



*The Sower*  
Van Gogh, 1888

## Sowing the seeds of the future

An exploration of human  
beliefs and values





In March of this year, the All Party Parliamentary Group on RE published a report following a five month inquiry into the contribution of RE to good community relations. In a statement to the press, Stephen Lloyd, chair of the group, said “Schools and colleges are a safe and trusted place to explore religions, conflict and world views in a constructive and positive way... This prepares children for the challenges and opportunities of multi-cultural life, and helps them live harmoniously with others.”<sup>1</sup>

Ealing SACRE has for many years championed an inclusive attitude to the study of religion. This new syllabus, which Ealing schools will be required to follow from September 2014, continues in that tradition by adopting an approach that looks at the diversity of beliefs—religious and non-religious alike—as differing responses to the challenges of life affecting all of us.

“Sowing the seeds of the future: an exploration of human beliefs and values” has been well-received by school consultative groups and RE heads and coordinators. I would like to thank the members of Ealing SACRE who contributed to its production, and I commend it to our schools, with the hope that teachers and students alike will continue to find the subject both challenging and inspiring.

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Executive director for children and adults

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<sup>1</sup> BBC news website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-26617395>



*Nourish beginnings, let us nourish beginnings.  
Not all things are blest, but the seeds of all things  
are blest. The blessing is in the seed.*

*Muriel Rukeyser, American poet*

*(Plant fossil, 93 million years old)*



3	Forward
5	Contents
7	Introduction
13	Programmes of study
29	Religious education and SEN
35	Assessment
47	Annex 1: Legal requirements
48	Annex 2: Right of withdrawal from RE
50	Membership of Agreed Syllabus Conference
50	Acknowledgements
50	Photo credits





## Introduction

*A good question is never answered. It is not a bolt to be tightened into place but a seed to be planted and to bear more seed toward the hope of greening the landscape of idea.*

John Ciardi, American poet

If any area of the school curriculum illustrates how new ideas will seed change it is religious education. Not only has the pedagogical approach itself evolved over the years—from confessional instruction to a more inclusive look at the phenomena of religion and belief, but in addition each of our traditions has had to respond and adapt as global movements of people bring new perspectives to familiar ways of thinking.

This on-going confluence of ideas is the reason that the study of human beliefs and values remains so important. Children are not just growing up in an increasingly diverse society; they also have unprecedented access to a wide—and occasionally wild—variety of beliefs via the Internet. Exposure to the traditions of others can facilitate understanding; however it is also vital that pupils develop critical thinking skills so that they can learn to distinguish between ideas that would help them to flourish and those that will eventually limit their options in life.

*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*

Nelson Mandela

In a free society such as ours debate can be incredibly creative. From the moment they enter school, pupils in Ealing have the opportunity to forge friendships with children from a wide variety of backgrounds. One of the positive consequences of this is that they learn that genuine fellowship does not necessitate that everyone think the same. In fact, quite the opposite: engaging with someone who disagrees with you can go a long way towards helping you formulate and understand your own point of view.

Celebrating cultural difference fits in well with the modern approach to religious education, which allows for diversity of belief at the same time as it promotes community cohesion. In addition, mainstream schools are welcoming increased numbers of pupils with special educational needs (SEN). And for the significant number of children in Ealing with English as a second language, RE lessons provide opportunities to talk about and share something with which they are already familiar, and in doing so, to grow in self-confidence.

*Nothing is permanent except change.*  
Heraclitus (c 535-475 BCE)

In the past several years religious education as a discrete area of the curriculum has come increasingly under threat to the point that it is often marginalized; this is in spite of the fact that legally schools are still required to give it equal standing in relation to core and foundation subjects. It is also the main area of the curriculum where students have access to accounts of moral and spiritual development, an important consideration when it comes to a school fulfilling their duty to promote SMSC.<sup>2</sup> The best way to ensure the survival of the subject is to make it forward-looking and challenging, and providing compelling learning experiences for all pupils—regardless of their religion or philosophy—will keep them engaged.

Ealing's teachers and RE co-ordinators will be relieved to discover that, although this can be considered a significant revision of the syllabus, much of the content remains the same. So, what are the main innovations?

- 1) A more structured programme of study to ensure that pupils arrive at key stage 3 having covered more or less the same content.
- 2) Themes that unify and root the material in common human experience.
- 3) The incorporation in the schemes of work of learning and thinking skills, the community of inquiry approach, and activities geared for both gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs.
- 4) Learning objectives and an example assessment task with differentiated outcomes for each unit.

#### *A more structured programme of study*

In Ealing's previous syllabus, the content to be covered, outlined in the programme of study section, was to be delivered via a certain number of core and optional units. However in order to ensure that pupils arrive at key stage three having covered generally the same material there will now be a fixed set of units, with the unifying themes providing overall structure.

The requisite units will be those for which schemes of work have already appeared on the Ealing Grid for Learning. Although teaching each of these units will be required, it will be up to individual teachers to decide which of the activities in each scheme to cover in order that their pupils have a sound understanding of the objectives. That is, it is more important to ensure that pupils have a good grasp of one or two key concepts for each topic than to attempt to cover the breadth of material available—in any case an impossible task. In addition RE co-ordinators will still have flexibility in setting out their whole-school timetable. For example, a school with a large percentage of pupils from Muslim backgrounds might choose to teach

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<sup>2</sup> Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development; how well a school promotes SMSC remains a key inspection focus for Ofsted.



the unit on Islam early in key stage 2, to give their pupils a chance to share their knowledge and develop their literacy and communication skills.

The revised programme of study also includes some interesting new material. Two of the topics—*Seeds of Unity* and *History of Belief in the UK*—are to be taught across key stages 2 and 3.

*Seeds of unity (1 and 2)*: These resources were initially created for Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI). The *Seeds of Unity* resources<sup>3</sup> contain activities focussing on the relationship between plants and belief and the ethics of environmental stewardship.

*History of belief in the UK (1 and 2)*: One of the aims of this material is to put the recent appearance amongst Britain’s churches and synagogues of mosques, mandirs and gurdwaras into the context of a long history of immigration, and to consider the influence each new group has on the landscape of ideas. Part 1 will look at how historians and archaeologists draw conclusions about the beliefs of early cultures from a variety of sources (e.g. archaeological evidence, textual references, remnants of ancient rituals in contemporary practices). In part 2 such topics as Celtic influences on early Christianity, the birth of the Church of England, the persecution and expulsion of the Jews during the Crusades and their subsequent return, the confrontation between religion and science following publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, and the arrival of other religions in further periods of immigration will be considered.

Rather than contributing to the deepening of the chasm between those who define themselves as ‘religious’ compared to those who do not, we intend to continue to seek—and nurture—common ground. Thus we have created a new key stage 3 unit in the ‘sources of inspiration’ thread that *compares religious and metaphoric thinking to scientific thinking*. The purpose of this unit, entitled “Mixed Metaphors”, is to initiate discussion and formulate questions: for instance, how can a person be both religious and a scientist? And, how can different beliefs creatively co-exist?

All of the above units can be studied in conjunction with other areas of the curriculum. The *Seeds of unity* material is relevant to biology, PSHE and citizenship, and the *History of belief* units will obviously find useful links to the history curriculum. Although perhaps not immediately obvious, the key stage 3 unit on different modes of thinking will help pupils understand how the approach required for analysing scientific data differs to that we employ when engaging with a religious text or when writing poetry.

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<sup>3</sup> This project was funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. To see how classroom activities can be enriched by visits to local botanic gardens such as Kew visit the BGCI web site: <http://www.bgci.org/education/2542>

*When the words come, they are merely empty shells without the music.  
They live as they are sung, for the words are the body and the music the spirit.*  
Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

By linking content in thematic threads we are hoping to show how the traditions being studied are responses by people across the globe to *common human experiences and predicaments*. It is impossible to understand the nature of religion without acknowledging that it is built round these experiences—the ‘music’ so to speak. It is also important to acknowledge that these experiences can be appreciated and interpreted in non-religious ways. Highlighting the perennial questions themselves is ultimately geared towards encouraging pupils to formulate their own questions and solutions.

The following shows how the required units fit into eight thematic threads:

Units				
Themes	Foundation	Key stage 1	Key stage 2	Key stage 3
Stories that guide	Learning from stories (1 and 2)	Learning from stories (3)		Founders of religion
Answering life questions			Christianity Judaism Islam Hinduism Sikhism Beliefs re: death 1	Buddhism Humanism The Baha’i Faith Creation stories Why do we suffer Beliefs re: death 2
Belief and identity	Who am I?	Special days	Initiation practices Signs and symbols	What belief means to me
Acting ethically			How belief affects living: moral dilemmas Rules for living	Moral dilemmas 1 Moral dilemmas 2
Humankind and the environment		Our world: caring for new life	Seeds of unity 1(new)	Seeds of unity 2 (new)
Human experience and belief		Special food	History of belief in UK 1 (new)	History of belief in UK 2 (new)
Sources of inspiration	Precious things	Special places	Festivals of light Journeys: pilgrimage Special leaders Religious buildings	Modern day leaders Mixed metaphors (new)
Human experience and spiritual expression		The importance of water	Prayer, meditation, and cultivating the inner life Religion in art	Religion in sound and music

*Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous.*  
Confucius (c 551-479 BCE)

It is important for pupils to understand how well they are learning and how they can improve, and for that reason it is a legal requirement that parents and carers are informed on an annual basis as to their child's progress in any given subject. To facilitate this process there will be an example assessment task provided in each scheme of work, although it is not expected that a formal assessment will be performed for each unit taught.

