</li> <li>• Students examine how spiritual experiences (such as sensing the presence of God, or the experience of answered prayer) have an impact on some members of different communities. They develop reasoned arguments to support their ideas about these kinds of claims or events</li> <li>• Linking to Geography, students investigate the demographics of Christianity, Judaism or Sikhism or 'No Religious belief' in their local area and wider region.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> this is an aspect of RE that provides many opportunities for students' social and cultural development.</p>
<p>A2. Explain and interpret a range of beliefs, teachings and sources of wisdom and authority including experience in order to understand religions and worldviews as coherent systems or ways of seeing the world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students develop their moral reasoning skills by studying moral ideas from Humanism about good ways to live. They compare these ideas with Christian sources of authority and wisdom, responding systematically</li> <li>• Students select and interpret texts from the Qur'an and Hadith to explain and exemplify their understanding of Muslim beliefs and ways of seeing the world</li> <li>• Students consider how sacred writings such as the Torah or the Bhagavad Gita, or other sources of wisdom, provide ethical guidance and spiritual nurture to members of different communities</li> <li>• Students consider why so many sources of wisdom and authority in religions and worldviews are men, and so few are women.</li> <li>• They appraise some sources of female wisdom, from within or beyond religions and worldviews</li> <li>• Students consider the importance of experience as a source of wisdom and authority including religious experience and everyday human experience.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> The focus on interpretation of religions and worldviews requires learners to be active in engaging with texts and issues and responding with reasoned ideas of their own.</p>
<p>A3. Explain how and why individuals and communities express the meanings of their beliefs and values in many different forms and ways of living, enquiring into the variety, differences and relationships that exist within and between them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students investigate the life, teaching and example of Jesus, responding to Christian theology and other views of his influence with their own interpretations and insights</li> <li>• Students plan an investigation into examples of daily practice of Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jewish people, Muslims and / or Sikhs in Britain, examining in particular some similarities and differences in spiritual practice, ethics, beliefs and community life</li> <li>• Students explore different ways of expressing beliefs and values in architecture, music, media and the arts, building their understanding of diversity within the religions and worldviews they study.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> The focus in this aim on expression and communication connects the ways people from different religious or non-religious backgrounds express their ideas to the ways learners themselves express their own ideas. Both are equally important in good RE learning.</p>

## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

<p>B1. Explain the religions and worldviews which they encounter clearly, reasonably and coherently; evaluate them, drawing on a range of introductory level approaches recognised in the study of religion or theology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students plan, write and deliver an illustrated talk about different views of life after death, from, for example, a humanist, a Buddhist and a Christian, using arguments from philosophy of religion and human experience to evaluate varied ideas thoughtfully</li> <li>• Students use ideas from the sociology of religion, the psychology of religion or the philosophy of religion to explain the appeal of a non-religious or a Buddhist, Islamic or Christian identity to millions of people in Britain and / or the wider world today</li> <li>• Students experience dialogue between members of different religions and those who hold a non-religious worldview. They consider theological questions about truth that arise, giving reasons for the ideas they hold.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> in working to meet this aim, students may encounter religions and worldviews with a significant local presence, even if their national numbers are small. Examples might include members of the Bahá'í faith, Jains, Zoroastrians, Latter Day Saints or Jehovah's Witnesses.</p>
<p>B2. Observe and interpret a wide range of ways in which commitment and identity are expressed. They develop insightful analysis and evaluation of controversies about commitment to religions and worldviews, accounting for the impact of diversity within and between communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students investigate and evaluate in an essay the influence of some contemporary 'great lives' on religious communities and the wider world, weighing up ways in which the commitment of key leaders can inspire whole communities. They also consider questions about possible dangers of commitment</li> <li>• Students use an ethnographic approach to interview believers representing diversity within a tradition about what makes religious living challenging in Britain today e.g. from Sunni and Shi'a Islam, Protestant and Catholic Christianity or Orthodox and Reform Judaism.</li> <li>• Students select a religious controversy in current affairs to investigate (examples: What rights can migrant religious community members expect in the UK with regard to their religious practice? Why do some people convert from one religion to another? Why might some people from different religious groups or worldviews think that protecting the environment is not a major priority?)</li> </ul> <p>Students present arguments from both sides of the controversy to show their ability to analyse issues from different perspectives.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Engagement with controversial issues is at the heart of good RE and one aim of the subject is to enable respectful disagreement.</p>
<p>B3. Consider and evaluate the question: what is religion? Analyse the nature of religion using the main disciplines by which religion is studied.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students consider the questions: What is religion? What is a worldview? They develop skills to interpret claims made by different religions and worldviews about the nature of reality and the value of religion</li> <li>• Students use methods of study from history, theology and philosophy to assemble a coherent case for their answer to the question: In the twenty first century world, is religion a force for good, or not?</li> <li>• Students examine questions about whether religion and spirituality are similar or different, about how different religions and worldviews relate to each other and about collaboration and conflict between individuals and communities, including inter faith.</li> <li>• Students consider questions about whether different religions are compatible or incompatible, in for example their ideas about God or the ultimate reality or deciding how to live a good life.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> it is in meeting this aim of RE that students build an understanding of religion itself as a phenomenon, rather than merely studying religions and worldviews one by one.</p>

