Wandsworth

Chief Executive
Mike Jackson

Wandsworth Borough Council
Chief Executive's Group
The Town Hall Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU

Date: 17 September 2024

For further information on this agenda, please contact the Democratic Services Officer: Ruth Wright on ruth.wright@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk, 020 8871 6038

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

MONDAY, 30TH SEPTEMBER, 2024 AT 7.30 P.M. ROOM 122 - THE TOWN HALL, WANDSWORTH HIGH STREET, WANDSWORTH SW18 2PU

SACRE Membership:

Group A – Religious denominations other than the Church of England – namely Christian and other denominations, religions and world views which appropriately reflect the principal faith traditions and belief systems in Wandsworth:
Mr Dominique Joseph Clem (Seventh-day Adventist Church), Ms Sharon Coussins (Wimbledon Synagogue), Mr Nabhinandan Das (London Institute of Vedic Education (Hindu)), Ms Saffi Haines (Society of Friends), Rev. Rosamund Hollingsworth (the Methodist Church of Great Britain), Ms Lottie Holmes (Humanists UK), Mrs Maria Liddy (Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark), Ms Jyotika Pandya (Hindu Education Board UK), Imam Hamzah Patel (Balham Mosque and Tooting Islamic Centre), Mr Colin Perry (Buddhapadipa Temple), Mr Paul Phillips (Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is), Mr Usman Shazhad Butt (Ahmadiyya Muslim Association), Mr Charan Singh (Khalsa Centre Gurdwara) and Mr Harbans Singh Mehta (Khalsa Centre Gurdwara).

Group A Substitute: Ms Shanta Chellappoo-Phillips (Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is).

Group B – Church of England:
Rev. Susan Bolen, Mr Shaun Burns, Ms Rachel Croft and Miss Sharon Cunningham.

Group C – Teachers' Associations:
Mrs Claire Beecher (NEU), Ms Clare Hewitson (NEU) and Ms Anna Madden (NAHT).

Group D – Local Authority:
Councillor Jo Rigby (Chair), Councillor Mrs Rosemary Birchall, Councillor Clare Fraser and Councillor Angela Graham.

Co-opted members: none

AGENDA

1. Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. Minutes - 4th March 2024

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting of the SACRE held on 4th March 2024 and to consider any matters arising.

3. Membership

To receive a verbal update on the membership of the SACRE.

4. Remembering Lesley Prior

Shaun Burns to lead a short remembrance for Lesley, who was part of Wandsworth's SACRE and died earlier this year.

5. Monitoring Religious Education in schools: annual review of Ofsted reports and presentation on a 'deep dive' **(Pages 5 - 6)**

To receive and discuss the published 2023/24 Ofsted reports (attached).

Presentation from Charlene Folkes from Granard Primary School on what a 'deep dive' looked like in her school.

6. School faith inspection reports **(Pages 7 - 20)**

To receive and discuss the published 2023/24 Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) report for Saint Cecilia's Church of England School and St Boniface RC Primary School's Catholic Schools Inspectorate (CSI) report (attached).

7. 'Deep and meaningful? The religious education subject report' **(Pages 21 - 72)**

Discuss the April 2024 Ofsted report (attached).

8. Religious Education Council of England and Wales Handbook **(Pages 73 - 184)**

Note the updated handbook (attached) and ask any questions arising.

9. National content standard for Religious Education and FAQs **(Pages 185 - 216)**

Note the Religious Education Council of England and Wales's National Content Standard for Religious Education and frequently asked questions paper (attached) and discuss questions arising.

10. Wandsworth London Borough of Culture - 2025

Discuss how local faith groups can be part of the London Borough of Culture celebrations.

11. Faith Trails update **(Pages 217 - 218)**

To receive an update on the trails (attached).

12. Faith Direct update

To receive a verbal update on progress.

13. NASACRE training and resources

To receive information on the latest NASACRE training and website resources, found on: https://nasacre.org.uk

14. NASACRE conference talk: '35+ things a good SACRE can do!' **(Pages 219 - 226)**

Discuss the conference paper (attached) and take forward any ideas that would be appropriate for Wandsworth.

15. Future meeting dates

To note the forthcoming SACRE meeting scheduled so far for 2025:

- Monday 3rd March 2025 at Balham Seventh-day Adventist Church, 83 Elmfield Road, London, SW17 8AD

All meetings of the SACRE start at 7.30pm.

16. AOB

- How faith groups can help promote vaccination programmes across the borough.

Monitoring from Ofsted Reports published in the Academic Year 2023-2024

27 Ofsted inspections took place in the borough's schools in the last academic year, slightly fewer than the 33 in 2022-23 but more than in 2021-2022, when there were 19. The reports from all of the schools have now been published. Eight schools were judged outstanding, three were requiring improvement (one of which, Christchurch CE Primary, has now closed) and the others were good.

16 inspections were graded, ie section 5 and took place over two days, and 11 were ungraded (section 8). Ungraded inspections do not change the Ofsted grade the school holds, but if inspectors feel that from the evidence gathered that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out, the next inspection would therefore be a graded inspection and usually within 18 months. The converse is also true, if Ofsted felt a school could achieve a higher grade than it currently held.

The schools inspected comprised 21 primaries, two secondaries, three specials and the Hospital and Home Tuition Service.

These inspections were under the framework introduced in 2019 and reports are concise and specifically focused on a number of areas, usually: reading, mathematics, other curriculum subject(s) chosen for a "deep dive", SEND, disadvantaged pupils, behaviour, and for primary schools, Early Years. Typically, for a deep dive, inspectors discuss the curriculum with subject leaders, visit a sample of lessons with senior leaders, meet with teachers, speak to some pupils about their learning and look at samples of pupils' work.

No deep dives were carried out in religious education (RE) in any of the schools. As in the past, there were comments specifically to RE or to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in very few of the schools. These comments are reproduced below. Pupils' wider personal development was generally reported upon.

Primary

Brandlehow - They (*pupils*) show appreciation of the range of faiths and cultures within the school community and beyond. They enjoy learning about diversity and respect difference in the world and its people. (G)

Christchurch - Staff encourage pupils to respect people's different beliefs. (G to RI)

Holy Ghost – Pupils are taught extensively about equalities, including the importance of respect and tolerance for others' beliefs and backgrounds. (G, previously O)

Beatrix Potter - The school encourages pupils to respect the cultures and beliefs of others. (G)

Penwortham - The school offers an extensive range of experiences, including visits to museums, arts venues and places of worship. (O)

The following school was inspected in 22-23 but the report was only published after the last monitoring report:

Sacred Heart RC Battersea - Pupils' wider personal development is exceptionally well considered ... 'Faith friends' have successfully raised funds for charity and help support pupils' spiritual understanding. (G with OS Behaviour & Attitudes and Personal Development)

Nursery
There were no inspections of nursery schools this year.

Special
Linden Lodge - Children consistently enjoy outings and trips, as well as cultural and religious events. (O)

Secondary
No comments from schools inspected 23 -24 but the following school was inspected in 22-23 and the report only published after the last monitoring report:

St Cecilia's – Leaders celebrate the school's Christian ethos while also promoting high levels of respect and tolerance for the faiths and beliefs of others. (G)

In Voluntary Aided (VA) schools, religious education is fully reported on by inspectors from the appropriate religious bodies. VA schools receive denominational inspections every five years, and SACRE receives the reports. In the last year, there was one inspection of a Catholic school by the Catholic Schools Inspectorate (CSI) and one of a Church of England school, a SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspection. Their reports follow in the next agenda item.

Angela Rundle
LA Officer for SACRE

September 2024

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND EDUCATION OFFICE

Methodist Schools

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Saint Cecilia's Church of England School, Wandsworth	
Address	Sutherland Grove, London, SW18 5JR

School vision

'I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.' John 10:10
Our aim is to fulfil the words of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, so that our school community glorifies God through enjoyable and outstanding education.

School strengths

- Saint Cecilia's community is united by an aspirational vision which informs strategic decisions and daily life. Dedicated leaders and staff collaborate well for the good of the community. Governors are effective in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the academy's vision.
- Saint Cecilia's rich curriculum promotes students' academic, creative and spiritual development. It provides well for vulnerable students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Collective worship, supported by rich partnerships and highly effective chaplaincy, enables students and adults to flourish spiritually.
- As a result of the vision, behaviour throughout the school is cheerful and courteous. Interactions between adults and pupils are characterised by affirmation and respect. Pupils' understanding of diversity and others' freedom and rights supports harmonious relationships.
- Student leadership deeply embeds an ecosystem of participation and mutual support. This boosts students' wellbeing and strengthens their sense of community.

Areas for development

- Further develop opportunities for students' positive engagement in social action projects to enhance their advocacy for change nationally, and globally.
- Enhance the core religious education (RE) programme in the Sixth Form through deeper exploration of religions and worldviews.

Inspection findings

Saint Cecilia's deeply held Christian vision powerfully drives its strategic direction and daily life. Every policy is grounded with reference to a specifically chosen biblical quotation. Governors have clear processes for evaluating the impact of the vision, drawing upon the views of students, staff and parents. In addition to formal evaluation, governors witness the impact on adults' and students' spiritual life through occasional attendance at worship. Leaders are attentive to staff wellbeing and training, to ensure that they are professionally fulfilled. Parents and carers welcome and speak strongly of the impact of Church school leadership. They offer examples from their own children's experience, such as worship in the community.

The school's stated aim is to foster and develop the fruit of the Holy Spirit in all those within the school community. The focus on character development is rooted in the values of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Spiritual development embraces the awe and wonder of God in learning, extra-curricular activities, events and workshops. Staff training provides skills for the planning of rich spiritual reflection in authentic subject contexts.

Examples include selecting texts in English to challenge students' thinking on social questions, such as the nature of masculinity. In art, students' work on portraiture helps them explore their understanding of representation of the self. Students appreciate that reflection on their spiritual responses helps their personal development and strengthens their sense of self-worth. Leaders invest in a comprehensive extra-curricular programme, which nurtures students' interests and talents. They experience fulfilment and joy in their individual pursuits and performing with others. The school's ambitious approach to the curriculum boosts staff development through, for example, a teacher innovation group. Nurturing staff expertise demonstrates how they are valued. As they are fulfilled professionally and spiritually, so they are better placed to provide for students.

All are invited to grow spiritually through encountering the person of Jesus through the teachings of the Bible. Students are highly involved in worship through discussions in their mentor groups and interactive assemblies. The chaplain supports house captains and students from different year groups in planning and leading worship. Each house participates in termly 'Worship in the Community'. These strong partnerships offer experience of the diversity of worship found in various denominations of the worldwide Anglican Church. Chaplaincy nurtures spiritual development through Christian Union meetings, student prayers, and 'Bible and breakfast' gatherings that welcome adults and students. Pitched invitationally to meet students' interests and needs, these enrich their spiritual journeys. Extending beyond the school campus, such enrichment includes a youth club at a local church. Assemblies conducted online with clergy in other countries has a deep impact. For example, discussing 'Lent across the world' with them strengthens students' understanding of Christianity as a global religion.

Relationships are harmonious because students' encounters with adults are rooted in mutual respect and dignity. The house system and positions of responsibility enable mixed age friendships, recognised positively by parents and evident in the playground. Shaped by the vision, each student is valued and provided for as a unique child of God. A minority of students have low attendance, which is rightly a strong focus for the school's leaders. They recognise that attendance is key to enabling students to flourish in their learning, socially and spiritually. Leaders pay particular attention to the needs of the most disadvantaged students. They conduct focus groups to understand their perspectives on how they are treated and what they need to thrive. Extensive training enhances teachers' skills in ensuring that the needs of students with SEND are appropriately met. This is strengthened by highly trained specialist staff offering support in wide ranging areas such as mental health, dyslexia and occupational therapy. Personal development programmes enable students to discuss the challenges of living in a complex, diverse society. This includes the impact of social media, in which they consider why issues of identity can be difficult to speak about. As a result, students talk respectfully and debate, teasing out challenges. Such a comprehensive and inclusive approach ensures that vulnerable students and those with SEND flourish at Saint Cecilia's.

Extensive leadership opportunities build a strong culture of participation in the student body. From house captains through prefects to librarians and sports coaching, roles of responsibility enable all to build confidence and character. Roles such as buddy mentor or wellbeing champion provide emotional or personal support to other students. Students are trained for these sensitive roles and understand how to refer to the school's professional support services. This comprehensive leadership programme deeply embeds an ecosystem of students supporting each other. They say, for example, 'everyone brings their own background and culture. It benefits everyone working together.' They recognise the deeper impact on their own development, commenting, 'it makes you socially aware, it makes you appreciative.' Students explore questions of justice and acting courageously through the language of being an 'upstander'. They are taught how important it is to speak up for what is right. As a result, they feel confident in challenging instances of prejudiced behaviour or bullying. Many students' social conscience is developed further through volunteering as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Charitable fundraising provides a further focus for social action. Leaders are building lasting connections with local charities to enable students to make a difference in their local community. Support for local food banks is one example. Experience in taking action to improve the lives of others beyond the locality is mostly gained in the Sixth Form. Leaders correctly identify social action projects nationally and globally as the next step.

RE is planned effectively and taught well, so all students can enjoy success and make positive progress. The Key Stage 3 curriculum enables students to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding. They compare similarities and differences between Christianity, a range of other religions and other worldviews. As a result, they demonstrate a high level of understanding and respect for the beliefs of others. All students in Key Stage 4 study the full GCSE course. Subject leadership is effective, capitalising on collaboration with other schools and support from the diocese. The core RE programme in the Sixth Form has many positive aspects, including further in-depth study of Christianity. However, there is less emphasis on further exploration of religions other than Christianity. Students consider ethical, philosophical and sociological questions alongside religious beliefs, and prepare a formally assessed extended study. This fosters the development of their personal worldviews.
Discussions with older students show that they appreciate the breadth of religions, beliefs and worldviews that they study. In this way, RE contributes significantly to the appreciation of diversity and positive culture of this inclusive Church school.

The inspection findings indicate that Saint Cecilia's Church of England School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	29 February – 1March 2024	URN	141808
VC/VA/Academy	Academy	Pupils on roll	1079
Diocese	Southwark		
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Renata Joseph		
Chair	James Ewins		
Inspector	Rachel A Jones	No.	2237

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CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INSPECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND ACADEMIES

St Boniface Catholic Primary School

URN: 101042

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Most Rev. John Wilson, Archbishop of Southwark

04–05 July 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

2

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	Yes
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	Yes
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Partially

What the school does well

- St Boniface creates a haven of calm in a busy world where children feel safe, secure and are keen to learn.
- Promotes and models the highest standards of actively living the school charism.
- Seeks ways to bring learning to life using a wide range of stimuli enabling pupils to explore the teachings of Christ.
- Leaders create an environment where prayer is common practice both formally and in opportunities for spontaneous and reflective independent prayer.

What the school needs to improve

- Create links to Catholic social teachings across all aspects of the school.
- Ensure all leaders and stakeholders fully understand the Catholic Schools Inspection evaluation criteria in order to plan impactful whole school improvement.
- Consistent application of good practice, policy and strategies for individualised pupil support.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

1

Pupil outcomes
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Provision
The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

The behaviour of the pupils is impeccable, they live out the school motto 'one who does good' by caring for each and every member of the school community through a deep respect of everyone. Pupils take on board the opportunities offered to them and are itching to do more. They are open and giving of their time freely to improve the lives of others speaking selflessly of how they impact on other people's lives. Pupils take an active lead in a wide range of opportunities to live out the charism and engage in stewardship. These opportunities range from Year 1 children taking care of the prayer garden through to B-Buddies taking care of other children in the playground, prefects, eco prefects and school council. Year 6 pupils described their role as one where they have a responsibility to model expectation and ensure everyone is involved. Chaplaincy pupils form a key role in linking prayer in action and supporting staff leading prayer in class. A wide range of opportunities are afforded to pupils to live the charism. Pupils are actively involved in works of charity. Activities this year include, a Loving Lions sale to raise money for overseas humanitarian services and raising funds for a variety of local charities including, Little Village and local food banks. When pupils bring ideas such as creating a newsletter for the school, they are encouraged and supported to try new ideas. Pupils' stewardship extends beyond the school working with the parishes and local community, for example providing breakfast for parishioners who volunteer in the local church. Pupils say they feel safe and that St Boniface is happy place to be.

Being 'ones who do good' is a common language across the school. Staff describe a top down approach to an intrinsic support mechanism where all staff support each other's wellbeing. This includes time, as one member of staff quoted, 'to reflect and take time to breath'. Both staff and parents express that the Catholic life of the school is at the heart of everything the school does. The charism of "one who does good" extends beyond the school gates. On the day of inspection staff were taking part in an annual Noah's walk, set up to raise funds for those in need in their community. Staff work seamlessly together to support every member of the school community. This includes a knowledgeable team of inclusion leads who support with strategies to engage and include every child in the school in all aspects of provision. This is reflected throughout the school where an environment

of celebration and praise is seen both in classrooms and corridors. Relationships and sex education provision follows an agreed programme and is planned across the year mapped to dovetail with the religious education provision.

Leaders and governors model the Church's mission through the school charism rooting faith and wellbeing in policy and practice. Governors support all work of the school and consider their role to be models as well as guardians of the Catholic life and mission of the school. The school is privileged to have a skilled proactive team of governors led by a passionate chair and vice chair. They have an in depth understanding of the school and engage in discussions and debates with senior leaders to ensure policy and practice form the foundations for a truly spiritual provision at St Boniface. The school has effective communication with parents who value the regular communication from the school. Staff and pupils highly value the work of the Friends of St Boniface, referring to the parent's group as always being there to support and help.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education

2

Pupils are fully engaged in their learning benefitting from the deep respect of each other which is routed in the school. This enables every child to feel safe to take risks, express opinions about their learning and make expected progress. Overall scores in reading, writing and maths sit at local averages with maths slightly above, this is matched in religious education. Less progress is seen however, for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils use a high level of religious educational language appropriately and in context, with higher ability pupils making links across topics when given the opportunity. A pupil said 'our teacher allows us to look at different angles when we are exploring a problem'. Learning from religious education lessons which links to scripture carries forward to other aspects of school life. This is seen as a common thread in lessons linking teachings from scripture to draw empathy and understanding in everyday life. Pupils can articulate how well they are doing with most pupils responding enthusiastically when recapping prior learning.

Teacher's subject knowledge is strong underpinned by support, resources and training from the religious education lead. Teachers are encouraged to use emotional learning techniques, such as the Zones of Regulation framework, and creativity in their lessons for example the use of art, music and mime to assist pupil's understanding of complex teachings. An example of this was in a Year 1 class where children were encouraged to explore the feelings of Peter and John as they worked through the Holy Spirit to heal the lame man. The use of techniques such as my turn your turn, is used across the school to support the development of religious literacy and understanding of scripture, leading to a high level of understanding throughout the school. Teaching assistants know their pupils well and are able to work seamlessly alongside their teacher to support progress of each child. A knowledgeable and passionate inclusion team, ensure diversity and learning opportunities for every child. They provide guidance and strategies to teaching staff which enable access by all children to the religious education curriculum. Whilst these strategies are provided they are not consistently used. Pupils would benefit from consistent application of these strategies in all religious education lessons. Teachers use a high level of question and answer, both to check prior learning and promote understanding and exploration of new topics. A marking policy is evident with regular comments in

most books. Consistency of application of the agreed process for marking is not always followed through.

Leaders and governors ensure that the school curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the Religious Education Directory. Processes for assessment and tracking are in place, supported by phase group meetings and whole staff training, to support the delivery of religious education. Teachers would benefit from a system of impactful review of the data to inform strategic planning of provision to meet the needs of every pupil. The religious education lead takes full advantage of support and training available to ensure a robust curriculum is planned for. This includes guidance from both diocesan support and training to being a proactive member in a local Catholic network group for religious education leaders. Governors and leaders understand the importance of those delivering religious education to access training available and network beyond the school. This include training on how to respond to an individual's needs and understand any barriers to learning, the use of visuals to support verbal instructions, differentiated questioning, story maps and processing time. Governors are presented with progress data and now need to develop rigorous review and analysis of data in their guardianship of religious education.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

Collective worship key judgement grade

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

Pupils participate reverently in prayer and liturgy, joining in with invitations to pray and singing confidently using actions when appropriate. Pupils understand how to pray independently and use informal spaces as well as formal provision to reflect. They know the liturgical calendar well and as a result pupils understand and are able to discuss key aspects of the liturgical year. They can describe how these events link to the scriptures deepening their own experiences of prayer and liturgy. Pupil chaplains are beginning to take a lead in class prayer and liturgy supported by their teachers. Where opportunities are given to engage and lead fully, pupils grasp these enthusiastically. Pupils want to be stewards of their faith and embrace every opportunity to do so. Each class is offered an opportunity every year to lead a class assembly. Pupils are guided by their teachers to explore the meaning of scripture and present using various medium, song, dance and role play. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about a class assembly based on justice, linking to Passover and Moses to the current justice system. Pupil chaplains were instrumental in the creation of the well-used prayer garden, with Key Stage 1 pupils taking responsibility for its maintenance. Pupils told us how they felt privileged to be present when the garden was blessed by the assistant parish priest. Pupils are ready and eager to take a greater role in leading prayer and liturgy.

Appropriate planned prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school and form part of routine gatherings which include the whole school community. Every classroom has a focal prayer table used for daily prayer, liturgical sessions and prayers in religious education lessons. Formal opportunities to pray at least three times each day are enhanced by informal spaces and opportunities to reflect independently. A strong partnership with the local parish priest ensure Masses for key liturgical events and the school feast day happen throughout the year. More recently Masses have taken place in school, which staff, pupils and parents have greatly welcomed. All classes have regular class liturgical sessions scheduled. Pockets of inspiration occur as was seen in a nursery class liturgy where pupils were provided with the opportunity for spontaneous prayer using prayer stones as stimulus enabling a deepening of purposeful reflection. In a Year 5/6 liturgy session pupils led spontaneous intercessions from their peers, with pupils feeling secure to share and pray for personal matters that were important to them. Leaders openly welcome families to join special liturgical events with a parent saying 'I

appreciate the invitation to attend school to pray the stations of the cross. This also happens for The Rosary'.

The policy for prayer and liturgy is structured, accessible and fit for purpose. Leaders assist staff to plan and lead experiences of prayer and liturgy, whilst also providing staff with appropriate training to deliver prayer and liturgy. Leaders understand the different levels and skills of participation that are reflective of the age and capacity of pupils, ensuring a range of ways to pray and participate is routed in planning. As a result, pupils and staff experience high quality opportunity for reflection. Governors attend times of prayer, Masses and other liturgical events providing an opportunity to feedback and review in a very practical way. Leaders and governors support the wider church family in celebrations of the sacraments held at pupils' parishes. As part of the celebration of their First Holy Communion, Year 3 pupils traditionally visit Wintershall to watch 'The Life of Christ'. Leaders including governors, recognise the importance of prayer and liturgy when setting budgets and allocating resources, such as time, staffing and facilities.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Boniface Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	101042
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	2123422
Full postal address of the school	St Boniface Catholic Primary School, Undine Street, Tooting, London, SW17 8PP
School phone number	02086725874
Headteacher	Lisa Platts
Chair of Governors/Trustees	Veronika Hughes-Bednar
School Website	www.stboniface.wandsworth.sch.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	6 March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Catherine Burnett	Lead
Michelle Wilson	Team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement

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GOV.UK

Research and analysis

Deep and meaningful? The religious education subject report

Published 17 April 2024

Applies to England

Contents

This publication is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subject-report-series-religious-education/deep-and-meaningful-the-religious-education-subject-report

Context

The scope of religious education (RE) is vast. Through RE, pupils encounter ancient and living traditions that have shaped the world. They explore foundational texts and the way that individuals and groups live in the world, as well as the values, beliefs and ideas that bind people together. Pupils consider deep questions that have inspired human thought throughout history, and that still challenge children and adults alike today. The knowledge that they gain stretches beyond oversimplifications: it enables pupils to derive meaning from complexity.

The RE sector generally agrees that RE contributes to pupils' personal development. However, the sector does not agree on – or discuss enough – the distinct body of knowledge that pupils learn in RE. This report explores the content and substance of what pupils learn in RE. Within the RE classroom, teachers and pupils work with claims about religious and non-religious traditions, as well as the reflections that they themselves bring to the table. At its best, RE can help pupils to make sense of a complex world where aspects of religion and non-religion hold different places in the lives of its citizens.

RE forms part of the basic curriculum for all state-funded primary and secondary schools up to the end of sixth form. Unlike the content of other subjects, the RE content is not nationally defined. Maintained schools and voluntary-controlled schools must teach the agreed syllabus that has been proposed by their local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education and approved by the local authority. Voluntary-aided schools must teach RE but do not have to follow this syllabus. They can determine their own curriculum, which should be in accordance with their trust deed. If they convert to academy status, this requirement remains in place.

What academies and free schools must teach in RE is outlined in their funding agreements. Many choose to follow the locally agreed syllabus. Sometimes, trusts develop their own curriculum. All schools, including independent schools, must promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. RE may be a significant part of the school's provision of this.

This report considers the evidence gathered through inspections and research visits. For our methodological note, see Annex A: Methodological note. The report is split into findings in primary schools and those in secondary schools; it includes evidence from Reception Year to sixth form. It evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of RE, building on the work of our 2021 research review into RE (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education). It considers:

- curriculum: the content that pupils learn in RE lessons
- pedagogy: how schools teach and implement the curriculum
- assessment: how teachers check the extent to which pupils have learned the curriculum

- how RE is organised in schools
- teacher education and professional development

Strengths and weaknesses are exemplified through this report. The report aims to illuminate effective practice. It makes recommendations to help wider stakeholders, leaders and teachers understand how they can make sure that all pupils leave school with the depth of knowledge that they need about a range of religious and non-religious traditions. It explains what it means for pupils to have a meaningful understanding of the complex and diverse world that they live in.

The evidence gathered suggests that many of these RE curriculums are in the process of refinement. In some schools, an ambitious RE curriculum is clearly still a ‘work in progress’. There is much to do to ensure that all pupils have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum.

The quality of RE is not determined by the type of school or the source of its curriculum. We found better quality RE in a range of schools, from small primary schools to non-selective and selective secondary schools. Factors that contributed towards this included:

- strong teacher subject knowledge
- access to professional development
- regular time for RE lessons
- a well-organised curriculum containing knowledge chosen by leaders to enable pupils to deepen their understanding term by term

Religion in schools

The place of religion in schools in England is complex, eliciting much debate. These debates fall beyond the scope of this report, which focuses on the curriculum subject of RE.

The focus of this report is on the content and teaching of RE in schools. Specifically, it looked at RE in schools where the subject falls within Ofsted’s inspection purview. Our research focused on evidence about the quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment in RE. Our research also looked at the impact of the curriculum on the knowledge and skills of pupils.

We did not gather evidence on the wider work of schools relating to social, moral, social and cultural education, or on other areas of school life which have religious dimensions. For instance, this report does not explore provision for collective worship in schools.

RE and personal development

There are a range of different ways in which RE operates in schools. We are aware that the way that schools approach RE can be relevant to 2 different judgements within our education inspection framework (EIF): the quality of education and personal development. The quality of education is about the academic substance of what is taught. It looks at what pupils learn and know in each subject. The personal development judgement explores how the curriculum may extend beyond the academic, technical or vocational. This may include, for instance, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. This report outlines what we have found out about RE through our ‘deep dive’ methodology on inspections and our research visits. As such, the report is primarily concerned with the school RE curriculum considered through the lens of the quality of education judgement.

Main findings

The RE curriculum often lacked sufficient substance to prepare pupils to live in a complex world. The RE content selected rarely was collectively enough to ensure that pupils were well prepared to engage in a multi-religious and multi-secular society.

A superficially broad curriculum does not always provide pupils with the depth of knowledge they require for future study. In most cases, where the curriculum tried to cover many religions, like equal slices of a pie, pupils generally remembered very little. In cases where the curriculum prioritised depth of study, pupils learned much more.

The RE curriculum rarely enabled pupils to systematically build disciplinary knowledge or personal knowledge.

The content of some secondary curriculums was restricted by what teachers considered pupils needed to know for public examinations at the end of key stage 4. In a significant number of cases, teachers taught examination skills too prematurely. This significantly limited the range and types of RE content taught.

In the secondary phase, most statutory non-examined RE was limited and of a poor quality. A notable proportion of schools did not meet the statutory

requirement to teach RE to pupils at all stages of their schooling.

Where RE was weaker, the knowledge of traditions specified for pupils to learn was overly and uncritically compartmentalised. Sometimes, pupils were presented with over-simplistic assertions about religious traditions, which were often based on visible entities, such as places of worship.

What schools taught was rarely enough for pupils to make sense of religious and non-religious traditions as they appear around the world. Curriculums did not identify clearly the suitable mix of content that would enable pupils to achieve this.

There was a profound misconception among some leaders and teachers that 'teaching from a neutral stance' equates to teaching a non-religious worldview. This is simply not the case.

In some schools, leaders were rightly focusing on developing the curriculum before considering assessment. However, even when leaders had systems of assessment in place, these rarely gave them the requisite assurance that pupils were learning and remembering more and increasingly complex content over time.

Long gaps between lessons hindered pupils' recall. When the timetable was organised so that pupils had regular RE lessons, they remembered more.

Although a few teachers had received subject-based professional development in RE, the overwhelming majority had not. Given the complexity of the subject and the kind of misconceptions that pupils were left with, this is a significant concern.

10 years on – what has changed in RE since our last subject report?

In 2013, our subject report (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/religious-education-realising-the-potential) stated that RE 'should make a major contribution to the education of children and young people'. The unrealised potential of the subject remains now, as it was then. At the time, the report made several

recommendations to improve the subject in schools. One recommendation was that the Department for Education (DfE) should review statutory arrangements that allow RE to be determined locally by agreed syllabus committees. Others related to responding to weaknesses found in RE by clarifying expectations, training staff, monitoring provision, having enough resources, and improving subject quality. All these factors could have significantly improved the quality of the RE curriculum that pupils learn, preparing them to be well informed and thoughtful about religious and non-religious traditions that shape the world. Ten years later, and although much of the educational landscape has changed, the problems and challenges facing RE persist.

The 2013 subject report suggested that the DfE worked with professional associations to clarify its expectations about RE and consider what high-quality curriculum, pedagogy and assessment might look like in schools. A decade on, there has been no change to the legal position of RE. RE syllabuses are still locally determined. However, the system has become more complex and includes the growth of multi-academy trusts. As a result, ‘where teachers go’ to tell them what to include in their RE curriculums has become even more complicated: the locally agreed syllabus applies in some, but not all, maintained schools. Academies have freedoms to develop their own RE curriculums in accordance with their funding agreements; and some multi-academy trusts have established trust-wide curriculum expectations.

The 2013 report also called for improvements in training, both locally and nationally. Until recently, bursaries for trainee teachers were withdrawn, and recruitment has reached a new low. The capacity of local authorities to develop and support school RE has reduced. There are various subject associations, organisations and networks, some of which are linked to charities, which provide support for RE. However, the subject lacks the kind of coordinated support that is, for example, provided through subject hubs in English and mathematics.

These factors have combined to mean that leaders in schools have been poorly served. The lack of a coherent approach to the subject has negatively affected leaders and specialist and non-specialist teachers. The absence of an infrastructure to support schools has only served to compound problems that already existed. This has meant that, in many cases, teachers’ subject knowledge has not improved. Despite the importance of RE in preparing pupils to engage in a multi-religious and multi-secular world, these issues have not been addressed through primary legislation or statutory guidance. In many ways, the subject continues to wilt.

Although various subject organisations and stakeholders share a common pursuit for excellence in RE, they do not always agree about the best way forward. A coordinated approach led by the RE Council of England and Wales has suggested that a focus on ‘religion and worldviews’ would be an improved way of framing curriculum content in RE. This approach has gathered much interest and support, but not all in the world of RE agree with this reframing. Many have also discussed the need for a national standard for the subject.

While this debate continues, the status of RE as a mandatory subject, yet outside the national curriculum, remains unchanged. There are still no clear national expectations for RE. A system that is increasingly hyper-localised is confusing for leaders and teachers to navigate.

The challenge that this context presents to schools should not be underestimated. Even in schools where Ofsted inspects RE, leaders must balance competing views about what RE should cover and how this should be done. There is a significant duplication of time and energy in establishing the content of RE. This happens nationwide as local authorities, trusts and school leaders have to grapple with competing ideas. This adds undue complications for those who are involved in teacher development. It is hard to provide training and support for teachers when content is so varied across schools.

Statutory guidance has not kept pace with national changes, including the growth of multi-academy trusts. Leaders and teachers need up-to-date guidance in order to understand the implications of the complex legal foundation for teaching RE. Teachers moving from school to school may have to adapt to different models and expectations of RE each time. It can be tricky for parents to understand how RE in one school may differ from RE in another school down the road. It may be difficult for stakeholders to understand why Ofsted inspects RE in some schools and does not in others. These factors, and the failure to address them over the past 10 years, make the work of leaders and teachers harder.