Most schools already have established procedures for assessing pupil progress. A good principle to adopt with assessment and marking is to guide pupils with respect to what they have done well, what they need to do to improve and ways in which they might make that improvement. Rather than prescribing one specific way of measuring attainment in religious education, the assessment section will contain a selection of tools to facilitate this process. These include guidance on how to create an assessment activity for a specific unit and two tools specifically designed to help teachers determine levels of understanding, the 'can-do' statements and the RE APP (assessing pupils' progress) guidelines.

*[Imagine] a niche and within it a lamp: the lamp enclosed in glass: the glass as it were a brilliant star: lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it: Light upon Light!*  
The parable of the light, Qur'an 24:35

Whether an individual believes in a god or not, whether they consider themselves a person with a soul, there is a part of all of us—the core of our being, our essence—that needs to be both nurtured and protected. And while it is proper in modern religious education that we teach children to take a step back when learning about the phenomena of religion, it is also right that we keep the door open to awe, that we encourage them to honour their own unique mystery.

Formulating the good question is at the heart of this: sometimes, for some children, this will be as straightforward as giving them the confidence to complain about hunger or to ask without shame for something to be explained in a way that they can understand. To live a balanced, creative life we all need to develop intellectual, emotional and practical intelligence. In other words, at the same time as we need to develop critical enquiry and build the capacity for awe and inward reflection we also need to foster common sense, to get children to consider whether a particular idea, belief or course of action is creative *for them*: this is of course one of the most difficult of life lessons.

*But, after all, who knows, and who can say  
whence it all came, and how creation happened?  
Rig Veda X, 129.*

In a debate<sup>4</sup> on the changes in the religious landscape of Britain, Professor Linda Woodhead of Lancaster University said: “we’ve got to stop talking as if religions are packages of unchanging conservative dogmas, rituals and values. They are for a few people—but not for most. The majority are a bit religious and interested in exploring things for themselves. They want religion to give meaning to their lives—they don’t want to give their lives to a religious system.”<sup>5</sup>

This leaves us with the challenge of contemporary religious education: opening eyes to the rich history of human responses to the perennial life challenges, at the same time as helping pupils develop the skills to work out their own answers. Or as the noted Italian educator Maria Montessori said:

The secret of good teaching is to regard the child’s intelligence as a fertile field, in which seeds may be sown to grow under the heat of flaming imagination. ... We do not want complacent pupils, but eager ones: we seek to sow life in the child rather than theories, to help the child grow mentally, socially, emotionally and physically.<sup>6</sup>

In this syllabus we would of course want to add ‘to help the child grow spiritually’, but using the word in a way that embraces all, whether religious or non-religious.

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<sup>4</sup> “Trends in Religion and Values”, Westminster Faith Debate, 2 May 2012.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/News/Latest/Pages/Britishreligionhaschanged.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> From *To Educate the Human Potential*, Maria Montessori, 1948.



## Programmes of study

*A child can ask questions that a wise man cannot answer.*

Anonymous

Schools are expected to spend about 5% of curriculum time on teaching RE. The bulk of this should be devoted to the required units, leaving individual schools to decide what to cover in the remaining time allotted to the subject. It is also important that aspects of Christianity are taught across all key stages. Schemes of work have been posted on the Ealing Grid for Learning.<sup>7</sup> These exemplars are meant to be a source of ideas and inspiration, and it is expected that many teachers will have developed their own activities to cover the relevant material.

### Early years

“Awe” and “wonder” feature daily in a young child’s life as they experience, see and admire the goings on around them. Time needs to be devoted to encourage them to reflect on what it means to be a human being, and to help them acquire vocabulary that will enable them to express themselves in relation to their awareness of self, others and the world around them. For children brought up within a particular tradition, conceptualisation is likely to be rooted in that world view; others will need to develop language to express delight, wonder and emerging concepts related to their emotional, intra- and interpersonal development.

Religious education is a statutory requirement for children in reception classes,<sup>8</sup> and although not required, it is recommended that it should also be a recognisable element in the planning for nursery classes. Children begin to formulate their own basic sets of beliefs, values and attitudes at an early age, and for this reason it is important that they are exposed to accurate information delivered at an appropriate level in order for them to make informed, coherent choices and to develop their thinking.

Seven areas of learning and development shape educational programmes in early years’ settings; of these “communication and language”, “personal, social and emotional development”, “physical (i.e. health and hygiene as relevant to religious practices)”, “expressive arts and design” and “understanding the world” are most relevant to religious education. Each child’s level of development must be assessed against the early learning goals, and practitioners are required to indicate whether children are meeting or exceeding—or if they have not yet reached (‘emerging’)—expected levels.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.egfl.org.uk/religion> These schemes will be updated over time.

<sup>8</sup> RE is statutory for pupils and students aged 5-19, but not for children of nursery age or for students in sixth form colleges.

*If you don't know the trees you may be lost in the forest,  
but if you don't know the stories you may be lost in life.*  
Siberian elder

Foundation stage	
Themes	Pupils should have the opportunity to:
Stories that guide	listen to a variety of stories from different traditions, so that they become familiar as stories ( e.g. The Monkey King [Buddhist], the Christmas story [Christian], the story of Rama and Sita [Hindu], Noah and the Ark [Christian, Jewish and Muslim], Muhammad and the crying camel [Muslim], Aesop's Fables [simple, practical morality, deeply rooted in human experience and common sense]).
Answering life questions	undertake practical activities which enable them to develop their growing understanding of the conventions of language and graphic representation, using a variety of cross-curricular approaches, e.g. making finger-puppets, rangoli patterns, making models or painting to illustrate a story, singing, writing about a special event, talking with adults about their rituals and beliefs.
Identity, diversity and belonging	develop a growing sense of self in relation to others, including a celebration of diversity and important values such as sharing, loyalty and negotiation; share religious and culturally significant events (e.g., harvest, end of year performances, birthdays, arrivals and departures, and festivals such Vaisakhi, Christmas, Diwali, Easter, Eid-ul-Fitr, Sukkoth, Remembrance Sunday).
Acting ethically	participate in conversation and play –including role play, some of which will encourage pupils to raise questions about meaning, purpose and value; begin to be aware of ethical issues (e.g. parties for dolls and soft toys, discussions about rules and routines, responses to spontaneous comments).
Humankind and the environment	be introduced to the idea of protecting our planet; be introduced to the idea of diversity, specifically that it is very important to have many different types of plants and animals.
Human experience and belief	examine and explore a variety of artefacts of religious and secular significance (e.g. Jewish seder plate, Christian nativity figures, Muslim prayer mat, the five signs of belonging in the Sikh tradition).
Sources of inspiration	build a shared vocabulary and understanding of events and experiences that evoke awe and wonder (e.g. the birth of a baby, natural beauty, special moments).
Human experience and spiritual expression	Use special terms, including religious ones, when it is helpful and appropriate to do so (e.g. belief, community, Bible, God, Christian, gurdwara, temple, Muslim).

<b>Enquiry and thinking skills appropriate for RE at the foundation stage:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Beginning to explore abstract concepts such as celebration, specialness, belonging and community</li> <li>▪ Appreciating communal experiences (e.g. a classmate's birthday)</li> <li>▪ Learning to express personal feelings about a story or experience</li> <li>▪ Learning to listen (to the teacher and other classmates)</li> <li>▪ Beginning to explore/associate certain artefacts/stories/pictures/people with specific traditions</li> <li>▪ Learning to treat others with respect when their beliefs/traditions are different to one's own</li> <li>▪ Beginning to develop the capacity for reflection</li> <li>▪ Developing the confidence to ask questions</li> </ul>
<b>Foundation stage schemes of work</b>
The following units will provide opportunities to work on the above skills and to cover some of the topics and themes that should be considered.
F1: Learning from stories (1): stories from the Bible
F2: Learning from stories (2): stories from other traditions
F3: Who am I?
F4: Precious things

*Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.*

Desmond Tutu (1931- )

Key stage 1	
Themes	Pupils should have the opportunity to:
Stories that guide	hear stories of the lives of Jesus and other key figures within religions; share their response to stories such as the story of Chanukah, Ganesha, the Sikh story "The Milk and the Jasmine Flower and Ibrahim's story from the Qu'ran.
Answering life questions	explore festivals and rituals related to the need to give thanks, to celebrate new life and to cope with experiences of loss and death.
Identity, diversity and belonging	learn about infant baptism and other ceremonies where babies are named, dedicated or introduced to their community (e.g. naming ceremonies in Hinduism and Sikhism); share their own experiences of family and community occasions (e.g. weddings).
Acting ethically	hear stories and teachings which encourage them to have concern for people and other forms of sentient life; respond to stories from the Christian and other traditions that help people to make moral decisions (e.g. the story of the Good Samaritan).
Humankind and the environment	study the importance of water to all living things and begin to understand how various traditions use water symbolically in rituals (e.g. Christian baptism, Muslim wudu, and immersion in the Ganges river during such Hindu pilgrimages as Kumbh Mela).
Human experience and belief	learn stories connected with various festivals which explore how and why they are observed; understand how believers participate in appropriate activities associated with these festivals (e.g. special songs, special ceremonies); explore the reasons why believers participate in these observances.
Sources of inspiration	become aware of books which have a special significance to different groups of people (e.g. the Bible and other texts regarded as sacred by believers); think about and share stories, places, people and experiences that inspire them.
Human experience and spiritual expression	learn about and visit places of prayer or worship to become aware of their distinctive features; learn of some of the different ways in which people express their spirituality in their homes, communities and places of work; begin to appreciate that 'worship' means different things within different traditions.



