

A. What is RE for?

A1 The purpose of RE

- 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 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 should learn to articulate clearly and coherently their personal beliefs, ideas, values and experiences while respecting the right of others to differ.

The purpose of RE is captured in the principal aim, which is intended to be a short-hand version for day-to-day use. Teachers should use it when planning RE, whether long-term or short-term. It should be considered as a doorway into the wider purpose articulated above.

Principal aim

The principal aim of RE is to engage pupils in systematic enquiry into significant human questions which religion and worldviews address, so that they can develop the understanding and skills needed to appreciate and appraise varied responses to these questions, as well as develop responses of their own.

Schools might wish to devise a pupil-friendly version of this for themselves. Discussing this, using the full purpose and the principal aim, would be helpful for teachers in clarifying what RE is for in their school and classroom.

For example: 'RE explores big questions about life, to find out what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can make sense of religion, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.'

A2 The aim(s) of RE

The threefold aim of RE elaborates the principal aim.

The curriculum for RE aims to ensure that all pupils:

- 1. Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews¹, 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 wisdom² found in religions and worldviews
 - appreciate and appraise the nature, significance and impact of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.

- 2. 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.³

- 3. 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.

Throughout schooling, teachers should consider how their teaching contributes towards the principal aim of RE in the local area, and how they help pupils to achieve the threefold aim.

Note: These aims incorporate the former attainment targets of 'learning about religion' and 'learning from religion'.

¹ 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, e.g. in terms of belief, practice or identity.

² 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.

³ 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.

A3 How to use this agreed syllabus: 12 steps

1. Key to implementing this revised syllabus is getting to **know the purpose and principal aim**, p.6. Is this the understanding of what RE is in your school? Does RE in your school currently deliver this aim? If teachers are to teach RE effectively, it is vital that they understand what they are doing RE *for*. Reflect on how fulfilling the principal aim will contribute to SMSC and wider school priorities.
2. For each key stage, get to know the **Programme of Study** pages (EYFS p.19; KS1 p.31; KS2 p.45; KS3, p.69). These give the statutory requirements of the syllabus. Note that the syllabus is structured around the three aims (see p.6) and the three strands, *Believing, Expressing and Living*. The three aims form the basis of the end of key stage outcomes, and the progressive 'Learning outcomes' in each unit of study. The overview of questions (p.16) show how the key questions relate to the strands.
3. Review the **legal requirements** (see p.11) and **curriculum time** for RE (see p.14). Are you fulfilling the legal requirements for RE for all pupils? Are you giving sufficient time to allow pupils to make good progress in understanding and skills?
4. Review the **religions and beliefs** studied at each key stage (see p.13 for overview). Are you following the syllabus requirements? Are you meeting the needs of your children?
5. The syllabus is based around a **key question approach**, where the questions open up the content to be studied. The syllabus gives some example **key questions** to help you to deliver the statutory Programmes of Study. All of the questions are found on p.16-17, with EYFS on p.22, KS1 on p.33; KS2 p.47; KS3 p.71; these are followed by detailed outlines for each question. These are not statutory but are designed to support you in delivering high-quality RE that enables coherence and progression. The key question outlines give structured support in terms of 'emerging', 'expected' and 'exceeding' learning outcomes and suggested content, to enable good planning and progression.
6. **Audit the topics you already cover** in your existing long-term plan. There may well be overlap with your current RE, but schools will still need to go through and adjust (or, if necessary, re-write) Schemes of Work to ensure that RE **meets the principal aim, reflects the key question approach and secures progression in relation to the end of key stage outcomes**. To this end, use the planning steps.
7. The **planning process** is at the heart of the syllabus (p.34, 48, 72). The five steps are designed to help teachers to make best use of the key questions and plan excellent RE. As a staff/department, go through the planning process, following the steps and one example of a key question. Note that there is flexibility in terms of choosing outcomes and content, but that all steps need to be followed.
8. Take the opportunity of the new syllabus to audit your schemes of work to consider the **styles of teaching and learning** that pupils are encountering. Is RE engaging and encouraging enquiry? How is RE delivered? Does it link to other subjects? Is it taught in blocks or on a once-a-week model? What is best for learning in RE? (See Section E4 for more on this, p.110.)
9. Work to create a coherent **long-term plan** to begin in September 2019. The syllabus is flexible enough to allow RE to be taught in a variety of ways – RE days or weeks, linking with other subjects and discretely. Ensure RE is true to the principal aim and the Programmes of Study.
10. If you are a Special School or have significant numbers of SEND pupils, read Section C7 (p.89). There is freedom in the syllabus to adapt your RE to meet the needs of SEND pupils.
11. Share the positive adaptations and changes in RE with the governing body and other interested parties. This is an ideal chance to raise the profile of RE.
12. Use September 2019–July 2020 to implement the syllabus gradually. Adapt what works well and create a scheme of work that fits with your methods of curriculum delivery and delivers the principal aim of the syllabus. Use the year to train staff who teach RE, improve and review.