Our research shows that, although some schools steer through these challenging waters well, most do not. The legacy of poor subject and pedagogical knowledge, scant training and a lack of clarity about RE content is that, in too many schools, the RE curriculum is poorly constructed, poorly implemented and poorly learned. What pupils know and remember about the subject is noticeably patchy. Misconceptions abound. A superficial and limited approach to RE sometimes ends up normalising caricatures or the most extreme or ‘unusual’ religious traditions. Leaders and teachers have not had the direction or support they need to inform their decisions about the structure and content of the subject. We called for this support in our 2013 report, and we call for this again now.

Despite all these challenges, this report demonstrates that it is possible to construct a curriculum that is ambitious and achievable. Some schools manage to select the knowledge they want pupils to gain so that it reflects the complex and diverse world that we live in today. They consider what might be collectively enough in the curriculum so that pupils can build an informed conception of the place of ‘religion’ and ‘non-religion’ in the world, (which includes making informed choices about what content, for practical reasons, has to be left out). They make thoughtful decisions about which narratives, texts, case studies and traditions pupils will explore in depth. They enable pupils to discern between different types of claims that different thinkers have about religion and non-religion. They plan carefully for how pupils can use the content of the RE

curriculum to reflect on their own position, including their personal beliefs and attitudes.

We found examples of this ambition in both small and large schools, in both primary and secondary schools, and in both maintained schools and academies. This shows that it is possible, realistic and attainable to have an ambitious RE curriculum, taught capably, which has a positive impact on pupils' lives in the long term. However, without serious attention and support, it is difficult to see how the fortunes of RE – a subject so essential to prepare pupils to make sense of the world deeply and meaningfully – will be reversed.

Recommendations

Curriculum

Schools should:

- ensure that there is a distinct curriculum in place for teaching RE at all key stages. They should make sure that this is rigorous and challenging and that it demonstrably builds on what pupils already know
- carefully select the knowledge they expect pupils to gain to make sense of a complex and diverse world. They should make sure that important content and concepts are clearly identified and sequenced. They should also make sure that curriculums do not contain oversimplifications of traditions, including, where appropriate, non-religious traditions
- balance the breadth and depth of study of religious and non-religious traditions to ensure that these are collectively enough for pupils to make sense of a complex world
- ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in RE over time. Leaders in secondary schools should make sure that the curriculum is designed to meet or exceed exam board specifications (rather than being driven by them)
- make sure that curriculums clearly identify how pupils will develop disciplinary and personal knowledge through the chosen substantive content

Teaching and assessment

Schools should:

- be ambitious for pupils to develop all aspects of knowledge: substantive, ways of knowing and personal knowledge. They should make sure that

teachers have high expectations of what pupils will know and remember
- provide opportunities for pupils to review and build on important knowledge over time. They should make sure that pupils use the knowledge that they gained in previous years as the curriculum becomes increasingly more complex and demanding
- ensure that teaching specifically develops pupils' knowledge of the complexity of religious and non-religious traditions
- develop manageable assessment methods that move beyond the simple recall of factual information. They should check that pupils recall and understand the intended curriculum over time and that the domain of their knowledge is expanding

Systems at subject and school level

Schools should:

- ensure that all teachers have the subject and pedagogical knowledge that they need to teach RE well
- check that the time allocated for teaching RE at all key stages is used effectively so that pupils learn a curriculum that is both broad and deep
- organise the timetable for RE so that gaps between teaching are minimised
- ensure that the curriculum for statutory non-examined RE at key stages 4 and 5 is ambitious and consistently implemented. They should make sure that the RE content is clearly identified and builds on what pupils have learned at key stage 3

Recommendations for others

- The government should urgently update guidance for schools about its statutory expectations for RE. The government should also ensure that there is appropriate clarity about what is taught in RE, and when and where it is taught, for those schools where Ofsted inspects the subject. This would help schools and, particularly, leaders and teachers of RE.
- Those involved in writing syllabuses and commercial curriculums should make sure that these enable pupils to build deep knowledge of the chosen religious and non-religious traditions. They should make sure that curriculums identify what pupils should learn and when. They should ensure that it is clear to teachers when pupils will revisit and review important content and concepts.
- Those involved in commissioning and organising professional development should increase access to, and the range of, training available to all leaders and teachers, to improve their subject knowledge.

- Those involved in training teachers and early career professional development should prioritise helping trainee teachers and those who are newer to the profession to gain the subject knowledge that they need.
- Exam boards should recognise that the way in which schools use exam-style questions is not always appropriate. They should make sure that their communication with schools reflects this.

Primary

Curriculum: what pupils need to know and do

Summary of the research review relevant to curriculum

Through the RE curriculum, pupils build knowledge of the religious and non-religious traditions that have shaped the world: substantive content and concepts. Pupils should increase their depth of knowledge about such traditions, which provides them with detail on which to build ideas and concepts about religion. At the same time, high-quality RE curriculums accurately portray some of the diversity and complexity found within and between different traditions.

In ways that are appropriate to the primary phase, pupils also need to learn ‘how to know’ in RE (how knowledge about religious and non-religious traditions came about). We call this ways of knowing.

In high-quality RE, substantive knowledge and ways of knowing are not separated. For example, leaders might plan for pupils to know how the meanings of a religious text might differ between followers in a particular tradition. Or they might plan for pupils to know different knowledge constructed in different ways, such as the results of national surveys and religious stories.

When pupils learn both substantive content and concepts and ways of knowing, they do so from a position that we define as their personal knowledge. Pupils come to see the relationship between what they learn in the RE curriculum and their own lives as they build awareness of the assumptions that they bring to discussions concerning religious and non-religious traditions.

Substantive knowledge – knowledge of religious and non-religious traditions

Summary of the research review relevant to substantive knowledge

> There are a variety of religious and non-religious traditions that leaders of RE could include within their curriculums. It would be impossible to cover every tradition that could be covered in RE. Leaders therefore have to choose to include some content and leave other content out. The RE curriculum can be considered to include collectively enough RE content when what is included enables pupils to have an accurate overall conception of religion and non-religion in the world. In high-quality RE, pupils reach these ambitious end goals over time. Accuracy should not be confused with making the curriculum unnecessarily complex: there may be times when generalisations are helpful to show those aspects of traditions that bind some communities together, such as creeds.
>
> A high-quality curriculum may build towards greater nuance over time. It will also be coherently planned and well sequenced, considering what specific prior content is needed ahead of future learning. This is particularly the case when introducing sensitive issues in RE. At primary, pupils may need a range of, for example, emotional and knowledge components before teachers introduce social and religious concepts such as death or community. In these ways, the RE curriculum may build towards greater nuance over time. These all illustrate how the curriculum is the progression model.

1. Leaders in this sample of schools said that they recognised the importance of RE and wanted to improve the quality of their educational offer. Just under half of the schools visited as part of the sample had recently introduced new curriculums. Leaders of several other schools were refining existing curriculums.

2. In the schools that inspectors visited, we found that Christian traditions were the most frequently studied. This is in keeping with the legal expectation that curriculums should reflect that traditions in England are ‘in the main Christian’. Jewish and Muslim traditions were the next most frequently studied religious traditions.

3. In schools where RE was strong, leaders had clearly identified what children in the early years needed to know to be ready for the RE curriculum in Year 1. In one school, for example, teachers read stories from religious traditions to children in the Reception Year. As pupils were familiar with these stories, in key stage 1 they were able to build on this knowledge and learn what they might mean to different people.

4. In schools that had Reception classes, inspectors found that children were taught about a range of faiths and cultures. This linked to children's developing knowledge of the world around them. However, some leaders did not have coherent reasons for what they had chosen to include as part of the early years curriculum and why. Traditions selected in the early years did not always link well to the traditions that children would go on to study in key stage 1. In most cases, schools had little rationale for why content such as the Chinese New Year had been selected. The curriculum did not identify key concepts, such as 'festival' or 'new beginnings', that would help pupils at a later stage.

5. There were clear similarities in the ways in which the curriculum was organised across primary schools. For example, in most schools, pupils studied Jewish and Christian traditions at key stage 1. Inspectors found that few leaders could explain why they had organised the curriculum in this way. In roughly half of these schools, pupils did not study Jewish traditions again, and so they did not have the chance to build on this knowledge.

6. In almost all schools, pupils also learned about dharmic faiths. Few schools studied a dharmic faith at key stage 1. More curriculums included content on Hindu traditions than other dharmic traditions, such as Sikh and Buddhist traditions. However, less curriculum time was afforded to dharmic traditions than to Abrahamic traditions. Although this is not a problem in itself, it could become one if, over time, the curriculum did not reflect a range of religious traditions. This could lead to pupils having a skewed understanding of the historic and current religious landscape.

7. A minority of schools specifically allocated curriculum time to teaching about non-religious worldviews. In almost all these schools, this consisted of a unit of work in Year 6. It was rare that schools included systematic study of non-religious worldviews throughout the school curriculum. This could become a problem if pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to recognise and understand that there are religious and non-religious traditions and worldviews.

8. Inspectors found that there was a common misconception about teaching non-religious worldviews. Some teachers thought that explaining to pupils that RE was taught from a non-confessional standpoint equated to teaching about non-religious worldviews. Inspectors found that curriculums typically contained little about both defined non-religious traditions, such as Humanism, and the complexity of contemporary beliefs, such as those of people who might define themselves as 'spiritual' but not 'religious'.

9. Beyond the top-level headings (such as 'Judaism' or 'Christianity'), few schools had precisely identified the concepts and content they wanted pupils to learn. Many schools used either a locally agreed syllabus or a published scheme of work. These identified high-level outcomes of what pupils should know and be able to do. However, these were rarely adapted for individual schools. Schools had not identified, within these broad plans, precisely what pupils would know or decided how and when this would be taught and revisited.

They had not been selective in thinking through the specific content they wanted pupils to understand deeply.

10. In a few schools that followed locally agreed syllabuses, the curriculum went beyond the number of religious traditions that were recommended in the syllabus. Inspectors found that this did not increase pupils' knowledge of each religious tradition. Rather, this spread curriculum time thinly. Pupils did not have the chance to consolidate and deepen their learning. Few pupils could remember what teachers had planned for them to recall. Pupils had misconceptions about what they were learning.

11. Pupils, in general, had a relatively unsophisticated view of religion and non-religion through their study of the RE curriculum. For example, when some Year 6 pupils were asked about what they recalled about Sikh traditions, their response was: 'Be honest, everyone should be treated equally, don't bully other people, listen to other people's ideas.' Teachers had planned an incomplete version of the tenets of this tradition in the curriculum.

12. Few curriculums included planning that reflected the variety of beliefs within a tradition. Inspectors found that it was rarely the case that there was collectively enough content to lead pupils to an accurate understanding of the complexity and diversity of religious traditions. Pupils encountered an oversimplified representation of faiths and practice.

13. In a minority of schools, pupils recalled a great deal about what they had been taught. In one infant school, pupils had a deep understanding of Jewish and Christian traditions. In another school, pupils understood how religions change over time, and could explain different beliefs within Christianity about what happens after death. They could contrast this with knowledge of beliefs about moksha and reincarnation in Hindu traditions. However, in most schools, pupils remembered little of the taught curriculum.

How one school went about selecting collectively enough content to include in the RE curriculum

One school planned its curriculum by adapting the locally agreed syllabus. It selected 2 dharmic traditions and 2 Abrahamic traditions, as well as non-religious worldviews. Staff identified concepts they thought were most important from each tradition. They also had a clear rationale for what they did not study and why.

Leaders constructed the curriculum to focus on the lives of people who follow these traditions. This meant that pupils revisited important content as well as learning that there may be differences within religious traditions. Teachers planned precisely when pupils would encounter new content and when pupils could revisit important concepts such as 'prayer'. This meant

that they had the chance to recall this knowledge and meaningfully compare differences as well as similarities between traditions.

How one school went about sequencing content

One school explained how the similarities between the traditions in Christianity and Judaism helped pupils to understand how there are some shared values. Staff chose stories from the Torah that explained how God forgave the people of Israel when they turned from him. They contrasted these with the stories that Jesus told, such as the story of the prodigal son.

They said that learning about some of the writings in Christian traditions helped pupils when they learned about some of the teaching from the Qur'an in key stage 2. In Year 1, pupils learned about the practice of baptism in the Christian traditions as turning from evil and being welcomed into the family of the Church and a loving relationship with God. In Year 6, pupils contrasted this with the text from the Qur'an: 'Whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy hand.'

14. Inspectors found very little evidence of how schools decided that curriculum content might build up over time to help pupils to learn bigger ideas, such as 'covenant', 'dharma' or 'prophethood', that form part of different religious traditions. In some schools, inspectors found that the curriculum emphasised specific and important vocabulary. Inspectors found that some of these schools made sure that pupils became familiar with these words in context. In others, pupils did not have the chance to use this vocabulary again and forgot how to use these words accurately.

15. Inspectors found that the accuracy of the representation of traditions in the RE curriculum varied. In some schools, pupils became aware of complexities within religious traditions. For example, one pupil said: 'I used to think that all Christians thought being gay was a sin, but now I realise that not every Christian thinks this.' As another example, pupils recognised the idea that 'all Muslim women wear a hijab' is a misconception. In other schools, misconceptions remained because pupils had not retained important knowledge. This was evidenced through the kinds of claims and statements that pupils made. An example of these was when pupils explained that 'some Humanists believe in God because it's up to you'.

16. Curriculums typically focused on main beliefs, lifestyles and festivals. Some schools used these as topic titles for units of learning. There were few instances where curriculums included the challenging questions that religions seek to answer.

17. In a minority of schools, leaders had thought carefully about how RE can support pupils as they encounter sensitive content. They recognised, for example, that they needed to make sure that content about the Holocaust had

appropriate contextualisation. In one school, leaders explained that they had chosen to continue to study Jewish traditions because they knew that pupils would be learning about the Holocaust as part of their history curriculum and would need sufficient background knowledge of the traditions to understand what was being referred to in history. In other schools, this focus was less explicit.

Ways of knowing – learning ‘how to know’ about religion and non-religion

Summary of the research review relevant to ways of knowing

Ways of knowing is about pupils learning and acquiring different ways that scholars can study religious and non-religious traditions. This kind of knowledge is reliable and prevents pupils from depending on views and opinions that are not justified by scholarship. The professional standards of teachers include promoting the value of scholarship. In ways that are appropriate to the primary phase, the RE curriculum can include knowledge that is suitably precise. For example, leaders might add simple detail to make the representations on the curriculum as precise as possible by using qualifying words such as ‘some’, ‘many’ or ‘European’ (instead of blanket phrases such as ‘all Christians’, ‘Sikhs believe’, ‘Muslims practise’) to add clarity. This can help avoid over-simplifying or stereotyping religion and prevent misconceptions about religion from developing. The RE curriculum can also introduce pupils to different types of questions that scholars ask about religion. For example, at primary, the symbol of light in Hindu traditions could be approached by 2 contrasting questions, such as ‘Why do different Hindu stories talk about light?’ and ‘How does a festival of light bring different Hindus together?’ When pupils learn ways of knowing, this can help prevent misconceptions from developing, such as ‘Science is about facts; religion is about opinions’.

Younger pupils will experience ways of knowing before they understand its distinction from substantive knowledge. For example, when they study a topic on ancient Egypt in history and then learn about Jewish stories set in that period, they may ask ‘Did these stories really happen?’ Pupils may gather information about the significance of dharma in Hindu traditions from stories as well as from speaking to people from those traditions. Pupils may be curious about the difference between their own view of the world and those of others. In all these instances, teachers need to know how to respond in suitable ways. For this reason, teachers’ disciplinary knowledge is perhaps even more important than pupils’ at this stage. Effective training

> to develop strong subject knowledge would help to avoid misconceptions and enable teachers to model ways of knowing well.

18. In most of the schools we visited as part of the sample, pupils were taught generalisations, for example that all followers of a particular religion might worship in the same way. Misconceptions communicated to pupils through the curriculum demonstrated a lack of subject knowledge. Pupils were taught ideas that did not reflect accurately the traditions that they were learning about, such as the idea of Christmas as ‘God’s birthday’. However, this was not always the case. However, this was not always the case. In one school, teachers spoke about how they had changed the language that they used to avoid generalisations, for example talking about what ‘most Christians believe’. This stopped pupils developing the misconception that all Christians believe the same thing.

19. Some curriculums contained questions that developed pupils’ disciplinary knowledge through new substantive content. For example, as one Year 6 class worked over time to answer the question ‘How reliable are sources of authority for believers?’ the pupils studied the story of Siddhartha Gautama and the Four Sights to learn how followers of Buddhist traditions interpret such stories. Through their developing disciplinary knowledge, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), began to understand how followers of traditions might interpret the same story in different ways.

20. Other questions gave pupils the opportunity to develop their personal knowledge once they had secured substantive knowledge. For example, when pupils had learned about the story of the Buddha’s enlightenment and understood concepts such as ‘attachment’, they answered the question ‘What do you do when you see suffering?’ Pupils successfully used the substantive knowledge that they had gained in what they wrote. For example, one pupil described enlightenment as more than having an idea: ‘It’s like turning on a light.’

21. However, in too many cases, the curriculum questions that were asked were disconnected from the substantive content that pupils were learning, such as ‘Does everyone need a fresh start?’ Some questions were not appropriate to answer within an RE context: for example, ‘How do you think Muhammad would have felt when he realised that he was a prophet?’

22. Many curriculum questions asked were poor because they elicited narrow yes/no answers. Questions such as ‘Do you think that water is precious in Christian baptism?’ and ‘Is water precious to you?’ did not require pupils to use the substantive knowledge that they might have gained. These were questions that simply required an opinion. As such, they were not fit for purpose.

23. Curriculum questions were not always anchored in disciplinary discussions. For example, sometimes pupils were asked to respond to the story of the Nativity as though they were one of the characters. This required pupils to

guess or suggest responses, rather than use the texts in the gospel narratives as evidence for their answers. Questions such as ‘How would you feel?’ were not approached in a way that built pupils’ grasp of different ways of knowing. Pupils did not have sufficient knowledge of the differences in the gospel narratives to be able to explain the significance of these in the accounts.

24. Most schools said that they had artefacts from different faiths. However, they were not always used in a way that developed pupils’ ways of knowing. Pupils in one school had been learning about Sikh traditions. They recalled some knowledge about who Guru Nanak was. Pupils enjoyed handling objects that represented the 5 Ks. They could suggest what they were when presented with them for the first time. However, they did not have enough knowledge of Sikh traditions to be able to develop this when they were asked to guess what the symbolic meaning of them was.

25. A few schools had identified important passages from religious texts that they thought would help pupils to know more about religious traditions. Some curriculums were written with the aim that pupils would know more about how some traditions were connected. For example, schools explained that they wanted pupils to understand that Christians would know stories that were also found in the Jewish Torah. In a few cases, teachers had higher expectations of how pupils would gain knowledge from and about these texts. They started to help pupils develop knowledge of how different people might interpret religious texts. For example, older pupils in one school considered the different messages of the 2 different narratives of the birth of Jesus in Christian traditions.

26. Although a few primary schools recognised the importance of laying foundations that would enable pupils to recognise different ways of knowing in RE, most did not. Most schools had not chosen to include this as part of their curriculums. Some did not see the relevance of this. Few schools considered different disciplinary aspects, such as discussing where, around the world, followers of different traditions lived in the past and live today.

27. In the few schools that did include ways of knowing content, curriculums were organised around different questions that groups of thinkers ask. For example, some content related to topics that might interest social scientists. In one school, the curriculum specifically identified opportunities for pupils to learn about Christian traditions around the world. Younger pupils learned about ‘my life as a Christian’ in contrasting locations, such as Liverpool and Israel. They learned about rites of passage in Britain and in other countries around the world, such as Australia. Older pupils looked at maps and statistics about religious demographics in countries around the world.

How one school went about developing ways of knowing in the RE curriculum

One school wanted pupils to be able to understand, before they went to secondary school, the different kinds of questions that scholars might ask about sacred texts. The school wanted pupils to know that not all followers would necessarily gain the same meaning from texts.

The curriculum identified the stories that pupils would learn in key stage 1. For example, pupils listened to the story of the ‘Two gardens of Sheba’. They thought about how, to Muslims, faith in Allah was more important than material things. They considered how the story might be interpreted by different Muslims in different ways.

In lower key stage 2, pupils learned about how familiar stories fitted into a religious text as a whole. They learned about the beliefs and attitudes that prevailed when the texts were written and thought about the impact that this had on the stories. So, for example, before they read the story of ‘The good Samaritan’, they learned about how Jewish people might have thought about Samaritans. They learned about the roles of the priest and Levites so that they could understand what the story might have meant to contemporary audiences as well as to Christians today.

Finally, in upper key stage 2, pupils looked at different translations of the story of creation in Genesis. They thought about how people from different Christian traditions understood and used these passages in the 21st century.

Personal knowledge – pupils’ awareness of the presuppositions and values they bring to studying religious and non-religious traditions

Summary of the research review relevant to personal knowledge

Pupils bring to the RE classroom a ‘position’: their viewpoint or perspective on the world. This position has been described using a range of words such as ‘personal worldview’ or ‘positionality’; we define it as personal knowledge.

In high-quality RE curriculums, leaders are precise in how they select content to develop pupils’ personal knowledge. For example, leaders may identify a specific concept such as ‘searching’, ‘salvation’ or ‘rejoicing’ when exploring Christian readings of ‘The parable of the lost sheep’. Pupils can reflect on these specific concepts and consider how they might value them in similar or different ways – or may not value them at all. This is particularly important because pupils may not see the immediate value of that content. The focus on both knowledge of religious traditions and on what that

> knowledge contributes to pupils' self-understanding is well established in RE. Pupils are free to express their own religious or non-religious identities, and these may or may not change because of their studying RE (and, indeed, there is no obligation for them to change).

28. Most schools visited claimed that their curriculums developed pupils' personal knowledge. Few had specifically planned how and when this would happen. Some believed that it was an inevitable by-product of teaching RE. As one leader stated, 'It just comes out.' Other leaders expected teachers to build in opportunities for reflection. However, these were rarely built into the curriculum systematically.

29. When teaching concepts within specific religious and non-religious traditions, some schools used appropriate stories to help pupils to understand significant concepts. For example, one school used the story of Siddhartha Gautama to help pupils reflect on how they reacted when they witnessed suffering. This helped them to answer the question, 'Where would you go to think about something important to you?' In the weakest cases, specific content was taught in ways that were too often artificially separated from their in-depth contexts.

30. In curriculums that did include opportunities for personal reflection, the point at which these happened differed. Some units built towards questions that pupils would consider, so that they would draw on the substantive knowledge gained across the year to answer them. Pupils could develop their personal knowledge through being taught the substantive knowledge.

31. In other curriculums, pupils were asked to develop their personal knowledge first. This meant that they did not use the substantive knowledge that they gained throughout the course of the unit to deepen their thinking. Pupils did not always reflect on the RE content that leaders had identified. For example, pupils discussed their own ideas about what they would do if they were powerful, without relating this back to the views about power from within the Christian and Islamic traditions that they had been learning about.

32. Approaches to teaching personal knowledge without considered connections to substantive concepts and content were problematic. In one example, pupils were asked to reflect on the Christmas story before they understood what Christians believed about it. This led to unhelpful misconceptions developing, such as the belief that it is 'God's birthday'. Pupils did not always have the knowledge of the concepts related to the story of the Nativity that teachers thought that they had. So, for example, when asked to give 3 reasons why God sent Jesus into the world, one pupil wrote, 'To be king, be kind and pick up litter.'

33. Sometimes, aspects of the curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) were conflated with RE. This meant that the kinds of personal knowledge that pupils were acquiring did not meaningfully draw on the

religious traditions that they were studying. For example, in one school, pupils were asked to explain when they might be kind to others and how they might show love to the world, or to reflect on the life of significant individuals. Teachers did not expect them to use what they had learned to help them to explain what they felt. This meant that tasks were poorly linked to the curriculum, and expectations of what pupils would know and be able to do were low.

34. Some schools wanted pupils to use their substantive knowledge to develop their personal knowledge. For example, in one school, pupils in key stage 2 used examples that they already knew about to explain the idea of different Christians trying to build God's kingdom on Earth. Pupils described how Elizabeth Fry 'did much to alleviate appalling prison conditions in the 18th and 19th centuries'. Pupils recalled the response of Christians in their local area, for example running a local foodbank and the work of the Salvation Army. This informed their own reflections: 'It is hard to believe that poverty and hunger really exist in the UK in this day and age. The truth is, it's a growing reality.'

35. However, pupils did not always have the substantive knowledge that they needed to be able to think and reflect more deeply. This was the case for pupils with SEND as well as their peers. For example, in one class, where pupils were learning about the events in Holy Week, they were asked how they would feel if they were Pontius Pilate, or Mary the mother of Jesus. However, they did not know enough to be able to answer this. Pupils were still learning the events of the story and were not able to give their personal ideas about the significance of these.

How one school went about developing pupils' personal knowledge

One school made deliberate choices about when and how pupils would develop their personal knowledge. The curriculum included specific units that would elicit pupils' reflections at the end of the academic year, so that pupils had built up substantive knowledge of what Christians, Jews, agnostics and atheists might believe. They made sure that pupils knew that there were complexity and variation in these religions and beliefs, as they had studied them the previous year.

The curriculum identified specific vocabulary and important concepts, such as creation and stewardship. Teachers checked that pupils remembered these. Pupils were familiar with texts, such as the accounts of the creation of the world in the book of Genesis. Pupils had learned about these stories earlier in their school career. Having secured this knowledge, pupils were able to use it to explain what they believed themselves. Teachers specifically planned questions so that pupils would come to evaluate an argument and learn to use the language that they needed to explain their own ideas.

Teaching the curriculum

Summary of the research review in relation to teaching the curriculum

> High-quality teaching in RE enables pupils to remember the curriculum in the long term. Teachers adopt well-chosen approaches that recognise that different forms of knowledge might require different teaching activities. When teachers are choosing which methods and strategies to use, their decisions should depend on the specific type of content being taught. Importantly, methods and strategies are fit for purpose when they lead to pupils remembering the RE curriculum. Suitable methods are appropriate for what is to be learned (the curriculum object), are well matched to what pupils already know (because they will need certain knowledge to succeed at a task), and prompt pupils to remember previous content. There are a range of classroom activities that may well be enjoyable for pupils in RE; not all of these will lead to pupils remembering what they have been taught in the long term.

36. It was notable that, when inspectors visited lessons, over 50% were focused on developing pupils' knowledge of Christian traditions. However, scrutiny of pupils' work indicated that the curriculum covered a broader range of religious traditions over the year. That said, work about Abrahamic faiths was found far more frequently than work about dharmic faiths.

37. In some schools, the teaching activities chosen were appropriate because they were well suited to pupils' existing knowledge. However, in some cases, pupils did not expect to have to use what they had learned before. For example, pupils learning about Mother Theresa considered quotations that gave reasons why she chose to help those who were suffering. Few pupils were able to relate this to what they had learned about Jesus and understand that, as a follower of Jesus, she was copying what he did. Implicit links that were evident to teachers did not support pupils as well as teachers hoped they might.

38. Before covering sensitive content, schools used a range of examples to prepare pupils for this. They made sure that pupils had the background knowledge that they needed. For example, pupils in one school were learning about places of stillness and calm in Christianity and Islam. Teachers planned to visit a burial ground to enhance this teaching. However, they were also mindful of pupils' individual experiences and how they could prepare them for challenging topics. They thought carefully about suitable activities to explore sensitive content about death and afterlife, particularly for pupils who had suffered bereavement.

39. Many pupils did not have enough substantive knowledge to do extended writing activities or topic tasks. In addition, some activities did not support pupils to develop their knowledge of the topic in authentic ways. For example, some

activities were anachronistic or focused on developing writing in genres. For example, teachers asked pupils to write from the perspective of a religious and historical figure who would almost certainly have been illiterate. These tasks displayed a lack of teachers' subject knowledge and did not help pupils to build their knowledge of RE-specific content.

40. Pupils typically responded positively in RE lessons. They told inspectors that they recognised the importance of learning about faiths and different people's beliefs. However, pupils spoke less favourably about times when they had to do research to find out about faiths. Pupils found this difficult because they had insufficient prior knowledge to do this effectively.

How one school approached teaching the curriculum

One school had recently developed a new curriculum. The subject leader had worked closely with staff to make sure that they had the right subject knowledge to teach the new units of work. The subject leader supported them as they were teaching the unit so that she could make changes in the curriculum in subsequent years. Teachers commented that they felt well supported and could develop their teaching.

When teaching about significant Christians, such as Martin Luther King, leaders included appropriate references to the Bible to explain what he believed and where this came from. This gave pupils the knowledge that they needed to respond to the question 'How often do you think you should forgive someone?' Pupils were in turn able to use passages from the Bible to explain their ideas.

Assessment

Summary of the research review in relation to assessment

> In our RE research review (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education), we highlighted that there has been an overall lack of clarity about what exactly is being assessed in RE. For assessment to be fit for purpose, leaders and teachers need to be clear about what they are testing and why. We focus on the kind of assessment that checks whether pupils have learned the content of the RE curriculum. Approaches to assessment that do not check whether pupils have learned the curriculum are not very useful in determining pupils' progress in RE. In RE, assessment does not have to be used excessively.

Types of assessment and assessing types of knowledge in RE

Summary of the research review relevant to types of assessment and assessing types of knowledge

> Assessment has different purposes in the RE curriculum. Formative assessment is granular. It can provide 'in the moment' feedback for pupils. Formative assessment can be used as part of adaptive teaching that, for example, responds to pupils' misconceptions. It can also give teachers very clear feedback on the next steps for teaching RE content. Problems can occur when schools use formative assessment for other purposes, such as accountability. Summative assessment checks whether pupils have learned portions of the curriculum. Those portions increase over time, as pupils are taught more. Schools can use more simple assessment tasks (such as multiple-choice questions) to isolate portions of knowledge, including vocabulary and basic concepts. However, they are a blunter tool for assessing ways of knowing or personal knowledge. Personal knowledge, due to its highly personal nature, might be an aspect of RE that should be unencumbered by assessment.

41. The primary schools sampled used whole-school assessment systems rather than assessment designed to specifically check pupils' substantive and disciplinary knowledge in RE. For example, teachers used some of the same techniques and practices that were used in other subjects, such as skilfully using questions to check what pupils could remember. Questions focused on checking what substantive knowledge the pupils had retained, or whether pupils could find that information quickly in their books. For example, pupils answered questions in simple sentences to explain why babies receive a candle when they are baptised.

42. Summative checks of what pupils have learned in RE did not feature as part of typical school practice. In schools that did use these, assessment seemed to be on a formative basis, lesson by lesson. For example, in one school, leaders explained that teaching began with 'recaps', such as 'We learned about Judaism last term. Can you tell your partner what you remember about Hannukah? Now can you tell me what your partner just told you?'

43. Where RE-specific assessment did take place, it focused on substantive knowledge, particularly vocabulary and definitions of concepts. Schools did not attempt to assess personal knowledge. A few schools anticipated that pupils might not recall some important vocabulary. During the lessons, pupils were reminded of words that might be new to them. Teachers then recapped this during the story they were telling. Pupils used the correct vocabulary to explain the meaning of the story, demonstrating how they were building their conceptual knowledge.

44. Very few schools could explain how they used assessment. In most of the sampled primary schools, the curriculum was not being used as the progression model. Few teachers were able to tell whether the curriculum was remembered over time.

45. Many schools recognised that they were not using assessment well enough in RE. Some had appropriately prioritised establishing a new curriculum first. They were mindful of the fact that they needed to adopt an approach that checked gains in substantive knowledge in a manageable way to avoid undue workload for teachers. Few schools had incorporated developing ways of knowing into their curriculum. Those that had included appropriate elements, such as representations of where followers of different traditions were most populous, did not assess these. They were justifiably not planning assessment of personal knowledge.

Relating assessment expectations to the RE curriculum

Summary of the research review relevant to assessment approaches that use the curriculum as the progression model

> The curriculum maps out the journey of what it means ‘to get better’ at RE. So, when teachers want to know whether pupils have made progress in RE, they are asking a summative question: Have pupils learned and remembered the RE curriculum? If pupils have learned this curriculum, then they have made progress. Assessment models in RE that use ‘scales’, ‘ladders’ or ‘levels’ of generic skills to determine progress are not valid assessment models to assess specific RE curriculums. Assessment practices that report to parents, which are based on something other than checking whether pupils have learned the curriculum, or tasks that do not enable pupils to demonstrate what they have learned from earlier in the curriculum, are not useful. Good-quality assessment in RE relates assessment expectations precisely to the RE curriculum.

46. In most schools that inspectors visited, there was no assessment in place. In some of these schools, the curriculum was new, but not in all. Schools said that introducing assessment was a priority.

47. Some said that they had identified that the ways in which they had used assessment in the past were ineffective. Schools had stopped using them because they did not tell teachers what pupils could or could not remember. They said that they had focused instead on getting the curriculum right. This shows their sensible prioritising of securing appropriate knowledge first.

48. Some schools said that their assessments were based on end-of-key-stage statements in locally agreed syllabuses. These were often organised as end-of-year statements. They described high-level outcomes such as: ‘Observe and consider different dimensions of religion so that they can explore and show understanding of similarities and differences between different religions and worldviews.’ Statements like this describe a high-level end goal, rather than an assessment outcome. However, leaders had not spent time breaking down these high-level objectives into smaller units of knowledge to cover in their school curriculums. They did not provide a framework for checking how pupils’ knowledge grew and deepened over time. As such, these assessments were of little use for making reliable and valid judgements about what pupils knew and could remember.