## Requirements

Note: as this is not a statutory document, these are not legal requirements as in the national curriculum.

## Examples and notes

Note: the examples from religions and worldviews given below do not constitute a syllabus but illustrate what is meant in the first column

<p>C1. Explore some of the ultimate questions that are raised by human life, making well-informed and reasoned personal responses and expressing insights that draw on a wide range of examples including the arts, media and philosophy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking to Science, students examine arguments about questions of origins and purpose in life (Where do we come from? Why are we here?)</li> <li>• Students develop insight into and understanding of why some people argue that science and religion can be compatible and others argue that they cannot</li> <li>• Linking to expressive arts, students investigate the ways drama, broadcast media and visual artists explore questions about the meaning of life, selecting and explaining examples that they find compelling and relating these to the teaching of different religions and worldviews</li> <li>• Students develop their skills in reasoning and constructing arguments by debating questions and dilemmas about the nature of human life and the moral responsibilities of being human.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> this aim in RE connects philosophical reasoning with other forms of expression, using the varied talents students bring to the subject.</p>
<p>C2. Examine and evaluate issues about community relations and respect for all in the light of different perspectives from varied religions and worldviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students consider what religions and worldviews say about what makes people happy. They seek and articulate explanations for links between character, well-being and happiness, especially in relation to living with difference in our communities</li> <li>• Linking to Citizenship Education and History, students consider responses to genocide from different religions, for example studying the thought, theology and activism of Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel and Dietrich Bonhoeffer in response to Nazism.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> this aim of RE provides significant opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</p>
<p>C3. Explore and express insights into significant moral and ethical questions posed by being human in ways that are well-informed and which invite personal response, using reasoning which may draw on a range of examples from real life, fiction or other forms of media.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students consider the impact of ethical choices. They could create a 'multi-path narrative' about a contemporary moral issue, showing what the consequences of different choices might be and evaluating the impact of moral choices with discernment</li> <li>• Students make compelling and reasonable connections between what religions and worldviews teach and what they say about issues such as starvation around the world, the sanctity of life, environmental ethics, war or prejudice</li> <li>• Students consider philosophical, ethical and religious questions about what it means to be human, for example questions posed in relation to the development of new medical technologies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> this aim of RE provides significant opportunities for students' moral and social development.</p>

## Key stage 4 and RE 16-19

All students<sup>14</sup> should extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of religions and worldviews, reflecting local, national and global contexts. Building on their prior learning, they appreciate and appraise the nature of different religions and worldviews in systematic ways. They should use a wide range of concepts in the field of Religious Studies confidently and flexibly to interpret, contextualise and analyse the expressions of religions and worldviews they encounter. They should be able to research and investigate the influence and impact of religions and worldviews on the values and lives of both individuals and groups, evaluating their impact on current affairs. They should be able to appreciate and appraise the beliefs and practices of different religions and worldviews with an increasing level of discernment based on interpretation, evaluation and analysis, developing and articulating well-reasoned positions. They should be able to use some of the different disciplines of Religious Studies (eg textual study, philosophical and sociological approaches) to analyse the nature of religion.

### More specifically students should be taught to:

- investigate and analyse the beliefs and practices of religions and worldviews using a range of arguments and evidence to interpret and evaluate issues and draw balanced conclusions;
- synthesise their own and others' ideas and arguments about sources of wisdom and authority using coherent reasoning, making clear and appropriate reference to their historical, cultural and social contexts;
- analyse in a coherent and well informed way the forms of expression and ways of life found in different religions and worldviews;
- use different disciplines and methods by which religions and worldviews are studied to analyse their influence on individuals and societies;
- account for varied interpretations of commitment to religions and worldviews and for responses to profound questions about the expression of identity, diversity, meaning and value;
- argue for and justify their own positions with regard to key questions about the nature of religion, providing a detailed evaluation of the perspectives of others;
- enquire into and develop insightful evaluations of ultimate questions about the purposes and commitments of human life, especially as expressed in the arts, media and philosophy;
- use a range of research methods to examine and critically evaluate varied perspectives and approaches to issues of community cohesion, respect for all and mutual understanding, locally, nationally and globally;
- use ideas from phenomenological approaches to the study of religions and beliefs to research and present skilfully a wide range of well-informed and reasonable arguments which engage profoundly with moral, religious and spiritual issues.

