



Religious education

A statutory subject supported by a non-statutory programme of learning

(This is an extract from the National Curriculum 2009)

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Curriculum aims

This area of learning contributes to the curriculum aims for all young people to become:

- successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

Why this area of learning is important²

Religious education provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human. It develops children's knowledge and understanding of the nature of religion and belief³ including Christianity, principal religions, other religious traditions and world views, in the context of a diverse society.

RE offers opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development. It enables children to flourish individually, within their communities and as citizens in a diverse society and global community. RE has an important role in preparing children for adult life, employment and lifelong learning. It enables them to develop respect for and sensitivity to others, and enables children to challenge prejudice. In these ways it contributes to children's wellbeing and promotes ways in which communities can live and work together.

1. Essential knowledge

Children should build secure knowledge of the following⁴:

- a. beliefs, teachings and sources
- b. practices and ways of life
- c. forms of expressing meaning⁵
- d. identity, diversity and belonging
- e. meaning, purpose and truth
- f. values and commitments.

ns Denotes non-statutory information.

The explanatory text is a non-statutory part of the programme of learning.

1. Religious education is a statutory subject in the curriculum of all maintained schools. RE must be taught according to the locally agreed syllabuses (for community schools, voluntary schools and foundation schools without a religious character). Voluntary controlled and foundation schools with a religious character should teach the locally agreed syllabus unless parents request that RE is taught in accordance with the trust deeds and faith of the school. Voluntary aided schools with a religious character should teach RE in accordance with the trust deeds and faith of the school. Academies and Trust schools should provide RE in accordance with their funding agreement or trust deeds

This illustrative programme of learning is offered to support those who design statutory syllabuses, in order to promote consistency and quality in RE, in the context of a coherent curriculum

2. This statement is consistent with the secondary RE programmes of study
3. Religion and belief: this includes systems of thought that are religious and non-religious, theistic and non-theistic, in the context of a broad and balanced curriculum
4. Understanding these concepts is the basis of effective learning in RE
5. People can express a sense of meaning through their big questions about life (e.g. 'where do I come from?'), through their commitment to standards of behaviour (e.g. 'do not steal') and through their beliefs and practices (e.g. the practice of prayer, meditation, religious dancing or singing)

2. Key skills⁶

These are the skills that children need to learn to make progress:

- a. Identify questions and define enquiries, using a range of methods, media and sources
- b. Carry out and develop enquiries by gathering, comparing, interpreting and analysing a range of information, ideas and viewpoints
- c. Present findings, suggest interpretations, express ideas and feelings and develop arguments
- d. Use empathy, critical thought and reflection to evaluate their learning and how it might apply to their own and others' lives.

3. Cross-curricular studies⁷

This area of learning should provide opportunities for:

- a. children to develop and apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills
- b. personal, emotional, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- c. enhancing children's understanding of religions and beliefs through making links to other areas of learning and to wider issues of interest and importance.

4. Breadth of learning

Children should be enabled to develop their understanding of the essential knowledge and key skills by drawing on an appropriate balance of religion and belief in the context of the religious and non-religious traditions that form the background and experience of pupils. The religions drawn on should include Christianity in each of the early, middle and later phases⁸. At least two other principal religions should be included during primary education as a whole⁹. To ensure that all children's background and experiences are taken into account, it is recommended that there are also opportunities to study other religious traditions such as the Baha'i faith, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism, and secular world views, such as humanism, where appropriate¹⁰. A religious community with a significant local presence¹¹ could also form a context for learning. Understanding of key ideas can also be promoted through themed studies, experiences of dialogue between and within beliefs, and visits to or encounters with people of a variety of religions and beliefs. Children should learn to use appropriate specialist vocabulary.

ns Learning in this area should include an appropriate balance of focused subject teaching and well-planned opportunities to use, apply and develop knowledge and skills across the whole curriculum.

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6. Key skills run through all areas of learning and are derived from the personal development framework 'Essentials for Learning and Life'
7. Further guidance and case studies to provide teachers with help to plan for cross-curricular studies are available on the National Curriculum website (www.qcda.gov.uk/curriculum) from early 2010
8. Where possible, this should include Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Free Church (e.g. Methodist or Baptist) and Pentecostal branches of Christianity across the whole primary phase

9. This should include at least one from Judaism and Islam, and at least one from Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism, across the whole primary phase
10. Over the primary phase children should learn about and learn from both religious and non-religious world views, in the context of a broad and balanced curriculum
11. This could include, for example, traditional religions such as those from African countries or China

5. Curriculum progression

The overall breadth of learning should be used when planning curriculum progression. Children should be taught:

EARLY ¹²	MIDDLE	LATER
<p>E1. to explore a range of religious and moral stories and sacred writings, and talk about their meanings</p> <p>E2. to name and explore a range of celebrations, worship and rituals in religions or beliefs, recognising the difference they make to individuals, families and local community¹³</p> <p>E3. to identify and suggest meanings for religious symbols, using a range of religious and moral words and exploring how they express meaning¹⁴</p> <p>E4. to recognise the importance for some people of belonging to a religion or holding special beliefs, in diverse ways, exploring the difference this makes to their lives</p>	<p>M1. to explore and discuss some religious and moral stories, sacred writings and sources, placing them in the context of the belief system¹⁵</p> <p>M2. to investigate and suggest meanings for celebrations, worship and rituals, thinking about similarities and differences¹⁶</p>	<p>L1. to describe and discuss some key aspects of the nature of religion and belief¹⁷</p> <p>L2. to investigate the significance and impact of religion and belief in some local, national and global communities¹⁸</p> <p>L3. to consider the meaning of a range of forms of religious expression¹⁹, identifying why they are important in religious practice and noting links between them</p>

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12. Each area of learning should build on children's experiences and development in the early years foundation stage to ensure continuity of curriculum provision and their continuing progress

Early

13. Celebrations refer to annual festivals such as Christmas, Easter, Pesach, Id-ul-Fitr or Diwali. Worship usually refers to daily or weekly ceremonies at home or in a sacred building. Rituals can be rites of passage, e.g. those marking birth or growing up; rituals can also be used in the context of worship, e.g. wudu at the start of daily prayers in Islam. Similarities and differences and the impact on daily life can be noted, e.g. believing in compassion may lead people to help others

14. The expression of a sense of meaning could be explored and responded to through the arts, e.g. in appreciation of religious art or music, or thinking about the position of hands/posture in prayer or meditation

Middle

15. Stories and their meanings should be understood as part of the sources of a belief system

16. Thinking about similarities and differences could mean wondering about differences between birth and naming rituals across religions, or about similarities between religious services with different names, such as Mass, Eucharist, Communion and the Lord's Supper. This should include investigation of the importance of these practices and ways of life to believers

Later

17. Children could describe and discuss the key aspects, including the questions that beliefs ask and answer, their key teachings and sources of authority, and the people, stories and traditions that influence the beliefs and values of followers

18. This could include, for example, how giving to charity might be based on a deep sense of the unity of humankind, or on a commitment to follow a divine commandment

19. Forms of expressing meaning could include, for example, Indian dance, Buddhist meditation, Arab calligraphy or Sikh sewa (service)

5. Curriculum progression

The overall breadth of learning should be used when planning curriculum progression. Children should be taught:

EARLY	MIDDLE	LATER
<p>E5. to communicate their ideas about what matters most, and what puzzles them most, in relation to spiritual feelings and concepts²⁰</p> <p>E6. to reflect on how spiritual qualities and moral values relate to their own behaviour²¹</p>	<p>M3. to describe and interpret how symbols and actions are used to express beliefs²²</p> <p>M4. to recognise that people can have different identities, beliefs and practices, and different ways of belonging, expressing their interpretations, ideas and feelings</p> <p>M5. to reflect on questions of meaning and purpose in life, expressing questions and opinions²³</p> <p>M6. to investigate questions of right and wrong in life, expressing questions and opinions²⁴</p>	<p>L4. to reflect on the challenges of belonging and commitment both in their own lives and within traditions, recognising how commitment to a religion or personal belief is shown in a variety of ways</p> <p>L5. to describe and begin to develop arguments about religious and other responses to ultimate and ethical questions²⁵</p> <p>L6. to reflect on ideas of right and wrong and apply their own and others' responses to them</p>

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Early

20. This could include naming and thinking about experiences such as love, wonder, thankfulness, joy and sadness, or questions such as why we care for people or for things. Such experiences should be linked to related stories, rituals or symbols in a religion or belief
21. This could include thinking about spiritual qualities such as reverence or openness, and moral qualities such as forgiveness of people who hurt us. Such qualities should be linked to related stories, rituals or symbols in a religion or belief

Middle

22. Beliefs and ideas can be expressed in many different forms, including art, music, dress, dance, food, artefacts, behaviour codes and social action
23. Questions of meaning and purpose could include wondering about where life comes from, what people hold to be most precious or significant in life, or what happens when people or animals die, and learning about and from beliefs and practices related to these questions

24. Questions of right and wrong should include thinking about the practices and values arising from religious and non-religious traditions

Later

25. Beginning to understand responses to ultimate questions could include discussing and sharing beliefs on issues such as the meaning and value of human life, the existence of God, the causes of suffering or whether there is life after death. There are many such questions that are answered differently by most religious and philosophical traditions. Understanding responses to such questions means recognising that they have no certain answers agreed by all. Children should be encouraged to ask and think about their own and each other's questions, their sources of inspiration and views about truth, as well as exploring the responses of individuals and communities and applying them to their own lives