49. Because schools had not identified component elements in the curriculum, it was not clear what specific content needed to be learned and taught in lessons, units or year groups to meet these abstract or generalised statements. There was not an agreed expectation of what pupils should be able to remember for teachers to check. Assessment, where it took place, did not typically check whether pupils retained this knowledge to be ready for the learning that they would meet next.

50. In a small number of schools, leaders checked what pupils could remember. They did this through speaking to groups of pupils to check whether pupils had learned the intended curriculum. They also sampled pupils’ work.

How one school used assessment effectively

In one infant school, the RE curriculum was very clearly defined. Teachers knew precisely what knowledge they expected pupils to have before they left for the junior school. This included important words which pupils would need to know, the stories that they would recall and the conceptual knowledge that they would gain through listening to stories, thereby learning about the ways in which believers lived in a range of countries.

Teachers used assessment tasks that checked important vocabulary. They also used discussions to check what pupils could explain during lessons. Teachers made sure that they listened to what pupils with SEND and those who were disadvantaged could tell them. Swift verbal explanations from teaching assistants helped pupils who had not understood something, or who had missed a lesson, to catch up. Teachers also checked pupils’ written work.

This gave teachers deep knowledge of what pupils had and had not remembered. For example, they identified that pupils were able to explain the importance of Shabbat to Jewish people. But they also knew that pupils found it difficult to recall a symbolic meaning of the Chanukiah.

Systems at subject and school level

Summary of the research review in relation to systems, culture, policies and prioritisation

> All schools that are state funded, including free schools and academies, are legally required to provide RE as part of their curriculum. They are required to teach RE to all pupils (who are of statutory school age) at all key stages, except those who have been withdrawn. The way in which schools structure and organise this is one indication of the quality of education.

Summary of the research review in relation to prioritising school RE

> How the RE curriculum appears on the timetabled curriculum (how it is 'classified') may be an indication of the extent to which a school prioritises RE. Problems can emerge when the subject is too weakly classified (for example, a key stage 2 topic approach that provides pupils with historical and geographical knowledge, but relatively little RE content). What limits the quality of RE can be a lack of scope: there is not enough time to teach a high-quality subject curriculum. Subject organisations suggest that in about a quarter of primary schools, fewer than 45 minutes of teaching time a week were given to RE. Staffing decisions can also affect the quality of RE: at primary, RE classes are often the ones deprived of a main or specialist teacher. A report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on RE found that less than half of primary schools allocated the main teacher to teaching RE.

51. Inspectors found that some RE was being taught in all the primary schools visited. However, the quality and quantity of this varied widely. In 3 schools, RE was not taught in every year group.

52. In a very small number of schools, there was not a distinct curriculum for RE. In these schools, it was incorporated with PSHE or with other humanities subjects. It is worth noting that the blurring of subject boundaries in these cases did not enhance the quality of RE for pupils.

53. In most schools, RE was taught by class teachers. Some had changed to this model recently. This generally applied to both key stage 1 and key stage 2.

54. In most schools visited, RE was taught for around 36 hours at key stage 1 and 45 hours at key stage 2 over the academic year. In schools where teaching time was less than this, the quality of RE was weaker. However, the quality of RE was not decided by time allocation alone. In some schools where the timetable did allow for this amount of time, the curriculum did not have the

impact that leaders intended. However, in the schools where the quality of the planned and taught RE curriculum was stronger, RE featured on the timetable weekly for at least an hour at key stages 1 and 2.

55. RE is a statutory subject for all pupils of statutory school age. However, aspects of the early years foundation stage framework (which is also statutory) include content on religious and cultural communities. All schools that had Reception classes included some of this content. How it was planned and delivered was of variable quality.

56. Inspectors found that the way in which time allocations were organised differed. In schools where RE was solely taught through special RE days, the quality of RE was weaker. However, such days sometimes enhanced the quality of RE in schools where there were also timetabled weekly lessons.

57. In over 30% of schools, RE was taught fortnightly or in blocked half terms, alternating with PSHE. RE was weaker in these schools. Where RE was not taught weekly, pupils remembered less. Pupils did not have the opportunities that they needed to return to important content and recall it.

58. In nearly 70% of schools in the sample, RE had at least a weekly timetabled lesson. In almost all cases, these lessons were taught by the class teacher.

59. In almost a third of primary schools, RE was taught in other ways. These included fortnightly lessons, a half-termly rotation with PSHE or drop-down days. Where RE was not as strong, these ways of organising the timetable for RE were more prevalent.

Teacher education and professional development in RE

Summary of the research review in relation to developing teachers' knowledge and expertise

> Although there are clearly strong practitioners within the RE subject community, it is likely that school leaders will have teachers who do not have qualifications in RE. About half of primary school teachers lack confidence in teaching RE. Many primary teachers' views about RE are significantly shaped by the variability of RE they observe in schools during their training. School leaders can mitigate some of these factors by carefully considering the professional development needed to improve teachers' subject knowledge. Areas of professional development for teachers include: RE policy knowledge, RE content knowledge, RE pedagogical content knowledge, and research in RE.

60. Some schools recognised the importance of professional development. In many cases, professional development took place when an agreed syllabus was launched or a new curriculum adopted. This training was often only for the subject leader. Some subject leaders used this knowledge to support staff when new curriculums were introduced. Some had time at the beginning of the year to give an overview of what teachers needed to cover. Teachers appreciated the support. However, this was usually in response to individual requests, rather than following a systematic plan.

61. Over 60% of teachers in the primary schools sampled had not received any professional development in RE about what they were supposed to teach or the way in which they should teach it. Teachers explained that this meant that they sometimes did not understand what they had to teach well enough. One said: ‘It’s a good framework, but we don’t necessarily know which RE concepts we are trying to develop.’

62. It was rarely the case that teachers received any professional development that developed their knowledge of RE policy or research. In schools where RE was stronger, staff had benefited from some professional development. In most cases, this was focused on developing their knowledge of the content of the curriculum and pedagogies appropriate to RE.

63. A few subject leaders had visited classes as a way of supporting their colleagues. However, most did not receive any dedicated leadership time to improve the quality of RE in their school.

Secondary

Curriculum: what pupils need to know and do

Summary of the research review relevant to the curriculum

> Through the RE curriculum, pupils should build knowledge of the religious and non-religious traditions that have shaped the world: substantive content and concepts. This knowledge includes knowledge of artefacts, texts, concepts and the diverse lived experiences of individuals who are part of living traditions. Pupils increase their depth of knowledge about such traditions, which provides them with detail on which to build ideas, concepts and theories about religion. At the same time, high-quality RE curriculums should accurately portray the diversity and complexity of religion and non-religion, such as the fluid boundaries between different traditions.

Pupils also need to learn ways of knowing. In high-quality RE, substantive knowledge and disciplinary knowledge are not treated as separate. Leaders might ensure that pupils learn not only selected content, but also tools with which to explore that content. This may include knowledge of well-established methods, processes and tools of scholarship, and of different types of conversation that academic communities use to learn about religion and non-religion.

When pupils learn both substantive content and concepts and ways of knowing, they do so from a position: that of personal knowledge. Pupils come to see the relationship between what they learn on the RE curriculum and their own lives, as they build awareness of the assumptions that they bring to discussions about religious and non-religious traditions. This kind of knowledge also occurs through tensions between their own perspectives and the perspectives of others.

Our research review highlighted a range of factors that affect quality in RE, such as what is included in the RE curriculum, which we call ‘curriculum intent’, and how that curriculum is taught and assessed, which we call ‘curriculum implementation’. When pupils have, in fact, learned and remembered what was planned and taught, we call this ‘curriculum impact’. Weaker RE would leave pupils with scant subject knowledge, leaving them ill-prepared to engage with the kinds of diversity and complexity of lived traditions in the modern world and their histories.

Substantive knowledge – knowledge of religious and non-religious traditions

Summary of the research review relevant to substantive knowledge

There are many religious and non-religious traditions that leaders of RE could include within their curriculums. It would be impossible to cover them all. Leaders therefore have to choose to include some content and leave other content out. The RE curriculum can be considered to include collectively enough RE content when what is included enables pupils to be prepared to engage in a complex multi-religious and multi-secular world.

In high-quality RE, pupils work towards these ambitious end goals over time. For example, leaders might consider the mix of content that would be suitable to give pupils an accurate overall conception of religion and non-religion in the world by the end of the curriculum journey. A high-quality curriculum may build towards greater nuance in stages. For example,

> leaders may aim to develop pupils' knowledge over time towards theories about religion and non-religion developed by communities of experts. These examples illustrate how the curriculum is the progression model. By the end of the curriculum, pupils should possess accurate knowledge of the complexity and diversity of global religion and non-religion.
>
> A high-quality RE curriculum will also be well sequenced, in such a way that it identifies the specific prior content that is needed for of future content. This is crucial when introducing particularly sensitive or controversial issues in RE, such as topics that relate to perceptions of religion and terror, or the way in which the Holocaust (or Shoah) has shaped Jewish traditions. Pupils will likely need many knowledge components – political, social, emotional, intellectual – in order to study topics such as these in a meaningful way.

64. Given the quality of curriculums found in the majority of schools sampled, it is unlikely that their pupils would build up an overall diverse and rich conception of religion and non-religion. This is because most curriculums lacked collectively enough content to achieve it. Most lacked depth of study in specific religious traditions, which meant that there was a weak conceptual basis for pupils to make links with other traditions.

65. With a handful of exceptions where RE was not taught at all, key stage 3 was the main or only place in the secondary school curriculum where all pupils studied RE content. Fewer than a fifth of schools visited included any discernible RE content at key stages 4 and in sixth form, for those pupils who had not chosen to study the subject at GCSE or A level. This is despite RE being a statutory subject for pupils throughout their schooling.

Key stage 3

66. In this phase, the religious tradition most studied in depth was Christianity. This is not surprising, given that Christianity is the only religious tradition specifically named in law. The next most frequently studied tradition was Buddhism.

67. Most school curriculums in the secondary schools visited covered a range of Abrahamic and dharmic traditions at key stage 3. Dharmic traditions were taught as discrete units, mainly towards the start of the key stage. In most cases, these traditions were not then referenced again at a later stage in the curriculum, so pupils did not have the chance to deepen their knowledge. If the key stage 4 curriculum then concentrated only on the Abrahamic faiths, this would prevent it from giving a balanced view of the variety of world religions.

68. Beyond the top-level headings (such as 'Buddhist practices'), subject leaders in about half of schools had identified some important content that they wanted pupils to learn, such as existentialism or meditation in Buddhism. They specified central tenets of faith in Abrahamic traditions, such as the 10 commandments or the concept of the law and mitzvot. So, pupils might have

met the ideas of morality and sin and the belief in the omniscient nature of God before they undertook work about the problem of evil. However, curriculums did not typically identify the important concepts that connected content. For example, pupils would benefit from knowing how the concept of ahimsa was understood by Gandhi in the context of the struggle for Indian independence or how it might influence what followers of Hindu traditions thought about how animals should be treated.

69. In schools where concepts were identified, pupils rarely had the opportunity to return to them to see how they connected with similar or contrasting concepts in other traditions. So, for example, pupils in one school learned about ‘stewardship’ when they studied Sikh traditions in Year 7. They learned about the concept of ‘sewa’ or selfless service. However, they did not then revisit any of this knowledge in the rest of key stages 3 or 4. Although there is no obligation for those traditions to be studied again, in this school there were plenty of other topics or opportunities within the RE curriculum that would have allowed pupils to revisit this concept through contrasting it with comparable concepts from other traditions. Without this linking, pupils were unable to build up a connected conceptual framework about religion and non-religion.

70. In this phase in particular, if pupils studied a particular belief system during one year, they did not usually return to it in the next to deepen their understanding. In some schools, pupils studied dharmic faiths one year and the Abrahamic faiths the next. When links between traditions were emphasised, they were too superficial. Some schools had identified what they thought were ‘comparable’ elements, such as religions having festivals, holy books or founders. However, these elements do not actually apply to all religious traditions. Examples of those elements that could be compared between different traditions, such as ummah in Islam and the idea of the Khalsa in Sikhism were not always specified in curriculum plans.

71. In around half the secondary schools visited, RE curriculums did not include non-religious worldviews. Some schools commented that this was because of a lack of time. Others stated that they limited their curriculums to what they thought that pupils needed to know to be successful in public examinations at the end of key stage 4. For example, one comment included: ‘The exam board doesn’t call for it.’ Some curriculums were specifically designed to focus on key stage 3 content that mirrors the specifications of the religious studies GCSE. This narrows the scope of the curriculum. Some exposure to curriculum content that is not set out in an exam specification can be helpful. This is true of both religious and non-religious traditions. For instance, learning content about non-religious worldviews at key stage 3 can help prepare pupils to learn how different groups approach social ideas about equality, marriage and the end of life, which they may study at key stage 4. Alternatively, learning about the significance of the characters of Isaac and Ishmael in Jewish traditions at key stage 3 can help with the study of Islam later, even if Judaism is not part of the key stage 4 course.

72. Most curriculums lacked end goals that captured the diversity, fluidity and complexity of global religion and non-religion. Some pupils said that the curriculum did not reflect the place that religious and non-religious experience and thinking actually holds in people's lives.

73. Notably, in 4 schools, pupils told inspectors that the curriculum did not reflect their experience of living in a complex world. Some pupils said that they recognised the importance of learning about a variety of religious traditions. However, they commented on the need to make sense of more complex, contemporary expressions of human experience, such as being spiritual but not religious For example, one pupil said: 'We learn what the Pope thinks about something, and that's fine. But what about other thinkers, such as Humanists? Or other thinkers? It's not like I'm not interested in learning about Christianity. I am, and I understand why it's important. We're a majority Christian country. But it's not the only way that people think. We're all far more interested when we get to discuss what people are thinking now.'

74. In schools where RE was strongest, pupils recalled what they had been taught and made clear links between what they had learned before and what they were learning then. They could:

- explain the complexity within individual religious traditions as well as the diversity of religious and non-religious traditions
- use a range of sources, from interviews to textual analysis, to make sense of how different people see religion
- explain how they had spent time exploring significant concepts such as 'prophethood' or 'trinity'
- recall how what they had learned about philosophy developed from Year 7 and could explain particular philosophers' points of view
- give examples of how stereotypes have been challenged, such as the misconception that scientific professions are incompatible with belief in God

75. However, in approximately half the secondary schools in the sample, there were significant weaknesses in the curriculum. In these schools, pupils, including those with SEND, had limited recall of what they had been taught. They found it difficult to explain what they had learned about diverse expressions of religious traditions, such as Christian denominations. In these schools, where RE was taught in thematic units, pupils could not distinguish between followers of dharmic and Abrahamic faiths.

How one school went about selecting collectively enough content to include in the RE curriculum

Leaders wanted pupils to understand that the breadth and diversity in religious experience. They made sure that pupils had a strong prior knowledge of monotheistic faiths and, in particular, Christian traditions.

On this basis, in Year 7, the curriculum included an introduction to the dimensions of religions. Leaders wove in further examples of traditions, such as Paganism and Zoroastrianism, to illustrate different aspects. Pupils had the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of how religion could be categorised by considering how well these applied to the variety of traditions examined. Pupils also revisited what they knew about Abrahamic faiths when they encountered Rastafarianism.

The curriculum also included non-religious worldviews. For example, pupils learned about a non-religious worldview systematically in Year 8. They learned how Humanists decide what to believe and their views on death, discrimination and God. They revisited some of this content in Year 9, when they learned about theories of the problem of evil.

Leaders had selected sufficient traditions to ensure that the curriculum amounted to a high-quality subject education, collectively enough. Leaders organised the curriculum so that pupils had the chance to deepen their knowledge year on year.

76. In around half the schools visited, the curriculum was organised so that pupils revisited component elements. All pupils, including those with SEND, accessed this curriculum. For example, in one school, the Year 7 curriculum included an introduction to philosophy framed around the question ‘Does God exist?’ It also contained a focused study of Christian and Buddhist traditions about life and death. The curriculum built on this in Year 8 through pupils exploring the problem of evil and religious responses to suffering. This gave pupils the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the events of Holy Week in Christian traditions and the concept of attachment in Buddhist traditions.

77. In some schools, the curriculum covered many Abrahamic and dharmic faiths in one year. In some cases, this meant that pupils gained a superficial understanding of the diversity and complexity within religious traditions. For example, in one school, pupils did not have secure and broad enough prior knowledge of Islamic traditions to be able to comment knowledgeably about issues relating to the participation of Muslim women in sport.

78. Only about a third of curriculums included content that addressed the complexity and variation in religious and non-religious traditions. This led to inaccurate representations of traditions.

79. Pupils were presented with stereotypes. This was evidenced through the kinds of claims and statements that pupils made, such as ‘Jesus was like a saint’.

80. In many cases, pupils were taught generalisations about, for example, Christianity and Islam, rather than how different Christians and Muslims have constructed ideas about Christianity and Islam. This was revealed when dealing

with moral issues about sexuality. Pupils in one school had developed misconceptions, such as ‘Christians don’t like gay things’.

81. The great majority of secondary RE curriculums did not equip pupils for controversial or sensitive content in RE through prior, well-sequenced preparatory content. In about 40% of the schools visited, the curriculum focused on developing pupils’ knowledge of religious and non-religious perspectives on ethical issues. However, this did not guarantee that they had sufficient prior knowledge to handle controversial or sensitive content. In most of the schools, pupils lacked vital background knowledge about relevant aspects of different traditions. For example, in one school, pupils did not know enough about foundational beliefs within Christian traditions to be able to knowledgeably consider Christian perspectives on moral issues such as abortion. One notable exception was a school where leaders had ensured that pupils had completed an in-depth study of Jewish traditions before they welcomed a Holocaust survivor to speak to pupils. Leaders said that this meant that pupils had a more mature grasp of the subject and were able to ask questions that built on this knowledge.

How one school went about sequencing content to ensure that pupils were well prepared for controversial and sensitive content

Subject leaders developed a sequence of learning that developed pupils’ thinking over time.

In early key stage 3, the study of ethical questions was introduced alongside an introduction to arguments about the existence of God. The curriculum included clear content around the in-depth study of Judaeo-Christian traditions, including moral codes such as the 10 commandments. This was built on again at the end of key stage 3, as pupils revisited learning about philosophical and religious thinkers when considering the problem of evil. Pupils secured deep knowledge of both religious traditions and philosophical enquiry.

This was built on in key stages 4 and 5 with questions that required pupils to consider the possible tensions between the rights of an individual and particular religious perspectives. This knowledge became embedded, so that pupils in Year 13 understood the complexity of sensitive issues, such as euthanasia and – specifically – the rights of an individual in a persistent vegetative state.

Key stages 4 and 5

82. In schools that offered a qualification in religious studies at key stage 4, the 2 most common traditions studied were Christianity and Islam.

83. In approximately one third of schools, all pupils followed either the short or full religious studies GCSE course.

84. Of the approximately two thirds of schools in which pupils did not take a qualification in religious studies, very few continued to give pupils specific RE lessons at key stage 4. Most of these curriculums were weak and did not typically build on the knowledge that pupils had gained in key stage 3.

85. Most of the above schools combined RE with PSHE on the timetable. When inspectors considered these curriculums, RE formed a very small proportion of the content. Schools had not clearly defined what pupils should be able to do and know in RE by the end of key stage 4. In some cases, it was indiscernible. These sessions were typically taught during tutor time. In a very few cases, it was part of a clearly planned curriculum. In most, it was not. It was not clear how pupils would get better at RE during these sessions.

86. In schools where there was no statutory RE timetabled at key stage 4, pupils retained little of what they had learned during key stage 3. This was particularly the case for content about dharmic traditions.

87. Sixty per cent of the secondary schools visited had a sixth form. Provision in these varied in quality. In one third of schools, there was no provision at all for the teaching of RE. In another third, leaders said that RE was considered to be in the same part of the curriculum as other subjects such as PSHE or careers education, information, advice and guidance. In some cases, these curriculums built on what pupils had learned before, for example through topics such as stereotypical representations of religions in the media, or Islamophobia. However, in other cases, there was little content that was identifiable as RE. Some schools said that RE was taught during tutor time. However, there was very little evidence that demonstrated how these sessions developed pupils' knowledge in RE.

88. Curriculums in examination classes were better planned, and those who taught RE in the sixth form demonstrated secure subject knowledge. Pupils who were studying for A levels in religious studies or philosophy made secure links with their prior learning. For example, pupils could recall what they had learned about the Eightfold Path (magga) to nibbana/nirvana and the 5 moral precepts (as part of Buddhist ethical teaching) when they considered the difference between the intentions of lay people and monks.

Ways of knowing – learning how to know about religion and non-religion

Summary of the research review relevant to ways of knowing

> Ways of knowing is about being scholarly in RE. When pupils learn ways of knowing in RE, they can build knowledge of scholarly tools, methods and processes. They may also build knowledge of types of conversations that academics have about religious and non-religious traditions. They can then develop awareness of how these are connected: that conversations about religion and non-religion carry with them certain assumptions which link to methods and processes and contain certain criteria about what is considered valuable.
>
> In high-quality RE, leaders are precise about what constitutes appropriate evidence or purpose for constructing different types of arguments. When leaders plan for pupils to learn ways of knowing in RE, this can help overcome misconceptions, such as: ‘Later ideas in some religious traditions are deviations from an original pure tradition’, ‘Science is about facts; religion is about opinions’ or ‘Only loving religion is true religion’.

89. About half the schools visited did not have curriculums that would enable pupils to make sense of the global diversity and complexity of religious and non-religious traditions.

90. Most schools had not identified even the simplest ways of knowing that could illustrate how different knowledge about religion and non-religion could be constructed. Most did not use sources of information, such as interviews with followers of different religious traditions, to show how different people express ideas about religion and non-religion.

91. Some schools’ expectations of what pupils would be able to do were low. For example, they did not expect pupils to be able to analyse and interpret texts, including longer portions of religious texts, beyond simple ‘proof texts’. In around a third of schools, pupils had limited opportunities to contextualise passages or understand the wider traditions in which they were based.

92. In schools where pupils’ disciplinary knowledge was well developed, teachers had taught pupils the different methods that scholars used from Year 7. Opportunities to gain different forms of knowledge were woven in alongside substantive content.

93. Occasionally, misconceptions were communicated to pupils through the curriculum. These tended to take the form of unsustainable generalisations or over-simplifications, for example: ‘Christians believe that people should be humble’, or ‘Religion is a belief in God’. Pupils then developed misconceptions, such as ‘Jews think that Jesus is the Messiah’ (when not referring to forms of messianic Judaism). Similarly, pupils were not always corrected when they used imprecise terminology.

94. Curriculums in around 40% of schools used enquiry questions. For example, a curriculum question that pupils in one school studied was ‘What is

religion?' The topic was constructed so that pupils could develop knowledge from a sociological perspective, with strong links to ethnographic sources. This informed pupils as they were taught about a range of religions over the key stage. In one school, pupils began to learn stories about different ancient Greek philosophers in order to answer the curriculum enquiry question 'What does it mean to live a good life?' Pupils then used this knowledge to begin to learn about epistemology through questions such as 'What is real?'. This was developed further the following year when pupils explored non-religious worldviews through the question 'How do Humanists decide what to believe?'

How one school went about developing ways of knowing in the RE curriculum

Leaders had thought carefully about how to weave in disciplinary knowledge. Contextual knowledge that pupils gained in Year 7 framed the discourses that they had in Year 9 about the Genesis narrative. Pupils learned about doctrinal development within Christianity, which gave historical context to how textual interpretation developed over time. Pupils used the questions that scholars from different disciplines, such as philosophy or social science, ask. They also analysed the data relating to the distribution of different religions as they began to consider global patterns of belief.

Personal knowledge – pupils' awareness of the presuppositions and values they bring to studying religious and non-religious traditions

Summary of the research review relevant to personal knowledge

> Pupils bring to the RE classroom a 'position', which is their viewpoint or perspective on the world: personal knowledge. Pupils develop their personal knowledge when their assumptions about religious or non-religious traditions are drawn out through the content they study. Content relating to meaning and purpose, human nature, justice in society, values, community and self-fulfilment can all illuminate pupils' own self-knowledge.
>
> In high-quality RE curriculums, leaders are precise in how they select content to develop pupils' personal knowledge. For example, leaders may identify a specific concept such as sewa (selfless service) in Sikh traditions, together with rich detail about how this may form part of Sikh ways of life. Pupils can reflect on these specific concepts and consider how they might value them in similar or different ways – or may not value them at all. This is

particularly important because pupils may not see the immediate significance of that content. In RE, pupils are free to express their own religious or non-religious identities. These may or may not change because of their studying RE – although of course there is no obligation for them to change.

95. Schools stated that they valued the role that RE plays in developing personal knowledge. They considered that it was part of the broader school curriculum. However, not all could explain how they had planned this in the curriculum or what content they used to develop pupils' personal knowledge.

96. Some schools explained that they thought that personal knowledge formed a part of the curriculum because pupils were asked to give their own views at the end of the unit of teaching. There was a disparity between what leaders thought was in the curriculum to develop personal knowledge and what was evident through speaking to pupils or scrutinising their work.

97. Inspectors found that some schools gave pupils the opportunity to reflect on the content of the RE curriculum. However, in some cases, pupils did not use the knowledge that they had previously gained in RE to help them do this. For example, some pupils knew that many Christians might believe that God had given them dominion over animals. They knew about factory farming and free-range farming. However, they did not use this knowledge when trying to explain the ethical issues of the treatment of animals and how they felt about these. They had not connected the prior learning with the reflection task that they were asked to complete.

How one school went about developing pupils' personal knowledge

Leaders carefully planned the substantive knowledge that pupils would gain. Pupils learned about Jewish messianic expectations and revisited this concept when they learned about different Christian beliefs. Teachers skilfully wove in the opportunity for pupils to develop their personal knowledge once they had secured this component knowledge.

Pupils said that they use this knowledge to reflect. One said: 'We explored the idea of what a messiah is and also our own viewpoint about what we might think that this would mean.' Another pupil added: 'I don't think my views have changed, but it's given me the opportunity to see the world from a Christian perspective, and I can see the possibility for how there could be a God. So, I think it's brilliant to be able to see another point of view.'

Pupils were able to understand the significance of messianic expectations being fulfilled for Christians. However, they did not need to believe this themselves to have deepened their personal knowledge of ideas of hope,

expectation and redemption, which have different connotations for many in a diverse and pluralistic world.

Teaching the curriculum

Summary of the research review in relation to teaching the curriculum

> High-quality teaching in RE enables pupils to remember the curriculum in the long term. Well-chosen approaches to classroom teaching enable pupils to build the forms of knowledge that are distinctive to RE. A 'fit-for-purpose' teaching approach (including teachers' selections of procedures, methods and strategies in RE) depends on the subject matter being taught and whether it supports pupils to remember the RE curriculum. Suitable methods are appropriate for the RE curriculum object, are well matched to pupils' prior knowledge (whether pupils have the requisite knowledge to be able to succeed at a task) and support pupils' recall of the curriculum. Without such well-judged teaching approaches, classroom activities may well be enjoyable for pupils but may not lead to curriculum impact.

98. In approximately half the schools visited, the teaching activities chosen were appropriate because they were well suited to pupils' existing knowledge bases. For example, in one lesson, pupils had appropriate knowledge before they answered the question: 'If God was omniscient, what would be the purpose of a test?' Pupils had learned about the Job narrative when they had studied Jewish traditions as well as teachings from Buddhist traditions about suffering and attachment. Skilful teaching built on this through developing pupils' knowledge of the terminology of 'moral evil' and 'natural evil'. Teachers had made sure that pupils' knowledge was broad enough and deep enough to be able to tackle the question.

99. These schools also developed activities to enable pupils to use concepts well. Teachers encouraged pupils to see the connections between concepts, such as 'atonement' and 'forgiveness'. This meant that pupils were able to refine their thinking through using increasingly precise terms. For example, one pupil wrote about beliefs held within the Christian tradition with increasing precision. Following discussion with the teacher, they corrected their work, so that 'Jesus was killed by crucifixion and he came back to life, which was a miracle' was changed to 'Jesus was killed by crucifixion and ascended to heaven after being resurrected'.

100. Sometimes, pedagogical choices were inappropriate. For example, pupils were asked to make posters about ethical issues. However, they did not know

enough about the topics, nor about religious perspectives, to make this a meaningful activity. Pupils did not find this engaging or interesting.

101. In one school, lessons were skilfully adapted for pupils with SEND. Teachers had identified precisely which specialist vocabulary they needed to understand. The pupils studied content that was similar to the expectations of the GCSE course, but in a simpler way. This helped pupils to concentrate on the principles of the design argument more closely. The pupils who needed extra practice in using these words precisely, got it.

102. In the majority of schools, pupils lacked background knowledge to engage with sensitive or controversial content in an informed way. Pupils did not have the knowledge needed to answer questions or debate issues competently. For example, in one school, pupils were asked to summarise how followers of specific religious traditions might view contraception. Pupils did not know enough about methods of contraception or how they worked; nor did they know enough about religious beliefs about the sanctity of life. This prevented them from answering well. There were notable exceptions, however. In one school, pupils were taught about moral codes and ethical issues in Years 7 and 8 before they discussed whether the death penalty should be used. This prepared pupils well for wider discussions about war and conflict at key stage 4.

How one school approached teaching controversial and sensitive issues

This example shows why teaching activities need to be appropriate for the curriculum goal.

A single lesson in the Year 8 curriculum was given to the topic of religion and abortion. In the lesson visited, the curriculum goal was for pupils to learn different religious attitudes to abortion. The teacher chose an activity that explored how the legal status of abortion in England applies at different stages of pregnancy. As much of this was new information for pupils, most of the lesson was taken up by the teacher responding to pupils' questions on the scientific details about what abortion is and what happens. Very little time was given to exploring religious attitudes.

In this instance, the curriculum goal was not to develop pupils' scientific or legal knowledge, but to learn how values and ideas (such as the sanctity of life) shape the attitudes that different religious people hold. The teacher did not take into account the natural curiosity and predictable interest of pupils when planning this activity. This should have been a particularly important consideration for them, especially as this was the only lesson on the topic. Although it was stimulating, the teaching activity was not appropriate because it did not help pupils to reach the curriculum goal.

This example also shows how the RE curriculum should supply pupils with sufficient prior knowledge to learn new content in a meaningful and

nuanced way. In this example, the curriculum was implemented as leaders had intended. Earlier in the curriculum, pupils had studied a topic on inspirational religious figures (such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King), and had one lesson on the Holocaust, one lesson on religion and human life, and one lesson on euthanasia. However, this sequence did not prepare pupils well for each lesson. Their knowledge of specific religious traditions was scant, and so what they knew about different religious attitudes towards all stages of human life was very limited.

103. When teaching concepts within specific religious and non-religious traditions, not all teachers made sure that pupils had the core knowledge that they needed. In the weakest cases, teachers taught specific content in a way that was artificially separated from its in-depth context. For example, in one lesson, pupils were asked to create their own 10 commandments when they did not know anything about the Torah, or where it came from.

104. In a significant minority of RE lessons that inspectors visited, there was little discernible RE content being taught. In some schools, this was because RE curriculum time was used to teach non-RE content, such as relationships, sex and health education (RHSE), study skills or other aspects of personal development.

105. In around a third of the schools visited, teaching focused on developing exam technique prematurely. In the majority of these schools, this practice began in key stage 3. Pupils did not always have the substantive knowledge that they would need to answer a question well. This approach limited the scope of the curriculum and the opportunities to deepen pupils' knowledge. One pupil commented: 'We have to write what we have been taught – [there's] less time for thinking. We are writing to a mark scheme. We have to write "In conclusion I think this" to get the marks, when actually we don't [think this].'

Assessment

Summary of the research review in relation to types of assessment and assessing types of knowledge

There has been an overall lack of clarity about what exactly is being assessed in RE. This confusion has led to, among many things, unreliable assessment practices. For assessment to be fit for purpose, leaders and teachers need to be clear about what they are testing and why. Literature categorises RE assessment into 2 kinds: the 'knowing kind' and the 'personal qualities, beliefs and values kind'. We focus on the first kind of assessment, because this is appropriate for checking the forms of knowledge pupils build through the RE curriculum. High-quality RE uses

assessment sufficiently, but not excessively.

Assessment has different purposes in the RE curriculum, as outlined in the primary school section on types of assessment and assessing types of knowledge in RE.

106. The great majority of schools visited had some form of summative assessment in place at key stage 3. Yet a handful had no meaningful assessment system at all. This was problematic as it meant that leaders and teachers had no way of checking whether the curriculum was being learned.

107. Summative assessments in key stage 3 were typically written by teachers to assess the knowledge that pupils had secured. They checked pupils' use of specialist vocabulary and knowledge of important concepts. These assessments usually took place at the end of the unit. However, they rarely included prior knowledge from previous units. In this way, few schools revisited this in subsequent assessments to see what pupils had remembered over a longer period. This meant that assessments did not actually check how much of the curriculum pupils had learned over time. Therefore, in most cases, assessments were unlikely to provide valid information about pupils' progress through the curriculum.