<sup>14</sup>All state funded schools must teach RE to all students on school rolls, including all those in 14-19 education, unless withdrawn by their parents (or by themselves if aged 18 or over). It is important that teaching enables progression from the end of key stage 3, in ways that meet the varied learning needs of all students. All students can reasonably expect their learning will be accredited. These modes of accreditation include nationally accredited courses in RE such as GCSE and A level RS. Good practice examples include many schools of different types where all students take GCSE RS or other accredited courses at 16. Requirements are different in FE and sixth form colleges (see:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/a0064886/religious-education-in-english-schools-non-statutory-guidance-2010>)

## Appendix

### Expectations, progression and achievement in religious education: a contribution to current discussion.

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This appendix provides an interim response to the REC's expert panel report, which recommended that 'new instruments for describing achievement in RE are created, that teachers can use working alongside the DfE's new descriptions of achievement in subjects like English, Mathematics and Science.'

Mirroring the subjects of the national curriculum, RE syllabus makers and teachers have used an eight level scale to describe learning intentions, expectations and achievements for many years. The effectiveness of such scales has been a contested area in RE as in other subjects, and as the DfE has set aside 8 level scales for other subjects, this document does not offer an 8 level scale for RE. Consultations on the RE Council's draft materials suggested a wide consensus about the need for further future national work in this area, but mixed professional views about this: many teachers will wish to continue to use RE levels, while others will not.

The NCFRE includes this statement: '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.' This statement is also included in the programmes of study for each subject of the national curriculum. There is a clear expectation that pupils' achievements will continue to be weighed up by teachers using criteria arising from the programmes of study.

The RE Council notes that the DfE expects schools to have a curriculum and assessment framework that meets a set of core principles<sup>57</sup> and commends this advice to syllabus makers and teachers in RE as they plan particular ways of describing achievement in RE in those schools for which they have responsibility.

#### The core principles are that assessment should:

1. set out steps so that pupils reach or exceed the end of key stage expectations in the new national curriculum;
2. enable teachers to measure whether pupils are on track to meet end of key stage expectations;
3. enable teachers to pinpoint the aspects of the curriculum in which pupils are falling behind, and recognise exceptional performance;
4. support teachers' planning for all pupils;
5. enable the teacher to report regularly to parents and, where pupils move to other schools, providing clear information about each pupil's strengths, weaknesses and progress towards the end of key stage expectations.

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<sup>57</sup> These 5 expectations upon schools are drawn from *Primary assessment and accountability under the new national curriculum*, a DfE consultation document published July 2013.



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In the light of these DfE concerns and in relation to RE, syllabus makers and teachers will need to consider these 5 questions, to which we provide answers from the subject review below.

### **What steps within an assessment framework enable pupils to reach or exceed the end of key stage expectations in the RE curriculum?**

In RE, at 7, 11 and 14, pupils should show that they know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the programme of study. This should enable teachers to plan, assess and report on progress in RE as outlined in the principles above.

### **Areas of enquiry to be included**

The programme of study enables pupils to increase and deepen their knowledge and understanding of key areas of enquiry in RE. These relate to the religions and worldviews studied. The range of key areas of enquiry in RE can be described like this:

- beliefs, teachings, sources of wisdom and authority;
- ways of living;
- ways of expressing meaning;
- questions of identity, diversity and belonging;
- questions of meaning, purpose and truth;
- questions of values and commitments.

While this list bears a close relation to previous versions of RE curriculum guidance (e.g. the QCA non statutory National Framework for RE of 2004), the purpose of its inclusion here is to provide a checklist of areas in which pupils will make progress in RE and also to guide syllabus makers in developing appropriate statements of attainment for different groups of pupils. This task will require further work within the RE community.

### **Gaining and deploying skills**

The programme of study also illustrates progression in skills across the 5-14 age range. In relation to the religions and worldviews they study, pupils are increasingly enabled to develop both their knowledge and understanding and their expression and communication through the skills that they gain and deploy. While the programme of study makes clear the skills that are expected of learners at the end of each key stage, progress towards these outcomes will need careful planning in schemes of learning.

The progression in understanding and skills that the programmes of study envisage are made explicit in the grid below. This is presented for syllabus makers to consider as they approach the task of designing instruments that will enable fair, valid and manageable assessment for learning in RE.