**Enquiry and thinking skills appropriate for RE at key stage 1:**

- Enquire into and engage with concepts that are important in their own experience and in religious and humanistic traditions (e.g. belonging, remembering, symbols, God, worship).
- Learning to contextualise concepts within certain traditions (e.g. how and what Jews remember at Passover, or what rite of passage rituals—such as marriage or funerals—mean to Humanists).
- Learning to identify and recognise the importance of certain responses for the tradition concerned (e.g. various ways humans demonstrate respect or awe with regards to special places).
- Being able to comment on and express their own thoughts about a certain religious practice.
- Begin to express their thoughts about the meaning of a particular story.
- When discussing a certain concept (e.g. the use of particular foods in certain celebrations), being able to comment about how they might express such a concept themselves.

**Key stage one schemes of work**

The following units will provide opportunities to work on the above skills and to cover some of the topics and themes that should be considered.

KS1.1: Special days

KS1.2: Special places

KS1.3: Learning from stories (3)

KS1.4: Special food

KS1.5: The importance of water

KS1.6: Our world: caring for new life

*We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry...*  
 Maya Angelou (1928- )

<b>Key stage two</b>	
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Pupils should have the opportunity to:</b>
Stories that guide	use stories from the Bible and other appropriate texts to learn about important events in the life of Jesus and key figures from other traditions; to consider what guidance they have drawn upon during key events in their own life.
Answering life questions	listen to and discuss a variety of Christian and other views concerning God / ultimate spiritual reality; think about ways in which a belief in God or an ultimate spiritual reality affects a person's everyday life (e.g. daily prayer, reading from the scriptures, dress); begin to explore the various beliefs about what happens at death.
Identity, diversity and belonging	learn about various rites of passage that enable the participant to feel part of a community (e.g. first communion, bar and bat mitzvah and the Sikh Amrit Sanskar ceremony); hear about rituals related to marriage; discuss and explore rites of passage surrounding death (e.g. Remembrance Day observances); begin to understand the difference between religion and culture and how intolerance can lead to conflict.
Acting ethically	listen to and talk with peers and/or adults from within Christianity and other religious and non-religious traditions so that they may become aware of the rules, customs and behaviours which typify members of that community; begin to explore codes of conduct (e.g. Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule); consider the basis of their own moral thinking and the beliefs which underpin it.
Humankind and the environment	look at a variety of ways that human dependence on plants is reflected in belief and ritual; begin to explore the concept of 'stewardship', and the importance of an ethical approach in light of modern concerns about the environment.
Human experience and belief	explore the explanations of – and responses to – common human experiences in the Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and Jewish tradition, as well as understanding that there are non-religious explanations and responses to these experiences.
Sources of inspiration	consider the ways that spirituality is inspired by and expressed through creativity; explore how gardens can be places for meditation and healing; examine the importance of leaders and historical figures – both religious and non-religious – as role models.
Human experience and spiritual expression	develop an understanding of the functions and uses of places of worship and meditation (e.g. church, mosque, gurdwara, meditation gardens) and of the work of those who lead communal worship (e.g. priest, imam, rabbi, etc); explore expressions of spiritual life, (e.g. prayer, meditation and pilgrimage); begin to explore how myth, metaphor and poetry are used to convey meaning and put into words concepts that are difficult to convey through every-day language; understand that many people have an experience of something greater than themselves, which elicits feelings of respect.

**Enquiry and thinking skills appropriate for RE at key stage 2:**

- Enquiring into concepts that have significance in both religious and non-religious experience (e.g. devotion, stewardship, sacrifice, authority).
- Contextualising concepts with regards to how they are manifested in practice (e.g. how are ideas about what happens at death reflected in various funeral rituals).
- Evaluating/comparing religious ideas and precepts with their own ideas regarding important values (e.g. how certain traditions place an emphasis on compassion and service).
- Be able to describe and compare how certain traditions remember and mark events important to that tradition (e.g. observance of Lent before Easter, rituals surrounding the Muslim hajj, the distinction between eating certain foods in a special context and an every-day context).
- Be able to explain their own opinions about a concept and the religious beliefs and practices associated with that concept (e.g. discussing the Sikh value of sewa as expressed in langar, and how they might choose to show charity or service).

**Key stage two schemes of work**

The following units will provide opportunities to work on the above skills and to cover some of the topics and themes that should be considered.

KS2.1: Beliefs and practices: Christianity

KS2.2: Beliefs and practices: Hinduism

KS2.3: Beliefs and practices: Islam

KS2.4: Beliefs and practices: Judaism

KS2.5: Beliefs and practices: Sikhism

KS2.6: Spirituality through art

KS2.7: Beliefs regarding death, 1

KS2.8: Initiation practices

KS2.9: Signs and symbols

KS2.10: Moral dilemmas 1

KS2.11: Rules for living

KS2.12: Seeds of unity, 1

KS2.13: History of belief in the UK, 1

KS2.14: Festivals of light

KS2.15: Pilgrimage

KS2.16: Special leaders

KS2.17: Religious buildings

KS2.18: Prayer, meditation and cultivating the inner life

*It is important that students bring a certain ragamuffin, barefoot irreverence to their studies; they are not here to worship what is known, but to question it.*

Jacob Bronowski (1908-1974)

Key stage three	
Themes	Pupils should have the opportunity to:
Stories that guide	compare religious/metaphoric/poetic thinking with scientific thinking (e.g. in an exploration of accounts of the creation of the universe); explore how symbols are linked to religious texts and experience; explore metaphoric ways of conveying meaning; understand the different ways—symbolic and literal—that elements of various religious rituals are understood by believers (e.g. for Christians, holy communion).
Answering life questions	explore a range of religious and non-religious responses to universal questions of meaning, purpose and value; explore the problem of suffering in the world and the various ways in which religious and philosophical traditions deal with this question (e.g. the Buddhist and Hindu understanding of karma); study beliefs about what happens at death.
Identity, diversity and belonging	explore believers’ understanding of key religious symbols and how they relate to historical events (e.g. cross, star of David, the Sikh signs of belonging); develop a better understanding of the nature of diversity within a single tradition; explore religious and non-religious definitions of faith, belief, identity and spirituality.
Acting ethically	deepen their understanding of how moral codes affect behaviour; consider rules for living, the ways in which people cope with the temptation to break these rules and the various beliefs regarding the consequences of having broken them; examine how religious and Humanist beliefs have led people to social action.
Humankind and the environment	explore the links between religious beliefs and attitudes to the natural world and the use of the world’s resources; be able to articulate and defend their position as regards whether humans have an ethical responsibility to preserve the environment for future generations.
Human experience and belief	deepen their knowledge of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism, and make links and comparisons with traditions such as Buddhism, the Baha’i Faith and Humanism; explore the changing landscape of religious ideas in Britain and discuss how their own beliefs have changed over time.
Sources of inspiration	investigate how individuals can serve as role models, and more specifically how members of faith communities look to key figures in their tradition as sources of inspiration and authority; explore how religions have drawn upon the ability of sound and music to evoke awe.
Human experience and spiritual expression	continue to explore how individuals relate to—and express—their spirituality through creativity (e.g. music); consider the ways creating and/or maintaining a garden can be an act of devotion, a means of healing, and a way to unite communities.

**Enquiry and thinking skills appropriate for RE at key stage 3:**

- Contextualise responses to common human experiences within the diversity of traditions (e.g. the Buddha's prescription of the Middle Way as response to his exposure to the reality of suffering).
- Communicate and justify their own opinion of religious concepts, beliefs and practices (e.g. the Baha'i belief that religious figures throughout history have all been messengers of a single God).
- Be able to relate lessons embedded in the various traditions into terms that are relevant to their own life and/or experiences (e.g. how working in a community garden or nurturing their own talent/intellect might be seen as an act of devotion and stewardship).
- Develop the capacity for independent enquiry and for asking relevant questions.

**Key stage three schemes of work**

The following units will provide opportunities to work on the above skills and to cover some of the topics and themes that should be considered. Schools are required to teach a minimum of twelve units, except for those schools where the GCSE is taught to all students beginning in year 9. These schools should ensure that at least nine of these units are taught over the course of years 7 and 8; the choice of which units to study should be based on avoiding repetition of material that will be covered in the GCSE.

KS3.1: Belief and practice: Buddhism

KS3.2: Belief and practice; Humanism

KS3.3: Belief and practice: the Baha'i Faith

KS3.4: Founders of traditions

KS3.5: Why do we suffer?

KS3.6: Creation stories

KS3.7: Beliefs regarding death, 2

KS3.8: What belief means to me

KS3.9: Moral dilemmas, 2

KS3.10: Seeds of unity, 2

KS3.11: History of belief in the UK, 2

KS3.12: Inspired leadership

KS3.13: Mixed metaphors: logical/scientific thinking c.f. poetic/religious expression

KS3.14: Spirituality in sound and music

KS3.15: Existing school-based unit (e.g. Judaism taught in Featherstone HS and Ellen Wilkinson)

*A mind once stretched by a new idea never regains its original dimensions.*

Anonymous

### Key stage four

While there is no legal requirement that pupils must sit public examinations, they deserve the opportunity to have their learning in the statutory curriculum subject of religious education accredited, and therefore it is hoped that all students will follow a public examination syllabus during key stage 4.

Those who do not elect to study a full RE GCSE in KS4 have the right to RE lessons throughout key stage 4. If there are pupils for whom the attainment of a pass in a GCSE examination is not a realistic target, but who still wish to have some kind of certification, they could be prepared for an accredited Certificate of Achievement (entry level qualification) in RE. Where schools anticipate needing to enter pupils for this certificate they will probably need to consider whether their choice of syllabus is co-teachable with the GCSE syllabus. An alternative, however, is for the school to provide students in years 10 and 11 with RE lessons where the focus is on expanding learning and enthusiasm without the concomitant pressure of sitting a public exam.