108. Many schools used 'low stakes' quizzes. Teachers stated that they used them to check what pupils had recalled. However, in about a third of schools, many pupils' knowledge was insecure, and they were not always able to use this information well. This indicates that low stakes quizzes are not a guarantee of pupils remembering the curriculum.

109. Some pupils had a shallow recollection of specific terminology because they lacked in-depth knowledge of the place of that terminology within religious and non-religious traditions. This led to pupils remembering some information but only being able to construct superficial answers to questions. For example, pupils struggled to explain why followers of Hindu traditions might avoid meat, simply saying 'religious reasons'.

Relating assessment expectations to the RE curriculum

Summary of the research review relevant to assessment approaches that use the curriculum as the progression model

The curriculum maps out the journey of what it means 'to get better' at RE. So, teachers want to know whether pupils have made progress in RE and need to ask as a summative question: Have pupils learned and remembered the RE curriculum? If pupils have learned this curriculum, then

they have made progress.

This can be achieved by sampling from the knowledge that teachers expect pupils to retain from earlier parts of the curriculum, as well as checking what has most recently been taught. Assessment models in RE that use ‘scales’, ‘ladders’ or ‘levels’ of generic skills to determine progress are not valid assessment models to assess specific RE curriculums. Assessment practices that report to parents, which are based on something other than checking whether pupils have learned the curriculum, or tasks that do not enable pupils to demonstrate what they have learned from earlier in the curriculum, are not useful. Good-quality assessment in RE relates assessment expectations precisely to the RE curriculum.

110. Positively, most schools sampled no longer used a skills-based ladder as a framework for assessment at key stage 3. A minority of them assessed ‘skills’. Some used an assessment framework that was totally disconnected from the curriculum journey, for example an assessment scale of generic skills, such as recounting, explaining, evaluating or analysing.

111. In most of the schools, assessment was related to the intended curriculum. In schools where RE was stronger, leaders had thought carefully about how they would check whether pupils had learned the curriculum, including ways of knowing. In one school, leaders spoke about changing assessment questions from questions like ‘What are the 5 Ks?’ to questions like ‘Why might the life of Guru Nanak impact the lives of Sikhs today?’ The former question is more limited in its scope and is far less orientated toward the kind of meaningful questions that scholars might ask about religion and non-religion than the latter. The latter question enables pupils to apply a range of substantive knowledge and to consider the kind of knowledge that would be needed to be able to answer the question appropriately.

Assessment tasks in RE

Summary of the research review relevant to assessment tasks

Summative assessment often includes composite tasks (such as extended writing) to assess learning. These tasks do not separate types of RE knowledge. For example, RE teachers can assess ways of knowing through the ways that pupils use substantive content and concepts to respond to a subject question. These sorts of composite assessment tasks are fit for purpose when they are based on RE curriculum content. In this way, teachers’ use of assessment is based on curriculum-related expectations.

> At key stages 3, 4 and 5, a common assessment task is for pupils to construct an argument. When teachers are unclear about what is appropriate evidence, purpose and backing for that specific argument, this assessment practice is not as effective as it could be.
>
> Further, there are significant limitations and problems with applying exam-style questions (such as GCSE religious studies exam questions) in non-qualification contexts, including key stage 3. First, pupils will not have had the opportunity to learn the domain of the programme of study. Second, the specific RE curriculum cannot be assessed effectively by generic exam skills. Finally, these types of questions too often promote a narrow 'oppositional' approach to thinking about religious and non-religious traditions.

112. The majority of schools visited used composite tasks as a form of assessment. Typically, this took place at the end of a term or a unit of work. In schools where strong RE was evident, this was closely linked to the ways of knowing that were woven into the curriculum. For example, pupils knowledgeably used textual sources, understanding the context from which they came, or referenced the philosophical thinkers whose arguments they were using.

113. Positively, many schools had moved away from using GCSE assessment criteria in key stage 3. However, approximately one fifth of schools visited applied these assessment approaches prematurely to key stage 3. This approach skewed the curriculum. Some assessment practices led to pupils developing stereotypical ideas based on oversimplifications of what followers of different traditions might think. One school, for example, used excessive and imprecise 'proof texts'. Pupils learning to use a particular quote did not encounter the wider text from which it was derived. As a result, they did not understand that followers of the same faith might interpret texts in different ways.

114. In these schools, not all pupils had developed a detailed knowledge base to draw on before being asked GCSE-style questions. Yet leaders did not identify this as an issue. For example, one leader commented: 'We've tried to provide the skills for GCSE as early as possible. Then it's about developing the knowledge.' This approach is problematic. It does not consider the rich body of knowledge that pupils need to draw on in order to answer complex questions meaningfully. Exam-style questions are designed for pupils who have had the opportunity to learn the domain of the GCSE programme of study.

115. In about one fifth of the schools visited, leaders thought carefully about how to build towards more complex assessments within units of learning. Teachers used a variety of formative tasks to check pupils' security with content. Once pupils had acquired sufficient depth of knowledge, teachers introduced more complex assessment tasks, allowing them to use this knowledge. In one school, an assessment question such as 'What is it like to be

a Muslim in the UK today?' was not asked until pupils had gained secure knowledge of the concept of ummah, as well as a range of accounts written by young Muslims.

Systems, culture and policies at subject and school level

Summary of the research review in relation to systems, culture and policies

> All schools that are state-funded, including free schools and academies, are legally required to provide RE as part of their curriculum. They are required to teach RE to all pupils at all key stages (including sixth form), except those who have been withdrawn. The way in which school leaders organise this is one indication of the quality of education.

Prioritising RE in the school curriculum

Summary of the research review in relation to prioritising school RE

> How the RE curriculum appears on the timetabled curriculum (how it is 'classified') may be an indication of the extent to which a school prioritises RE. Problems can emerge when the subject is too weakly classified (for example, teaching RE through tutor times or assemblies, or in conjunction with PSHE education where the format limits the curriculum that pupils can learn).
>
> What limits the quality of RE can be a lack of scope: there is not enough time to teach a high-quality subject curriculum. Research by subject organisations suggests that about a quarter of secondary schools gave no dedicated curriculum time to RE. About a third of academies reported no timetabled RE at all. This increases to just under a half of all academies at key stage 4. Staffing decisions can also affect the quality of RE. This may depend on the type of state-funded school. For example, a much greater percentage of RE lessons are taught by a qualified subject specialist in schools of a religious character than in academies.

At key stage 3:

116. In about four fifths of the secondary schools visited, RE occupied, on average, at least a weekly timetabled lesson.

117. In about one fifth of the schools, RE was not strongly ‘classified’. It was timetabled in a range of ways, including half-yearly blocks. In 2 schools, what leaders asserted to be the ‘RE curriculum’ contained, in the main, PSHE content.

118. In just under a third of the schools, leaders had shortened the length of key stage 3 RE. Often, this was the only subject that was timetabled in this way

At key stage 4

119. About four fifths of the schools visited offered a religious studies qualification. In approximately half these schools, all pupils at key stage 4 were required to take either a short or long GCSE in religious studies. In the other half, pupils were given the option to take a GCSE in religious studies.

120. In almost a third of schools with a shortened key stage 3, pupils took their GCSE qualification at the end of Year 10. In most cases, these schools did not provide RE in Year 11.

121. Two thirds of the schools taught statutory RE through a timetabled lesson for all pupils. However, one third of schools offered no timetabled statutory RE lessons at key stage 4. In those schools, leaders said that they taught RE content through other means. Examples of these included assemblies, tutor time and drop-down days. In these schools, the RE curriculum was rarely ambitious enough.

At key stage 5

122. Fifteen of the 25 secondary schools visited had a sixth form. In these schools, just under two thirds offered a qualification in religious studies or a related subject such as philosophy. Most taught statutory RE content through tutor time or PSHE. The RE content was rarely defined clearly or suitably rigorous.

Teacher education and professional development in RE

Summary of the research review in relation to developing teachers’ knowledge and expertise

> Although there are clearly strong practitioners within the RE subject community, it is likely that school leaders will have teachers who do not have qualifications in RE. More than half of secondary school RE teachers

> do not have a qualification or appropriate expertise in the subject. This is a higher proportion than in other subjects. School and subject leaders can mitigate some of these factors by carefully considering the professional development needed to improve teachers' subject knowledge. Areas of professional development for RE teachers include: RE policy knowledge, RE content knowledge, RE pedagogical content knowledge, and research in RE.

123. Over half the schools visited used non-specialist teachers to teach RE. In the majority of these schools, teachers had not had any subject-specific professional development. These teachers did not have the training that they needed to be able to develop their subject knowledge (content knowledge) or to teach subject content (pedagogical content knowledge).

124. In about 90% of the schools, teachers did not have regular access to research in RE. In these cases, specialist RE teachers were unable to keep up to date with developments in their subject.

125. In schools where the quality of RE was stronger, teachers had access to regular professional development. They used research to help them evaluate the strengths and areas for development in the curriculum. They used subject expertise, both in-house and externally sourced, to make sure that the curriculum was suitably ambitious and taught well. These schools said that they valued their links with other schools and with national associations.

How one school developed teachers' subject knowledge

Leaders developed a subject network with other schools in their trust. They used this to exchange knowledge about recent research and to share their different specialist knowledge.

Leaders identified that teachers had less subject knowledge about defined non-religious worldviews and how to teach these systematically. They organised a day when they could work with experts to increase their knowledge and incorporate new professional knowledge into their curriculums. Staff from all the schools were able to work together and deepen collaboration across the RE departments.

Teachers used the knowledge that they had gained when they revised the curriculum. They included a new scheme of work at Year 7. They adapted existing planning in Year 8.

Annex A: Methodological note

This report draws on findings from 50 visits to schools in England. We carried out the visits between September 2021 and April 2023. They took place as part of scheduled school inspections under the education inspection framework and also as specific research visits.

The inspectors who made the visits had relevant expertise in RE and were trained for this work. They carried out a deep dive as part of our methodology for evaluating the quality of education. Inspectors gathered a rich range of data by speaking to senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and pupils, and visiting RE lessons. They also reviewed pupils' work in RE.

Schools were not compelled to take part in the research visits or additional deep dives. It is possible, therefore, that this had an impact on the findings. Schools that thought that RE was weaker may have chosen not to take part.

We identified some criteria for the sample that risked being under-represented. These criteria were: region, inspection outcome, disadvantage quintile, size of school, and rural or urban location. We made sure that the sample was broadly representative of the national picture and that there was some representation from schools with different characteristics. The visits were split evenly between primary and secondary schools. The sample only included schools in which the inspection of RE falls within Ofsted's legal purview.

Inspectors gathered qualitative evidence about RE in the schools they visited. The evidence gathered across these visits enabled us to identify common themes in RE that are likely to be relevant in a wide range of schools.

Inspectors focused on gathering evidence that related to the following areas:

- curriculum
- pedagogy
- assessment
- school-level systems and their impact on RE

When analysing this evidence, we drew on the conception of quality in RE that we outlined in our RE research review (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education). This enabled us to consider how RE in English schools relates to our best evidence-based understanding of how schools can ensure high-quality RE for all pupils.

Annex B: Key terms used in this report

Throughout this report, we use the same terminology to describe the forms of knowledge that pupils learn in RE as we did in our RE research review

(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education). These are not day-to-day terms that we would expect pupils or teachers to necessarily use. Rather, we use them here to recognise at least 3 important types of knowledge that pupils build in RE throughout their time at school.

- **Substantive knowledge** refers to knowledge of the religious and non-religious traditions that have shaped the world: the substantive content and concepts. It includes knowledge of different ways that people express religion and non-religion, as well as artefacts, texts, concepts and narratives found within traditions. Some of these are connected by geographical location and conceptual knowledge. For example, the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam share the figure of Abraham and all regard him as a prophet. Some other faiths, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism, originated in the Indian subcontinent and share some similarities in core beliefs. These are referred to in this report as dharmic faiths. There are, of course, other religious and non-religious traditions, such as e, that may be part of the RE curriculum.
- **Ways of knowing** refers to pupils gaining disciplinary knowledge in RE. This is when pupils learn how knowledge about religious and non-religious traditions is constructed. This is part of 'being scholarly' in RE. It includes both the knowledge of what scholars use to make sense of religion and non-religion and how debates and discussions add to this. So, pupils might learn about what ethnographic information tells them about the Jewish diaspora. They might consider how debates within different orthodox and reformed traditions have an impact on how Jewish people keep the Shabbat.
- **Personal knowledge** refers to pupils' awareness of their own assumptions, presuppositions and reflections that they bring to studying religious and non-religious traditions. This sort of knowledge is similar to academic reflections in higher education.
- **Collectively enough** refers to a curriculum that covers substantive content and concepts collectively, rather than covering excessive amounts of content superficially. Content is sufficient for pupils to grasp a bigger picture about the place of religion and non-religion in the world.

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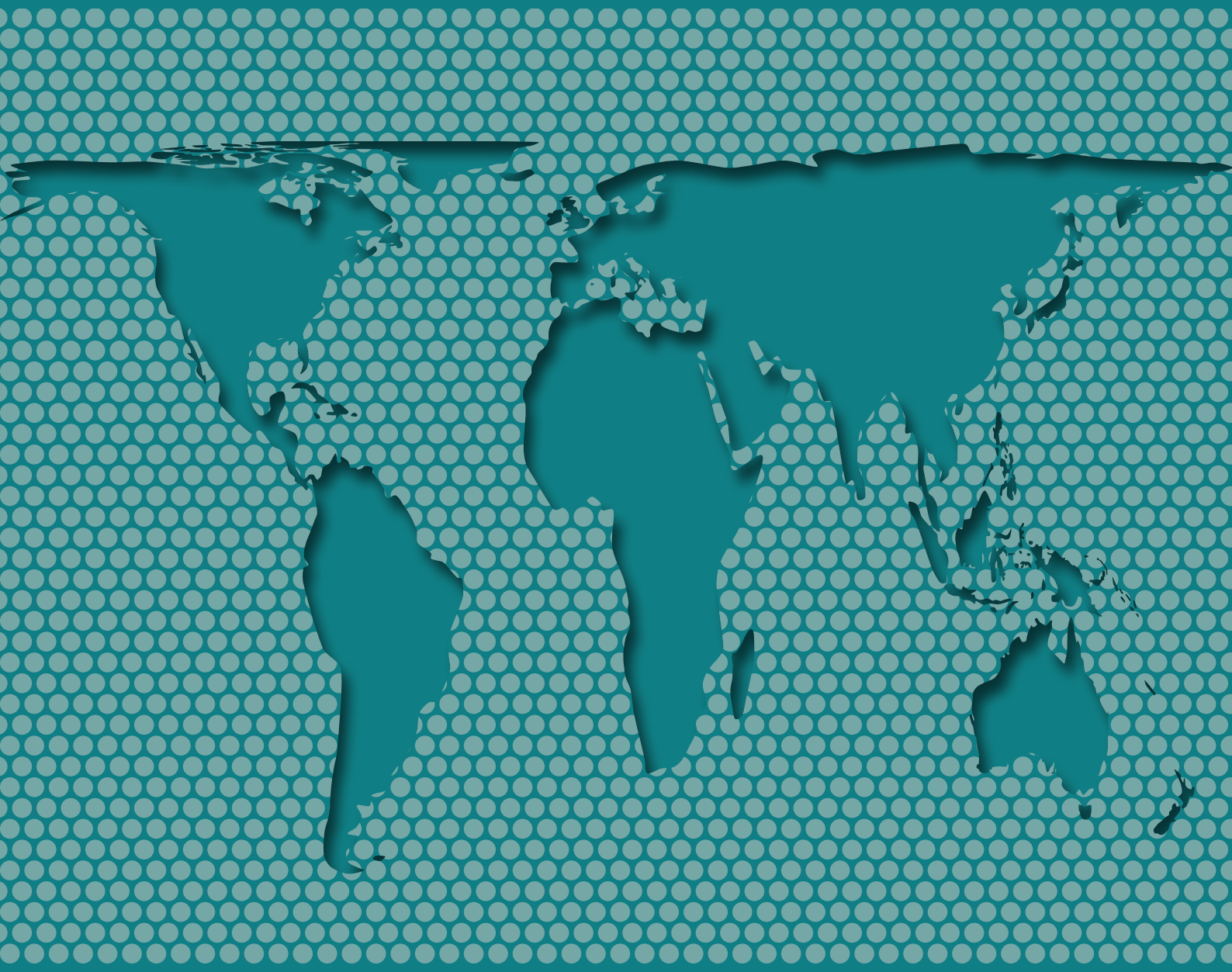

Developing a Religion and Worldviews approach in Religious Education in England

A Handbook for curriculum writers

Stephen Pett

Religious Education Council of England and Wales
BIG QUESTIONS in CLASSROOMS
TEMPLETON WORLD CHARITY FOUNDATION
Westhill make things happen
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The Handbook and related resources are available at www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/RWApproach

Acronyms/abbreviations:

ASC: Agreed Syllabus Conference

CoRE: Commission on RE

CoRE report: *Religion and Worldviews: The way forward*, report published 2018, following the two-year independent commission set up by the REC

DfE: Department for Education

MAT: Multi-Academy Trust

NCS: National Content Standard for RE (England)

NSE: National Statement of Entitlement

Ofsted: Office for Standards in Education

REC: Religious Education Council of England and Wales

RW: Religion and Worldviews

SACRE: Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Contents

Foreword

This Handbook is the outcome of a three-year long project on behalf of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales.

The project builds on the religion and worldviews approach, advocated by the independent Commission on Religious Education (2018), offering an approach to religious education which is academically rigorous, multi-disciplinary, and which draws on the lived experience of those who inhabit both religious and non-religious worldviews. It draws on the best that religious education has traditionally offered and brings this into dialogue with contemporary academic approaches, resulting in a new level of challenge and engagement for students.

At the heart of the Handbook is the National Statement of Entitlement which aims to establish a shared vision for the subject, and to lay the foundations for building a curriculum. The National Content Standard for RE for England, which is built around the National Statement of Entitlement, provides a benchmark for high-quality religious education and should be read alongside the Handbook.

The Handbook has been developed thanks to the expertise of the Project Director, Professor Trevor Cooling, and the Project Leader, Stephen Pett, both of whom have worked tirelessly to bring it to this point. Its principles have informed the work of three teams whose members included teachers, curriculum leaders, teacher educators and academics, and who have written three exemplar curriculum frameworks, accompanied by sample units of work, for use in their distinct contexts. These frameworks are published separately and we hope they will inspire others, in different contexts, to develop their own curricula using a religion and worldviews approach. These might include Academy Trusts, Agreed Syllabus Conferences and those with responsibility for the religious education curriculum in schools with a religious character. Whilst the principles may be applied in a wide range of settings, the Handbook, the National Statement of Entitlement and the National Content Standard for RE have been written primarily for those within the education system in England.

“The Religious Education Council of England and Wales embraces a vision that every young person should experience an academically rigorous and personally inspiring education in religion and worldviews.”

The Religious Education Council of England and Wales embraces a vision that every young person should experience an academically rigorous and personally inspiring education in religion and worldviews. This Handbook is a resource which can bring us closer to achieving the vision, and the REC Board is pleased to endorse it.

Sarah Lane Cawte
Chair, RE Council

Introduction

This Handbook represents the culmination of a three-year project carried out on behalf of the RE Council of England and Wales (REC).

It takes forward the vision from the independent Commission on RE (CoRE 2018) and offers guidance for applying that vision to the classroom, building on the strong traditions of religious education (RE) in Britain. It takes into account research commissioned by the REC (Benoit et al. 2020; Tharani 2022) and other work done around worldviews and RE. It responds to extensive feedback received on the first draft (Pett 2022).

This Handbook offers a toolkit for developing the Commission's vision of a religion and worldviews (RW) approach to developing curriculums for religious education (RE). It is offered as a resource for those who wish to use it. It is not a policy statement.

At the heart is a National Statement of Entitlement (NSE). This provides a pedagogical tool for curriculum developers. It supports the selection of content and of appropriate teaching and learning approaches to enrich and deepen pupils' scholarly engagement with religion and worldviews.

The Handbook is accompanied by three frameworks which give examples of how the Handbook and NSE have been interpreted and put into practice in particular contexts. These frameworks were developed by three teams, selected for the quality of their proposals by the REC Board in an open tendering process, representing three distinct contexts. These frameworks and their accompanying units of work are offered as examples to promote thinking by curriculum developers as to processes they might use in their own situations.

The frameworks take the shared vision of the NSE and accompanied guidance, and express it in different ways in different contexts. They affirm the application of local autonomy in developing local curriculums on the basis of a shared national vision.

A significant step but not the final word

The development of religious education towards an RW approach has been part of the national conversation in RE since at least 2017, when the first draft of the Commission on RE's report came out. The conversation has been wide-ranging, with debates about the value or wisdom of such a development, and with both strong advocates and critics publishing responses ranging from social media posts through to academic journals. Research projects are on-going at the time of writing and papers have been published that explore aspects, such as how teachers might make decisions on how to select content (Lewin et al. 2023), what it means to develop pupils' personal worldviews (Plater 2023 , Flanagan 2021), and the worldviews of people who are non-religious (Wright and Wright 2024; Strhan et al. 2024; van Mulukom et al. 2022).

This Handbook is part of that conversation. It builds on a great deal of development in RE over decades, and sets out a rationale for its on-going development, reshaping and reorienting the subject for future decades. This Handbook is not, of course, intended as the final word on the subject. It is intended to provide some clarity around the approach and guidance on how to implement it in a curriculum. The NSE itself sets out expectations and a benchmark for an education in religion and worldviews, and is indicative of the breadth, depth and ambition it has for teaching curriculum content about religious and non-religious worldviews. This is further developed in the RE Council's National Content Standard for RE in England.[1] The NSE is not intended to set out an exclusive or finally definitive position with regard to worldviews; rather, it is a pedagogical tool to assist curriculum developers and teachers in their task of enabling pupils to understand how worldviews work in human lives, including their own.

The Handbook sets out practical steps for developing a religion and worldviews curriculum as well as offering a rationale and a commentary on how we have responded to feedback and considered some of the challenges arising from the approach. The three frameworks and accompanying units of work give evidence of the flexible way in which the NSE can be interpreted and applied to suit different contexts. While there may be differences of opinion over these frameworks, we argue that this is healthy, given the variety of approaches there are to teaching RE.

We recognise that there are resourcing and training implications from this new direction for RE, and that to equip classroom teachers to use this approach requires the kind of national plan called for in the CoRE report, and by the REC subsequently.

“We recognise that there are resourcing and training implications from this new direction for RE, and that to equip classroom teachers to use this approach requires the kind of national plan called for in the CoRE report, and by the REC subsequently.”

Legal context

The legal requirements governing RE were set out in the Education Reform Act of 1988 and confirmed by the Education Acts of 1996 and 1998. RE is a statutory subject and part of the basic curriculum.

RE must be provided for all registered pupils in maintained schools and academies, including those in Reception classes and sixth forms (Education Act 2002, Sections 78 to 79).

The content of RE in maintained schools is determined at local authority level. The Local Authority must establish an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to produce and recommend a syllabus. Each local authority must convene an ASC to review its agreed syllabus at least every five years. An agreed syllabus should 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian while taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (Education Reform Act 1988, Section 8(3)).

In community, foundation and voluntary controlled (VC) schools with a religious character designation, RE must be provided in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. RE in voluntary aided (VA) schools with a religious character must be provided in accordance with the trust deed of the school and the wishes of the governing body.

Academies must provide RE in accordance with their funding agreements. The Funding Agreement requires that academies with a religious character provide RE in accordance with the tenets of their faith. Academies that do not have a religious character must arrange for RE to be given to all pupils in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses, that is, a curriculum which reflects that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain (Education Reform Act 1988 8(3)). Academies are not, however, required to follow any specific locally agreed syllabus. They are accountable for the quality of their curricular provision.

Who is this Handbook for?

The Handbook is primarily written to assist those who are developing syllabuses and curriculums for RE with a religion and worldviews (RW) approach, including local authorities, Standing Advisory Councils on RE (SACREs), Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs), dioceses, and curriculum leaders in multi-academy trusts (MATs) and other academy trusts.

It is intended to be relevant to schools in England, those with and without religious character, including community maintained schools, academies and free schools, and independent schools wishing to establish a curriculum of ambition for RE.

It is intended to be of use to a wide range of people involved in the subject, including those with responsibility for the subject in schools both with and without a religious character, school leaders and governors, subject leads and teachers in primary and secondary phases, trainee and early career teachers, their tutors and mentors, inspectors and advisers, examination boards and resource developers.

It is intended to be helpful to people with different worldviews, ranging across religious and non-religious, to understand how an education in religion and worldviews approaches and handles organised, individual and personal worldviews.

It is hoped that it will be of interest to parents, pupils and the wider public, to inform them of the content and purposes of the subject.

Note: The Handbook will refer to **religious education (RE)** as the term that is currently in use in legislation and guidance for England. The Commission on RE recommendation that the subject be officially renamed 'Religion and Worldviews' would require legislation, whereas this Handbook is encouraging a shift in approach that can happen regardless of legislative change. This does not, however, prevent schools from renaming the subject as suits their context or needs.

Handbook structure

The Handbook is divided into four sections. Each section is intended for a specific audience, which means that some material is repeated between sections, since it is relevant to different audiences, and some material is amplified and expanded in different sections.

SECTION	CONTENT	INTENDED AUDIENCE	
A. Overview 	This is intended to give the overview of the RW approach, its key features, including the National Statement of Entitlement (NSE), and a brief rationale.	Head teachers, governors, leaders of MATs and other academy trusts, SACREs, ASCs, dioceses and others who are interested in these developments, including teachers, parents and pupils.	
B. Toolkit for developing a religion and worldviews approach in RE 	This section has a more practical focus, clarifying some definitions, offering both a commentary on the NSE and some practical advice for taking the NSE and applying it in different contexts. Examples are given of RW approach questions.	The syllabus developer, curriculum leader, or subject leader who wants to apply an RW approach in their SACRE, ASC, diocese, MAT or school context. It is also relevant to teachers, subject leaders, trainee and early career teachers.	
C. A religion and worldviews approach: rationale and explanations 	This section offers some of the background to the move to an RW approach, offering a more detailed rationale, expanded definitions and explanations, and some engagement with academic responses.	Curriculum leaders and syllabus developers, members of SACREs and ASCs, academics and other commentators, inspectors and advisers, examination awarding bodies and resource developers.	
D. Frameworks 	Three frameworks based on the NSE and the draft resource (2022), exemplifying three ways of applying an RW approach to the development of a curriculum in three specific contexts.	These are intended to be of interest to all parties, particularly syllabus developers, curriculum writers, teachers, inspectors, advisers and resource developers.	

Key terms and how we use them

Some of the key concepts we are dealing with in RE are complex and contested. Wittgenstein once remarked that 'problems arise when language goes on holiday' (Wittgenstein 1967), and so this section sets out how we are using these key terms in the context of advocating an RW approach.

RELIGION	This is a contested conceptual category, to be examined in the classroom. Definitions of religion vary. Some focus on beliefs, such as belief in a deity and a supernatural dimension to existence; some definitions start from the idea of the divine origin of religion; some argue that religion is a human construct, inextricably linked with culture; some definitions focus on the ways of thinking and living of adherents; other definitions look at look at the function religions play within communities and societies. We use the term to accommodate this diverse range of meanings, open to debate in the classroom.
RELIGIONS	These are instances of religion, and the term can be taken as 'multi-aspectual traditions', (O'Grady 2023) usually with some relationship to the idea of the sacred, included in the curriculum on grounds of historical influence. Religions can be explored as social facts as well as having their truth claims examined and weighed up, their teachings and traditions studied and the lived experience of adherents explored.
WORLDVIEW	This is another contested term. We intend the term to be more inclusive than the category of 'religion' or religiousness. At the very least, worldview incorporates the non-religious. Religions may be seen as examples of worldviews.
WORLDVIEWS	These are identifiable instances of worldview, and can be understood at the level of the organised or sometimes institutional, the individual and communal, and in this context, the personal worldviews of pupils. These include both religious and non-religious worldviews. None of these pairings (organised/institutional, organised/individual, religious/non-religious) is intended to be a binary – clearly there are overlaps and fluid borders.

RELIGION AND WORLDVIEWS (RW)	We use this term to describe the approach advocated by this project. – It is a religion *and* worldviews approach in contrast with a 'world religions paradigm' approach. – It is a *religion* and worldviews approach to examine the relationship of worldviews to religion. – It is a religion and worldviews *approach*, including selection of content but also encompassing the ways of engaging with this content and bringing into focus the position of those studying.
NON-RELIGION	We use the term 'non-religion' as an object of study, a category emerging in academic discourse. Scholars use the term in different ways, for example, non-religion is 'a descriptive term for a certain group of understudied phenomena and not … an analytical term aiming to draw clear boundaries between religion and non-religion' (Quack 2014), and 'Non-religion is any phenomenon – position, perspective, practice – that is primarily understood in relation to religion but which is not itself considered to be religious.' (Lee 2015).
SECULAR	This is a contested term with many meanings. a. In common usage, this is often used as a synonym for 'non-religious'. b. In US contexts it tends to be used in opposition to religion, often seen as antagonistic to religion. c. In the UK it commonly refers to a space or attitude where religion is not a primary concern, has little relevance or significance. Lois Lee describes secular as 'phenomena – objects, spaces, people, and practices – for which religion is no more than a secondary concern, reference point, or authority' (Lee 2015). d. This UK usage also describes a more political sense of a public square that does not privilege any variety of religion or worldview. e. It is also more narrowly connected to an argument for separating religious institutions from the apparatus of the state. In this Handbook we generally refer to sense c) when using 'secular', unless otherwise specified.

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A. Overview:

introducing a religion and worldviews approach

Intended audience
Head teachers, governors, leaders of MATs and other academy trusts, SACREs, ASCs, dioceses and others who are interested in these developments, including teachers, parents and pupils.

Content
This is intended to give the overview of the RW approach, its key features, including the National Statement of Entitlement (NSE), and a brief rationale.

A1 What is a religion and worldviews approach?

A religion and worldviews (RW) approach offers a new way of handling religious and non-religious beliefs and ways of living in the RE classroom, representing a significant shift in the subject. It reshapes the subject away from a focus on gathering information about the 'world religions' towards gaining an understanding of how worldviews work in human experience, including pupils' own. On the understanding that 'everyone has a worldview', this means that the subject helps pupils to understand 'organised' and 'personal' worldviews, as a way of increasing understanding of the world and of themselves, and how they might act in the world. Integral to the approach are ways of engaging with examples of religious and non-religious worldviews, equipping pupils with the ability to make scholarly judgements about them. At the heart of the approach is the National Statement of Entitlement (NSE) that aims to equip curriculum developers for introducing pupils to an academically rigorous, scholarly approach to the study of religion and worldviews.

The significance of this development is that 'the relationship between the pupil and the content studied becomes more than simply mastering knowledge or retaining information. Rather it becomes an interpretive experience with a focus on understanding how people (those studied and those in the classroom) both shape and are shaped by their encounter with the substantive knowledge specified in the curriculum.' (Cooling, 2024)

The 2018 independent Commission report offered a new vision of RE (CoRE, 2018). While it has deep roots in past and current RE pedagogy (see Section C6 for details), the RW approach outlined in this Handbook advocates a new approach. It is a new engagement, or perhaps a re-engagement with RE's subject matter, a change to how sometimes familiar content is approached. The key focus is on the role worldviews play in people's lives. This RW approach looks at worldviews:

a. as objects of study
b. as part of *how* we study them
c. and as part of the experience of those doing the studying.

a. Worldviews as objects of study:

The subject continues to explore organised worldviews:

- with rich histories and traditions that change and grow (and decline)
- with doctrines, texts, rituals, creative expression, spirituality, ethics and philosophical constructs
- often with institutions that carry on their traditions and guide people's living today
- with various responses to big questions on the purpose and meaning of life, and questions of ultimate reality, truth, morality, justice.

These show a weight of tradition, which has long been the traditional focus of RE. However, this RW approach is balanced with the study of 'individual worldviews'. The approach explores the place that individuals have within these organised worldviews, often as part of local or wider communities. It recognises, of course, that none of us is individual in the sense of being entirely isolated and that, therefore, our worldviews tend to be shared or communal. The approach considers the way that individuals' lived worldviews do not always reflect the orthodox teachings or practices of the traditions – but that they are nonetheless part of the wider tradition.

b. Worldviews as part of how we study them:

This RW approach does not see pupils as passive recipients of 'textbook' chunks of knowledge. This approach is not simply about accumulating content about a range of different organised religious and non-religious worldviews. Rather,

- an RW approach is about the exploration of human engagement with these religious and non-religious traditions
- it is about how humans make sense of, respond to and act in the world
- it is about how they make sense of their experience through worldviews, with particular reference to the place and influence of the traditions studied.

If it is not the passive reception of chunks of stuff, then what does this mean in relation to how pupils study? An RW approach draws attention to the process of engagement, to the process of encounter between pupils and the subject content, asking:

- What are the questions we want to ask? What are the questions that other people ask (e.g. adherents, scholars etc.)? Why is it important to ask these questions?
- What are the best ways of finding out the answers?
- How will we explore that relationship between the teachings/traditions and the everyday lived practice?
- How do we as RE students participate in that process of interpretation of the world and experience that is part of different organised, individual or communal worldviews?