## Aims in RE: a progression grid

A: Know about & understand		At the end of key stage 1 pupils will be able to:	At the end of key stage 2 pupils will be able to:	At the end of key stage 3 pupils will be able to:
A1. Describe, explain and analyse beliefs, and practices, recognising the diversity which exists within and between communities	Recall and name different beliefs and practices, including festivals, worship, rituals and ways of life, in order to find out about the meanings behind them	Describe and make connections between different features of the religions and worldviews they study, discovering more about celebrations, worship, pilgrimages and the rituals which mark important points in life, in order to reflect on their ideas	Explain and interpret ways that the history and culture of religions and worldviews influence individuals and communities, including a wide range of beliefs and practices, in order to appraise reasons why some people support and others question these influences	
A2. Identify, investigate and respond to questions posed by, and responses offered by, some of the sources of wisdom found in religions and worldviews	Retell and suggest meanings to some religious and moral stories, exploring and discussing sacred writings and sources of wisdom and recognising the communities from which they come	Describe and understand links between stories and other aspects of the communities they are investigating, responding thoughtfully to a range of sources of wisdom and to beliefs and teachings that arise from them in different communities	Explain and interpret a range of beliefs, teachings and sources of wisdom and authority in order to understand religions and worldviews as coherent systems or ways of seeing the world	
A3. Appreciate and appraise the nature, significance and impact of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning	Recognise some different symbols and actions which express a community's way of life, appreciating some similarities between communities	Explore and describe a range of beliefs, symbols and actions so that they can understand different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning	Explain how and why individuals and communities express the meanings of their beliefs and values in many different forms and ways of living, enquiring into the variety, differences and relationships that exist within and between them	



**B: Express & communicate**

**At the end of key stage 1 pupils will be able to:**

**At the end of key stage 2 pupils will be able to:**

**At the end of key stage 3 pupils will be able to:**

<p>B1. Explain reasonably their ideas about how beliefs, practices and forms of expression influence individuals and communities</p>	<p>Ask and respond to questions about what communities do, and why, so that they can identify what difference belonging to a community might make</p>	<p>Observe and understand varied examples of religions and worldviews so that they can explain, with reasons, their meanings and significance to individuals and communities</p>	<p>Explain the religions and worldviews which they encounter clearly, reasonably and coherently; evaluate them, drawing on a range of introductory level approaches recognised in the study of religion or theology</p>
<p>B2. Express with increasing discernment their personal reflections and critical responses to questions and teachings about identity, diversity, meaning and value</p>	<p>Observe and recount different ways of expressing identity and belonging, responding sensitively for themselves</p>	<p>Understand the challenges of faith commitment to a community of faith or belief, suggesting why belonging to a community may be valuable, both in the diverse communities being studied and in their own lives</p>	<p>Observe and interpret a wide range of ways in which commitment and identity are expressed. They develop insightful evaluation and analysis of controversies about commitment to religions and worldviews, accounting for the impact of diversity within and between communities</p>
<p>B3. Appreciate and appraise varied dimensions of religion<sup>58</sup></p>	<p>Notice and respond sensitively to some similarities between different religions and worldviews</p>	<p>Observe and consider different dimensions of religion, so that they can explore and show understanding of similarities and differences between different religions and worldviews</p>	<p>Consider and evaluate the question: what is religion? Analyse the nature of religion using the main disciplines by which religion is studied</p>

<sup>58</sup> The RE programme of study usually refers to 'religions and worldviews' to describe the field of enquiry. Here the aim is to consider religion and belief itself as a phenomenon which has both positive and negative features, and is open to many interpretations: in this aspect of the aims, pupils are to engage with the concept of religion and non-religious belief, not merely with individual examples, and similar critiques should apply to both.

The content in Aims A and B will be the vehicle through which the skills in Aim C will be developed

<b>C: Gain &amp; deploy skills</b>		<b>At the end of key stage 1 pupils will be able to:</b>	<b>At the end of key stage 2 pupils will be able to:</b>	<b>At the end of key stage 3 pupils will be able to:</b>
C1. Find out about and investigate key concepts and questions of belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, responding creatively;	Explore questions about belonging, meaning and truth so that they can express their own ideas and opinions in response using words, music, art or poetry	Discuss and present their own and others' views on challenging questions about belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, applying ideas of their own thoughtfully in different forms including (e.g.) reasoning, music, art and poetry	Explore some of the ultimate questions that are raised by human life in ways that are well-informed and which invite reasoned personal responses, expressing insights that draw on a wide range of examples including the arts, media and philosophy	
C2. Enquire into what enables different communities to live together respectfully for the well-being of all	Find out about and respond with ideas to examples of co-operation between people who are different	Consider and apply ideas about ways in which diverse communities can live together for the well-being of all, responding thoughtfully to ideas about community, values and respect	Examine and evaluate issues about community cohesion and respect for all in the light of different perspectives from varied religions and worldviews	
C3. Articulate beliefs, values and commitments clearly in order to explain reasons why they may be important in their own and other people's lives.	Find out about questions of right and wrong and begin to express their ideas and opinions in response.	Discuss and apply their own and others' ideas about ethical questions, including ideas about what is right and wrong and what is just and fair, and express their own ideas clearly in response.	Explore and express insights into significant moral and ethical questions posed by being human in ways that are well-informed and which invite personal response, using reasoning which may draw on a range of examples from real life, fiction or other forms of media.	