As mentioned earlier, some schools are beginning the GCSE in year 9. For schools that do not offer the GCSE, the school must ensure that the full key stage 3 curriculum is taught, and that in key stage 4 the following subject material is covered. This can be delivered from a single religious perspective or by using a thematic approach where more than one tradition is studied. Where a thematic approach is used, a comparative study is expected.

Links to personal experience and the wider community is needed throughout this key stage, and it is hoped that students will reach an understanding of the commonalities of spiritual experience as well as the diversity both within and between different religious and non-religious traditions.

#### Enquiry and thinking skills appropriate for RE at key stage 4:

- The ability to base enquiries into human experience through the study of key concepts (e.g. the nature of faith, beliefs regarding the existence of evil)
- An understanding of how to put key concepts into religious and secular contexts (e.g. examining different responses to key medical issues based on a person's beliefs and values)
- The ability to understand the existence of—and to evaluate—a range of views about different concepts (e.g. different understandings of the nature of divine intervention in the world)
- The ability to communicate personal views on a subject and back these views with supporting evidence
- The ability to apply their views on a subject to real-life situations (e.g. how their beliefs will affect their behaviour in relationships)

Themes	By the end of key stage 4 pupils should have had the opportunity to:
Beliefs about God	understand and use correctly terms that describe beliefs about an ultimate spiritual reality (e.g. monotheist, polytheist, omnipotent, omniscient); justify reasons for and against a belief in God; use religious texts to support the beliefs about the nature of God; describe various beliefs concerning the involvement of a divine being in the world (e.g. Jesus, avatars, prophets, miracles, gurus).
The nature of faith and belief	explain how and where people worship; describe the importance and relevance of food and fasting as an act of worship and reflection of belief.
Beliefs about death	describe religious beliefs about the existence of the soul; study the various rituals surrounding death, and the role funerals play as a rite of passage; learn about key religious beliefs that reflect the consequences of good and evil behaviour (e.g. the concepts of heaven and hell and karma and reincarnation); explain why moral codes are needed and how various traditions understand the impact of ethical behaviour on the possibility of life after death.
The experience of evil	consider beliefs—religious and non-religious—regarding the reason for the existence of evil in the world; define key terms and the relevance of a belief in the devil/satan/shaytan as a response to the experience of evil; explain the importance of moral codes for religious and non-religious people alike
How belief affects relationships	discuss the importance and relevance of marriage for religious and non-religious people as regards a lifelong commitment to sexual fidelity and procreation; explain religious teachings on divorce and the impact on believers; describe the differences ascribed by various traditions when looking at the roles of men and women within relationships.
Medical ethics	discuss the rights or wrongs—from both a religious and non-religious perspective—of key medical issues (e.g. euthanasia, abortion and fertility treatment); explore, discuss and link moral codes to ethical decisions underpinning health care.
Issues of equality	identify the rights and wrongs of prejudice and discrimination across the racial and gender divide and the religious response to it; explore why intolerance exists and how this can be in conflict with the idea of love, forgiveness and reconciliation; give tentative solutions reflecting religious teachings to the problems that prejudice and discrimination cause; explore the reasons for the rich-poor divide in the world and understand why this cannot be ignored on religious and ethical grounds; explore teachings regarding the poor and how various traditions help by encouraging or providing job-training, charity and voluntary work.
Conflict and justice	define key terms (e.g. peace, war, conflict, pacifism, justice, injustice); identify ways in which conflict and injustice can be resolved from a religious and ethical perspective; describe what is meant by a just war/holy war/jihad; discuss the various ethical responses to how criminals should be treated; identify the religious response to social injustice, with an emphasis on liberation theology.

*Tell me and I'll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I'll understand.*  
Chinese proverb

## Post-16

As previously stated this syllabus supports schools offering public examination work to students post-16. Accordingly, any student pursuing a GCSE, an A/S level or A' level GCE qualification in religious studies is exempted from the requirement to follow any other prescriptions of this agreed syllabus for the period in which the course is being followed.

To facilitate examination work post-16 it would help teachers if the syllabus of religious education for those students not taking a public examination shares common material with the examination syllabus. The reason this is proposed includes the observation that:

- 1) where an exam syllabus is not followed, the expectation is that a complementary programme amounting to a minimum of fifteen hours study is followed;
- 2) schools may wish to construct their timetables so that the religious education provided for all students constitutes part of the A' or A/S level work for those who have opted for the subject;
- 3) students who do not initially intend to take religious studies to examination level will have a greater opportunity of changing their options to include religious studies during the first year of a two year course;
- 4) teacher preparation time will be shortened if the same material can be used with all students.

Many students post-16 will be following vocational courses, some will be retaking GCSEs, and a minority will be pursuing A' level courses. Teachers have the duty to ensure that the work offered is suitably differentiated in order that students of all abilities can benefit from it.

Schools must ensure that the time available for religious education post-16 allows for substantial and meaningful work to be done and to this end it is recommended that a minimum of half-an-hour a week—or blocked equivalent—of teaching time is made available for the subject.



Teachers may design their own programme of study based on a shortened and simplified version of any existing A' level or A/S level religious studies syllabus provided:

- 1) students of all abilities are able to access the work;
- 2) it involves significant attention being paid to Christianity over a full two year course;
- 3) it includes the production of at least one substantial piece of written work based on a student's own research into one of the following themes.

By the end of key stage 5 students should have a detailed understanding of *one* of the following topics.

Topics	Students should have the opportunity to:
Belief and the media	know and understand that belief permeates all areas of life, including the media (e.g. television, internet, newspapers, film); know and understand that religion and atheism can be portrayed both positively and negatively by the media; identify the various ways the media can report on positions of belief or non-belief, e.g. challenging stereotypes or alternatively reinforcing them.
Music and spiritual expression	know and understand the role of music in expressions of faith and the development of spirituality; know and understand scriptural inspiration of religious music (e.g. the psalms as a basis for hymns, the Qur'anic origin of the call to prayer); study examples of people who composed music under what they believed to be divine inspiration (e.g. the choral works of Hildegard of Bingen); compare and contrast different eras of music within a religion or across the traditions studied in key stage 4.
Art and spiritual expression	explore artistic expressions of religion and faith in Christianity (e.g. how biblical stories were used in the past in stained glass windows to teach the non-literate); understand—and identify the reasoning behind—the prohibition against representing the physical form, significant people and/or God/Allah in some traditions and to learn about some alternative methods of artistic expression in these religions (e.g. architecture, calligraphy, textiles of geometric design); develop some interpretive skills when looking at religious works of art; explore how the experience of creativity is related to the development of spirituality or a focus on the inner life.
Literature and belief	know and understand how religion—and/or a loss of belief—is portrayed and incorporated into literature from the 19 <sup>th</sup> century to the present day; identify key themes from a selection of literary texts (e.g. good versus evil, social justice, life after death, God as judge, moral behaviour and ethical attitudes towards others), with the understanding that all of these themes, apart from God as judge, can arise independently of religious belief; explore freedom of expression and religious ideology and the tensions that can arise between these two (e.g. the furore around Salman Rushdie's <i>The Satanic Verses</i> and the reaction from religious groups to the Monty Python film <i>The Life of Brian</i> ).

Topics	Students should have the opportunity to:
Religion and philosophy	compare and contrast key Western philosophic and religious beliefs (e.g. how do Plato's theories differ from religious ideologies regarding life experience, the concept of body and soul, creation of the world; what does Aristotle bring to the philosophical debate; how does St Thomas Aquinas respond to both Plato and Aristotle); know and understand the key principles behind the arguments for and against a belief in God through studying people like Plato, Aristotle, St Thomas Aquinas; explain the pros and cons of the 'ontological', 'cosmological' and 'design' arguments for a belief in the existence of God.
Belief and morality	know and understand how various traditions conceptualise the development of morality (e.g. when does morality become the responsibility of the individual, when are people accountable for their own actions, what is conscience); know and understand that religion does not hold a monopoly on morality (i.e. that various secular philosophies also promote a moral code); describe and respond to different codes of practice regarding behaviour and morality in relation to questions regarding ultimate truth, situational ethics etc.
Belief and society	define key issues (e.g. assimilation and integration) and discuss how certain beliefs affect responses to these issues; debate the role of religion within society, for instance how religious codes (e.g. the Ten Commandments) have influenced modern law; develop an understanding that religion can be expressed differently in different societies and cultures, and the impact this has on the global stage; explore how conflict can exist between religious groups within a society, from both an individual and a group perspective.
Religion and gender	know and understand how gender is represented within religion and how this has changed and developed throughout history; know and understand that changes in society regarding gender roles have not always been matched by similar changes in religious perspectives, and explore the consequences of this (e.g. the conflicts that arose in connection with the ordination of women); learn about how various religions view the equality or inequality of men and women, and their justifications for these positions.
Politics and belief	debate whether religion and politics should be intertwined or kept separate, identifying the benefits and difficulties of each of these positions; know and understand how religious beliefs can affect political action (e.g. how a person's beliefs affect how they vote, can people believe in a God and yet belong to an oppressive political regime, the role of liberation theology from a political perspective); know and understand how politics affects religious belief and practice—and vice versa—on a global stage.
Religion and secularism	discuss examples of conflicts that can arise between religion and the secular world (e.g. recent banning of religious dress and/or symbols in schools); identify how religious and secular points of view can co-exist for the benefit of society; identify how religion fits into the idea of globalisation.

