

Religious Education

Introduction:

Religious Education (RE) is not just an academic subject, but, lies at the very heart of the curriculum and has an important role in reflecting and conveying the distinctively Christian character of the school.

There is a clear expectation that as inclusive communities, church schools encourage learning about and from other religions and world views fostering respect for them. Although there is not a National Curriculum for RE, all maintained schools have a statutory duty to teach it.

(The Education Act 2002, section 80)

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be provided for all registered pupils in state-funded schools in England, including those in the sixth form, unless withdrawn by their parents (or withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 or over). **(1)** 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'. **(2)**

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. **(3)** 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. 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.

Academies with a religious designation provide Religious Education in accordance with the tenets of their faith and academies that do not have a religious designation must arrange for Religious Education to be given to all pupils in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses. In other words, a curriculum which reflects 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.

For foundation or voluntary controlled schools with a religious designation that convert to academies, the intention is that they will arrange for Religious Education in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses, as set out above, unless any parents request that their children receive religious education in accordance with any provisions of the school's trust deed or in accordance with the tenets of the school's faith. If any parents do request this, the academy must make arrangements for those children to receive such religious education unless, because of special circumstances, it would be unreasonable to do so. The Funding Agreement sets this out.

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.'**(4)**

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.

Our Diocesan 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. **(5)**

- 1. School Standards and Framework Act 1998, Schedule 19; Education Act 2002, section 80.**
- 2. The Education (Special Educational Needs) (England) (Consolidation) (Amendment) Regulations 2006 Regulation 5A.**
- 3. Education Act 1996 Schedule 31.**
- 4. Education Act 1996 section 375.**
- 5. [A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England \(REC 2013\).](#)**

One of our core purposes as a Diocese, is to ensure we support our church schools to deliver high quality teaching and learning in Religious Education (RE). We do this in a number of ways, one being to provide all our schools with the option of adopting our diocesan syllabus.

We want our children and young people to receive a religious education curriculum that is rich and varied, enabling all learners to acquire a thorough knowledge and understanding of Christianity as well as all other world faiths and world views. We want to ensure that the RE our children and young people receive, provides opportunity for learners to understand and make links between the beliefs, practices and value systems of the range of faiths and world views studied.

There is no doubt that RE must have a very high profile within the church school curriculum and learning activities should provide fully for the needs of all learners. Learners should be inspired by the subject and develop a wide range of higher level skills such as enquiry, analysis, interpretation, evaluation and reflection to deepen their understanding of the impact of religion on the world. Attainment should be high and progress significant in developing an understanding of Christianity and a broad range of religions and world views. RE should reflect the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE.

We strongly would encourage RE subject leaders to be members of the leadership team and have a developing expertise in the subject. As a Diocese we pride ourselves on offering our subject leaders and Headteachers high quality training and support via regular RE network meetings and through our core service.

Please download and familiarise yourself with the Religious Education in Church of England Schools - [A Statement of Entitlement](#)

Purpose of study:

The core purpose in teaching RE is to enable all children and young people to be religiously literate.

There is no doubt that, 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 (1) 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 (2) 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.

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, eg 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. 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.

(National Curriculum Framework 2013)

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, as a Diocese, we would strongly advise Headteachers, as a form of good practice, to talk to their link Primary Adviser and to talk to parents/carers 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.

Questions to consider:

Managing the right of withdrawal:

The following points can be shared with the Headteacher and governors, who have responsibility for ensuring that provision is made for RE (and collective worship) and that parents have information about the right of withdrawal.

- Is the school careful to ensure that RE is of educational value to all pupils, whatever their belief background, thus reducing the likelihood of parental / carer requests for withdrawal?
- Does the school ensure that the nature, objectives and content of RE are shared with parents?
- Are parents or carers notified about plans for RE as part of the curriculum for the coming session for their child's class?
- Does the school have a procedure in place for parents or carers who want to withdraw children from RE?
- Does the organisation of the curriculum allow parents to exercise the right of withdrawal?
- What practical implications arise from a request by parents to withdraw a child from RE and how might they be addressed?
- Are all those who teach RE aware of the school's policy and procedures?

For further guidance:

<http://www.reonline.org.uk/leading/policy/national-guidance/#>

Guidance on Managing the Right of Withdrawal from Religious Education.

It cost £8.99 from WASACRE www.wasacre.org.uk/publications.html