## DONORS

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Grateful thanks are extended to the following organisations for their generosity in supporting the review.



*The Jerusalem Trust*



**Hockerill Educational Foundation**



**For further information, please contact the  
Religious Education Council of England & Wales:**

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[info@religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk)  
[www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk](http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk)



**DRAFT Reading SACRE development plan April 2013-March 2014**

<b>Aim</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>People Responsible</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Summer 2013</b>	<b>Autumn 2013</b>	<b>Spring 2013</b>
A. To be a supportive and proactive SACRE enjoying full and well-informed membership.	1. Fill membership vacancies	End July 2013	SACRE Chair Committee Services		Some vacancies filled		
	2. SACRE members attend termly SACRE meetings (3 per year) and, when possible, teacher termly network meetings and training events	Termly SACRE meetings: Summer: 19 June 2013 Autumn : 20 November 2013  Spring 2014: 3rd February  Termly teacher network meetings Occasional training events	SACRE Chair/SACRE Adviser SACRE members SACRE Clerk	SACRE Adviser to prepare and attend x3 SACRE meetings a year @ £500 per term =£1500 SACRE Clerk to administer each meeting  Oxford Diocese updates £50 x3 =£150 (shared with other SACREs)	All meeting obligations fulfilled 2012-13	Network meeting: only 6 teachers attended	
	3. Produce annual SACRE Report	Autumn Term 2013	SACRE Adviser and clerk	SACRE Adviser x1 day @£500		Draft brought to November meeting	
	4. Review the development plan at each meeting and update for next year	At each SACRE meeting	SACRE Adviser and SACRE	SACRE Adviser time included in A2 above			
	5. ~Subscribe to NASACRE ~ Representation at annual NASACRE conference, NASACRE AGM and local SACRE events including the annual pan-Berkshire SACRE conference	Ongoing	SACRE members SACRE Adviser to organise Jo Fageant re pan-Berks event/s	Subscription £90 Conference/s and AGM budget £500 SACRE Adviser time if needs to be the SACRE representative x1 day shared with Wokingham £250	Jo attended AGM 23/5/13 (Alan Brine presentation attached to papers for 19 June meeting) Jan attended Wessex joint SACRE meeting 11/3/13 (notes attached 19/6/13)		

B. To support teachers of RE to continually improve RE learning in their schools	6. Members to present aspects of their faith/beliefs to SACRE to inform members	At selected SACRE meetings	SACRE members. Decide plan at SACRE meetings: Chair		? Does SACRE wish to activate this item?			
	1. Provide a termly Primary RE network meeting, 4-5.30, hosted by a school RE teachers and SACRE members to be invited	Once a term (3 per year) Summer 2013: 16 May Autumn 2013: 1 Oct Spring 2014: 3 February Summer 2014: 14 May ( Venues tba) Hosted by schools/places of worship	SACRE Adviser to plan, invite schools, administer, deliver and follow up x 3 networks a year.	SACRE Adviser x1.5 days @ £500 = £750	16/5/13 Primary network held. 8 attended. Thanks to LDS Church  Volunteer hosts: places of worship? Bridge-building.	1 <sup>st</sup> October at Wilson. 6 attended		
	2. Provide, jointly with Wokingham SACRE, a termly secondary RE network meeting, 4-5.30, hosted by a school. RE teachers and SACRE members to be invited	Once a term (3 per year) Summer 2013: 21 May, venue Forest School Autumn 2013: 22 October Spring 2014: 11 February ,venue tba Hosted by schools	SACRE to plan etc in liaison with Secondary Federation manager/LA	SACRE Adviser x1.5 days @ £500 = £750. Cost shared with Wokingham so Reading contributes £375	21/5/13 Only 3 attendees, Kendrick. Continue in Autumn, then review	22 October 4 teachers, federation manager , JL and colleague Discussion about 28 <sup>th</sup> Feb conference		
	3. Provide a termly RE e.newsletter	Publish in the half-term when the network meetings don't happen	Jo Fageant to produce	£250 for JEF's time (shared with other SACREs)				