A personal 'worldview' describes the way in which a person encounters, interprets, understands and engages with the world.

▶ *See Sections A3, B3 and C2 for more detail.*

c. Worldviews in relation to the experience of the pupils doing the studying:

Recognising that organised worldviews all have their own context and that we do too, so teachers and pupils bring their autobiography to their studies.

As scholars doing research have to consider how their own assumptions might affect their studies, so the RW approach draws attention to the personal worldviews of pupils, and how they affect and are affected by their studies.

The RW approach is not just a cognitive endeavour. To understand how worldviews work is to see that they encompass beliefs and stories, but also hopes and fears, values and convictions, intentions and desires, creativity and imagination, and the experience of living in our own bodies, our own identities, in our own physical and communal and global contexts.

An organised worldview can be understood as 'a view on life that has developed over time as a more or less coherent and established system with certain (written and unwritten) sources, traditions, values, rituals, ideals, or dogmas … [it] has a group of believers who adhere to this view on life'. (van der Kooij et al. 2013).

▶ *See Sections A3, B3 and C2 for more detail.*

A2 What is the purpose of an RW approach?

The RW approach adopted here seeks to embody the vision developed by the Commission on RE (2018). This recognised the truth that 'everyone has a worldview' or, to put it another way, 'nobody stands nowhere'. This vision seeks to engage all pupils in a personally relevant and engaging study of influential religious and non-religious worldviews in a way that enables them to embrace an academically rigorous understanding of their own personal worldview development. Such an approach offers an inclusive experience of religious education for all pupils, irrespective of their background or personal worldview. It puts the pupils' educational outcomes at the centre of RE.

The RW approach seeks the following outcomes for pupils (in no particular order of priority):

1. They have a good understanding of how worldviews (religious and non-religious) work in human life, including knowledge about organised worldviews, their teachings and traditions as well as the lived experience of adherents.
2. They emerge from their schooling with the scholarly skills and attributes to be lifelong learners in religion and worldviews.
3. They become wise interpreters in their encounters with other people and in their treatment of their own worldview, recognising how their personal worldview both shapes and is shaped by their encounters.
4. They learn how to be skilled navigators of the worldview diversity that they will encounter in school and in adult life.
5. The experience of RE makes a positive contribution to their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
6. They are inspired by the study of religion and worldviews as a way of understanding the world, to be curious, creative and thoughtful.
7. They are equipped with skills of dialogue and self-reflection, so as to be able to deal with the challenge of differences of opinion on controversial issues, and able to do so in a positive way that seeks to live well with others.
8. They are equipped to function as contributing citizens and as active participants in a diverse nation and beyond.

▶ *For more on purposes of RE and an RW approach, see Section B1.*

A3 What do we mean by 'religion' and 'worldviews'?

The term 'religion' is a complex and contested term. The complexity of the term 'religion' allows for rich dialogue and debate about its nature in relation to beliefs about god(s), the divine, the supernatural and/or the transcendent; its function in communities and societies; its origins in the divine or in human culture; the relationship between believing, belonging and behaving. 'Religions' are instances of 'religion', and relate to the term in different ways.

The term 'worldview' is also a contested term, with a shorter history than 'religion' but one no less complex. This Handbook builds on the idea that we can consider worldviews from different positions. Two understandings drawn from the academic literature have shaped the project's approach:

A person's **personal worldview** describes and shapes how they encounter interpret, understand and engage with the world. A person may have a coherent and considered framework for answering questions about the nature of ultimate reality, knowledge, truth and ethics, or they may have never given such questions much thought – but they still have a worldview, including the beliefs, convictions, values and assumptions that influence and shape their thinking and living.[2]

An **organised worldview** can be understood as a 'more or less coherent and established system with certain (written and unwritten) sources, traditions, values, rituals, ideals, or dogmas' (from van der Kooij et al. 2013).

An RW approach does not see personal and organised worldviews as a binary but explores the complex relationship between them. Individuals within organised traditions may be more or less orthodox in their beliefs and practices, or in their engagement with theological or philosophical discourse, or in their day-to-day practice, or in their identification with that worldview.

An RW approach looks at the relationship between individuals and the organised worldviews to which they may belong, as well as using this exploration to give pupils opportunities to reflect upon their own personal worldviews.

▶ *See Sections B3 and C2 for more detail.*

A4 Why is this change needed?

The move towards an education in religion and worldviews is not about a change of name. It encompasses an adjustment in the way that content is selected and how it is approached within the subject, with the outcomes for pupils the first priority. There are several dimensions to this shift towards an education in religion and worldviews.

a

A critique levelled at religious education over past decades has been its over-emphasis on what is known as the 'world religions paradigm' – the idea that there are six major world religions, and lots of minor ones, and that they have a comparable set of core beliefs and practices that we can neatly package up and present in lessons. This approach is seen as distorting by imposing a particular model (deriving from Protestant Christianity) onto diverse traditions. Academic study has largely moved on from this paradigm, and now studies not only the formal/doctrinal aspects of religion and non-religion but also the fluid lived reality of adherents within these traditions, as well as the interplay between orthodoxy and lived experience. The study of religion and worldviews in schools needs to catch up with these academic developments.

b

Another dimension is the changing demographics globally (an increase in people affiliated to religions) and nationally (a significant increase in people identifying as non-religious, including a growing majority of young people in the UK). The picture is not simple, of course; many young people in the UK see themselves as 'spiritual but not religious'; for some, their non-religious worldviews embrace beliefs in supernatural phenomena and spiritual practices (Bullivant et al. 2019); for some it is the organised nature of religious worldviews that they are rejecting. Being non-religious is increasing in the UK, so the study of non-religion and non-religious worldviews is an increasingly important academic field, and it needs to be part of the school study of worldviews.

c

A third dimension is the challenge of content selection for teachers, as the increased complexity and scope of the field of study, combined with the impossibility of teaching everything about religion and non-religion, lead to the danger of content overload. A new rationale for content selection is needed.

d

A fourth dimension is the educational benefit for pupils from studying RE with an RW approach. This includes introducing pupils to the rich diversity of religion and non-religion as part of understanding how the world works and what it means to be human; enabling them to understand the complex ways in which worldviews work in human life, including their own; inducting them into scholarly processes, virtues and methods with which we can study religious and non-religious worldviews; and including pupils in an exploration of the influences on their own worldviews so that they can better understand and contribute to their community, to society and to the world.

e

A fifth dimension is that across the UK there are many examples of excellent RE provision and practice, but also evidence of too many schools that are neither meeting their statutory requirement nor providing all pupils with their entitlement to high quality RE. In part, the shift to an RW approach is to reinvigorate the subject, to reinforce its importance as part of children's and young people's education in a diverse religious and non-religious world, and to reinspire those schools currently neglecting the subject.

A5 How does an RW approach work?

The concept of worldviews offers an approach that revitalises the subject, taking account of academic developments around the understanding and study of religion and non-religion.

An RW approach accommodates the study of the fluidity within and between organised religious traditions; the diversity of identities and ways of living and thinking among both religious and non-religious people; and the relationship between religious and non-religious worldviews.

It also places the development of pupils' own position and assumptions within the academic processes of the subject. Their perspectives matter: they affect pupils' engagement and encounter with the content of the subject; they might reasonably expect their education to help them develop healthy, scholarly perspectives so that they can better understand and contribute to their community, to society and to the world. Pupils need opportunities to recognise, reflect on and develop their personal worldview, and to understand how their own worldview operates as a lens through which they encounter those of others.

This approach means enabling all pupils to become open-minded, well-informed, critical participants in public discourse and society, thus equipping them to make academically informed judgements about important matters in relation to religion and worldviews which shape the global landscape. They will have opportunities to consider how they might also shape that landscape. The approach sets out a subject for all pupils, whatever their own family background and personal worldviews. It supports them in not only understanding and responding to the world in which they find themselves but also considering the world as they would like it to be. It supports them in learning to live well together in a diverse society.

RE, like all education, has transformational intentions. Learning changes the learner. The approaches to the subject which are developed here, taking into consideration the long-standing debates about the ways in which RE may be legitimately transformational, reinforce the value of studying religion and worldviews for all children and young people. They aim to equip pupils with the scholarly knowledge, understanding and attributes that enable them to flourish as adults in, and contribute positively to, a society where matters of religion and worldviews are contentious and challenging.

The history of the subject includes varying emphases on, for example, edification, learning from religion, personal development including spiritual, moral, social, cultural development (SMSCD), the deconstruction and reconstruction of worldviews, and the human search for personal meaning. An RW approach carries this debate forward, and can provide pupils with vital opportunities to develop reasoned accounts of their own worldviews.

A6 Introducing the National Statement of Entitlement and its role

The key mechanism for supporting an RW approach is the National Statement of Entitlement (see Section B2 below). The NSE sets out:

- a benchmark for standards in a religion and worldviews curriculum about how worldview(s) work in human life (see also the National Content Standard for RE in England[3])
- a pedagogical tool for the selection of content and of appropriate teaching and learning approaches to enrich and deepen pupils' scholarly engagement with religion and worldviews.

The NSE has three interrelated elements, divided into eleven strands. The elements comprise **content**, **engagement** and **position**. Each strand is set out in a brief 'core statement' and an expanded statement (see p. 28–29). The core statements are given below.

Note that wherever the NSE mentions worldviews, it signifies religious and non-religious worldviews.

Notes:

- This National Statement of Entitlement provides a shared vision for the subject that will be interpreted for, and applied in, a variety of different contexts by syllabus writers and curriculum designers. This is exemplified by the three frameworks produced in response to the NSE.
- The NSE offers a benchmark around which the RE community can gather and agree, and as such has been embedded in the RE Council's National Content Standard for RE in England (2023). While this is not statutory, it has widespread agreement from education and RE professionals as well as faith and belief communities.
- The wider context for the NSE is that schools will give sufficient time and resources to the subject and to the equipping of specialist teaching. (See Section B2.1)

Legal requirements

Note that in applying the NSE, the legal requirement still operates, which is that RE 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (Education Act 1996 Section 375).

The NSE core statements:

CONTENT

a. Nature/formation/expression

What is meant by worldview and how people's worldviews are formed and expressed through a complex mix of influences and experiences.

b. Organised/individual

How people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or institutional worldviews.

c. Contexts

How worldviews have contexts, reflecting time and place, are highly diverse, and feature continuity and change.

d. Meaning and purpose

How worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience.

e. Values, commitments and morality

How worldviews may provide guidance on how to live a good life.

f. Influence and power

How worldviews influence, and are influenced by, people and societies.

ENGAGEMENT

g. Ways of knowing

The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing.

h. Lived experience

The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people.

i. Dialogue/interpretation

The field of study of worldviews is to be shown as a dynamic area of debate.

POSITION

j. Personal worldviews: reflexivity

Pupils will reflect on and potentially develop their personal worldviews in the light of their study.

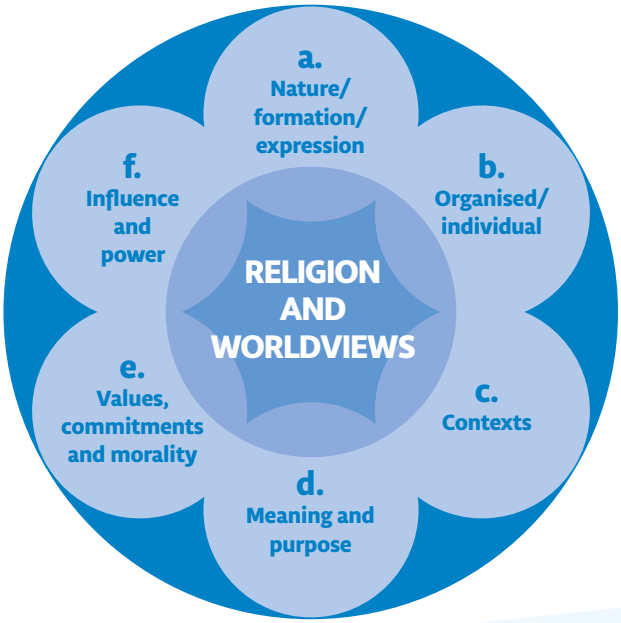
k. Personal worldviews: impact

Pupils will reflect on how their worldviews affect their learning.

Thinking through the NSE

While it is set out as a list, the NSE is not intended to function as one. The three elements are integrated. The relationship between content, engagement and position might be explained in this way:

The NSE presents a realm of religion and worldviews to explore (content strands NSE a-f).



As with any exploration, you need to prepare; you need to choose the right tools for the job and a suitable route (engagement strands NSE g-i).

But your exploration is always going to be undertaken from your own position – i.e., from within your own worldview (position strands NSE j-k). Awareness of how this affects your exploration, and how your journey affects your own worldview, is an integral part of the exploration, and something to draw attention to throughout the journey – not just something to reflect upon when you get back home.

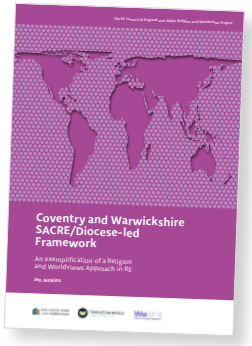
A7 Introducing the frameworks

In 2022, after an open tendering process, three framework teams were selected by the REC to participate in this project. Their task was for each to develop a framework for an RW curriculum, based on the National Statement of Entitlement (NSE) and the guidance offered in the Draft Resource (REC, 2022), accompanied by sample units of work and examples of pupil responses. The purpose was to test the NSE and the guidance, and to demonstrate ways in which these could be interpreted and applied in different contexts.

The three frameworks are exemplars but not templates. They all reflect specific contexts and have applied the NSE accordingly. As such, they exemplify a process that other SACREs, MATs or schools might follow to apply the NSE and accompanying guidance when developing a curriculum for their own contexts.

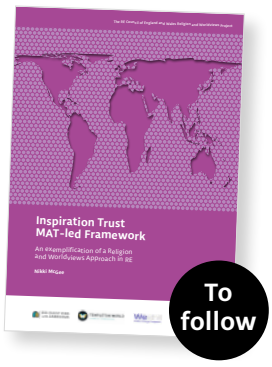
SACRE/Diocese-led Framework

This team, led by adviser Jen Jenkins, worked to create a framework for a locally agreed syllabus for two SACREs, Coventry and Warwickshire. Working with the Diocese of Coventry and the members of the two SACREs, the team took account of the contrasting nature of diverse, urban Coventry and predominantly monocultural, suburban and rural Warwickshire. This draws on the particular connection between Coventry and other parts of the world in relation to reconciliation and peace-making. The selected units of work show the progression along one of the framework's key concepts from 4 to 14.



MAT-led Framework

This team, led by Subject Specialist Lead Nikki McGee, worked within the Inspiration Trust MAT, seventeen academies in Norfolk and north Suffolk. Their particular context includes the application of a particular approach to knowledge in their curriculum, and their framework reflects that, as well as the geographical, historical and religious/non-religious context of East Anglia. The RE context includes the Norfolk 2019 agreed syllabus's use of the disciplines of theology, philosophy and human and social sciences. These disciplinary strands are embedded in the Trust's RE curriculum, and can be seen in, for example, the emphasis of philosophical questions and methods in their Framework. The selection of units shows progression along one strand of the curriculum from 4 to 14.



Teacher-led Framework

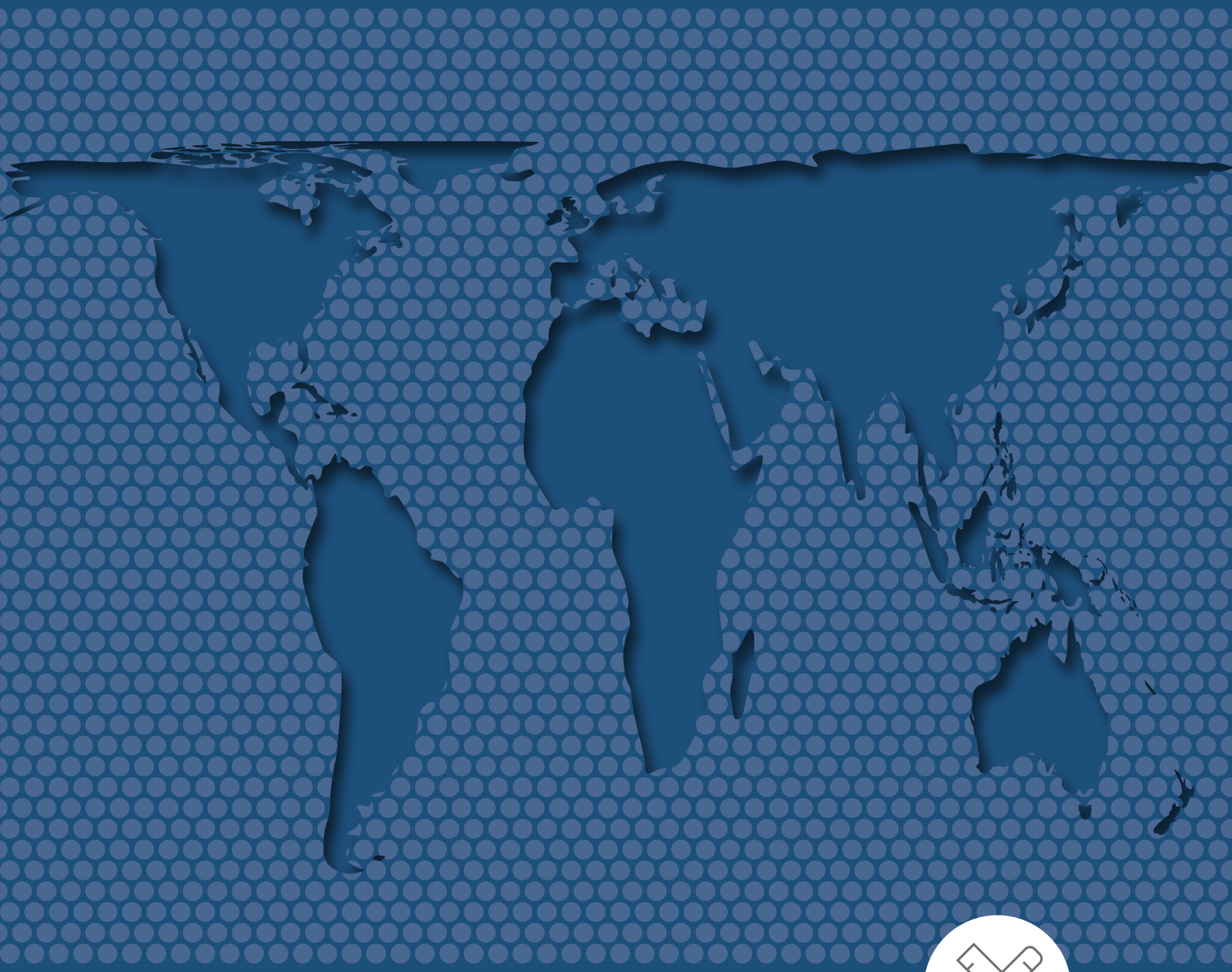
This team, led by Gillian Georgiou, comprised teachers across the country, in different contexts: primary and secondary, community, Church of England, academy, urban, suburban and rural. It addressed the challenge: what do you do to introduce an RW approach when you already have a syllabus or curriculum in place? In response, its framework is set up to allow the curriculum leader or teacher to address a series of questions about the unit they are teaching, so as to apply an RW approach to existing units. The framework is in two forms – one at the curriculum level and one at the unit level. The units of work are selected to show how the framework can be applied in a range of school and curriculum contexts.

Note:
Both the SACRE-led and Teacher-led Frameworks are written to offer examples for those in community schools, foundation schools, schools with a religious character, academies and free schools.

A8 What do schools need to do?

- The Handbook, with its three exemplar Frameworks and accompanying units of work, has been produced to support curriculum developers to create a curriculum that fits their context.
- Section B (see below) gives a series of steps for developing an RW approach curriculum in a school's context, applying the NSE and associated guidance. How schools use this will depend on whether they are at the stage of starting from scratch or adapting a current RE curriculum.
- The Teacher-led Framework offers an example of how to do this at the unit level and at the curriculum level, in a context where there is already a syllabus or curriculum in place. The SACRE/Diocese-led and MAT-led Frameworks offer examples of how these teams created new curriculum approaches, while drawing on the lessons learnt from their previous syllabus/curriculum.

‘How schools use this will depend on whether they are at the stage of starting from scratch or adapting a current RE curriculum.’



B. Toolkit

for developing a religion and worldviews approach in RE

Intended audience
The syllabus developer, curriculum leader, or subject leader who wants to apply an RW approach in their SACRE, ASC, diocese, MAT or school context. It is also relevant to teachers, subject leaders, and trainee and early career teachers.

Content
This section has a more practical focus, clarifying some definitions, offering both a commentary on the NSE and practical advice for taking the NSE and applying it in different contexts. Examples are given of RW approach questions.

B1 Purposes for RE in a religion and worldviews (RW) approach

The key purpose for RE in an RW approach is: **for pupils to understand how worldviews work in human experience, including their own, through the study of religion and non-religion, using rigorous scholarly approaches that equip them for adult life in a diverse world.**

This incorporates several other purposes for the subject, drawn from the strong traditions of RE and the wider purposes of education. This education in religion and worldviews will help pupils to engage with, understand and respond to:

- diverse responses to and understandings of the world as presented by worldviews (religious and non-religious)
- relationships between beliefs, teachings, forms of expression within organised worldviews, and the lived experience of adherents
- questions of meaning, purpose and truth, including about ultimate reality, and how these questions may be posed, addressed, understood, evaluated and responded to differently within worldviews and across disciplines
- the concepts, language and ways of knowing that help organise and make sense of religion and worldviews
- the development of 'worldview literacy', including the explicit deconstruction of knowledge about (or representation of) worldviews
- how their own personal worldview shapes their encounters with and responses to the world, and how their context, experiences and study can shape their personal worldview.

The RW approach seeks context-appropriate expression of the key purpose statement. It is not trying to impose a one-size fits all model but recognises the need for diversity of implementation to fit the varied contexts of schools across, for example, local authorities, MATs and dioceses in the realising of a shared vision.

As each section of this Handbook has a different intended audience, some of this section repeats elements from Section A, and some sections are expanded in Section C.

B1.1 Purpose statements

An RW approach will:

Introduce pupils to the rich diversity of religion and non-religion, locally and globally, as a key part of understanding the world, what it means to be human, and how they might respond
Stimulate pupils' curiosity about, and interest in, this diversity of worldviews, both religious and non-religious
Expand upon how worldviews work, and how different worldviews, religious and non-religious, influence individuals, communities and society
Develop pupils' awareness that learning about worldviews involves interpreting the significance and meaning of information they study
Develop pupils' appreciation of the complexity of worldviews, and pupils' sensitivity to the nature of religious language and experience
Induct pupils into the academic processes and methods by which we can study religion and religious and non-religious worldviews
Enable pupils, by the end of their studies, to identify positions and presuppositions of different academic disciplines and their implications for understanding
Give pupils opportunities to explore the relationship between religious and non-religious worldviews and literature, culture and the arts
Include pupils in the enterprise of interrogating the sources of their own developing worldviews and how they may benefit from exploring the profound and complex religious and non-religious heritage of humanity
Give opportunities for pupils to consider how they might respond to the way the world is, and play a part in how they might want the world to be in the future
Provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on the relationship between their personal worldviews and the content studied, equipping them to develop their own informed responses in the light of their learning
Equip pupils with the knowledge, understanding and attributes to make scholarly and reflexive judgements about religion and worldviews
Prepare pupils for active citizenship as adults in a world where diversity of views on religion and worldviews is increasing.

B2 National Statement of Entitlement

The National Statement of Entitlement (NSE) is the pedagogical tool for achieving the above purposes. The NSE sets out:

- a benchmark for standards in a religion and worldviews curriculum about how worldview(s) work in human life
- a pedagogical tool for the selection of content and of appropriate teaching and learning approaches to enrich and deepen pupils' understanding of and scholarly engagement with religion and worldviews.

Note that wherever the NSE refers to worldviews, it means both religious and non-religious worldviews.

This version of the NSE expands on the core statements set out in Section A6.

CONTENT	
CORE STATEMENTS	**EXPANDED STATEMENTS**
a. Nature/formation/expression What is meant by worldview and how people's worldviews are formed and expressed through a complex mix of influences and experiences.	The nature and variety of worldviews, and ways in which people's worldviews are formed through a complex mix of influences and experiences, including (for example) rituals, practices, texts, teachings, stories, inspiring individuals, the creative arts, family, tradition, culture, everyday experiences and actions, and interactions with others and in society. How these may also act as ways of expressing and communicating worldviews.
b. Organised/individual How people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or institutional worldviews.	Ways in which people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or (sometimes) institutional worldviews. For example, how individual worldviews may be consciously held or tacit; how they develop in relation to wider communities; how individual and organised worldviews are dynamic; the degree to which individual worldviews may be influenced and shaped by organised worldviews.
c. Contexts How worldviews have contexts, reflecting time and place, are highly diverse, and feature continuity and change.	The fact that worldviews have contexts, reflecting their time and place, shaping and being shaped by these, maintaining continuity and also changing; ways in which they are highly diverse and often develop in interaction with each other. (This applies to organised worldviews as well as to individual worldviews.)

d. Meaning and purpose How worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience.	Ways in which worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience, such as questions of ultimate reality, existence, meaning, purpose, knowledge, truth, creativity, identity and diversity. Ways in which worldviews may play different roles in providing people with ways of making sense of existence and/or their lives, including space for mystery, ambiguity and paradox.
e. Values, commitments and morality How worldviews may provide guidance on how to live a good life.	Ways in which worldviews may provide a vision of, and guidance on, how to be a good person and live a good life, and may offer ideas of justice, right and wrong, value, beauty, truth and goodness. Ways in which individuals and communities may express their values through their commitments.
f. Influence and power How worldviews influence, and are influenced by, people and societies.	Ways in which worldviews influence people (e.g. providing a 'grand narrative' or story for understanding the world) and influence the exercise of power in societies (e.g. on social norms for communities, or in relation to conflict or peace-making). How society and people can also influence and shape worldviews.

ENGAGEMENT

CORE STATEMENTS	EXPANDED STATEMENTS
g. Ways of knowing The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing.	The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing. Questions and methods should be carefully chosen, recognising that there are different understandings of what knowledge is deemed reliable, valid, credible, truthful etc.
h. Lived experience The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people.	The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people (e.g. religious, non-religious, embodied, diverse, fluid, material, experiential) in relation to local and global contexts, recognising the complex reality of worldviews as they are held, shared and expressed by people in real life.
i. Dialogue/interpretation The field of study of worldviews is to be shown as a dynamic area of debate.	The field of study of worldviews is to be encountered as a dynamic area of dialogue and debate, and one which engages pupils with practices of interpretation and critical judgement.

POSITION

CORE STATEMENTS	EXPANDED STATEMENTS
j. Personal worldviews: reflexivity Pupils will reflect on and potentially develop their personal worldviews in the light of their study.	Pupils will come to understand their own worldview in greater depth, and how it relates to the worldviews of others, becoming more reflective and reflexive. As they develop this awareness of their positionality in relation to that of others, they will be equipped to make informed, justifiable judgements on how (far) this understanding prepares them for life in a diverse world.
k. Personal worldviews: impact Pupils will reflect on how their worldviews affect their learning.	Pupils will develop their understanding of how their encounters with the subject content of RE are affected and shaped by their worldviews, whether conscious or not, and that this is also true for everyone else. They will reflect on how (far) their learning may have an impact on their worldview.

Legal requirements

Note that in applying the NSE, the legal requirement still operates, which is that RE 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (Education Act 1996 Section 375).

Notes:

- This National Statement of Entitlement provides a shared vision for the subject. It provides a pedagogical tool that will be interpreted for, and applied in, a variety of different contexts by syllabus writers and curriculum designers.
- The NSE offers a benchmark around which the RE community can gather and agree, and as such has been embedded in the RE Council's National Content Standard for RE in England (2023). While this is not statutory, it has widespread agreement from education and RE professionals, as well as faith and belief communities.
- The wider context for the NSE is that schools will give sufficient time and resources to the subject and to the equipping of specialist teaching. (See Section B2.1)

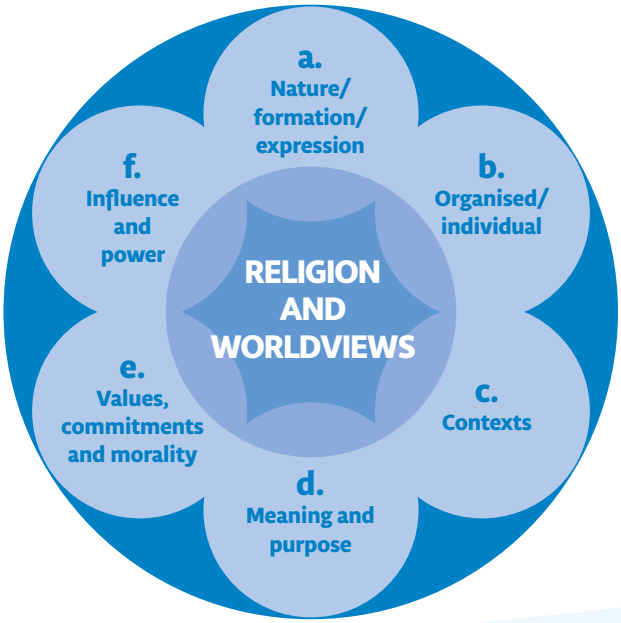
Note that these three elements and the strands will need to be integrated in practice.

Note also that the NSE appears as a list here, but it is not intended as a list. It can be understood in narrative terms – setting out on an exploration, choosing suitable routes and tools, and reflecting on one's position at key points (see p. 31).

Thinking through the NSE

While it is set out as a list, the NSE is not intended to function as one. The three elements are integrated. The relationship between content, engagement and position might be explained in this way:

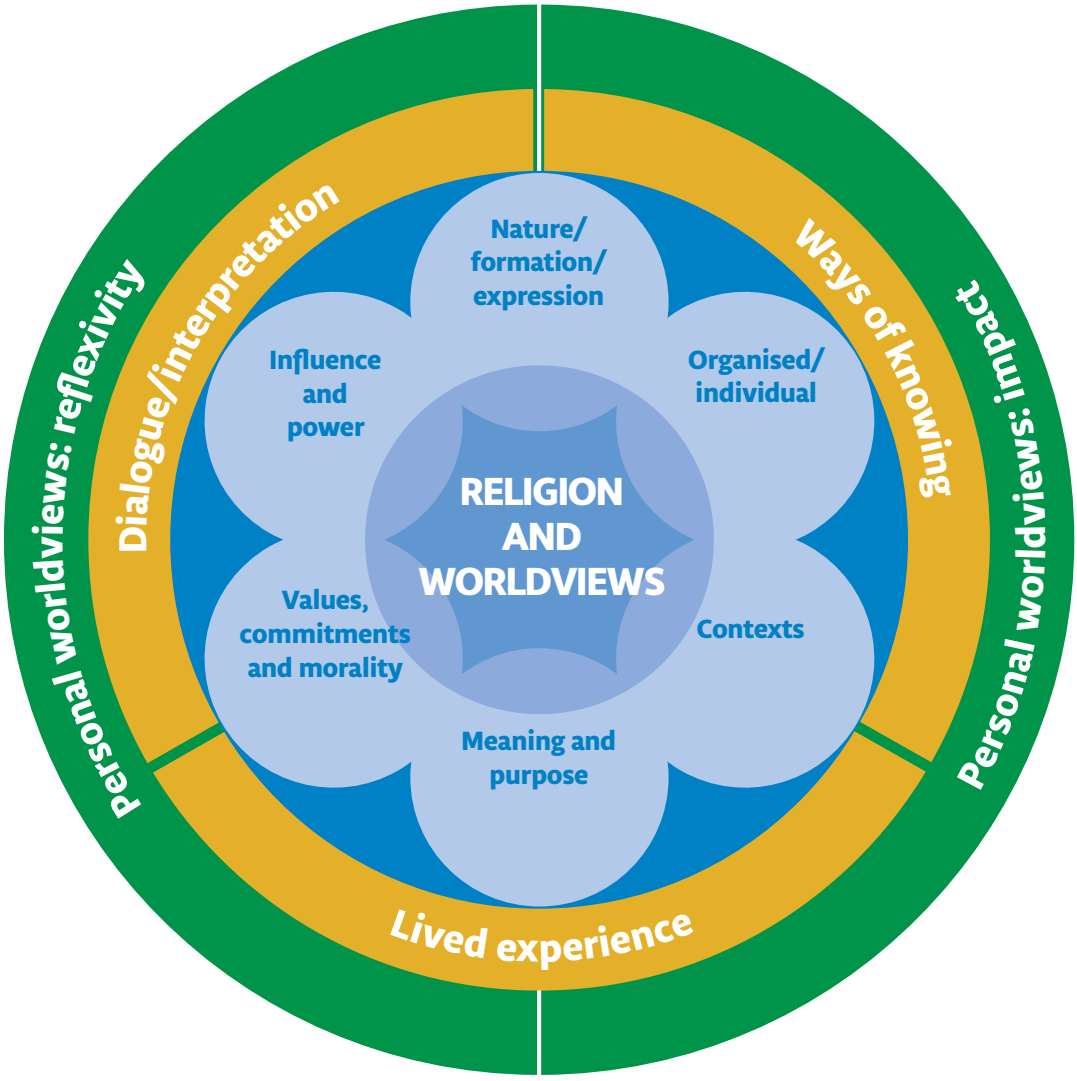
The NSE presents a realm of religion and worldviews to explore (content strands NSE a-f).