Topics	Students should have the opportunity to:
Common ground	know and understand how traditions can co-exist without conflict or detriment to their faith and beliefs; explore inter-faith groups and identify how such groups have constructive dialogue for the benefit of all (e.g. the work of the Council of Christians and Jews, Westminster Interfaith); identify the negative consequences of not having dialogue between religious groups; identify the negative consequences of not exploring the common ground between religious and non-religious perspectives.
New age beliefs	learn about how various alternative spiritualities arose in the 1970s as a response to what was felt as a failure of traditional religions and modern secularism to provide inspiration and guidance; examine some of these modern spiritualities (e.g. Wicca, Druidism, Neo-Paganism, Pantheism); understand that many of these New Age religions have roots in pre-Christian European religious traditions; learn about how many of these spiritualities, with their emphasis on the sacredness of the earth and its creatures, have had a positive impact as regards raising awareness of environmental issues.



*“Everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence,  
and I learn whatever state I am in, therein to be content.”*

Helen Keller

## Religious education and special educational needs (SEN)

Special schools are subject to separate legislative requirements to provide religious education—as far as is practicable—for all pupils, and thus must adapt this syllabus for their own use. It is clear that the programmes of study and end of key stage expectations in the previous sections may not be realistic for many students with SEN. It is up to the teacher to decide what activities are best suited for the individuals in their class, and as a consequence they are free to draw on material from whatever key stage they find appropriate.

Some students with SLD will be working at a level where the emphasis is likely to be on sensory experience, personal response and interaction and the development of awareness through whatever means possible. At the other end of the spectrum there will be children with SEN that are able to take part in religious education in a mainstream school. In this instance the pupil’s levels of attainment must be carefully judged, so that it is determined that they are able to access the demands of a mainstream class with minimum or no support. But regardless of their level of ability, all pupils with SEN deserve to be as inspired and challenged as those in mainstream RE classes.

Students in special schools or those with SEN in mainstream schools should follow the programme of study of each key stage if they can work at that level. The following suggestions<sup>9</sup> are some ways that RE can be tailored/adapted for pupils with SEN:

Make sure pupils are well prepared before visiting places of worship by exposing them to photographs, videos and artefacts, so that they aren’t unduly worried about an unfamiliar situation.

The acceptance that others have different views and that they have a right to hold and express them can present barriers for those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) or an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Many of these barriers can be removed by using multi-sensory approaches, e.g. through drama and role-play, visits to places of worship, or sharing special meals; drama and role-play, games and simulations can also help pupils with complex needs who might have difficulty understanding abstract concepts such as spirituality, belief, opinion, friendship, justice, cooperation, conflict and empathy.

<sup>9</sup> Based on material in the Institute of Education publication *Including pupils with SEN and/or disabilities in primary religious education*, <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/13806/1/religiouseducationre.pdf>

Pupil-made videos or digital camera presentations of situations involving moral dilemmas can be powerful aids to learning, particularly for pupils for whom writing presents barriers. Pupils can also use image technology to support the writing process, for example, creating a storyboard of pictures as a scaffold for writing a narrative about a moral choice. In addition ICT can offer alternatives to writing as a way of responding to text.

Planning support might include pre-tutoring important RE vocabulary and concepts and preparing grids for recording information, which can be helpful for some pupils.

Teachers should recognise that the language of RE may be challenging for many pupils, e.g.:

- language used in religious texts may be difficult to understand and will need to be explained;
- some vocabulary can have different meanings in different contexts;
- metaphor can be interpreted literally by some pupils, thus creating confusion or misunderstanding;
- it may be necessary to present the same information in a range of different ways to aid understanding.

Build up a chart to show each lesson's focus and how successive lessons/topics link together to develop an area of work in RE. This could include symbols, images, or objects to make it more accessible.

Mind maps are a good way of assessing how pupils' understanding of concepts is developing. This is particularly valuable for pupils for whom oral and written communication present a barrier, as pictures and symbols can be included.

As pupils can become confused between the different traditions studied, it is often better to concentrate learning – and display – on one tradition at a time. This may mean that thematic units are adapted to focus on one tradition per lesson to avoid confusion, rather than try to follow a theme through different faiths. If the school's curriculum requires the latter, try to clarify the different faiths in displays and resources.

To reduce reliance on memory, consider ways of supporting pupils' recall, for example using a digital camera to capture the stages of an activity or the sights of a visit for future reference. Images can also be used to build a visual or audio-visual record, and simple audio recording devices can replace the need for written notes during activities or visits.

Discussing misconceptions in RE prevents pupils becoming inhibited by fear of mistakes. Avoid a culture of 'right answers'. Some pupils may find it hard to see beyond a 'black and white' view of issues, but it is important to convey that religious education deals with belief and opinion. Draw on pupils' personal experiences to offer concrete examples of the concept being explored and make sure that the context of discussions is relevant to pupils' lives. Ensure that pupils are comfortable with how the ideas explored have been left, particularly if issues of personal belief have been discussed.

**Knowledge, skills and understanding for students with SEN working at the lower levels of achievement:**

- Engage with simple concepts such as celebration, specialness, remembering
- Associate concepts and practices within a certain tradition (e.g. associating the lighting of divas, smell of incense, a statue of Rama, Indian music and Indian sweets with the story of Divali)
- Learning to express personal feelings about a story or experience
- Using Makaton symbols, specialised IT, signing, gesture or speech to communicate thoughts and feelings
- Beginning to explore/associate certain artefacts/stories/pictures/people with specific traditions
- Developing the confidence to test their learning through sharing experiences

**P levels for assessment of RE**

Just as teachers of RE in a SEN context are free to draw on material from whatever key stage they find appropriate, they must assess their pupils against whatever scale best describes their abilities. As always in education, the hope is that pupils will demonstrate progression in their learning. Although the use of level descriptors is being abandoned for the purpose of pupil and parent feedback,<sup>10</sup> they are still useful for monitoring progression. For pupils with SEN working below level one on the descriptor scale, the P scale, which employs eight performance levels, is a useful tool.

- Levels P1 – P3 show the earliest levels of general attainment with subject focused examples
- Levels P4 – P8 show subject related attainment

The following are descriptors for the P levels of assessment in RE.

**P1 (i)** Pupils encounter activities and experiences. They may be passive or resistant. They may show simple reflex responses, for example, startling at sudden noises or movements. Any participation is fully prompted.

**P1 (ii)** Pupils show emerging awareness of activities and experiences. They may have periods when they appear alert and ready to focus their attention on certain people, events, objects or parts of objects, for example, becoming still in response to silence. They may give intermittent reactions, for example, vocalising occasionally during group celebrations and acts of worship.

**P2 (i)** Pupils begin to respond consistently to familiar people, events and objects. They react to new activities and experiences, for example, briefly looking around in unfamiliar natural and man-made environments. They begin to show interest in people, events and objects, for example, leaning towards the source of a light, sound or scent. They accept and engage in coactive exploration, for example, touching a range of religious artefacts and found objects in partnership with a member of staff.

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<sup>10</sup> See page 35 below.



**P2 (ii)** Pupils begin to be proactive in their interactions. They communicate consistent preferences and affective responses, for example, showing that they have enjoyed an experience or interaction. They recognise familiar people, events and objects, for example, becoming quiet and attentive during a certain piece of music. They perform actions, often by trial and improvement, and they remember learned responses over short periods of time, for example, repeating a simple action with an artefact. They cooperate with shared exploration and supported participation, for example, performing gestures during ritual exchanges with another person performing gestures.

**P3 (i)** Pupils begin to communicate intentionally. They seek attention through eye contact, gesture or action. They request events or activities, for example, prompting a visitor to prolong an interaction. They participate in shared activities with less support. They sustain concentration for short periods. They explore materials in increasingly complex ways, for example, stroking or shaking artefacts or found objects. They observe the results of their own actions with interest, for example, when vocalising in a quiet place. They remember learned responses over more extended periods, for example, following a familiar ritual and responding appropriately.

**P3 (ii)** Pupils use emerging conventional communication. They greet known people and may initiate interactions and activities, for example, prompting an adult to sing or play a favourite song. They can remember learned responses over increasing periods of time and may anticipate known events, for example, celebrating the achievements of their peers in assembly. They may respond to options and choices with actions or gestures, for example, choosing to participate in activities. They actively explore objects and events for more extended periods, for example, contemplating the flickering of a candle flame. They apply potential solutions systematically to problems, for example, passing an artefact to a peer in order to prompt participation in a group activity.

**P4** Pupils use single elements of communication, for example, words, gestures, signs or symbols, to express their feelings. They show they understand 'yes' and 'no'. They begin to respond to the feelings of others, for example, matching their emotions and laughing when another pupil is laughing. They join in with activities by initiating ritual actions or sounds. They may demonstrate an appreciation of stillness and quietness.

**P5** Pupils respond appropriately to simple questions about familiar religious events or experiences and communicate simple meanings. They respond to a variety of new religious experiences, for example, involving music, drama, colour, lights, food, or tactile objects. They take part in activities involving two or three other learners. They may also engage in moments of individual reflection.

**P6** Pupils express and communicate their feelings in different ways. They respond to others in group situations and cooperate when working in small groups. Pupils listen to, and begin to respond to, familiar religious stories, poems and music, and make their own contribution to celebrations and festivals. They carry out ritualised actions in familiar circumstances. They show concern and sympathy for others in distress, for example, through gestures, facial expressions or by offering comfort. They start to be aware of their own influence on events and other people.