C. To support the implementation of the revised Berkshire Agreed Syllabus for RE	1. Provide schools with a list of speakers from faith/belief communities for RE lessons	Summer Term 2013	SACRE Chair and SACRE members SACRE Adviser	SACRE Adviser x7 days @ £500, but cost shared with Wokingham so Reading contributes £1750	Work has started. Training/induction day for speakers: July 18 <sup>th</sup> 9.30-12.30 Venue:tba Launch through networks etc Autumn Term 2013	Delayed but now on track for December launch	
	2. Organise trip/s for teachers to places of worship to support planning and teaching (CPD)	Autumn term 2013		£1500 additional funding requested from Reading to enable this to happen + 2 days adviser time to organise, attend and lead (2@£500 =£1000)		Trip Nov 12 <sup>th</sup> . 20 teachers attended: Mosque, Synagogue, Gurdwara, Buddhist Centre, plus resources being produced as a result, for all primary schools	
	3. Liaise with local places of worship re children's visits, appropriate to agreed syllabus	Summer term 2013		As part of the RE Directory	Work started		
NEW ACTION	4. Support the planning and delivery of a secondary schools RE conference; with national speaker and workshops (possibly on: use of artefacts/ KS5 teaching/ dialogue with religions/ assessment at	Friday 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2014 at Waingels College.	Organised by Waingels College RE Department Stephen Vegh) in liaison with SACRE.	£1000 requested from Reading and Wokingham SACREs (£500 each) SACRE to support and subsidise the conference. Teachers from outside Wokingham to pay £20 each to cover their	SACRE: any members willing to be in dialogue with teachers 28 feb conference?	NEW ACTION TO DISCUSS AT SACRE MTG	

	KS3. Conference to be opened to Reading and pan-Berkshire.			costs.			



## SACRE Membership 2013/14

Bev Heslin	Free Churches (Group A)
Teresa Jones (nominated 3/9/13)	RC Diocese of Portsmouth (Group A)
<i>Vacancy</i>	Buddhism (Group A)
Ashok Khare	Hindu Faith (Group A)
Mustafa Chaudhary	Islam (Group A)
Leanne Campbell	Islam (Group A)
Rabbi Zvi Solomons	Jewish Faith (Group A)
<i>Vacancy</i>	Sikhism (Group A)
Jo Fageant	Church of England (Group B)
Margaret Elcock	Church of England (Group B)
Anne Cheeseman	Church of England (Group B)
Robin Sharples	Church of England (Group B)
Michael Freeman	ATL (Group C)
<i>Vacancy</i>	NAHT (Group C)
<i>Vacancy</i>	NASUWT(Group C)
Vera Bodman	NUT (Group C)
<i>Vacancy</i>	SHA (Group C)
Cllr Ennis	Reading Borough Council (Group D)
Cllr Hopper	Reading Borough Council (Group D)
Cllr McElligott	Reading Borough Council (Group D)
Cllr O'Connell	Reading Borough Council (Group D)
<i>Vacancy</i>	Reading Borough Council (Group D)
<i>Vacancy</i> <i>(no longer any grant maintained schools in Reading)</i>	Grant Maintained Schools (non-voting)
Jamie Howell, Humanist	Co-opted member (non-voting)
<i>Vacancy</i>	Co-opted member (non-voting)

**Note** - Humanists can't be included in Gp A, even if the constitution was changed. Baha'I (former co-opted members) could be, humanists would have to be co-opted member.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL  
ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
(SACRE)

CONSTITUTION

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is established in accordance with Section 11 of the Education Reform Act 1988.

1. MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE

The members of the SACRE shall be appointed by the Authority so that they shall represent the following groups.

*Group A Christian Denominations and other religions*

Free Churches	1
Roman Catholic Church	1
Buddhism	1
Hinduism	1
Islam	2
Judaism	1
Sikhism	1

*Group B The Church of England* 4

*Group C Associations representing teachers*

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers	1
The National Association of Headteachers	1
The National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers	1
The National Union of Teachers	1
The Secondary Headteachers Association	1

*Group D The Authority* 5

- Grant Maintained Schools (non-voting) 1
- Co-opted members (non-voting) 2

## TERMS OF OFFICE

- (i) Members of the SACRE shall serve from the date of their appointment for a term of three years or until their successors are appointed by the Authority. They shall be eligible for reappointment after each term for a further term by consultation, if necessary, with the group which they represent. This shall also apply to co-opted members. May 2010 shall be the first year for the purpose of these three year appointments.
- (ii) Any member who fails to attend three consecutive ordinary meetings of the SACRE other than for a reason approved by the SACRE shall cease to be a member.
- (iii) The validity of the proceedings of the SACRE, or any of its representative groups, shall not be affected by a vacancy in the membership or on the ground that a member does not at the time represent the denomination, religion or association he or she was appointed to represent.