B. What do we need to do?

B1 Legal requirements: What does the legislation in England say?

RE is for all pupils:

- RE must be provided for all registered pupils in state-funded schools in England, including those in the sixth form, unless withdrawn by their parents (or withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 or over).⁴ It is a necessary part of a 'broad and balanced curriculum'.
- This requirement does not apply for children below compulsory school age (although there are many examples of good practice of RE in nursery classes).
- Special schools should ensure that every pupil receives RE 'as far as is practicable'.⁵

RE is locally determined, not nationally:

- A locally agreed syllabus is a statutory syllabus for RE recommended by an Agreed Syllabus Conference for adoption by a local authority.⁶
- Local authority maintained schools without a religious character must follow the locally agreed syllabus.
- Voluntary aided schools with a religious character should provide RE in accordance with the trust deed or religious designation of the school, unless parents request the locally agreed syllabus.
- Foundation schools and voluntary controlled schools with a religious character should follow the locally agreed syllabus, unless parents request RE in accordance with the trust deed or religious designation of the school.
- Religious Education is also compulsory in faith and non-faith academies and free schools, as set out in their funding agreements. Academies may use their locally agreed syllabus, or a different locally agreed syllabus (with permission of the SACRE concerned), or devise their own curriculum.

RE is multi-faith:

- The RE curriculum drawn up by a SACRE, or by an academy or free school, 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'.⁷

As education policy changes, the legal requirement for RE for all registered pupils remains unchanged. RE is an entitlement for all pupils, unless they have been withdrawn by their parents from some or all of the RE curriculum.

This agreed syllabus builds on the good practice from the 2004 *Non-statutory Framework for RE*, produced by the then Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, and also the core ideas in the RE Council's non-statutory *Framework* from 2013.⁸

Right of withdrawal

This was first granted when RE was actually religious *instruction* and carried with it connotations of induction into the Christian faith. RE is very different now – open, broad, exploring a range of religious and non-religious worldviews. However, in the UK, parents still have the right to withdraw their children from RE/RME on the grounds that they wish to provide their own religious education. (School Standards and Framework Act 1998 S71 (3)). This will be the parents' responsibility. However, it is good practice to talk to parents to ensure that they understand the aims and value of RE before honouring this right. Students aged 18 or over have the right to withdraw themselves from RE.

⁴ School Standards and Framework Act 1998, Schedule 19; Education Act 2002, section 80.

⁵ The Education (Special Educational Needs) (England) (Consolidation) (Amendment) Regulations 2006 Regulation 5A.

⁶ Education Act 1996 Schedule 31.

⁷ Education Act 1996 section 375.

⁸ A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England (REC 2013).

B1.1 RE, academies and free schools

Free schools are academies in law and have the same requirement to provide RE and collective worship. In this document, any reference to academies includes free schools.

As set out in their funding agreements, all academies are required to provide RE for all pupils, from Reception to Sixth Form, except those whose parents exercise their right to withdrawal.

An academy must adopt a syllabus for RE. There is no requirement for an academy to adopt a locally agreed syllabus, as long as its own RE syllabus meets the requirements for a locally agreed syllabus, set out in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph (5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The requirements are that a syllabus 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'.

RE is not subject to nationally prescribed purpose of study, aims, attainment targets, and assessment arrangements, but it is subject to inspection. Where schools are not using an agreed syllabus, standards will be judged in relation to the expectations set out in the RE Council's *Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England* (2013).

The Doncaster Agreed Syllabus 2017–2022 fulfils the legal requirements set out above, and has its roots in the REC's *Framework* (2013). It is written to support academies in meeting the requirements of their funding agreements. Academies are encouraged to adopt the syllabus, taking advantage of the resources and support that it offers.

B2 What religions are to be taught?

This agreed syllabus requires that all pupils learn from Christianity in each key stage. In addition, pupils will learn from the principal religions represented in the UK, in line with the law. These are Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Judaism. Furthermore, children from families where non-religious worldviews are held are represented in almost all of our classrooms. These worldviews, including for example Humanism, will also be the focus for study.