**P7** Pupils listen to and follow religious stories. They communicate their ideas about religion, life events and experiences in simple phrases. They evaluate their own work and behaviour in simple ways, beginning to identify some actions as right or wrong on the basis of the consequences. They



find out about aspects of religion through stories, music or drama, answer questions and communicate their responses. They may communicate their feelings about what is special to them, for example, using role-play. They begin to understand that other people have needs and to respect these. They make purposeful relationships with others in group activity.

**P8** Pupils listen attentively to religious stories or to people talking about religion. They begin to understand that religious and other stories carry moral and religious meaning. They are increasingly able to communicate ideas, feelings or responses to experiences or to retell religious stories. They communicate simple facts about religion and important people in religions. They begin to realise the significance of religious artefacts, symbols and places. They reflect on what makes them happy, sad, excited or lonely. They demonstrate a basic understanding of what is right and wrong in familiar situations. They are often sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and show respect for themselves and others. They treat living things and their environment with care and concern.





## Assessment

*Life is a process of measuring. The lasting measure of good teaching is what the individual student learns and carries away.*  
Stanford Erickson, “The essence of good teaching”

As a result of consultation on the new national curriculum, the Department for Education has decided to abolish the use of level descriptors in assessment.

Levels have detracted from real feedback and schools have found it difficult to apply them consistently – the criteria are ambiguous and require teachers to decide how to weight a huge array of factors. Beyond the tests at key stage 2 and GCSEs at key stage 4, it will be for schools to decide how they assess pupils’ progress.<sup>11</sup>

Assessment should be linked to the key aims of the subject, and existing RE-specific level descriptors and I-can statements can still help teachers make judgements about how pupils are progressing. For that reason, the sample assessment tasks in the revised schemes of work<sup>12</sup> will include both level statements and ‘emerging’, ‘expected’ and ‘exceeding’ descriptors. However it is up to school heads of RE and RE-coordinators to ensure that the way they assess their pupils is in keeping with the school’s other assessment arrangements.

In the foundation stage, children’s attainment is assessed in relation to the early learning goals and is judged as meeting, exceeding or moving towards (‘emerging’) expected goals. At key stage 4, national qualifications are the main means of assessing attainment in religious education. There are no national statutory assessment requirements in religious education, but schools must report to parents on pupils’ progress in religious education.

Assessment is currently divided into:

**Assessment for learning:** considered to be *diagnostic* when it is used to identify strengths and weaknesses in performance and *formative* when used to help pupils understand how they can progress

**Assessment of learning:** measures what learners know or can do.

Both types of assessment in RE are important: pupils need feedback regarding how well they are progressing in the development of thinking and

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<sup>11</sup> *National curriculum and assessment from September 2014: information for schools*, DfE Guidance, January 2014.

<sup>12</sup> It is hoped to revise/update all of the RE schemes of work published on the EGfL, but until this is done it will be up to individual teachers to devise assessment activities.

communication skills as well as the assessment of their learning typically obtained through formal testing, examinations or set assessment tasks.

### *Designing an assessment task*

It is understood that teachers will structure their RE assessments to fit into the expectations of their school and guidance for the new national curriculum. Factors to take into account when planning an assessment task:

- The learning objectives to be assessed must be clearly defined during the course of the unit, and the activity designed in such a way that it tests the understanding of these objectives.
- There are a variety of ways in which pupils can demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Assessment can be done by sampling: for example, the majority of the class might be working on the activity while the teacher assesses a small group or an individual pupil.
- Assessment can be made more manageable by keeping a record of only those pupils who either failed to meet or exceeded the expected outcome.

The following tools can be used to help teachers to keep track of progress, however it is understood that level descriptors will not be used in reports to parents or in giving guidance to individual pupils.<sup>13</sup>

**Assessing pupil progress—APP focuses for RE:** These levelled descriptors,<sup>14</sup> intended to help facilitate the mapping, planning and monitoring of pupils' progress, are divided into three groups:

1. Thinking about religion and belief
2. Enquiring, investigating and interpreting
3. Reflecting, evaluating and communicating

**Can-do statements:** The 'can do' statements, written by Deborah Weston and Dave Francis, translate level descriptors into pupil-friendly terms.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Descriptors for P levels, which measure attainment of pupils working below level one, can be found on page 31.

<sup>14</sup> Lat Blaylock and Deborah Weston served as QCDA project consultants, and published their work on the NATRE website so that SACREs might include it in their assessment guidance.

<sup>15</sup> <http://betterre.reonline.org.uk/assessment/cando.php>. Thanks to the Culham Institute for permission to reproduce this material.

## Assessment focuses for exploring and explaining achievement in RE

Level	Thinking about religion and belief	Enquiring, investigating and interpreting	Reflecting, evaluating and communicating
	<i>Pupils:</i>	<i>Pupils:</i>	<i>Pupils</i>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ recall features of religious, spiritual and moral stories and other forms of religious expression</li> <li>▪ recognise and name features of religions and beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ identify what they find interesting and puzzling in life</li> <li>▪ recognise symbols and other forms of religious expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ express their own experiences and feelings</li> <li>▪ identify what is important to themselves and may be important to others</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ retell religious, spiritual and moral stories</li> <li>▪ identify how religion and belief is expressed in different ways</li> <li>▪ identify similarities and differences in features of religions and beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ recognise that some questions about life are difficult to answer</li> <li>▪ ask questions about their own and others' feelings and experiences</li> <li>▪ identify possible meanings for symbols and other forms of religious expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ identify what influences and inspires them, and why</li> <li>▪ compare their own ideas and feelings about what pupils think is important</li> <li>▪ make links between what they and other people think is important in life, giving reasons for beliefs, attitudes and actions</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ make links between beliefs, stories and practices</li> <li>▪ identify the impacts of beliefs and practices on people's lives</li> <li>▪ identify similarities and differences between religions and beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ investigate and connect features of religions and beliefs</li> <li>▪ ask significant questions about religions and beliefs</li> <li>▪ describe and suggest meanings for symbols and other forms of religious expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ identify what influences and inspires them, and why</li> <li>▪ compare their own ideas and feelings about what pupils think is important</li> <li>▪ make links between what they and other people think is important in life, giving reasons for beliefs, attitudes and actions</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ comment on connections between questions, beliefs, values and practices</li> <li>▪ describe the impact of beliefs and practices on individuals, groups and communities</li> <li>▪ describe similarities and differences within and between religions and beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ gather, select, and organise ideas about religion and belief</li> <li>▪ suggest answers to some questions raised by the study of religions and beliefs</li> <li>▪ suggest meanings for a range of forms of religious expression, using appropriate vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ describe how sources of inspiration and influence make a difference to themselves and others</li> <li>▪ apply ideas and reflections to issues raised by religion and belief in the context of their own and others' lives</li> <li>▪ suggest what might happen as a result of their own and others' attitudes and actions</li> </ul>

Assessment focuses for exploring and explaining achievement in RE (cont.)

Level	Thinking about religion and belief	Enquiring, investigating and interpreting	Reflecting, evaluating and communicating
	<i>Pupils:</i>	<i>Pupils:</i>	<i>Pupils:</i>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explain connections between questions, beliefs, values and practices in different belief systems</li> <li>recognise and explain the impact of beliefs and ultimate questions on individuals and communities</li> <li>explain how and why differences in belief are expressed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>suggest lines of enquiry to address questions raised by the study of religions and beliefs</li> <li>suggest answers to questions raised by the study of religions and beliefs, using relevant sources and evidence</li> <li>recognise and explain diversity within religious expression, using appropriate concepts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>express clear views about how sources of inspiration and influence make a difference to their own and others' beliefs</li> <li>recognise and explain how issues related to religion and belief are relevant in their own lives</li> <li>contribute to discussions and develop arguments about religious viewpoints and beliefs, and the challenges of commitment</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use religious and philosophical terminology and concepts to explain religions, beliefs and value systems</li> <li>explain some of the challenges offered by the variety of religions and beliefs in the contemporary world</li> <li>explain the reasons for, and effects of, diversity within and between religions, beliefs and cultures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify the influences on, and distinguish between, different viewpoints within religions and beliefs</li> <li>interpret religions and beliefs from different perspectives</li> <li>interpret the significance and impact of different forms of religious and spiritual expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>argue persuasively their views on questions of religion and belief, taking account of others' viewpoints</li> <li>express insights of their own into the challenges of committing to a religion or belief in the contemporary world</li> <li>explain the challenges posed by religious, spiritual and philosophical questions</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use abstract concepts to analyse issues of religions and beliefs</li> <li>explain coherently some consequences and influences of religions and beliefs on individuals and communities</li> <li>explain some of the varying influences of history and culture on aspects of religious life and practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>initiate independent critical enquiry into aspects of religions and beliefs</li> <li>use a wide range of relevant evidence, examples and sources to explore religious ideas and practices</li> <li>use some of the principal methods by which religion is studied to enquire into forms of spiritual and moral expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>critically evaluate the significance of religious and non-religious viewpoints, personally and across societies</li> <li>articulate insightful personal and critical responses to questions of belief and ethical issues</li> <li>analyse contrasting viewpoints, including their own, through critical argument and use of evidence and experience</li> </ul>

Assessment focuses for exploring and explaining achievement in RE (cont.)