## 2 DUTIES AND POWERS

- (i) The SACRE shall advise the Authority on such matters connected with religious worship in Borough schools and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus as the Authority may refer to it or as it may see fit.
- (ii) The SACRE shall, in particular, advise on methods of teaching, the choice of materials and the provision of training for teachers.
- (iii) The SACRE shall, on an application made by a headteacher of any Borough school after consultation with the governing body, consider whether it is appropriate for the requirement for Christian collective worship to apply in case of that school, or in the case of any class or description of pupils at that school. The SACRE shall arrive at its decision and communicate it to the headteacher in accordance with the provisions of Section 12 of The Education Reform Act 1988.
- (iv) The representative groups on the SACRE, other than that representing the Authority, may at any time require a review on any Agreed Syllabus for the time being adopted by the Authority.
- (v) The SACRE shall, each year, publish a report on its proceedings and those of its representative groups. The report shall specify any matters on which the SACRE has given advice to the Authority and the reasons for offering the advice.
- (vi) The SACRE shall take any action assigned to it by the Authority in relation to the consideration and disposal of any complaint concerning collective worship or religious education in compliance with Section 23 of The Education Reform Act 1988.

#### 4. PROCEDURE

- (i) The SACRE shall elect annually at its first meeting in the municipal year, a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman from among its members by voting in accordance with clause (ii).
- (ii) On any question to be decided by the SACRE, only the representative groups shall be entitled to vote, and each group shall have a single vote.
- (iii) The SACRE shall regulate its own proceedings and may establish committees for specified purposes. Such committees may include persons who are not themselves members of the SACRE. In any matter which falls to be decided by the member of any particular category, the members of that category may regulate their own proceedings.
- (iv) The quorum for a meeting of the SACRE shall be one member from each Group plus the person then acting as Chair, a total of five members.
- (v) The SACRE shall determine the frequency of its own meetings so long as it meets no fewer than two occasions in any academic year.
- (vi) The Clerk to the SACRE shall be the Chief Education Officer of the Authority or his representative.
- (vii) The Chief Education Officer or his representative(s) shall be entitled to attend all meetings of the SACRE and of any committees it may establish and to speak, but not to vote.
- (viii) The costs of operating the SACRE and any committees it may establish shall be met by the Authority.

Add Reading logo

## Reading Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

### Annual Report 2013

#### What has happened this year?

Last year saw a number of developments in education policy making a difficult impact on RE: the situation with the English Baccalaureate and the reduction in teacher training places specialising in RE, being examples. RE does remain statutory, however, and the renewed Ofsted emphasis on SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) development does give RE additional curriculum significance.

Last year also saw the requirement for the Pan-Berkshire Agreed Syllabus to be fully implemented in schools from September 2012. This led to x26 primary schools buying into the Discovery RE Scheme of Work to help them deliver an enquiry-based model that translates the Agreed Syllabus into practice.

The Reading SACRE has done its best to provide opportunities to listen to teachers and has considered the national developments. It has made every effort to tailor its development plan to address the needs and requirements of the national picture and the local schools.

#### This year has seen several very significant national reports on RE:

1. **'RE: The Truth Unmasked ; the supply of and support for Religious Education teachers', was published in March 2013, commissioned by The All Party Parliamentary Group on RE.**

Key Issues:

- **In 25% of the primary schools in the inquiry, RE was taught by teaching assistants.** The SACRE discussed this and recognised that whilst TAs reliably teach RE every week (not allowing it to drop off the edge of a pressured timetable) and some are excellent. There is a concern about the level of training available for TAs for teaching such a complex subject.

At the teacher network meetings this situation was reflected in some Reading schools.

- **In about 50% of the primary schools in the inquiry, teachers said they lacked confidence in teaching.** This was reflected in some Reading schools where some teachers feel insecure in their subject knowledge but are keen to teach well, being respectful to each religion being considered.
- **About 50% of primary RE subject leaders reported a lack of experience or expertise to undertake their role.** Subject leaders in Reading reported that using the Discovery RE Scheme of Work supports them to bring consistency in RE across their schools, to monitor RE and most importantly to ensure assessment is being done effectively. Others report very little time is allowed for their subject leader role.
- **Secondary RE has to deal with issues of non-specialist teachers (50% with no qualification in RE),** less specialists places in initial teacher training and a lack of CPD. However, the picture in Reading is not so bleak, although it is varied with some

schools having a team of specialists and others staffed by a non-specialist team with a head of department.