Religious traditions are to be studied in depth as follows:

Schools should consider the pupils they serve in deciding whether to go beyond the minimum entitlements to learning about religions, which are that pupils should learn from:	
4–5s Reception	Children will encounter Christianity and other faiths, as part of their growing sense of self, their own community and their place within it.
5–7s Key Stage 1	Christians and Muslims or Jewish people
7–11s Key Stage 2	Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Jewish people
11–14s Key Stage 3	Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists
14–16s Key Stage 4	Two religions required, usually including Christianity. This will be through a course in Religious Studies or Religious Education leading to a qualification approved under Section 96 ⁹
16–19s RE for all	Religions and worldviews to be selected by schools and colleges as appropriate.

Important notes:

This is the **minimum requirement**. Many schools may wish to go beyond the minimum.

- **The range of religious groups in the UK.** Groups such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Bahá’í faith or the Jains are not excluded from study in this scheme for RE. Schools are always advised to make space for the worldviews of the local community, which is why the table above expresses minimum requirements.
- Schools should consider the pupils they serve in deciding whether to go beyond the minimum entitlements to learning about religions and beliefs.
- Notice the language: Christians rather than Christianity; Hindus rather than Hinduism. This is to reflect the fact that RE starts with encounters with living faiths rather than the history and belief structures of traditions, and to recognise diversity within and between people of the same and different religions.
- **Non-religious worldviews:** Good practice in RE, as well as European and domestic legislation, has established the principle that RE in schools without a religious character should be inclusive of both religions and non-religious worldviews. Schools should ensure that the content and delivery of the RE curriculum are inclusive in this respect.
- This syllabus requires that, in addition to the religions required for study at each key stage, non-religious worldviews should also be explored in such a way as to ensure that pupils develop mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. This is enabled through the following key questions: L2.6, L2.9, U2.1, U2.5, U2.7, 3.1, 3.4, 3.9, 3.10 and 3.12.
- However, learning from four religions across a key stage is demanding: the syllabus does not recommend tackling six religions in a key stage. Depth is more important than overstretched breadth. Schools are encouraged to teach less but teach it better.
- The key questions offered here allow schools to draw in different traditions, where they fit the theme and question, and where there are representatives of those traditions in the school and local community.

⁹ Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. This requires maintained schools to provide only qualifications approved by the Secretary of State. http://www.dfes.gov.uk/section96/uploads/download_records_full.xls

B3 Time for RE

Schools have a statutory responsibility to deliver Religious Education to all pupils, except those withdrawn by parents (see p.11).

Schools must ensure that sufficient time is given in order to enable pupils to meet the expectations set out in this agreed syllabus, ensuring that the curriculum is coherent and shows progression, particularly across transitions between key stages.

There is no single correct way of making appropriate provision for RE as long as the outcomes are met.

In order to deliver the aims and expected standards of the syllabus effectively, the expectation is that there is a **minimum allocation of 5 per cent of curriculum time for RE**. This is set out in the table below, and based on the most recent national guidance.

4–5s	36 hours of RE , e.g. 50 minutes a week or some short sessions implemented through continuous provision
5–7s:	36 hours of tuition per year (e.g. an hour a week, or less than an hour a week plus a series of RE days)
7–11s:	45 hours of tuition per year (e.g. an hour a week, or a series of RE days or weeks amounting to 45+ hours of RE)
11–14s:	45 hours of tuition per year (e.g. an hour a week))
14–16s:	5% of curriculum time, or 70 hours of tuition across the key stage (e.g. an hour a week for 5 terms, or 50 minutes per week, supplemented with off-timetable RE days)
16–19s:	Allocation of time for RE for all should be clearly identifiable.

Important notes:

- **RE is legally required for all pupils.** RE is a core subject of the curriculum for all pupils. RE is an entitlement for all pupils through their secondary schooling. For schools offering GCSE short or full course RE in Y9 and Y10, there is still a requirement that there is identifiable RE in Y11.
- **RE is different from assembly.** Curriculum time for RE is distinct from the time spent on collective worship or school assembly, even though making links between the collective worship and the purposes and themes of RE would be good practice. The times given above are for Religious Education.
- **Flexible delivery of RE is often good practice:** an RE themed day, or week of study can complement – but not usually replace – the regular programme of timetabled lessons.
- **RE should be taught in clearly identifiable time.** There is a common frontier between RE and such subjects as literacy, citizenship or PSHE. However, the times given above are explicitly for the clearly identifiable teaching of Religious Education. Where creative curriculum planning is used, schools must ensure that RE objectives are clear. In EYFS, teachers should be able to indicate the opportunities they are providing to integrate RE into children’s learning.
- **Coherence and progression.** Whilst schools are expected to make their own decisions about how to divide up curriculum time, schools must ensure that sufficient time is given to RE so that pupils can meet the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus and this handbook to provide coherence and progression in RE learning. Any schools in which head teachers and governors do not plan to allocate sufficient curriculum time for RE is unlikely to be able to enable pupils to achieve appropriate standards in their RE.