Level	Thinking about religion and belief	Enquiring, investigating and interpreting	Reflecting, evaluating and communicating
	<i>Pupils:</i>	<i>Pupils:</i>	<i>Pupils:</i>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ use a wide range of terminology, concepts and methods to analyse and synthesise a broad understanding of religions and beliefs</li> <li>▪ interpret religions and beliefs in their historical, social and cultural contexts</li> <li>▪ analyse different interpretations of religious, spiritual and moral sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ independently research and conclude from critical enquiries into a range of arguments about religions and beliefs</li> <li>▪ analyse the interrelationship between religions and beliefs and other disciplines or areas of human understanding, e.g. scientific enquiry</li> <li>▪ interpret varied forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression using their understanding of religions or beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ synthesise a range of evidence, arguments and reflections to challenge others' ideas and justify their own</li> <li>▪ express creative interpretations and evaluations of different forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression</li> <li>▪ draw balanced conclusions about aspects of religion and belief and present them persuasively to others</li> </ul>

## Can-do statements

	<b>AT1 Learning about religion</b> How pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding with reference to:			<b>AT2 Learning from religion</b> How pupils, in the light of their learning about religion, express their responses and insights with regard to questions and issues about:		
<b>Level</b>	Beliefs, teachings and sources	Practices and ways of life	Forms of expression	Identity and belonging	Meaning, purpose and truth	Values and commitments
	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>
1	remember a Christian (Hindu, etc.) story and talk about it	use the right names for things that are special to Buddhists (Jews, etc)	recognise religious art, symbols and words and talk about them	talk about things that happen to me	talk about what I find interesting or puzzling	talk about what is important to me and to other people
	e.g. talk about the story of Diwali	e.g. say "That is a Church", or "She's praying" when my teacher shows me a picture	e.g. say "That is a Star of David" when my teacher shows me a picture	e.g. talk about how I felt when my baby brother was born	e.g. say "I like the bit when Krishna helped his friend"	e.g. talk about how I felt when I gave a present to my friend and how I think that made my friend feel
2	tell a Christian (Sikh, etc.) story and say some things that people believe	talk about some of the things that that are the same for different religious people	say what some Christian (Muslim, etc) symbols stand for and say what some of the art (music, etc) is about	ask about what happens to others with respect for their feelings	talk about some things in stories that make people ask questions	talk about what is important to me and to others with respect for their feelings
	e.g. tell the story of the birth of Jesus say that Christians believe in God	e.g. say that Christians and Sikhs both have holy books	e.g. say that the cross reminds Christians that Jesus died on a cross; e.g. say that some people dance, sing, recite for God	e.g. say "Was Jonah hurt after being inside the big fish?"	e.g. say "It was mysterious when God spoke to Moses"	e.g. say "I agree with the rule about not stealing as stealing is not fair"
3	describe what a believer might learn from a religious story	describe some of the things that are the same and different for religious people	use religious words to describe some of the different ways in which people show their beliefs	compare some of the things that influence me with those that influence other people	ask important questions about life and compare my ideas with those of other people	link things that are important to me and other people with the way I think and behave



	<b>AT1 Learning about religion</b> How pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding with reference to:			<b>AT2 Learning from religion</b> How pupils, in the light of their learning about religion, express their responses and insights with regard to questions and issues about:		
<b>Level</b>	Beliefs, teachings and sources	Practices and ways of life	Forms of expression	Identity and belonging	Meaning, purpose and truth	Values and commitments
	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>
	e.g. make a connection between the story of the forming of the Khalsa and the need for Sikhs to be brave in times of trouble	e.g. note how Muslims and Sikhs both treat their holy books with respect by keeping them higher than other books e.g note that Muslims and Christians both pray but in different ways	e.g. label a picture of Shiva Nataraja to show links with Hindu beliefs about God	e.g. talk about how Jesus influenced his disciples and how friends influence them	e.g. ask why many people believe in life after death, give their view and compare with a particular religious view	e.g. talk about how listening to a story about generosity might make them behave when they hear about people who are suffering
4	make links between the beliefs (teachings, sources, etc.) of different religious groups and show how they are connected to believers' lives	use the right religious words to describe and compare what practices and experiences may be involved in belonging to different religious groups	express religious beliefs (ideas, feelings, etc) in a range of styles and words used by believers and suggest what they mean	ask questions about who we are and where we belong, and suggest answers which refer to people who have inspired and influenced myself and others	ask questions about the meaning and purpose of life, and suggest a range of answers which might be given by me as well as members of different religious groups or individuals	ask questions about the moral decisions people make, and suggest what might happen as a result of different decisions, including those made with reference to religious beliefs / values
	e.g. make links between Qur'anic and Biblical sources and Muslim and Jewish charities e.g. connect some sayings of Jesus with different Christian beliefs about animals	e.g. use some Pali or Sanskrit terms in describing two different Buddhist types of meditation, e.g. compare the way that Hindus and Buddhists might meditate	e.g. draw and label the key features inside two churches, indicating their meaning for those who worship there	e.g. write an imaginary interview with a member of a minority religious community, referring to the beliefs which sustain them	e.g. write some questions about life after death and provide answers that refer to resurrection and reincarnation	e.g. write a report about the environment and suggest what might happen depending on different moral choices that could be made

	<b>AT1 Learning about religion</b> How pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding with reference to:			<b>AT2 Learning from religion</b> How pupils, in the light of their learning about religion, express their responses and insights with regard to questions and issues about:		
<b>Level</b>	Beliefs, teachings and sources	Practices and ways of life	Forms of expression	Identity and belonging	Meaning, purpose and truth	Values and commitments
	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>
5	suggest reasons for the similar and different beliefs which people hold, and explain how religious sources are used to provide answers to important questions about life and morality	describe why people belong to religions and explain how similarities and differences within and between religions can make a difference to the lives of individuals and communities	use a wide religious vocabulary in suggesting reasons for the similarities and differences in forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression found within and between religions	give my own and others' views on questions about who we are and where we belong and on the challenges of belonging to a religion and explain what inspires and influences me	ask questions about the meaning and purpose of life and suggest answers which relate to the search for truth and my own and others' lives	ask questions about things that are important to me and to other people and suggest answers which relate to my own and others' lives
	e.g. compare different Jewish beliefs about the Messiah and say how different interpretations may come about, using biblical and other texts to illustrate their answers	e.g. write an account of Hajj which explains why many Shi'a Muslims will go on to visit the tomb of Ali because they believe that he was the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad	e.g. produce a survey of different forms of creative religious expression and suggestions for similarities and differences between them	e.g. write a 'question and answer' style report on what it may like to be a member of a religious community in Britain today and outline what impresses them about this religious identity and community	e.g. write a short story which raises questions about what is 'true' and which relates to their own personal search for meaning in life	e.g. write a report on a moral issue in the news, interviewing key people in the debate and including religious views and the potential impact of those views on their own and others' lives
6	say what religions teach about some of the big questions of life, using different sources and arguments to explain the reasons for diversity within and between them	say what different practices and ways of life followers of religions have developed, explaining how beliefs have had different effects on individuals, communities and societies	use correct religious and philosophical vocabulary in explaining what the significance of different forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression might be for believers	consider the challenges of belonging to a religion today with reference to my own and other people's views on human nature and society, supporting those views with reasons and examples	use reasoning and examples to express insights into my own and others' views on questions about the meaning and purpose of life and the search for truth	use reasoning and examples to express insights into the relationship between beliefs, teachings and world issues, focusing on things that are important to me

	<b>AT1 Learning about religion</b> How pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding with reference to:			<b>AT2 Learning from religion</b> How pupils, in the light of their learning about religion, express their responses and insights with regard to questions and issues about:		
<b>Level</b>	Beliefs, teachings and sources	Practices and ways of life	Forms of expression	Identity and belonging	Meaning, purpose and truth	Values and commitments
	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>
	e.g. complete a poster demonstrating two contrasting religious views on astrology and making reference to religious texts and teachings which support the alternative teachings	e.g. prepare a guide for Anglican Christians on the celebration of Easter in the Orthodox Church, showing how resurrection belief is expressed in different ways	e.g. produce a booklet illustrating and explaining different sorts of symbolic expression involved in the life of a Buddhist monk or nun	e.g. write a news report on different Sikh attitudes to aspects of 'British' culture, explaining how Sikh views of human nature and society affect their views	e.g. produce a booklet of ideas about the 'Good Life' with reference to religious and non-religious points of view and their own conclusions	e.g. produce an e-media presentation on religious views of 'terrorism' with reference to religious and non-religious points of view and their own conclusions
7	present a coherent picture of religious beliefs, values and responses to questions of meaning and truth which takes account of personal research on different religious topics and a variety of sources and evidence	show how religious activity in today's world has been affected by the past and by traditions, and how belonging to a religion may mean different things to different people, even within the same religion	use a wide religious and philosophical vocabulary as well as different forms of expression in presenting a clear picture of how people express their religious, spiritual and ethical beliefs in a variety of ways	give my personal view with reasons and examples on what value religious and other views might have for understanding myself and others	give my personal view with reasons and examples on what value religious and other views might have for understanding questions about the meaning and purpose of life	give my personal view with reasons and examples on what value religious and other views might have for understanding what is important to me and to other people
	e.g. using books and the internet, investigate Sikh beliefs about the importance of the Guru and do a presentation which coherently illustrates a variety of views	e.g. produce two 'pen-pictures' of Muslims from different communities and explain how history and culture have influenced the way they put their faith into practice in different ways	e.g. produce an illustrated guide to representations of Jesus from different times and cultures, explaining the Christian beliefs and values presented through the different media	e.g. produce a summary of my own personal and social relationships alongside an analysis of Hindu and other insights into human nature and community	e.g. following research into samsara and nirvana, produce a dialogue I might have with a(nother) Buddhist about the future of humanity	e.g. following research into Jewish and Humanist views on 'faith' schools, produce a report with my recommendations on an application for a new Jewish foundation school