As with any exploration, you need to prepare; you need to choose the right tools for the job and a suitable route (engagement strands NSE g-i).

But your exploration is always going to be undertaken from your own position – i.e., from within your own worldview (position strands NSE j-k). Awareness of how this affects your exploration, and how your journey affects your own worldview, is an integral part of the exploration, and something to draw attention to throughout the journey – not just something to reflect upon when you get back home.

Another way of showing the relationship between the content, engagement and position elements of the NSE is through this diagram:



This diagram is not a presentation of the pedagogy, but is an analytic representation of the relationship between the elements. Teaching and learning could begin with an example of content and move 'outwards' towards the pupil's worldview, or with the experience of the pupil and 'inwards' to examine some exemplar material for a religion or worldview. Note also that pupils' personal worldviews are in play throughout any study.

Note also that there is no requirement to balance the elements equally in terms of time; the three elements are integrated within any unit in order to meet the purposes of an RW approach as effectively as possible. In practical terms, this might mean:

- the majority of curriculum time is spent engaging with the content
- varying amounts of time are spent on the model of engagement (more if using a method new to pupils, less as they become more familiar with it)
- appropriate time is spent on the position element, drawing pupils' attention to it at any point and involving some existential self-reflection at different stages. (See Section B7 for more examples of how this might be done, and see also the SACRE-led Framework's 'worldviews passport'.)

When planning units of work, teachers will not be trying to address all eleven strands in every unit. See the use of the mixing desk tool below (see Section B2.2).

B2.1 The context for this statement of entitlement.

All pupils are entitled to receive an education in religion and worldviews in every year up to, and including, Year 13.

Teaching must promote openness, respect for others, objectivity, scholarly accuracy and critical enquiry.

(By objectivity, we do not mean neutrality or some kind of subjectivity-free state. In an RW approach it refers to a person's ability to be reflective about their own personal worldview (i.e. their subjectivity) within their study.)

In line with the DfE Teachers' Standards, pupils are therefore entitled to be taught by teachers who:

i. have a secure knowledge of the relevant curriculum area
ii. foster and maintain pupils' interest in the subject
iii. can address misconceptions and misunderstandings, and handle controversial issues
iv. demonstrate a critical understanding of developments in the study of religion and worldviews
v. promote the value of scholarship.

For all pupils to have equal access to high quality education in religion and worldviews, the subject must be given adequate time and resources commensurate with the place of the subject (RE) as a core component of the basic curriculum.

Schools are required to publish information about their RE curriculum on their website. Ideally, schools should include a detailed statement about how they meet the NSE, and ensure that every pupil has access to it through the curriculum, lessons and wider experiences they provide.

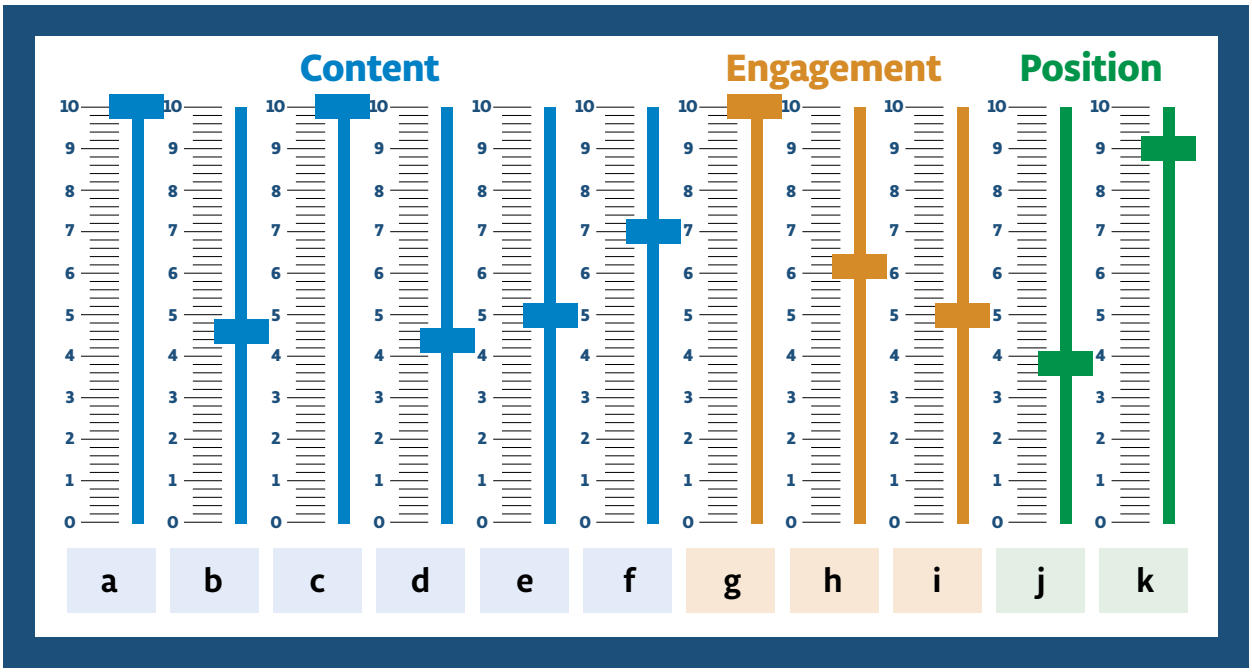
B2.2 Using the NSE to shape units and a curriculum

The NSE offers eleven statements, to be understood as being in relationship with each other. Units of work can focus on a particular *content* strand, alongside one from the *engagement* element to indicate the way in which *pupils* will approach the content, and one *position* strand. However, selecting a single strand does not mean that the others are irrelevant. You might consider the metaphor of a mixing desk, below.

In music, a mixing desk takes all the inputs from a band or orchestra and balances them, fading up a particular instrumental or vocal line (or lines) so that it comes to the fore in the mix. While this happens, it does not mean that the other inputs stop – they continue, and their turn in the spotlight comes at other points.

The NSE functions in a similar way. A unit might draw attention to a particular NSE content strand, or it might fade up two or more. For example, a unit might raise a question of meaning and purpose (NSE d) *and* examine how this is addressed differently in mainstream doctrines and in individual ways of thinking and living (NSE b). The unit may also use examples that show different contexts (NSE c), and while teachers may point this out – and pupils may spot it too – it is not the particular focus of the unit.

Likewise with the engagement element: emphasis may be placed on a disciplinary approach (NSE g) while also using examples from lived experience (NSE h); this element is noted but plays in the background. With the position element, both strands are likely to be in play but units might focus particularly on one rather than the other.



The mixing desk tool can be used to balance the use of the NSE across the curriculum too. The SACRE/Diocese-led Framework makes use of this model.

B3 What do we mean by worldview?

There are many definitions of 'worldview'. Alongside religion, it is another term that sparks debate. Fundamental to the RW approach advocated in this Handbook is the idea that **everyone has a worldview** – or at least, the idea that 'no one stands nowhere': everyone experiences the world from their own context, experience and position.

This does **not** mean:

- that everyone has a ready set of coherent, consciously held responses to a set of ultimate questions about life, the universe and everything. A person's worldview may be unconsidered and even unconscious, drawing on a wide variety of influences and implicit assumptions, and containing contradictions.
- that only people with a religious worldview have a worldview. As part of a religious community's nurture, religious people may have consciously learnt about and practised their tradition, and may have a considered worldview that reflects this. Alternatively, they may have unconsciously absorbed ideas and ways of living and being that have shaped and coloured their worldview, so that it is recognisably a religious worldview, even as they may well have absorbed non-religious influences too. Non-religious people – sometimes in transparent and deliberate ways, such as through membership of an organisation such as Humanists UK, and sometimes unconsciously – will also have absorbed ideas and ways of living and being from their own context, which may have had non-religious or religious influences, to different degrees. These will shape the way non-religious people encounter, view, and live in the world.

The RW approach balances what the CoRE report called personal and organised worldviews.

Note that when this Handbook refers to **personal worldviews**, it refers to *pupils'* personal worldviews.

When pupils are studying the worldviews of people within an organised worldview, the Handbook uses the term '**individual worldviews**'.

Use of the term 'individual' is not intended to imply that anyone's worldview is entirely unique or someone is completely isolated – we are communal beings, and we grow and develop in relation to others. However, 'individual' here functions as a scholarly tool focusing attention on the exploration of the relationship between an individual person and the communities to which they belong, including those of organised or institutional worldviews.

The term is also not intended to set up a simple binary between individuals and institutions. The relationships may be fluid and complex and are worth examination. With one element of an RW approach being that of examining lived religion, individuals' accounts of their worldview will be a key way of exploring these relationships.

The Handbook is making this distinction between **individual worldviews as case studies and objects of study** and **personal worldviews as the position of pupils** (also open to reflective consideration by the pupils). It is making this distinction in order to ensure that when we suggest that studying *individual* worldviews of adherents in relation to organised/institutional worldviews can contribute to the development of pupils' personal worldviews, pupils are not expected to resemble the people they study, nor aspire to do so, nor shape their worldviews in line with those under study.

B3.1 Personal worldviews

This Handbook's entry-point definition is:

A personal 'worldview' describes the way in which a person encounters, interprets, understands and engages with the world.

- This encompasses a person's beliefs, attitudes, identities, assumptions, intentions, convictions, values, hopes and ways of being in the world.
- It will affect, and be affected by, a person's thoughts, emotions, experiences, encounters, desires, commitments, actions and reactions; much of this is individual, but much will be shared too – people are not islands.
- A person's worldview will be influenced by their context, in terms of time, place, language, sex, gender, the communities that surround them, ethnicity, nationality, economics, history, class, access to political power etc. (Some contextual influences will be obvious and recognised; some will not.)
- It will change as a person grows and faces new experiences, encounters new people and situations, and engages in learning new knowledge. (Some changes may be conscious and deliberate, some may not.)
- This means a person's worldview may be visible or invisible to the individual, but it will show up through their words, attitudes and actions.
- A person's worldview affects how they interpret the world around them as they try to make sense of the world they encounter.
- A person's worldview is about more than religion, even if they are an adherent.
- It might be better to say that a person *inhabits* a worldview rather than *has* one.
- A person may or may not have considered the kind of existential, epistemological and ethical questions addressed by organised worldviews (see below). The RE classroom is an ideal place to encounter such questions, of course, and to learn how to respond in a reflective and informed way.

B3.2 Organised and institutional worldviews

The CoRE report also identified 'organised' worldviews as 'shared among particular groups and sometimes embedded in institutions', adopting the term 'institutional' worldviews for the latter.

There are many definitions offered of organised worldviews. For example, Jacomijn C. van der Kooij et al. (2013) offer this definition:

> **An organised worldview is 'a view on life that has developed over time as a more or less coherent and established system with certain (written and unwritten) sources, traditions, values, rituals, ideals, or dogmas … [it] has a group of believers who adhere to this view on life'.**

Some scholars set out worldviews around a set of questions (Sire 1976, 2004, 2020, Taves 2020, Aerts et al. 1984) to which organised worldviews have differing responses, embracing existential, ontological, epistemological, ethical questions for example. (See Section C2.5)

The way a worldview might be seen as 'organised' or 'institutional' will differ. There are global institutions such as the Roman Catholic Church, whose teachings and practices might present a Roman Catholic 'institutional worldview'. The teachings of the Ismailis might be another example of an 'institutional worldview', with the central authority of the Imamate manifested in institutional structures across different nations. Other Muslim groups, while still 'organised', might have less tight structures, with variation in practice across cultures or even within a single local community.

Tim Hutchings, University of Nottingham, notes that 'a religion, an institution and an institutional/organised worldview are not necessarily the same thing. The Church of England, for example, is part of a religion and it is an institution, but it is not an organised or institutional worldview. What unites the Church of England is certain points of shared history, texts, rituals and an institutional structure, designed to allow for a diversity of interpretations and worldviews.' (Hutchings 2023).

A world religions approach to RE has tended to see institutions representative of each religion as the focus of study. The RW approach explores how communities and individuals *interact* with these organised or institutional worldviews – how people experience them, and their impact on people's lives. For some:

- the scope and riches of their tradition are not captured in the austerity of the term 'institutional worldview' – instead, they experience it as spiritual, dynamic, creative and life-enhancing, for example
- the institution gives them a sense of community and identity, without their necessarily subscribing to the institution's beliefs and practices
- in addition to the positive benefits derived from belonging, an organised or institutional worldview may have negative effects, oppressing and limiting their identity and personhood

This kind of interaction is what is being explored through examination of *community* or *individual* worldviews.

B3.3 Studying religion and worldviews

This Handbook builds on the understanding of worldviews presented in the CoRE report. It balances personal and organised worldviews. Tim Hutchings comments: 'It is this balance that allows RE to justify attention to religious and non-religious texts, traditions, and complex theologies and philosophies alongside the everyday lived experiences of people who live in dialogue with those traditions. It is this balance that establishes valuable and exciting common ground between school and university teaching in the subject. From age 4 to age 19 – and beyond in higher education, teachers are inviting pupils to explore how humans interpret, understand, experience and engage with the world, including everyday life stories as well as some of the most impressive and sophisticated accomplishments of human thought.' (Hutchings 2023).

B3.4 Points to note

Religion and worldviews

- An RW approach examines the dynamic between these terms.
- Part of that dynamic allows for encounter with, and study of, diverse voices and the experiences of individuals within wider 'organised' worldviews. Thus, the individual worldviews of adherents within such organised worldviews come under the content to be studied.

Organised and individual worldviews

- Some organised worldviews may be expressed through widely approved doctrines and practices set out by official hierarchies, e.g. Christian creeds and catechisms; the Rehat Maryada in Sikh traditions. Some 'organised' worldviews may be embedded in institutions, e.g. the Roman Catholic Church.
- Individuals within these traditions may have an individual worldview that reflects these widely approved teachings to a greater or a lesser extent.
- Some involvement with an 'organised' worldview may take the form of devotion by a group to a particular guru or saint, e.g. A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder of ISKCON, or Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, chair of the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewa organisation.
- Some individual worldviews may weave together influences from diverse streams (e.g. be a practising Anglican with a preference for Celtic Christianity and an interest in Zen Buddhism, married to a pagan, and integrating pagan festivals and sensibilities into their living and being).
- Some may have left their religious upbringing behind but retain at least a trace of a religious worldview (e.g. brought up a Catholic, left it all behind in their teens and now living as non-religious, yet still practising fasting during Lent).
- Some individuals may have reflected on their personal worldview through encountering a set of worldview questions (for example, through the work of Christian scholars such as James Sire, or non-religious scholars such as Ann Taves or John Valk) and have their own coherent worldview, influenced by the answers from organised worldviews. Many others have not reflected on such questions – until, perhaps, they encounter these kinds of questions in RE.
- In a country such as the UK, people's worldviews may absorb Christian *and* non-religious influences (alongside consumerist influences, for example), as part of the air they breathe. Weeks and years are shaped by Christian festivals and observances; Christian ideas underpin law, morality, sanctity of life, the legislature, the monarchy. However, the media, TV, film, popular culture and education often present a secular perspective (where religion has little significance or relevance) as the default position.

Religious worldviews

- Some religious worldviews incorporate the idea of divine revelation – that a divine being has communicated the truth about the way the world is and how people should be. People holding these religious worldviews may believe in this kind of revelation, and part of their way of living and being involves adherence to the divine path, a participation in the deity's on going purpose, a celebration of the goodness, wisdom and mercy of the deity, and/or fear of divine judgement.
- Other traditions may see the idea of the divine as part of a human construct, a powerful metaphor, a transformative idea that motivates and illuminates ways of living, offering wisdom from the ages, refined through experience, conversation and debate, to guide actions.
- Some people within a religious tradition may seek to live in accordance with a sense of cosmic order and truth, and to ever-deepen their sense of connectedness to all life.
- Some people within a religious tradition may say that their own worldview is beside the point – the truth of divine revelation is true regardless of whether their individual worldview lines up, or whether their way of living matches the moral ideals of their tradition. They may therefore reject the idea that their beliefs are 'just a worldview'.
- For some, their religious identity is also associated with their ethnic identity. For example, many Jewish people are ethnically Jewish, with genetic roots in a particular time and place. Ethnicity is inescapable, even if, where linked to religious identity, people with specific ethnic backgrounds may not see themselves as having the linked religious 'worldview', or may see themselves as firmly part of it, or somewhere in between. They may have their own position on how, or sometimes even whether, they belong to an 'organised worldview'.
- Some religious people reject the term 'religious': they may say, 'I'm not religious; I'm Christian/ Muslim/ Sikh' etc.
- Some individuals who see themselves as being within religious traditions or communities may have never given much thought to the existential, epistemological or ethical questions addressed by the organised worldview to which they belong. They just do the stuff.
- People who identify with a religious worldview may not necessarily believe, belong or behave according to teachings and traditions, for example, research shows that a significant number of people in the UK who identify Christians do not pray, read the Bible, attend church or believe in the resurrection, or even in God.[4]
- Many people will vigorously defend their worldview because they believe it to be true. The philosopher Michael Polanyi described this as holding beliefs with 'universal intent'. Beliefs matter to people, because their identity is tied up with them.

Non-religious worldviews

- Non-religious worldviews are diverse and complex, with fluid boundaries. People may draw upon a wide range of influences, and there are no rules about what should or should not be incorporated into a non-religious worldview. Some influences are part of a person's cultural or social background; consumerism may not be a conscious choice for a person's non-religious (or religious) worldview, but it is difficult to escape in the contemporary UK. Other influences may be more deliberately chosen, such as ethical veganism, environmentalism or Sentientism. These may equally align with some religious worldviews, but adopting them does not require any assent to religious beliefs or teachings. The term non-religion itself does not entail any particular attitude towards religion.
- The term 'spiritual but not religious' is a contemporary sociological category, often indicating that someone rejects organised religion but embraces a belief in something greater than themselves or the transcendent, perhaps with a focus on their interior life or their relationship with the natural environment, for example.
- For some, their non-religious worldview includes elements of what some might call supernatural phenomena such as belief in ghosts or ancestor spirits; some have a sense that things happen 'for a reason' or are 'meant to be'; some embrace religious or spiritual practices, such as mindfulness meditation or belief in the healing power of crystals; some trust their horoscope for guidance (e.g. Bullivant et al. 2019). Non-religiousness has no orthodoxy or orthopraxy.
- Some non-religious people could reasonably be categorised as materialists, believing that as matter is the fundamental substance in nature, all things, including mental states and consciousness, are results of material interactions of material things. Many of these also embrace both metaphysical naturalism (a complete denial of the supernatural) alongside the application of methodological naturalism (a leading principle of scientific enquiry, that everything should be explained in this-worldly terms).
- Some non-religious people embrace Humanism as a worldview, in that their thinking is aligned with or shaped by the kinds of existential and ethical statements set out in the Humanist Manifesto, for example. Some are active in Humanist communities, and may offer their services as celebrants for non-religious people at significant times of life, as one expression of their worldview. For some, Humanism may function as an organised worldview, with parallels to organised religious worldviews.
- Scholars sometimes differentiate between Humanism and humanism, in a way consonant with the idea of organised and individual worldviews: 'The former is associated with explicit discourses and organisations such as Humanists UK and Ethical Culture, and includes an identification with Humanist histories and traditions; the latter is an analytic category which identifies a worldview that does not necessarily include explicit association or identification with these organizations or histories, even if it continues to be shaped by their inheritance.' (Strhan et al. 2024)

- Some non-religious people reject the term 'non-religion'. They do not believe in a non-religion nor do they define their beliefs in relation to religion.
- Some non-religious people may be secular in the sense of seeing the public square as a neutral place that does not privilege any worldview; or they may be secularist in the sense of wishing to remove religion from public life and restrict it to the private sphere. Those elements may be more or less significant in the impact they have on any individual's worldview.
- Lois Lee (2015) points out that the non-religious worldviews of her interviewees were rarely articulated as coherent credal expressions, that they emerged in fragmentary ways through expressions of belief, accounts of lived experiences, and embodied ways of living, and that they are often woven together in creative and even contradictory ways in people's lives.
- Some non-religious people's worldviews see existential/religious questions as meaningless, or are indifferent to them. Worldview is not just about substantive content, but about underlying orientations, as people will inhabit their worldview regardless of its relationship to religion. (Hancock 2024)

All of the above bullet points offer scope for pupil enquiry in an RE curriculum applying an RW approach.

B3.5 Pupils' personal worldviews

Demographic data suggests that across Britain most pupils are not part of organised religious traditions. The RW approach brings pupils' personal worldviews into play within the study of religion and worldviews. From the pupils' early days in primary school, the development of their personal worldviews includes a growing self-awareness of how our autobiography affects our worldview, and how it shapes our encounters in life.

In RE, an RW approach involves helping pupils to develop their personal worldview in conversation with the content and methods of study in the subject. As they move through their education, it helps them to make informed judgements about the content studied, the methods used, and their own perspectives and position, in the light of evidence and argument. This draws pupils' attention to ideas of critical 'positionality', as practised in academic study at undergraduate level and beyond.

Intellectual virtues

The development of pupils' personal worldviews thus involves developing some intellectual virtues, such as

- curiosity
- intellectual humility about the certainty of their own conclusions
- a willingness to learn from others
- developing the habit of careful listening before responding or making judgements, as they recognise the interplay between their own worldview and the worldviews of others in interpreting content
- being prepared to change their mind and adjust their worldview in the light of new encounters, knowledge and experiences.

The development of these intellectual virtues arises (in part) from the modelling of these virtues in the way pupils are taught. The ways that questions are raised and addressed in the classroom, and how the content is handled, will exemplify the kind of openness, humility, curiosity, even-handedness, accuracy, fairness, willingness to be challenged and self-awareness that the subject wants to promote, both for academic reasons and in preparation for life in a diverse world. Such virtues will promote scholarly attributes such as asking insightful questions and making wise and informed judgements.

Personal transformation

The subject, as with all school subjects, includes the possibility of personal transformation. The pupil engages with learning about ways of thinking, living and being that are outside their own experience. The inclusion of pupils' personal worldviews within the educational process draws attention to the possibility that the learning experience will change them (by increasing their interpretive skills, for example), and offers opportunities for them to reflect on how this might happen.

The centrality of pupils' personal worldview development is driven by the entitlement of all children and young people to understand human experience and the way things operate in their own and others' worlds. It is, therefore, part of the identify formation of pupils. They are given opportunities to examine the sources of their own worldviews, and the impact of their contexts on these.

Through the classroom encounters, pupils will develop awareness of how their own worldviews relate with the varied worldviews of others. They will have opportunities to grasp how their worldviews have a bearing on their understanding of, and engagement with, curriculum content. Recognising that this also applies to others is a valuable preparation for life in a world of diverse viewpoints.

While personal worldviews extend beyond matters of religious belief, study of religious and non-religious worldviews offers opportunities to examine important existential and ethical questions. These include questions around ultimate reality, meaning, purpose and truth, identity, diversity, morality, values and commitments, and the accumulated knowledge and understanding arising from centuries of religions and philosophies addressing such questions.

> **While personal worldviews extend beyond matters of religious belief, study of religious and non-religious worldviews offers opportunities to examine important existential and ethical questions.**

B3.6 The NSE and Ofsted's three types of knowledge

The Ofsted 2021 *Religious Education Research Review* outlines three types of knowledge that pupils should make progress in:

- **substantive knowledge:** this includes knowledge about religious and non-religious traditions, e.g. core concepts, truth claims, teachings and practices, behaviour and responses of adherents, wider concepts such as spirituality and secularity, and how worldviews work in human life
- **ways of knowing:** this is where pupils learn 'how to know' about religion and non-religion, incorporating methods from academic disciplines
- **personal knowledge:** pupils build an awareness of their own presuppositions and values about the religious and non-religious traditions they study, and of the lived experience of adherents.

The study of the relationship between religion and worldviews is thus a core element of the **substantive content** of the subject.

This substantive content includes **organised/ institutional/ community/ individual worldviews**. These range from precise credal expressions and central teachings to the complex fluidity of individual worldviews within wider traditions.

This Handbook recognises that there are differing interpretations of personal worldviews and personal knowledge, so the terms are not intended to be exact equivalents.

The methods used to explore, examine and engage with religion and worldviews form part of 'ways of knowing'.

There is consonance between Ofsted's accounts of these three types of knowledge and the content/engagement/position elements of the RW approach presented in this Handbook. (See Section C6 for more on the context of the NSE.)

B4 Selecting content

It is vital that syllabus writers and curriculum developers make wise decisions on the selection of knowledge for a curriculum. Time for RE is limited, and the RW approach is intended to offer a solution to the impossibility of comprehensive coverage of the diversity of religious and non-religious traditions. The criteria for deciding content include the following:

1

Intention

The NSE frames the intent behind the content selection. The treatment of that content then contributes to the progression of understanding of the elements in the NSE, and the links between them.

2

Legal framework

The legal requirement operates, which is that RE 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (Education Act 1996 Section 375). For most schools and academies with a religious character RE is determined by the governors and is set out in their trust deed or equivalent. This primary legislation along with case law, set an expectation that pupils will develop knowledge and understanding of the matters of central importance for the religious and non-religious worldviews studied.

3

Inclusive principle

Good practice in RE, as well as European and domestic legislation, has established the principle that RE in schools without a religious character should be inclusive of both religious and non-religious worldviews. There is widespread acceptance that study of Humanism is an appropriate example of a non-religious worldview, as is stated within case law ('The content of religious education teaching must include, at least to some degree, the teaching of non-religious beliefs (such as Humanism)', Bowen vs Kent County Council 2023 para.68[5]). Schools should ensure that the content and delivery of the RE curriculum are inclusive in this way, according equal respect to religious and non-religious worldviews (noting that this does not imply equal time between them) (Fox vs the Secretary of State for Education para.74 2015[6]).

All religious and non-religious worldviews studied must be represented fairly and accurately, and teaching should be critical, objective and pluralistic. This Handbook interprets '*critical*' as meaning that pupils learn to make good judgements; '*objective*' here means developing the ability for a person to be reflective about their own personal worldview (i.e. their subjectivity) within their study; and '*pluralistic*' in this context means honouring the fact that diversity is part of our world.

4

Contextual factors

Local context is important, including school character, local community character, pupil knowledge and experience, teacher knowledge and experience. Local context also includes the history of local areas, allowing opportunities for local studies that connect teaching and learning with the geographical and historical background.

5

'Collectively-enough' principle

Pupils need to gain 'collectively enough' or 'cumulatively sufficient' knowledge (Ofsted 2021), not total coverage. In this Handbook, 'collectively enough' needs to relate to the NSE, with its three broad elements of *content, engagement* and *position*.

6

Coherence

Schools should be able to give a clear account of their curriculum choices, and carefully consider how they will enable the construction of a coherent curriculum for pupils. The choices taken should be transparent and shared with pupils.

B4.1 Implications of this model

A wide range of content could be selected to enable pupils to understand religion and worldviews in the way set out in the NSE. The move to an RW curriculum gives great flexibility and freedom in this regard.

The selection of content is no longer driven by the 'world religions paradigm'. The world religions are 'social facts', and the Education Act still requires that RE 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'. However, an education in religion and worldviews includes these traditions as well as developing pupils' awareness of the causes and functions of that paradigm and its effects. This is part of the self-awareness of the approach – it examines the assumptions and perspectives at play.

According to Rob Freathy, University of Exeter:

'The fact that selection has been made should also be part of the content examined in lessons, so that pupils know why they are studying this content and not something else. When dealing with subject matter that is about ideas, beliefs, values, and so forth, and which some people promote, others accept, oppose, reject, or find controversial, there may be a higher level of attentiveness and perhaps suspicion on the part of some pupils about why schools are teaching what they are, how they have come to select that subject matter, what subject matter they have decided not to select. Schools should try as far as possible to make clear their selection criteria, and the nature/extent of the material from which a selection is being made. If pupils are being presented with a part – a case study, for example – then what is the whole from which the part has been selected, and on what grounds has the selection been made? By setting out the context, and describing the selection process, then it is possible to present the broad landscape and focus on one particular element without feeling the need to cover all of the ground in intimate detail. This helps to deal with criticisms that selections may be skewed, and to help fulfil the requirement to study 'cumulatively sufficient' content.' (Freathy, personal correspondence)

The NSE helps to give a rationale for selection. It outlines the features of worldviews, and how they work in human experience, that pupils should grasp by the end of their schooling, richly explored and examined through a wide range of exemplar content. However, the elements of the NSE are not separate – the engagement element indicates some of the ways in which the encounters with content should be shaped – namely, encounters with lived examples of adherents in organised worldviews, encounters that are brought into focus in the classroom, that use different methods, that evaluate methods and exemplar content appropriately, equipping pupils for handling questions raised by religion and worldviews. The position of the pupils in relation to the content and engagement can be focused on at any point.

B4.2 Principles for selection

The above criteria offer some guidance to shape, and limit the extent of the curriculum. Alongside that we might add 'fewer things in greater depth' as a principle.

The content element of the NSE is designed to give some criteria for selection. For example:

- A teacher can select examples and case studies to enable pupils to understand some ways in which worldviews are formed and some ways in which they can be expressed through, for example, use of ritual, stories and art in family and community life (NSE strand a), comparing some traditions within organised worldviews and the lived reality of adherents' lives (NSE strands b and h).
- Pupils can examine the kinds of answers that worldviews offer to questions of ultimate reality, meaning and purpose (NSE strands d and c), and how they may have changed across different contexts (NSE strand c) – through time and across different parts of the world, exploring the dialogue and debate that might have taken place as organised worldviews grapple with such huge questions (NSE strand i).

The 'After Religious Education' project[7] includes the principles of 'pedagogical reduction', where teachers make self-conscious choices about the selection, simplification and representation of content, and 'exemplarity', where something significant or fundamental about the world is opened up through concrete examples. This Handbook suggests that the NSE is a tool to support 'pedagogical reduction', and supports the idea of exemplarity. (See e.g. Lewin 2020, Lewin et al. 2023)

▶ *More examples of how the NSE can guide content selection can be found in Sections B8 and B9.*

B4.3 Curriculum planning

Content selection for a syllabus or curriculum needs to provide pupils with the foundations for learning about religion and worldviews through their schooling. Current good practice emphasises the critical focus on how early learning prepares for later learning, to create a coherent narrative across the curriculum. Two of the frameworks offer examples of how to show this kind of curriculum progression (SACRE/Diocese-led and MAT-led Frameworks).

▶ *Section B8 includes some steps for curriculum planning.*

B5 The NSE engagement element

The NSE engagement element indicates that content should be approached in a variety of ways:

- an emphasis on lived experience
- introducing pupils to, and including them in, some of the dialogues and debates within and between organised worldviews
- highlighting the ways interpretation is at the heart of human responses to living
- applying different 'ways of knowing' (cf. Ofsted), which may include different methods or academic disciplines.

B5.1 Ways of knowing

ENGAGEMENT	
CORE STATEMENT	**EXPANDED STATEMENT**
g. Ways of knowing The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing.	The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing. Questions and methods should be carefully chosen, recognising that there are different understandings of what knowledge is deemed reliable, valid, credible, truthful etc.

This allows for the application of methods, for example those from theology and philosophy, and from within the academic study of religion. Such disciplinary areas are valuable in helping pupils to understand how the study of religion and worldviews can be undertaken in different ways (Ofsted 2021).

For younger age groups, drawing on a variety of methods is sufficient, noting with pupils that different methods handle content in different ways and should be evaluated appropriately. The use of methods and disciplines helps pupils to learn how, for example:

- you can ask different questions about the same content
- answering these questions will require different kinds of methods
- the findings might be interpreted appropriately in different ways
- evaluation of the findings will require a set of tools appropriate to the methods and disciplines
- all the above are affected by the context of the learner/researcher and their personal worldview.

> **Good curriculum planning entails being clear about the type of knowledge that is being generated within any given module or unit.**

As pupils make progress through the school, they will understand that the kinds of questions you ask make a difference to how you would go about answering them. They should be taught how disciplines generate different types of knowledge. This means that there are particular assumptions behind the various disciplines, and different types of question being addressed within them.

To apply an RW approach is not a matter simply of selecting a method; good curriculum planning entails being clear about the type of knowledge that is being generated within any given module or unit. For example, how the theistic assumptions of theology and the naturalistic assumptions of sociology and anthropology affect how scholars practise the discipline, as well as the relationship of the knowledge generated in these disciplines to the worldviews of the adherents within traditions. Adherents may be unaware of some theological perspectives from within their tradition, or some external sociological descriptions of their lived reality.