- **The inquiry also pointed out that the ability of SACREs to provide support for RE at a local level has been dramatically reduced by LA funding decisions. This is not so in Reading where the SACRE continues to appreciate LA support with a budget of £6000 for the second year running to support the implementation of the agreed syllabus. This allows teacher network meetings and some level of support to be provided. Additional funding was requested and granted to enable the CPD trip to places of worship and the subsequent resources.**

## **2. 'Religious Education: realising the potential', the long report on RE from Ofsted (October 2013)**

The key findings of this report were alluded to in Alan Brine, the HMI's, presentation at the SACRE conference at Easthampstead Park in the summer term.

2 of the main findings:

- 1. 'The teaching of RE in primary schools was not good enough because of weaknesses in teachers' understanding of the subject, a lack of emphasis on subject knowledge, poor and fragmented curriculum planning, very weak assessment, ineffective monitoring and teachers' limited access to effective training'**

Having discussed these issues at the teacher network meetings it is recognised that these are real issues that most schools grapple with to some level. However, teachers report that using the Discovery RE Scheme of Work gives them a progressive and well-planned programme for the whole school. The assessment process is straightforward and comprehensive, even providing exemplification of the marking criteria and ready-made assessment tasks. It is not easy to assess the situation across Reading schools as the network meetings are poorly attended.

- 2. 'Most of the GCSE teaching seen failed to secure the core aim of the examination specifications: that is, to enable pupils to' adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion'**

This refers to the lack of time given in some schools to GCSE teaching, which often leads to teaching to the examination syllabi with little time for wider teaching which would better develop critical and reflective thinking.

Very little contact with the secondary teachers in Reading means it is difficult for the SACRE to gauge how reflective this is of the situation in Reading.

## **3. 'A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England', the culmination of the review commissioned by the RE Council of England and Wales (October 2013)**

The RE review, commissioned by the RE Council, formed part of its wider strategic plan for developing the subject, alongside the DfE national curriculum review. The review of RE has resulted in the design of a non-statutory national curriculum framework for RE (NCFRE) which was published in October 2013.

The aims of RE are arranged under x3 headings:

- Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews

- Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews
- Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews

Reading SACRE and teachers will be keen to consider how the Pan-Berkshire Agreed Syllabus reflects the new Programmes of Study, and indeed if there are any discrepancies. Initial consideration is favourable showing that the local agreed syllabus is in line with the NCFRE.

### **The SACRE and its work 2013**

2013, in this challenging climate, the Reading SACRE has continued to see a stable membership and its commitment to supporting RE is secure.

The LA has supported the work of the SACRE with funding of £6000 for the second year to enable the effective implementation of the syllabus (2012)

The development plan has reflected the needs of the teachers as expressed at the network meetings. These termly meetings serve as a useful channel between the SACRE and teachers in the classrooms but are disappointingly attended..

### **Teacher network meetings**

These termly meetings have been hosted by schools but are not well attended at primary or secondary level. Discussions and requests, reported back to the SACRE, are wherever possible, actioned through the SACRE development plan, often supported by the Professional Adviser to the SACRE eg request for a teacher trip to places of worship which took place on November 12th.

### **Training on location**

One such action this year was the organisation, November 12<sup>th</sup>, of a full day's training in Places of Worship in Reading. 9 Reading teachers visited a mosque, a synagogue, a gurdwara and the Buddhist Centre, enhancing their subject knowledge as well as being guided in how to teach specific themes and enquiries related to these places of worship.

The Reading Places of worship welcomed the teacher group warmly offering excellent information and great hospitality, encouraging teachers to bring children to these special places.

### **Provision of teaching resources**

The above-mentioned training also provided an excellent opportunity to take many photographs and to use them to design x9 powerpoint presentations relating to places of worship and to specific big enquiry questions.

Funding allows these resources to be distributed to every school, whether teachers were able to attend the training trip or not.

### **SACRE meetings**

The SACRE held x3 termly meetings which were generally well-attended.

The Chair and Clerk continue to do a sterling job supported by the Professional Adviser and the Diocesan Adviser.

### **Directory of speakers for RE**

After a delay in its production the Directory of speakers was launched in December and will be trialled by schools in 2014.

### **RE Quality Mark**

The teachers and the SACRE considered to RE Quality Mark and intend to encourage schools to use the criteria to audit their RE provision and the quality of it, perhaps applying for the Bronze, Silver or Gold award in time.

Reading SACRE October 2013