	<b>AT1 Learning about religion</b> How pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding with reference to:			<b>AT2 Learning from religion</b> How pupils, in the light of their learning about religion, express their responses and insights with regard to questions and issues about:		
<b>Level</b>	Beliefs, teachings and sources	Practices and ways of life	Forms of expression	Identity and belonging	Meaning, purpose and truth	Values and commitments
	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>
<b>8</b>	analyse the results of different sorts of research and place different interpretations of religious, spiritual and moral sources in their historical, cultural, social and philosophical contexts	weigh up different points of view and come to a conclusion on how religions and beliefs make a difference to communities and societies in different times and places	use a comprehensive religious and philosophical vocabulary in weighing up the meaning and importance of different forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression	weigh up in detail a wide range of viewpoints on questions about who we are and where we belong, and come to my own conclusions based on evidence, arguments, reflections and examples	weigh up in detail a wide range of viewpoints on questions about truth and the meaning and purpose of life, and come to my own conclusions based on evidence, arguments, reflections and examples	weigh up in detail a wide range of viewpoints on questions about values and commitments, and come to my own conclusions based on evidence, arguments, reflections and examples
	e.g. research the internet and interview individuals to produce a contextual comparison of interpretations of the resurrection of Jesus	e.g. conduct a questionnaire and produce findings on whether religion has had a mostly good or bad effect on different local communities	e.g. select some items of Buddhist artistic expression for an exhibition and produce a booklet of explanations of the symbolism and impact of the items for Buddhist belief and practice over time	e.g. write an article entitled, 'What is a Jew'? making use of Jewish and non-Jewish points of view and coming to a conclusion that takes account of religious, cultural and philosophical perspectives	e.g. write a speech for or against the motion that 'science will one day remove all need for religion', and coming to a conclusion that takes account of religious, philosophical and historical perspectives	e.g. write a dialogue between a Muslim and Hindu on how religious insights might save us from environmental disaster and write a conclusion that takes account of religious and social perspectives

	<b>AT1 Learning about religion</b> How pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding with reference to:			<b>AT2 Learning from religion</b> How pupils, in the light of their learning about religion, express their responses and insights with regard to questions and issues about:		
<b>Level</b>	Beliefs, teachings and sources	Practices and ways of life	Forms of expression	Identity and belonging	Meaning, purpose and truth	Values and commitments
	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>	<b>I can</b>
<b>EP</b>	provide a consistent and detailed analysis of religions and beliefs and of how religious, spiritual and moral sources are interpreted in different ways, with an evaluation of the different methods of study used to conduct the analysis	evaluate in depth the importance of religious diversity in a pluralistic society and demonstrate how religion and beliefs have had a changing impact on different communities over time	use a complex religious, moral and philosophical vocabulary in effectively synthesising my accounts of the varied forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression	analyse in depth a wide range of perspectives on questions about who we are and where we belong and provide independent, well informed and highly reasoned insights into my own and others' perspectives on religious and spiritual issues, with well-substantiated and balanced conclusions	analyse in depth a wide range of perspectives on questions about truth and the meaning and purpose of life, and provide independent, well informed and highly reasoned insights into my own and others' perspectives on religious and spiritual issues, with well-substantiated and balanced conclusions	analyse in depth a wide range of perspectives on questions about values and commitments and provide independent, well informed and highly reasoned insights into my own and others' perspectives on religious and spiritual issues, with well-substantiated and balanced conclusions
	e.g. write an article on 'mystical experience' which includes an evaluation of the research techniques used to gather information about it	e.g. write a report on a local religious community which analyses their place within wider society and evaluates the factors which have affected how relations with other local groups have changed over time	e.g. prepare a 'virtual' tour of a local place of worship which uses digital pictures of artefacts and architecture and includes consistent explanations of the symbolism employed in expressing religious, spiritual and moral beliefs ideas and feelings	e.g. research one 'Eastern' and one 'Western' religious view of human nature and write a report with conclusions on how far the two can be harmonised	e.g. research the history of human achievement and kindness within two religions / belief systems and write a message in defence of human beings to an alien species who think it would be better to wipe us off the face of the planet	e.g. conduct research on different attitudes to religious believers and write a report with conclusions on whether there should be a law against religious discrimination



 **Appendices**

*The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically.  
Intelligence plus character — that is the goal of true education.*  
Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Appendix 1: Legal requirements

### The legal basis of RE in the curriculum of maintained schools

Every maintained school in England must provide a basic curriculum (RE, sex education and the National Curriculum). This includes provision for RE for all registered pupils at the school (including those in the sixth form), except for those withdrawn by their parents (or withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 or over) in accordance with Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The key document in determining the teaching of RE is the locally agreed syllabus within the LA concerned. Schools designated as having a religious character are free to make their own decisions in preparing their syllabuses. LAs must, however, ensure that the agreed syllabus for their area is consistent with Section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996, which requires the syllabus to reflect that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

Schools are not obliged to provide RE to pupils who are under compulsory school age (section 80(2)(a) of the Education Act 2002), although there are many instances of good practice where RE is taught to these pupils. Separate legislative provision on RE is made for maintained special schools. Regulations covering maintained special require them to ensure that, as far as practicable, a pupil receives RE.<sup>16</sup>

### Academies

The funding agreements of academies require them to teach religious education as follows:

- Academies without a religious character must follow the locally agreed syllabus.
- Denominational academies with a religious character will follow their denominational syllabus.
- Non-denominational faith academies will follow the syllabus agreed by Ministers and their sponsors, which can be the locally agreed syllabus.

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<sup>16</sup> *Religious education guidance in English schools: non-statutory guidance 2010*, p. 10  
Full guidance available from the DFE website.: <http://www.education.gov.uk>

## Appendix 2: Right of withdrawal from RE

### The right of withdrawal

The 1996 Education Act and the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act provide parents with the right to withdraw their children from RE if they wish. To summarise:

Education Act 1996,  
Chapter 56 section 389

1. if the parent asks that a pupil should be wholly or partly excused from attending any RE at the school, then the school must comply;  

Education Act 1996  
Chapter 56, section 389 (1)
2. a pupil may, if the parent requests this, be withdrawn from the school premises to receive RE elsewhere so long as the LA school is satisfied that this will not interfere with the child's attendance at school other than at the beginning or end of any school session;  

Education Act 1996  
Chapter 56, section 389 (3,4)
3. if the parent of a pupil attending an LA-maintained secondary school wishes him or her to receive RE according to the tenets of a particular religious denomination and this cannot conveniently be provided elsewhere, the LA is required to allow such education within the school provided it does not consider that because of special circumstances it would be unreasonable to do so, and does not have to meet the cost;  

Education Act 1944  
s.26(3) + (4)
4. where the parent of a child attending an LA-maintained aided or special agreement school wishes that child to receive RE according to the agreed syllabus and the child cannot conveniently attend a school where that syllabus is in use, the governors (or if, in the case of LA-maintained schools, they are unwilling to do so, the LA) must make suitable arrangements unless they (or the LA) considers that special circumstances would make it unreasonable to do so (see paragraph 23).  

Education Act 1944  
s.28(1B) + (1C)
- 45 A school continues to be responsible for the supervision of any child withdrawn by its parent from RE, unless the child is lawfully receiving religious education elsewhere (paragraph 44.2).  

Education Reform Act 1988  
S9(4)

### Exercise of right of withdrawal

- 46 The parental right to withdraw a child from receiving RE should be freely exercisable and a school must give effect to



any such request. Parents are not obliged to state their reasons for seeking withdrawal.

47 The law does not prescribe how religious education should be taught or organised in schools. LAs and schools should bear in mind, however, that the way in which RE is organised must reflect the duty to teach the agreed syllabus or what is provided according to a trust deed, and that parents must be enabled to exercise their rights to request that their child should be excused from RE. This should not cause problems if RE is taught as a separate subject; but particular care will be needed to ensure that parents are able to exercise this right where schools, including primary schools, teach RE in an integrated form along with National Curriculum subjects (from which there is no right of withdrawal).

Education Reform Act 1988  
s9(3)

48 There will be occasions when spontaneous enquiries made by pupils on religious matters arise in other areas of the curriculum. Circumstances will vary, but responses to such enquiries are unlikely to constitute RE within the meaning of the legislation and a parent would not be able to insist on a child being withdrawn every time issues relating to religion and spiritual values were raised.

49 Experience suggests that, to avoid misunderstanding, a head teacher will find it helpful to establish with any parent wanting to exercise the right of withdrawal:

- the religious issues about which the parent would object to his or her child being taught;
- the practical implications of withdrawal;
- the circumstances in which the school can reasonably be expected to accommodate parental wishes (paragraph 48); and
- whether the parent will require any advanced notice of such RE, and, if so, how much.

## Ealing agreed syllabus conference

Because of cutbacks and limitations on the availability of the SACRE consultant, the agreed syllabus conference only met formally on a couple of occasions. Instead, aspects of the syllabus were sent out when available, as well as being discussed at full SACRE meetings. The syllabus was approved at the xx meeting of SACRE and ratified by Cabinet on xxx.

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## Photo credits

Cover: The Sower, by Van Gogh: Web Gallery of Art,  
[http://www.wga.hu/html\\_m/g/gogh\\_van/09/arles58.html](http://www.wga.hu/html_m/g/gogh_van/09/arles58.html)

Page 3: David Archibald, Ealing Press Office

Page 5: Plant fossil, The Virtual Fossil Museum  
<http://www.fossilmuseum.net/plantfossils/Sapindopsis-anhouryi/Sapindopsis.htm>

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<sup>17</sup> <http://betterre.reonline.org.uk>





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an exploration of human beliefs and values



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