Within an RW approach, pupils should, for example:

- be helped to recognise the different authoritative weight of a 'sacred' text for adherents in that tradition, and for those outside the tradition for whom it is not sacred, and some implications from this
- explore how and why such texts are interpreted and applied differently, looking at a range of perspectives and contexts
- examine how an RW approach questions some categories within 'religion', such as how far a focus on texts is appropriate in different traditions
- learn to recognise that a single voice from a tradition will not be representative, and consider whether and how a tradition could be represented
- learn that any adherent's perspective will indicate a relationship between 'orthodox' or mainstream teachings and individual practice; for example, a 'professional' or 'expert' religious person compared with a layperson or 'non-expert' (Ammerman 2007)
- consider whose voices are represented within lessons, why, and what implications there may be
- have opportunities to test whether, for example, survey data is reliable, such as by interrogating the questions asked, the sample size and range, who was asking whom and why, and how the data was presented
- be able to select and apply appropriate methods of evaluation, for example, to examine how far an argument is valid, or an interpretation of a text is legitimate, or a truth claim is credible, or theories are borne out by evidence.

▶ *See the Appendix for illustrations of what making progress in ways of knowing, including disciplinary knowledge, might look like.*

B5.2 Lived experience

ENGAGEMENT	
CORE STATEMENT	**EXPANDED STATEMENT**
h. Lived experience The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people.	The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people (e.g. religious, non-religious, embodied, diverse, fluid, material, experiential) in relation to local and global contexts, recognising the complex reality of worldviews as they are held, shared and expressed by people in real life.

In an RW approach, the study of organised worldviews, their doctrines, teachings, texts, rituals and practices is balanced with the ordinary experiences and commitments of 'everyday religion', in Ammerman's term (2007). RE has tended to emphasise the theological orthodoxy and orthopraxy of organised religions. The RW approach does not want to lose an understanding of those orthodoxies, but wants them to be placed in context and also to illuminate the ways in which those teachings and practices are lived and experienced by 'non-experts' (Ammerman). 'At the level of the individual, religion is not fixed, unitary, or even coherent' (McGuire 2008). Such an approach requires some engagement with the messy lifeworlds of individuals, families and communities that 'flow beyond ordered categories of doctrine and the spaces of religious institutions' (Strhan et al. 2024). These in themselves can shed a light on the nature of the institutions that might be examined in NSE strand f, influence and power.

The emphasis on lived experience is also to help teachers and pupils to extend their understanding of what it means to have a worldview beyond the cognitive; it is not just about beliefs – it incorporates the actions a person carries out, how they view and live in their physical body, the material objects that they use to express what matters most, such as in daily life or in rituals, the buildings in which they choose to act, the art they use to decorate their walls etc.

This strand also encourages schools to enable direct encounter with people from the different worldviews studied, always weighing up how representative an encounter can be, how far one can make generalisations about the wider community, and how the worldview of the person encountered shapes their thinking and being.

B5.3 Dialogue/interpretation

ENGAGEMENT	
CORE STATEMENT	**EXPANDED STATEMENT**
i. Dialogue/interpretation The field of study of worldviews is to be shown as a dynamic area of debate.	The field of study of worldviews is to be encountered as a dynamic area of dialogue and debate, and one which engages pupils with practices of interpretation and critical judgement.

This strand emphasises that religion and worldviews are dynamic rather than static. Even those organised worldviews who believe their central texts to be revelations of divine origin engage in lively and often centuries-old debates about, for example, the nature of the revelation, its status (e.g. revealed in a specific context or a copy of a pre-existing heavenly book), how to understand and apply its message etc.

A hermeneutical approach draws attention to the role that interpretation plays in how we make sense of the world. An RW approach is hermeneutical; it reminds teachers and pupils that texts (and rituals, actions, art and other forms of creative expression etc.) all have contexts, and that to understand them involves a hermeneutical process of interpretation. This means trying to understand the context of the text and the context of the reader – two horizons. 'The pedagogy embedded in the Statement of Entitlement is hermeneutical in seeking to create a dialogical experience between the horizon of the content studied and the horizon of the pupil in a way that equips pupils to make informed, reasoned, scholarly and reflective judgements and to develop the scholarly virtues that are integral to an academically rigorous approach.' (Cooling 2024)

In the classroom this will mean, for example:

- introducing pupils to some of the debates within organised worldviews, such as those that have caused contention through the centuries (e.g. developing understandings of life after death or salvation within Abrahamic traditions, or karma in Dharmic traditions), or are particularly challenging today (e.g. issues of climate justice or identity politics)
- acknowledging that debate is not always as harmonious as we might like to model in the classroom, and equipping pupils with the tools for coherent dialogue
- equipping pupils with interpretive skills as they encounter texts and other examples of religious or non-religious content (art, material culture, ritual actions, activism etc)
- drawing their attention to questions behind, within and in front of texts (Gooder 2008, Ipgrave 2013, Pett and Cooling 2018, Bowie 2018), and how these might apply to other content beyond texts
- noting how the pupils' personal worldviews play a role in their encounter with the text/content ('in front of the text' questions)
- supporting pupils to recognise generalisations that are made in introducing some organised worldviews and the kinds of evidence and examples needed to test and validate those generalisations.

B6 The NSE position element: developing personal worldviews

POSITION	
CORE STATEMENTS	**EXPANDED STATEMENTS**
j. Personal worldviews: reflexivity Pupils will reflect on and potentially develop their personal worldviews in the light of their study.	Pupils will come to understand their own worldview in greater depth, and how it relates to the worldviews of others, becoming more reflective and reflexive. As they develop this awareness of their positionality in relation to that of others, they will be equipped to make informed, justifiable judgements on how (far) this understanding prepares them for life in a diverse world.
k. Personal worldviews: impact Pupils will reflect on how their worldviews affect their learning.	Pupils will develop their understanding of how their encounters with the subject content of RE are affected and shaped by their worldviews, whether conscious or not, and that this is also true for everyone else. They will reflect on how (far) their learning may have an impact on their worldview.

The position element of the NSE emphasises the active role of the pupil in engaging in their learning. It highlights that the development of pupils' personal worldviews is integral to a scholarly RW approach. It involves:

- enabling pupils to reflect on and articulate their worldviews and the sources of these, so that they can engage in well-informed dialogue in relation to religion and worldviews (while recognising they might also do this in relation to English literature, geography, science or PE, for example)
- drawing pupils' attention to their worldviews and bringing them into well-informed dialogue with the worldviews of others
- developing their reflexivity – their reflection on and self-awareness about the learning process
- using this reflexivity to understand and explain how their personal worldviews both affect their encounter and engagement with the content of religion and worldviews, and also how these encounters may influence their worldviews

- recognising and reflecting on how other people are also influenced by their personal worldviews in how they respond to the world
- developing their understanding of the role of interpretation in their own knowledge growth
- interpreting art and drawing on creativity as a form of expressing their ideas, and as a means of deepening understanding of others' position and their own.

Developing pupils' personal worldviews may also include the following:

- the ability to apply disciplinary, dialogical and hermeneutical skills
- the creation of personal knowledge, arising through the interpretive action of engaging with the content of religion and worldviews
- the development of academic virtues, such as curiosity, intellectual humility, willingness to learn from others, and careful listening before coming to judgement.

Note that the subject will provide experiences, opportunities and encounters with diverse people and content exemplifying something of the richness of worldviews, wisdom, lived religion/non-religion, artistic expression, human creativity and ingenuity, culture, philosophy, ethics, etc.

The encounter with the diversity of human experience gives pupils space and tools for reflecting on their own worldviews, and for recognising how their worldview affects their interpretation of, and engagement with, the world. Pupils can reflect on how this applies to everyone else too, and what that might mean for listening to, and living with, others.

Not all effects and impacts of this on pupils can be known or examined, and for some school contexts (such as those with a religious foundation) syllabus writers may look to identify aspects of moral and spiritual development more closely.

B7 How to develop pupils' personal worldviews

It is important to note that the *position* element of the NSE (strands j—k) indicates that pupils are always encountering the content and processes of the subject from the position of their own worldview. This means that developing personal worldviews is not simply a matter of getting to the end of a unit of work and reflecting on their own ideas (see illustration on p. 31). Instead, pupils should have their attention drawn to their position in relation to their studies at different times within a unit of work. There is no set requirement for this – and it should not become a box-ticking exercise. Depending on the content, it might be appropriate to reflect on pupils' worldviews at the beginning, middle and end of a unit, asking pupils whether and/or how their ideas are changing or have changed.

One research project on metacognition and worldviews from Exeter University has developed a Worldview Question Framework (see Larkin et al. 2020). This works as a place for personal reflection for pupils on their own worldview. Pupils respond to a variety of questions on themes including personal identity, ultimate and existential questions, ontological and epistemological questions (i.e. about the nature of existence and of knowledge). Pupils respond to questions in the light of their learning, and reflect on how their answers might change as they learn more. The research project highlights opportunities for development of this approach. It also notes that there is a danger of overdoing reflective methods at the expense of substantive content, so it is important to find suitable strategies that integrate understanding religion and worldviews *and* pupil reflection. Suitable strategies for this include:

FREE-LISTING[8]

This is an ethnographic method from cognitive anthropology. When run with 30 people in a population, it can reveal the most shared and salient associations people have with particular concepts. For example, ask pupils or interviewees to list the first words that come to mind when they think about the term 'religion' or 'non-religion' or 'God' or 'truth'; then gather the lists and analyse for salience – that is, for rank and frequency. This can indicate personal worldview perspectives before studying religion, non-religion, God, truth etc. (Note that a class of 30 will only represent the classroom microculture rather than a wider population.)

MIXING-DESK ANALOGY[9]

This involves drawing up a diagram showing that elements of a person's worldview will have different relevance or importance in different contexts, such as when facing challenges, or at different times in life; see p. 34 for an example of a mixing desk applied to planning.

SNOWFLAKE[10]

This is a diagram that allows pupils to respond to different statements according to how far they agree or disagree; this visual presentation allows them to see immediately where they agree or disagree with another pupil's responses. Pupils apply philosophical thinking, clarifying the meanings of terms and offering reasons for their responses, applying their learning. The statements can indicate aspects of a pupil's worldview and be revisited at different stages of a unit or units of work to note any changes and continuities.

EXPRESSING IDEAS

Pupils might be asked to respond to stimulus material in different ways, expressing ideas through art, poetry, reflective writing, or even through taking action. These can indicate the nature and impact of pupils' personal worldview, with opportunities to revisit and reflect at different points later in the unit of work or a subsequent one.

PERSONAL WORLDVIEW TOOLS

Dawn Cox[11] has been working to develop a teacher personal worldview tool, to support teachers in identifying the influences on their positionality. There is scope for adapting this for use with pupils. James Sire's and Anne Taves' worldview questions can also be used directly with students.[12]

Note that these approaches focus on developing pupils' awareness of their own worldview, bringing to the surface what can be hidden in the lives of many people.

Note that the SACRE/Diocese-led Framework includes a pupil Worldview Passport to support and encourage self-reflection, building on the work of Larkin et al (2020).

B8 Using the NSE to develop a syllabus/ curriculum

A syllabus construction process requires a philosophy before it requires a checklist process or set of planning steps. The NSE shapes the philosophy, setting out the nature of the engagement between pupils and the content in an education in religion and worldviews. Below are some guidelines for developing a curriculum with an RW approach.

B8.1 Principles to bear in mind when developing a syllabus/ curriculum

Using the NSE

1. The NSE maps out the knowledge and understanding of how worldviews work in human life that students need to gain if they are to know how to study this academic subject and to understand the relationship between religion and worldviews.

2. The NSE provides a structure and criteria for content selection, to avoid content overload.

3. The NSE is not a list, nor is it a checklist. While the statements relate to each other, the boundaries are not fixed. It is a pedagogical tool to assist in curriculum building.

4. The RW approach is not about studying a list of religious and non-religious worldviews in separate containers. The focus is on the human experience of interacting with the religious and non-religious domain.

5 Syllabuses and schools should not simply assume that they are already implementing an RW approach as set out in this Handbook. Many teachers have been examining diversity and applying different disciplines – however, in a religion and worldviews *curriculum*, by facilitating their interaction with the content as set out in the NSE, pupils develop their understanding of the worldviews of others while developing and generating pupils' personal knowledge.

6 A syllabus should make judgements about the balance between the different elements of the NSE, according to the context. All units need to include something from each of the three elements of the NSE (content, engagement, position), balanced appropriately. Often this will mean a significant emphasis on the content element. The engagement element outlines the means of engaging with the content, and so it does not delineate a separate amount of content. Sometimes a unit will introduce some methods, and perhaps a discipline, in order to enable pupils to address a question and think of how best to answer it. As pupils become more familiar with a range of methods, less time is needed to introduce them. As mentioned in Section B7, pupils' personal worldviews are the lens through which they encounter every part of the curriculum, and attention can be drawn to them at any moment. Appropriate time should be spent on pupil self-reflection.

7 The NSE statements are not intended to be covered separately by unit/term. The bigger picture needs to emerge across topics and across school phases, so that the curriculum develops for pupils aged 4—19.

8 The different statements can be broken down and units can focus on a part of one. For example, NSE a could be used as the basis for a unit that explores how creativity and art express and help to form worldviews, with questions such as:

> *How does art express and influence people's worldviews? How do images of Jesus reflect global Christianity? How do Muslims use artistic forms in different ways to communicate ideas about God?*

NSE d could be broken down to ask ontological questions about existence or origins, such as:

> *Is there a God? Is this life it, or is there life after death? What exists and what does not exist? What is real and unreal?*

Similarly, a unit could use NSE d, and focus on epistemological questions of knowledge and truth, addressing questions such as:

> *What is true and false? How do you know? What source(s) do you use to decide? What is knowledge? What is belief? What is opinion? What is faith?*

NSE b opens up the possibility of examining the nature of religion and non-religion, raising questions for older pupils, which also touch on NSE f, such as:

> *What is the nature of the relationship between institutional and individual forms of religion and belief? What criteria might be used to classify someone as religious or non-religious? Are those valid distinctions? Who is doing the classifying, and why? Where do people get the standards that are used to judge whether something is religious or not?*

B8.2 Organising syllabus/curriculum content

9 Systematic study of an organised worldview (a religion, for example) can be undertaken, and constructed in such a way as to illustrate and explore the elements of the NSE.

10 Organised worldviews can be examined through case studies which illuminate the elements of the NSE as well as the worldview itself. Such case studies should ideally be microcosms, where focusing on the particular reveals key characteristics or qualities of the wider worldview.[13]

11 A syllabus should support teachers to select engaging material that is appropriate to the pupils in their own RE classrooms (but note point 17 below). This should make good use of creative expressions, lived experience and material religion as well as texts and teachings.

12 As pupils make progress in the subject, it is helpful to build their expertise in a variety of disciplines (NSE g), but it is not necessary to place equal emphasis on each. (See Making good progress Illustration II, Appendix below.)

B8.3 Questions and contexts

13 Enquiry questions are powerful ways to drive the use of the approach. Setting rich questions is one way of addressing the challenge of content overload – the questions can identify a route through the content, and different kinds of questions indicate the best methods and/or disciplines, and appropriate evaluative processes.

14 Contexts can influence choices of questions. These might include how a question will contribute to future learning. This might be preparing pupils to be able to welcome some visitors or to go on some visits; or to give them a nuanced awareness of diversity in a particular worldview in preparation for GCSE, along with the critical skills to handle varied questions.

15 The local context can help to shape or give a flavour to a syllabus; take, for example, the diversity of Tower Hamlets, within the wider diversity of London and compare that with Norfolk and the East of England, where 2011 census data identified Norwich as the most non-religious city (although it lost its crown to Brighton in 2021), and history indicates East Anglia as a place of occasional rebellion, with notable challengers of the status quo (see, for example, 1075 and 1549 CE; and see the MAT-led Framework for more on this). Compare also Cornwall/Kernow, with its Celtic Christian influence, Cornish language (Kernewek) and a local desire for political independence. This means that context is not just about relative size of different religions/worldviews but about the pulse of the local community.

16

Comparison with national and global contexts is also important. The high proportion of non-religious worldviews within Britain and Western Europe is not typical in global terms, where religious worldviews predominate.

17

Note how the syllabus writer or curriculum developer's own worldview will influence the choices made. It is important to ensure that you are just as aware of your own position as you are expecting your pupils to be! Be reflexive about your choices. You might ask questions such as: Are you developing a curriculum in your own image? Have you overemphasised critical or uncritical perspectives? Are all your questions or case studies from your comfort zone, or are you stretching and challenging your own perspectives? Are there spaces for scholars from within and outside different worldviews? Are your sociologists or theologians or philosophers all white European men? If so, make some changes! See the Teacher-led Framework for questions to consider on this.

B8.4 Steps for devising your syllabus/curriculum

This section includes some advisory steps for planning and some principles to bear in mind. Note that the framework teams took elements of the guidance that suited their particular contexts. For example:

- although the SACRE/Diocese-led Framework had a syllabus in place, they wanted one that reflected their context more closely. They began from scratch but, influenced by the Big Ideas project (Wintersgill 2017), identified a set of concepts as the building blocks, and then shaped how they approached these concepts using the NSE.
- the teacher-led team was dealing with teachers in schools across a variety of contexts and was seeking to develop an approach that could be applied to existing syllabuses and curriculums. They developed their own set of questions for 'retrofitting' an RW approach. You can see the processes they followed in the frameworks below.

STEPS TO CONSIDER:

1. Any curriculum needs to consider the school's/MAT's values and aims, so the wider context is understood. For example, the MAT-led Framework team was particularly focused on the notion of a knowledge-rich curriculum which is central to that Trust's curriculum philosophy.
2. Decide what is understood by the terms 'religion', 'religions', 'worldview' and 'worldviews', using the Handbook and other resources (e.g. Adam Dinham, Kevin O'Grady) and how studying these can put the school's/MAT's values and curricular aims into practice. Include SLT, governors, school community members and pupils in your discussions.
3. Whether starting a syllabus from scratch, or building on one already in place, **start with the NSE.**
4. You might want to put it in the centre of a large piece of paper/interactive whiteboard screen.
5. It would be useful to annotate the NSE to show some connections that you see across elements and statements/strands. Note how some statements can be broken down into smaller parts. Note how some might be used to add a dimension to another (e.g. NSE b could add a dimension of comparison between organised and individual worldviews to another statement).
6. Your annotations could include examples of content/concepts from religious and non-religious worldviews that you might use to enable pupils to grasp the statements – to understand how worldviews work.
7. As you annotate, you might use concentric circles around the NSE – indicating your initial thoughts about how to go deeper into a statement/strand, giving a sense of progression across the age range, and allowing pupils to revisit content. It is important to reflect on local contexts: where do these offer fruitful opportunities for exploring elements of the NSE?

8. Note the gaps; what areas are left out, or are covered in less detail? Might this be because they are not part of your current RE practice, or maybe cover an unfamiliar area of subject knowledge? How might you address those?

9. It would be helpful to break down the content component of your annotated overview into segments (four or five, perhaps). These could be vertical segments – showing a way that understanding of an NSE statement or statements might be developed as pupils move up through the school. This is to ensure that earlier learning prepares for later learning, and later learning builds on earlier learning. It is also to create a structure for the syllabus, to enable breadth and balance.

10. Some segments may work across all age groups, and some may be more suited to older pupils: consider when these segments might be phased in as pupils move through the school.

11. You could devise exemplar questions that could be used for different age groups to unlock the content – or adapt examples from your current syllabus. Note that an RW approach will shape questions differently from a world religions approach: don't just assume questions can transfer straight from one to the other.

12. Reflect on the balance of the *engagement* strands from the NSE across your questions, making use of the mixing desk image (see p. 34) to help. How well do your questions indicate the kind of methods (disciplines with older pupils) that are needed to find out suitable answers? How often do pupils get an opportunity for a direct encounter? Where are opportunities to develop interpretive skills?

13. It is important to draft a key stage outline or long-term plan, populated by your example questions. Check for clarity in terms of how the plan deepens pupils' engagement with the strands of the NSE, via your chosen segments, balanced across the school year and across age groups. The SACRE/Diocese-led Framework did this by drafting a detailed description of each unit's intention at each phase within each concept, to check it was 'building'.

14. You might like to test your syllabus design by choosing a sample of key questions from different phases and drafting some units of work to see how the questions open up the elements of *content*, *engagement* and *position*. Consider a range of case studies that give pupils an insight into the way worldviews work in different contexts.

B9 Using the NSE to develop questions and construct units of work

Enquiry questions are powerful ways to drive the use of the RW approach. Setting rich questions as a focus for units can address the challenge of content overload – the questions can identify a route through the content, and different kinds of questions indicate suitable methods and/or disciplines, and appropriate evaluative processes. Such questions will increase in complexity and sophistication as pupils move through the school.

Here are some examples of common questions explored in RE, in 'world religions paradigm' mode. Below are some reflections about the features of these kinds of questions, along with some suggestions for how a question might reflect an RW approach.

EYFS	• What happens at a wedding or when a baby is born? • What happens at a festival? • What can we learn from stories from different religions?
KS1	• Why are some stories/places sacred? • What festivals are important in Judaism and Islam?
LKS2	• What do different religions teach about God? • What is the sacred text in Islam, and how is it used? • What do religious codes say about right and wrong?
UKS2	• What do Christians believe about Jesus? • Why do people go on pilgrimage, and what impact does it have? • What are the key beliefs and values of Sikhism and how are these expressed in the Gurdwara?
KS3	• What does Islam/Hinduism teach about life after death? • Is there a God? What and why do people believe? • Are religions sources of peace or causes of conflict?

> **An RW approach is looking more for questions that include an evaluative element, recognising that different answers may be acceptable in different contexts.**

Note some key features of 'world religions' questions:

- the focus tends to be on the communication of information, transmitting a form of settled knowledge ('textbook' information)
- they tend to be abstract and context-free, as if there are answers that might apply universally
- the answers may contain diversity, but the implication is that there is a form of correct answer.

An RW approach is looking more for questions that:

- include an interpretive element (e.g. how do these people understand and apply this?)
- offer a clear context (e.g. how do these two people/groups respond at an identified time and place, and why?)
- recognise that there are different answers that are valid (e.g. different individuals, groups, or traditions may have different responses, and that these may change across time and place)
- include an evaluative element, recognising that different answers may be acceptable in different contexts.

You might consider how in Maths, pupils learn *how* to answer questions – the emphasis is on the methods used, the working, not just the answer. For example, pupils learn to become more systematic, they choose ever more concise written methods, and they learn reasoning skills to unpick questions. The same applies in an RW approach: for example, pupils learn *how* to make judgements in RE – they show the process they go through in order to find some answers, and they choose appropriate methods to evaluate the reliability, validity, truth or credibility of those answers.

Acknowledging that a question cannot do everything, some RW approach questions might look like the following, for example:

EYFS	• How do different people welcome a new baby into the world? • How do different people celebrate Christmas/Easter in our community? Around the world? • What stories are important in our school community?
KS1	• Why is the story of Rama and Sita special or sacred to Hindus in Britain and India, and what do they learn from it? • How do Jews/ Muslims in our area celebrate Hanukkah/Eid, and why are they special times?
LKS2	• Where do Muslims/Christians find out about God, and do they all agree what God is like? • What role does the Qur'an play in the lives of at least three Muslims, and why? • What is the 'golden rule', where is it from, and how is it put into practice by people from different religious and non-religious worldviews?
UKS2	• How and why does the life and teaching of Jesus influence the lives of Christians and their communities in different ways today? • What is the role and impact of the Gurdwara on the lives of Sikhs and on local communities in our area/Britain? • How far does Humanism function as an organised non-religious worldview?
KS3	• Who believes in life after death, who doesn't, and what difference does it make to how they live? • How have different Christians understood the idea of Jesus as God? How is Jesus viewed in other worldviews? • How and why have Christians, Muslims and/or Buddhists played a role in conflict and peace in the 21st century?

Note that the framework teams have developed a whole range of questions for units of study. Two of the frameworks show progression across the year groups.

Note that there is some value in the kinds of answers given to the 'world religion paradigm' questions set out above. There are often mainstream or 'orthodox' responses that often represent an organised or institutional worldview's position, and many people's individual worldviews align with those mainstream positions.

However, an RW approach does not stop there; it explores how worldviews work in people's lives, which may include how individuals' worldviews relate to the 'orthodox' views. As pupils progress through their schooling, they should also have opportunities to explore how and why these views become 'orthodox', and the implications in terms of power. For example, there may be an assumption that the literate and theological presentation of a worldview takes precedence over the everyday practice of individuals and communities. This is an assumption to explore in lessons.

B9.1 Disciplinary questions

Enquiry questions can also indicate the kind of methods or disciplines that might appropriately be used to work out answers. Young children do not need to know about theology or sociology as academic disciplines, but they can be introduced to some of the methods and approaches from different disciplines to indicate different kinds of questions, different ways of answering questions and different kinds of answers formulated.

For example:

What difference does it make to Christians to believe that God is both holy and loving?

This theological question allows pupils (even if they do not learn the term 'theology' at this stage) to examine Christian understandings that balance biblical ideas of God as a holy, transcendent, just judge who hates sin, while also being seen as an immanent loving father (or mother). A unit could involve interpreting biblical texts and examining voices from Christian tradition, talking with Christians to find out how far they balance these contrasting views and what impact believing in this kind of God has on their lives, and reflecting on how far pupils' own personal worldviews tend towards love and/or justice in how they respond to people.

What is the role and impact of the Gurdwara on the lives of Sikhs and on local communities in your area/Britain?

This question might draw on sociological survey data on how many Gurdwaras there are in Britain, where, when and why they were built, and how Sikhs use and value the Gurdwara; it might examine case studies from specific local or regional Gurdwaras, with interviews with Sikhs and people who live near the Gurdwaras; it might draw on some texts from the Adi Granth as to the early importance of the *langar*. Pupils draw on the range of data to come up with conclusions in response to the questions, evaluating the sources and methods as they do so.[14]

For a suggested illustration of how pupils might make progress in ways of knowing, see the Appendix.

B9.2 Constructing units of work

Below is a sample process (see the first column in each table) that might be used to shape a unit using the RW approach. The process is illustrated with four examples from different school phases.

EXAMPLE 1: KS1	
Age range: look at what pupils already know, and where you want them to go next	Pupils have encountered the idea that many religious adherents express their worldview through prayer and ritual (NSE a); this unit focuses on Muslims. They will later explore the relationship between individual and organised Muslim worldviews (NSE b).
Choose the particular focus from the NSE, balancing the three elements (content; engagement; position) appropriately	**NSE a: nature, formation, expression** **NSE h: lived experience** **NSE k: personal worldviews: impact** Note: these are the key statements for the unit, but NSE c (how mosques do not all look the same) and NSE d (how mosques indicate the idea of submission to God) are also part of this unit.
Identify an appropriate topic from the syllabus	The mosque for Muslims.
Design a question to examine the topic and open up the NSE focus	How is a local mosque important for some Muslims? Why?
Choose the best method(s) or discipline to answer the question	Methods: use photographs of a variety of mosques; visiting a mosque; talking with some Muslims at the mosque and in the classroom.
Identify moments for bringing pupils' personal worldviews into focus, to examine the interaction with the content, its impact on pupils' worldviews and the impact of pupils' worldviews on their study	Impact of pupils' worldview explored through looking at their expectations before the visit. Talking about what they think will be important about the mosque, and then comparing their ideas after the visit and their conversations.
Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities	Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities.[15]

EXAMPLE 2: LOWER KS2	
Age range: look at what pupils already know, and where you want them to go next	Pupils have encountered a number of religious worldviews (NSE b), and many pupils will have recognised that their own worldviews are different – that they are non-religious. This unit focuses on a non-religious worldview, as an example. Pupils will later investigate some of the blurred boundaries across non-religious worldviews.
Choose the particular focus from the NSE, balancing the three elements (content; engagement; position) appropriately	**NSE a: nature, formation, expression** **NSE g: ways of knowing** **NSE j: personal worldviews: reflexivity** Note: these are the key statements for the unit but NSE d (meaning and purpose) and NSE e (values, commitments and morality) also feature.
Identify an appropriate topic from the syllabus	Humanism as an example of a non-religious worldview.
Design a question to examine the topic and open up the NSE focus	How does a Humanist understand and respond to the world?
Choose the best method(s) or discipline to answer the question	Methods: demographic data on people who say they have no religion; talking with some Humanists about beliefs and actions; some features of a Humanist worldview, such as the significance of humanity, using reason and scientific method, rejecting ideas of the supernatural; researching the roles some Humanists perform e.g. celebrants.
Identify moments for bringing pupils' personal worldviews into focus, to examine the interaction with the content, its impact on pupils' worldviews and the impact of pupils' worldviews on their study	Identification of pupils' worldviews in relation to their (non-religious) beliefs and ways of living; this unit gives opportunities to explore what being non-religious can look like. How far do some pupils' worldviews reflect a humanist worldview (sharing some beliefs and values), if not a Humanist worldview (connecting to explicit Humanist tradition)?
Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities	Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities.[16]

EXAMPLE 3: UPPER KS2	
Age range: look at what pupils already know, and where you want them to go next	Pupils have explored how a Christian worldview may be influenced by seeing a 'big story' of God's involvement with humanity (NSE f); this unit reflects on what that might mean in specific examples. They will later explore NSE c in other contexts, e.g. Christian majority/ minority countries.
Choose the particular focus from the NSE, balancing the three elements (content; engagement; position) appropriately	**NSE c: contexts** (focus on change and continuity) **NSE h: lived experience** **NSE j: personal worldviews: reflexivity** Note: these are the key statements for the unit, but NSE a (how ritual may shape and express worldviews) and NSE g (using a historical lens) are also part of this unit.
Identify an appropriate topic from the syllabus	Christian pilgrimage: Walsingham as England's Nazareth.
Design a question to examine the topic and open up the NSE focus	Why might Christians have made pilgrimage to Walsingham in Medieval times, and why might they make a pilgrimage today?
Choose the best method(s) or discipline to answer the question	Discipline: history Method: sources and interviews.
Identify moments for bringing pupils' personal worldviews into focus, to examine the interaction with the content, its impact on pupils' worldviews and the impact of pupils' worldviews on their study	Reflexivity explored through reflections on testimonies. How do Medieval and contemporary voices affect/challenge their personal worldviews? How do pupils' own worldviews affect how they encounter these voices? Reflect on any equivalent place for 'pilgrimage' in their lives, including non-religious lives.
Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities	Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities.[17]

EXAMPLE 4: KS3	
Age range: look at what pupils already know, and where you want them to go next	Y7—8. Pupils have examined some features of religion and their influence in people's lives. They are going on to explore the relationship between religion, spirituality and secularity in the UK and India.
Choose the particular focus from the NSE, balancing the three elements (content; engagement; position) appropriately	**NSE a: nature** **NSE i: dialogue/interpretation** **NSE j: personal worldviews: reflexivity** Note: NSE b (organised/individual) and NSE c (contexts) are also part of this unit.
Identify an appropriate topic from the syllabus	The nature of religion and worldviews.
Design a question to examine the topic and open up the NSE focus	In what ways might a worldview be religious and/or non-religious?
Choose the best method(s) or discipline to answer the question	Discipline: religious studies/study of religion. Methods: data from surveys and interviews; analysis of definitions of religion and their applicability and interpretation in varied countries/cultures.
Identify moments for bringing pupils' personal worldviews into focus, to examine the interaction with the content, its impact on pupils' worldviews and the impact of pupils' worldviews on their study	Reflexivity explored through pupils' accounts of the sources and influences on their personal worldviews. How clear/blurred are the lines between religious and non-religious worldviews in data, in studies and in their own lives?
Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities	Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities.[18]

B10 Making progress

Enabling pupils to make progress through the curriculum is a key part of teaching and learning, and this obviously applies to the RW approach in RE. Note that the Teacher-led Framework team points out that one challenge for progression in RE is the application of an 'epistemic ascent' model, whereby pupils acquire more and more substantive knowledge. This model supports the idea that there is necessarily some content that must precede other content. RE, however, might be said to fit a horizontal model of knowledge better, in that progress lies in deepening learning and understanding to grasp more complexity and nuance.

Clearly, progress needs to relate to the curriculum being taught. Curriculum writers will need to draw up an assessment model that reflects the content. The SACRE-led Framework offers an example of this kind of approach, connecting disciplinary knowledge and skills with substantive content.

The Appendix to this Handbook includes two illustrations to show different kinds of progress. Illustration 1 describes the way the curriculum content gets more complex and nuanced as pupils proceed through the year groups. Some content is revisited in different contexts, to build on prior learning. However, the illustration only offers a single example of a unit per phase, thus providing only a snapshot of what progress looks like with an RW approach.

The second illustration takes the *engagement* element of the NSE and offers an outline of how pupils develop diverse and increasingly precise academic skills. It is not a complete model, as curriculum writers will need to show how pupils' understanding of the content is enriched and deepened through the processes of engagement.

B11 Relating to GCSE and beyond

GCSE remains the major defined vision for a 14–16 RS/RE curriculum: nearly 300,000 candidates, around half the cohort of 16-year-olds, take these courses. While short course numbers have declined since 2011, full course numbers have increased since 2010 and have remained robust. Current GCSE Religious Studies specifications, which date from first examinations in 2016, allow for diversity: students study two different religions and learn extensively about the internal diversities of the religions on the syllabus (e.g. a Catholic Christianity paper states: "Catholic Christianity should be studied in the context of Christianity as a whole, and common and divergent views within Catholic Christianity").

While there is still a difference in approach between the current exam specifications, which work largely from a world religions paradigm, and the RW approach elucidated in this Handbook, we argue here that following an RW approach is an excellent foundation for examination success. If pupils have had an education in religion and worldviews up to age 14, they would be able to examine critically the particular, contextual presentation of religion(s) within the specification, and offer nuanced responses to questions. In fact, a strong RE 4–14 curriculum following an RW approach should equip pupils with an understanding that is much broader and richer than the relatively narrow domain of GCSE RS specifications, providing opportunities for more scholarly responses to exam questions.

Here are some illustrations of how the different strands of the NSE, central to the RW approach, lay foundations for exam study:

NSE a Nature/formation/expression:

Pupils up to age 14 will have encountered and understood a variety of ways in which people develop and express their worldviews, such as through ritual, celebrations, stories, community engagement. This will prepare them to explain different interpretations of, for example, beliefs, texts, rituals and actions as they are shown within the lived experience of members of the community, as required at GCSE. At A level this will allow pupils to explore the theological underpinning of the lived experience, for example, in using Hadith studies to account for different ritual actions relating to the festival of Ashura.

NSE b Organised/individual:

By the time pupils begin GCSE and some go on to A level they will already be familiar with some examples of organised worldviews and how these generally include teachings, doctrines and practices regarded as orthodox. Pupils will already understand that individuals within these communities may hold views that differ from the orthodox, or may not put much of the religion into practice in their own lives. So, they will already be aware of the diversity of lived religion, standing them in good stead for understanding the variety of Catholic practice in relation to birth control and abortion compared with Church teachings. At A level they will have an idea of how there can be a range of academic and insider responses to the question of the nature of the Qur'an, for example how the Uthmanic codex has served as a unifying factor within at least one organised Islamic worldview but has also served as a contentious issue with some other Islamic worldviews in light of its authority and interpretation.

NSE c Contexts:

Pupils will be able to explore the historical background to the expression of religious belief. For example, for GCSE study of Buddhism, having looked at contexts already in earlier years, pupils will understand the difference between scholarly differentiation of Buddhist traditions as northern, southern, eastern and western rather than using the non-equivalent terms Theravada and Mahayana.

NSE d Meaning and purpose:

Questions of existence, meaning, purpose and truth underpin the study of arguments for and against the existence of God. Pupils following an RW approach will encounter these kinds of questions and their impact before they begin examination studies. This means that they will have a suitable preparation for understanding the nature of God for GCSE in Abrahamic traditions. This will enable them to draw on a rich understanding of non-religious responses to these questions, including Humanist ones, to apply to the GCSE 'themes' papers. They will serve as good foundations for engagement with philosophers, theologians and ethicists at A level.

NSE e Values, commitments and morality:

If pupils have the opportunity to explore how both religious and non-religious worldviews can offer people a vision of a good life and guidance in how to pursue it, it helps them to have a more rounded understanding of how and why people act in the way they do, and how and why they decide what is good, right, wrong, true, beautiful etc. This wider understanding prepares them to apply moral and ethical codes to specific, challenging issues at exam level, avoiding a mechanistic application of principles. Many people develop their ethical responses through their living, so their worldview influences their responses to a challenge in life, rather than them getting out a checklist.

NSE f Influence and power:

Giving pupils the opportunity to raise questions about the nature and category of religion opens up questions of power and influence. They might ask questions about the nature of the language used to describe the divine, such as whether it is all masculine – and, if so, why this might be. They might look at how translations of texts can bring influence to bear, such as the King James Version of the Bible never using the term 'tyrant' for a king, despite the Wycliffe translation using the term, or English translations of the Guru Granth Sahib that draw on Christian terminology such as 'Lord' and 'soul', and debates around the use of 'Sanatana Dharma' instead of 'Hinduism', or 'Sikhi' instead of 'Sikhism'. This critical awareness can be brought to their examination studies, so that they understand how the specification structures the content the way it does, within the 'world religions paradigm', and how far this reflects lived religion.

NSE g Ways of knowing:

By age 14 pupils will be familiar with a range of methods and some disciplines, so that they understand the source of key theological concepts in the teachings and traditions of the organised worldviews they have studied, and they are able to weigh up survey data for reliability or critique the presentation of survey results for interpretive accuracy. They will be aware of the value and limitations of small-scale case studies and of large-scale demography in painting a picture of what it means to be part of an organised religious worldview. This means that at GCSE and beyond they are able to balance insider and outsider perspectives on believing, belonging and behaving.

NSE h Lived experience:

The NSE encourages pupils to encounter religious and non-religious worldviews through the lived experience of adherents, in case studies for example. This supports their grasp of the relationship between the mainstream teachings and practices of organised worldviews and the practice of individuals and communities within them. For example, Jewish communities range across the Haredi, Orthodox, Reform, Liberal and 'Just Jewish', and include those who identify as Jewish through parentage, heritage, religion, culture, upbringing and/or ethnicity, those for whom belief in God is central and those for whom it is peripheral or irrelevant, those who attend Passover Seder each year or celebrate Shabbat each week, and those who don't. Encountering this diversity through ages 4–14 prepares pupils for GCSE and A level, studying Judaism but also other religions, as it increases their awareness of the diversity of lived experience.

NSE i Dialogue/interpretation:

Through their experience of an RW approach, exam students will already be aware that religious and non-religious worldviews do not arrive fully formed, but develop over time, through dialogue and debate, often a result of striving for agreement on matters of interpretation. For example, meanings of jihad or debates around the leadership of the Muslim community after the death of Prophet Muhammad; or the concept of 'messiah' within and between Jewish and Christian communities. This prepares them for more advanced debates at exam level, such as over the 'filioque' clause in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox creeds, or the nature of the Divine in Hindu philosophy – whether knowable or unknowable, with properties or without, the monism of Shankara, the dualism of Madhva or the qualified non-dualism of Ramanuja. Supporting pupils to develop hermeneutical skills helps them to appreciate the challenges as well as to participate in some of these on-going debates.

NSE j Personal worldviews – reflexivity; NSE k Personal worldviews – impact:

Helping pupils to recognise their own position contributes to their developing the intellectual virtues of curiosity, intellectual humility, willingness to learn from others, and careful responses to challenges to their view. These intellectual skills put them in a good position to explore and explain controversies at exam level, without oversimplifying or reproducing binary thinking: pupils will be accustomed to nuance and fuzzy boundaries instead of black and white responses to theological or ethical questions, for example. They will be increasingly adept at expressing and articulating their own developing position, however provisional.

It has been the practice of the Department for Education (DfE) and, under its influence, the Examination Awarding Bodies, to use contemporary academic and professional thinking in setting the specifications for RS qualifications. For example, the 2013 REC's National Curriculum Framework for the subject, which followed the National Curriculum orders for other subjects, was central in determining the Assessment Objectives in the 2016 GCSE specifications. These specifications emphasise the acquisition of knowledge of two religions, and the processes of critical thinking. Candidates learn about the internal diversity of religions, and develop reasoned responses from their own perspectives to evaluation questions.

In the light of this, it seems wise for those writing an RW-approach curriculum to balance an alertness to current structures and requirements with ambitious attention to the future possibilities of a 14–16 RS specification which uses the NSE as its starting point. In the meantime, there appears to be some scope within the subject content from the DfE[19] for developing a specification or updating an existing one, that is more in keeping with the RW approach. In addition, Ofqual might be encouraged to revise the assessment objectives, again in a manner that would facilitate closer alignment with this approach.

C. A religion and worldviews approach:

rationale and explanations

Intended audience
Curriculum leaders and syllabus developers, members of SACREs and ASCs, academics and other commentators, inspectors and advisers, examination awarding bodies and resource developers.

Content
This section offers some of the background to the move to an RW approach, offering a more detailed rationale, expanded definitions and explanations, and some engagement with academic responses.

C1 Outline and rationale: why do we need a religion and worldviews (RW) approach?

The final report from the Commission on RE has set out a vision for a new approach in RE, as part of a wider set of recommendations, to support the subject and encourage those involved in developing and teaching it, and to meet the needs of pupils and young people in our schools. There has been a great deal of debate since then, with robust disagreement from some quarters, but also, it must be said, a growing interest and welcome for the changes. The University of Nottingham's research project *Foregrounding Teachers' Voices*[20] indicates the interest among teachers, and offers some helpful videos about the approach, including how it prepares students for Higher Education and employment.

▶ *This section reprises and extends some of the reasons for the approach given in Sections A and B.*

The move towards an education in religion and worldviews (RW) is not about a change of name. It encompasses an adjustment in the way that content is selected and how it is approached and handled within the subject, with the outcomes for pupils the first priority.

Some of this section repeats and expands elements of Section B.

There are different elements in play here, including:

Scholarly understandings

For the last few decades a view of religions has dominated RE, namely, the so-called 'world religions paradigm'[21] – the idea that there are six major world religions, and lots of minor ones, and that they have a set of core beliefs and practices that we can neatly package up and present in lessons. Academic study of religion in universities has long challenged this view. Scholars point out the contested nature of the term 'religion'. They study both lived and doctrinal/formal aspects of religion as well as the interplay between them. As part of gaining a rounded education in RE, pupils should understand the complex reality of lived religion, which is less neat and tidy than formal religion, more fluid, and always tied to particular contexts. It is time for pupils to have a more realistic encounter with the world of religious and non-religious worldviews.

Demographics: the rise of non-religiousness

In terms of Census data, in 2001, 15.5 per cent of England and Wales said they had no religion. By 2011 this increased to 25 per cent and by 2021 to 37.2 per cent. British Social Attitudes Surveys from 2016 on have regularly indicated that this is just over 50 per cent. The European Social Survey shows that among young people in the UK (aged 16–29) 70 per cent say they have no religion, and this will be the experience of many teachers of pupils under age 16. The picture is not simple, of course; while many are outright materialists, many young people see themselves as 'spiritual but not religious'; for some, their non-religious worldviews embrace beliefs in supernatural phenomena and spiritual practices (Bullivant et al. 2019); for some it is the organised nature of religious worldviews that they are rejecting. Despite the wider global picture of the rise of religion, in contrast with the picture in the UK, Europe and North America, the study of 'non-religion' is an increasingly important scholarly field and it needs to be part of the school study of worldviews.

Content selection

The increased complexity and scope of the field of study, as set out in the above paragraphs, also increase the challenge of content overload. It is simply not possible to study everything, and so decisions have to be made on content selection. Making such decisions on the basis of numerical or cultural dominance is problematic, and a new rationale needs to be provided.

Preparation for life

A fourth dimension is the educational benefit for pupils from studying RE with an RW approach. This includes introducing pupils to the rich diversity of religion and non-religion as part of understanding how the world works and what it means to be human; enabling them to understand the complex ways in which worldviews work in human life, including their own; inducting them into scholarly processes, virtues and methods with which we can study religious and non-religious worldviews; including pupils in an exploration of the influences on their own worldviews so that they can better understand and contribute to their community, to society and to the world.

Equality of provision

Across the UK, there are many examples of excellent RE provision and practice, but also evidence of too many schools neither meeting their statutory requirement nor providing all pupils with their entitlement to high quality RE. In part, the shift to an RW approach is to reinvigorate the subject, to reinforce its importance as part of children and young people's education in a diverse religious and non-religious world, and to reinspire those schools currently neglecting the subject.

C1.1 How does an RW approach address these developments?

The concept of worldviews offers an approach that revitalises the subject, taking account of scholarly developments around the understanding and study of religion and non-religion.

An RW approach recognises the importance of being up to date with academic insights into the nature of religion and worldviews, including the critiques of the concept of religion (Masuzawa 2005, Cotter and Robinson 2016), the increase of non-religiousness in the west (Lee 2015) and the rise of non-religion as a focus of study (Cotter 2020). It acknowledges the rise of the non-religious in the European demographic context that pupils inhabit, with an awareness of some of the research on the factors that influence non-religiousness. This includes secularisation theories (e.g. Taylor 2007), ideas of existential security (Willard and Cingl 2017) and how religion and non-religion are entangled in some people's lives (Herbert and Bullock 2020).

In line with such academic research, an RW approach accommodates the study of the fluidity within and between organised religious traditions, the diversity of identities and ways of living and thinking among non-religious people, and the relationship between religious and non-religious worldviews.

RE, like all education, has transformational intentions. Learning changes the learner. The approaches to the subject which are developed here, drawing on the long-standing debates about the ways in which RE may legitimately be transformational, reinforce the value of studying religion and worldviews for all children and young people.

The history of the subject includes varying emphases on, for example: edification; learning from religion; personal development, including spiritual, moral, social, cultural development (SMSCD); the deconstruction and reconstruction of worldviews; and the human search for personal meaning (Grimmitt 2000). An RW approach carries this debate forward, and can provide pupils with vital opportunities to develop reasoned accounts of their own worldviews and to make scholarly judgements on challenging issues.

It places the development of pupils' own position and assumptions within the academic processes of the subject. Their perspectives matter: they affect pupils' encounters and engagement with the content of the subject; they might reasonably expect their education to help them develop healthy, scholarly perspectives so that they can better understand and contribute to their community, to society and to the world. Pupils need opportunities to recognise, reflect on and develop their personal worldview, and to understand how their own worldview operates as a lens through which they encounter those of others.

This approach means enabling all pupils to become open-minded, well-informed, critical participants in public discourse and society. They will be experienced in positive dialogue and equipped to make academically informed judgements about important matters in relation to religion and worldviews which shape the global landscape. They have opportunities to consider how they might also shape that landscape. The approach sets out a subject for all pupils, whatever their own family background and personal worldviews. It supports them in understanding and responding to the world in which they find themselves but also in considering the world as they would like it to be. It supports them in learning to live well together in a diverse society.

C2 Defining religion and worldview

C2.1 What do we mean by 'religion'?

On the one hand, the term 'religion' functions quite easily – we generally think we know what we mean when we talk about religions, or when we say something or someone is religious. On the other hand, the term is actually contested, with much debate and many theories about its meaning. Criteria used in definitions include:

- focusing on beliefs, such as belief in a deity and a supernatural dimension to existence
- focusing on the ways of thinking and living of adherents
- looking at the function religions play within communities and societies
- allowing for a divine origin of religion and the reality of a transcendent Being and realm
- seeing religion as a human construct, inextricably linked with culture.

So we are not able to pin 'religion' down to a single understanding – nor do we want to. Any account of religion is inevitably tied to a context, and any definition of religion is likewise going to arise from a context or a school of thought with its own assumptions. As with many other contested terms (such as democracy, politics, culture) the term 'religion' cannot simply be taken as a neutral description of the way the world is.[22] Its definition is actually part of what pupils will need to grapple with as they progress through their school career.

Part of the argument for seeing 'religion' as the focus of study for our subject is because it draws attention to the contested nature of the subject content. Instead of studying only examples of 'religions', the subject includes studying the nature and implications of the term itself. This brings into focus some of the challenges raised by scholars involved in studying religion, such as:

- the role of the European context – specifically applying a Protestant Christian worldview – in the development and categorisation of the term 'religion', such that it was seen as the norm against which all other 'religions' were classified, setting up a kind of hierarchy
- how this is embedded in the 'world religions paradigm', where religions are seen as separate entities, with a core set of common and comparable characteristics (reflecting the characteristics of Protestant Christianity)
- how the 'world religions paradigm' privileges organised or institutional religions and, in particular, those with established orthodoxies and doctrines, hierarchies and power
- how developments in (post-)secularity (the decline in Christian participation, its ongoing significance in public institutions, and the increasing diversity of religious, spiritual and non-religious worldviews, (Strhan et al. 2023)) increasingly blur the boundaries between religion and non-religion, where 'religious' people may believe, belong or behave in 'non-religious' ways, and 'non-religious' people accommodate 'religious' aspects in their worldviews and ways of living.

The RW approach takes account of the significant religious traditions in their changing contexts, and balances organised expressions alongside lived experiences of individuals and communities. A simple illustration might be a shift in language from a study of Islam, Buddhism and Christianity to a study of Muslims, Buddhists and Christians. This still requires rich encounters with traditions, such as their ancient

> Fundamental to the RW approach advocated in this Handbook is the idea that everyone has a worldview – or at least, the idea that 'no one stands nowhere'.

roots and contemporary expressions, their core beliefs and teachings, and their great works of literary and artistic achievement alongside their adherents' acts of service, justice, courage and resistance, and the varied impact they make on individuals, societies and the world – including some of their darker legacies. The RW approach allows these encounters to be selected to illuminate and illustrate how ideas, beliefs and practices arise, recognising how they are all shaped and reshaped by their contexts – including historical, geographical, social, cultural, political, and theological, for example.

C2.2 What do we mean by worldview?

There are many definitions of 'worldview'. Alongside religion, 'worldview' is another term that sparks debate. Fundamental to the RW approach advocated in this Handbook is the idea that **everyone has a worldview** – or at least, the idea that 'no one stands nowhere': everyone experiences the world from their own context, experience and position.

This does **not** mean:

- that everyone has a ready set of coherent, consciously held responses to a set of ultimate questions about life, the universe and everything. A person's worldview may be unconsidered and even unconscious, drawing on a wide variety of influences and implicit assumptions, and containing contradictions. The philosopher Michael Polanyi called this the tacit dimension of knowledge (Polanyi 1962).
- that only people with a religious worldview have a worldview. As part of a religious community's nurture, religious people may have consciously learnt about and practised their tradition, and may have a considered worldview that reflects this. Alternatively, they may have unconsciously absorbed ideas and ways of living and being that have shaped and coloured their worldview, so that it is recognisably a religious worldview, even as they may well have absorbed non-religious influences too. Non-religious people – sometimes in transparent and deliberate ways, such as through membership of an organisation such as Humanists UK, and sometimes unconsciously – will also have absorbed ideas and ways of living and being from their own context, which may have had non-religious or religious influences, to different degrees. These will shape the way non-religious people encounter, view, and live in the world.

The RW approach balances what the CoRE report called personal and organised worldviews.

C2.3 Personal worldviews

This Handbook's entry-point definition is:

A personal 'worldview' describes the way in which a person encounters, interprets, understands and engages with the world.

- This encompasses a person's beliefs, attitudes, identities, assumptions, intentions, convictions, values, hopes and ways of being in the world.
- It will affect, and be affected by, a person's thoughts, emotions, experiences, encounters, desires, commitments, actions and reactions; much of this is individual, but much will be shared too – people are not islands.
- A person's worldview will be influenced by their context, in terms of time, place, language, sex, gender, the communities that surround them, ethnicity, nationality, economics, history, class, access to political power etc. (Some contextual influences will be obvious and recognised; some will not.)
- It will change as a person grows and faces new experiences, encounters new people and situations, and engages in learning new knowledge. (Some changes may be conscious and deliberate, some may not.)
- This means a person's worldview may be visible or invisible to the individual, but it will show up through their words, attitudes and actions.
- A person's worldview affects how they interpret the world around them, as they try to make sense of the world they encounter.
- A person's worldview is about more than religion, even if they are an adherent.
- It might be better to say that a person *inhabits* a worldview rather than *has* one.
- A person may or may not have considered the kind of existential, epistemological and ethical questions addressed by organised worldviews (see below). The RE classroom is an ideal place to encounter such questions, of course, and to learn how to respond in a reflective and informed way.
- Increasing emphasis is being given in academic circles to the importance of reflecting on one's positioning in relation to the subject matter being studied and the scholarly methods being utilised. This is an integral element of an RW approach.

C2.4 Organised and institutional worldviews

The CoRE report also identified 'organised' worldviews as 'shared among particular groups and sometimes embedded in institutions', adopting the term 'institutional' worldviews for the latter.

There are many definitions offered of organised worldviews. For example, Jacomijn C. van der Kooij et al. (2013) offer this definition:

An organised worldview is 'a view on life that has developed over time as a more or less coherent and established system with certain (written and unwritten) sources, traditions, values, rituals, ideals, or dogmas … [it] has a group of believers who adhere to this view on life'.

Some scholars set out worldviews around a set of questions (Sire 1976, 2004, 2020, Taves 2020, Aerts et al. 1984) to which organised worldviews have differing responses, embracing existential, ontological, epistemological, ethical questions for example.

The ways a worldview might be seen as 'organised' or 'institutional' will differ. There are global institutions such as the Roman Catholic Church, whose teachings and practices might present a Roman Catholic 'institutional worldview'. The teachings of the Ismailis might be another example of an 'institutional worldview', with the central authority of the Imamate manifested in institutional structures across different nations. Other Muslim groups, while still 'organised', might have less tight structures, with variation in practice across cultures or even within a single local community.

Tim Hutchings, University of Nottingham, points out that 'a religion, an institution and an institutional/organised worldview are not necessarily the same thing. The Church of England, for example, is part of a religion and it is an institution, but it is not an organised or institutional worldview. What unites

Note that when this Handbook refers to **personal worldviews**, it refers to *pupils*' personal worldviews.

When pupils are studying the worldviews of people within an organised worldview, the Handbook uses the term '**individual worldviews**'.

Use of the term 'individual' is not intended to imply that anyone's worldview is entirely unique or someone is completely isolated – we are communal beings, and we grow and develop in relation to others. However, 'individual' here functions as a scholarly tool focusing attention on the exploration of the relationship between an individual person and the communities to which they belong, including those of organised or institutional worldviews.

The term is also not intended to set up a simple binary between individuals and institutions. The relationships may be fluid and complex and are worth examination. With one element of an RW approach being that of examining lived religion, individuals' accounts of their worldview will be a key way of exploring these relationships.

The Handbook is making this distinction between **individual worldviews as case studies and objects of study and personal worldviews as the position of pupils** (also open to reflective consideration by the pupils). It is making this distinction in order to ensure that when we suggest that the study of *individual* worldviews of adherents in relation to organised/institutional worldviews can contribute to the development of pupils' personal worldviews, pupils are not expected to resemble the people they study, nor aspire to do so, nor to shape their worldviews in line with those under study.

the Church of England is certain points of shared history, texts, rituals and an institutional structure, designed to allow for a diversity of interpretation and worldviews.' (Hutchings 2023)

A world religions approach to RE has tended to see institutions representative of each religion as the focus of study. The RW approach, in contrast, explores how communities and individuals *interact* with these organised or institutional worldviews – how people experience them, and their impact on people's lives.

For some:

- the scope and riches of their tradition are not captured in the austerity of the term 'institutional worldview' – instead they experience it as spiritual, dynamic, creative and life-enhancing, for example
- the institution gives them a sense of community and identity, without their necessarily subscribing to the institution's beliefs and practices
- in addition to the positive benefits derived from belonging, an organised or institutional worldview may have negative effects, oppressing and limiting their identity and personhood.

This kind of interaction is what is being explored through examination of *community* or *individual* worldviews.

C2.5 Extending the conversation around worldviews

There are many definitions of the term 'worldview'.[23] For example, Benoit et al. (2020) explore the use of worldview in disciplinary discourses, including philosophy, anthropology, sociology, theology and religious education.

Psychologist Koltko-Rivera (2004) sees worldviews as 'a set of assumptions about physical and social reality that may have powerful effects on cognition and behaviour'. Van der Kooij et al. (2017) suggest that personal worldviews address questions of ultimate concern, contain moral values, result in people experiencing meaning in life, and influence their thinking and acting.

The research of van Mulukom et al. (2022) introduces worldview clusters of non-religious people, and has a focus on extending this beyond those who are actively non-religious (i.e. those who engage in Humanist or secularist groups) in her 2024 research.

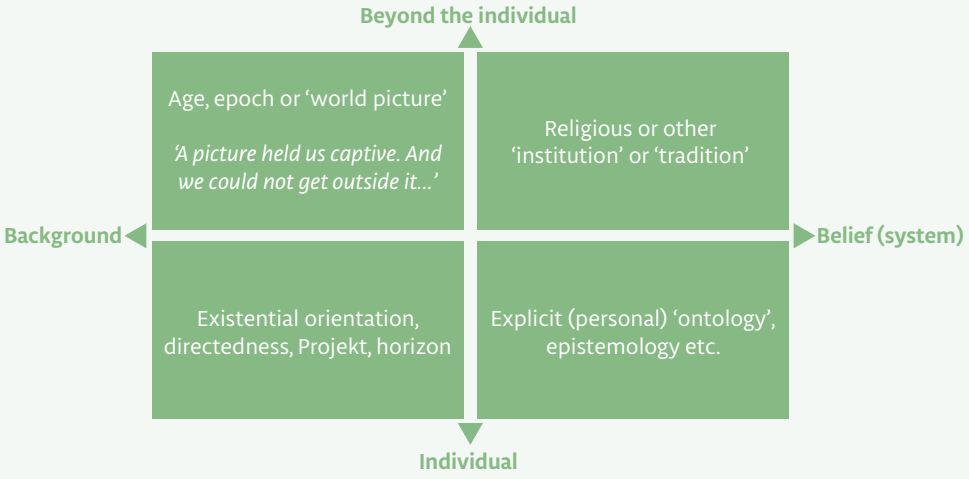
The approach of James Sire (1976, 2004, 2020), one-time professor of English literature, philosophy and theology, is built around a set of questions about ontology, epistemology, human nature, morality, meaning and commitments. The answers to these delineate a person's worldview. Originally developed for a literature class where he wanted students to distinguish between Milton's theism and Hardy's naturalism, Sire writes from within a Christian worldview as an apologist – defending a Christian worldview alongside a diverse range of other competing worldviews. Following on from Sire's definition of a worldview to include a person's 'heart-orientation', and also writing within the Christian tradition, Wilkens and Sanford (2009) focus less on examining worldviews in terms of propositional systems, adopting the metaphor of worldview as story, as the influences on people's lives arise more along a kind of (messy) narrative as they encounter life, rather than a series of propositions.

Ann Taves (2020) approaches worldviews with a set of questions similar to Sire's (about ontology, cosmology, epistemology, axiology and praxeology), but from a non-religious, naturalistic position. She sees worldviews in evolutionary terms – we should start with the individual and personal, the implicit and lived worldviews, rather than the complex, systematised and rationalised worldviews. Ultimately, for Taves, these explicit, systematised or 'organised' worldviews grow out of the implicit, lived experience of individuals.

Kevin O'Grady's considered response to the CoRE report makes a significant contribution to the idea of an RW approach (O'Grady 2023). He draws on worldview approach discussions in other countries, endorses the place of complexity rather than prescriptive definitions of religion(s) and worldview(s) in the classroom, and reflects on the use of disciplines, the importance of reflexivity and the power of worldviews in teachers' lives. Noting the roots of CoRE's vision in the work of Jackson, Grimmitt and Wright (see Section 6.1), he argues that such an approach should promote democratic citizenship.

The Catholic Education Service has drawn on the RW approach in its RE Directory,[24] the RE curriculum for Catholic schools for use from 2025. In their study of Catholic Christianity and other worldviews (including non-religious worldviews) they apply a range of 'ways of knowing' under the headings 'understand, discern and respond', reflecting to a certain extent the elements of the NSE.

One helpful stimulus in reflecting on the nature of worldviews has come from David Aldridge in his presentation to the Association of University Lecturers in RE in May 2023. He suggests 'two axes of worldview', from *background* to *belief (system)* on the X-axis, and from *beyond the individual* to the *individual* on the Y-axis. This extends the understanding of organised and individual worldviews beyond a binary. On the X-axis it differentiates between the general cultural or societal background influences in someone's worldview and the explicit belief systems which may be a more direct influence. On the Y-axis it also shows that a worldview may be individual (or personal) in that someone may develop their own idiosyncratic personal worldview, or it may reflect wider influences beyond the individual – organised religion, for example. The quadrant model also allows for someone to have a personal worldview that is hidden to them, in that it is not an explicit adoption of or assent to an organised worldview – instead it is their orientation or position. Aldridge points out that this background position is difficult to bring to view.



Aldridge's proposal is closer to this Handbook's view of 'worldview' than some of the more tightly defined sets of questions (Sire, Taves etc), in that it allows for a person's worldview to be a non-reflective, background position rather than a deliberate and reflective response to foundational beliefs.

C3 The value of worldviews for the classroom

An RW approach focuses on how religion(s) and worldviews (religious and non-religious) work, and how we can best go about studying them. It includes all pupils in the enterprise of interrogating the sources of their own developing worldviews, and how they may benefit from exploring and engaging critically with the profound and complex heritage of humanity.

The RW approach encourages an engagement with some of the scholarly concerns outlined in Section C2.5 above. It self-consciously explores the relationship between the teachings and doctrines of organised worldviews and the beliefs, practice and experience of adherents – what is sometimes called 'lived religion'.

Of course, any presentation of religion is going to be a limited representation – particularly within the constraints of the classroom time available for the subject. But given the impossibility of teaching the totality of six major 'world religions' in their diversity, alongside the many other living traditions, plus Humanism and the complex web of other non-religious worldviews, this approach offers a way of inducting pupils into the study of religion and worldviews, to empower them to be able to handle questions around religion and worldviews for themselves within, then beyond, the confines of the classroom. The National Statement of Entitlement (NSE, see Sections A6 and B2) helps in this by providing some criteria for the selection of content.

This approach explores the real religious landscape (Shaw and Dinham 2015). It is an educational project – an attempt not to stand outside the worldviews of others but to understand what being inside is all about, recognising that we do this from a particular position or worldview ourselves.

This approach draws on hermeneutical understandings (Pett and Cooling 2018, Bowie 2018, 2020), recognising that the encounter between every individual pupil and the subject content takes place in a context, and that is affected by the worldview of the learner. The approach therefore draws on pupils' interpretive skills and awareness of how their worldview affects these encounters. At the heart of an RW approach is the notion that every human being is an interpreter, and that this subject is teaching them to be 'wise interpreters' of life. As pupils grow in self-awareness of their assumptions, they are better able to identify, interpret and understand the worldviews of others.

> It is inclusive, in that it is based on the idea that everyone has or inhabits a worldview.

C3.1 Advantages of an RW approach

- It takes account of the contemporary place of religion, belief and practice locally, nationally and globally.
- It draws on developments in, for example, academic theology, philosophy, history, education, and the study of religion.
- It addresses the increasing influence of non-religious worldviews in the west, within the wider context of the global growth of religion.
- It takes account of sociological categories, such as the spiritual but not religious, and people 'believing without belonging' (Davie 1990) or 'believing in belonging' (Day 2011), and of the questioning of the category of 'religion' across many disciplines.
- It allows for sensitivity around diversity, identity, and legacies of power, for example, while equipping pupils to be able to take part in dialogue with better understanding of the worldviews of others.
- It is inclusive, in that it is based on the idea that everyone has or inhabits a worldview – so learning about any organised or individual worldview offers scope for learning about one's own.
- It equips pupils for reflecting on, and making choices about, the development of their personal worldview in the context of a complex world.

C4 Potential misunderstandings

This Handbook is advocating an RW approach. We are not, however, suggesting that it is a panacea. We are arguing that it offers a rich opportunity to reinvigorate the subject now and for the coming years. Following comments from David Lewin, University of Strathclyde, in his unpublished review of the NSE, we recognise that, given the emphasis on the RW approach being hermeneutical, the approach itself is also a lens – it does not just describe the lens. As such the RW approach shows some things well (as C3.1 above suggests) but simultaneously generates a set of associated issues which we want to be open about (Lewin 2023). For example:

1. The use of the phrase 'religion and worldviews' has led some to see this as an attempt to take the world religions paradigm and extend it by adding worldviews – whether smaller religious traditions such as the Bahá'í Faith or Paganism, or indigenous traditions, or a range of non-religious worldviews treated as 'religions'. In this Handbook, however, the approach is centred around the NSE. Pupils are entitled to understand worldviews as set out in the NSE, and the selection of content needs to enable that. The NSE attempts to reduce the challenge of content overload by clearly specifying the scope of the subject.

2. Following on from the above claim, the RW approach is clear that the place of religion is not being reduced within the subject. The dynamic relationship between religion and worldviews cannot be explored without examining religion and religions.

3. Some see a risk that the claim that everyone has a worldview might lead to relativism, with all worldviews being treated as having equal value or as purely human constructions. The worry is that the idea of truth is lost. However, the RW approach advocated here emphasises supporting pupils to be able to make critical judgements on questions of truth, meaning and ultimate reality, giving reasons for their responses.

4. Incorporating pupils' personal worldviews is not about pupils just expressing opinions (of course they will have opinions, and these can become informed opinions). Instead, the substantive content includes the relationship between organised and individual worldviews. This allows for a focus on the beliefs, teachings and practices of religions – mainstream or orthodoxy – as well as individual responses within these broader traditions. The personal worldview of the pupil is always the position from which the learning is done; how this affects learning is brought into focus within the classroom. The subject aims to support pupils in making sensitive and informed judgements based on reliable evidence and sound argument, in relation to religion and worldviews. In other words, they are being taught to be scholarly.

5 The statement 'everyone has a worldview' does not mean that everyone identifies with an organised worldview. Some people may, of course – and globally, statistics suggest that most have some sort of identification with an organised worldview of one or more kinds. However, someone's rejection of, or indifference towards, such organised worldviews is part of their own worldview.

6 There are ways of understanding worldviews as totalising systems of thought, where to have a worldview is to be able to offer coherent answers to a set of questions that indicate a view on existence, knowledge, meaning, purpose, ethics and behaviour. Some scholars present organised worldviews as being able to offer such a set of answers to 'worldview-framing' questions, and these are legitimate areas of study.[25] The RW approach advocated here has a wider understanding of 'worldview', such that it indicates the way in which everyone experiences the world from within their own context and experience, shaped by narratives and practices as well as ideas. As mentioned before, religion may or may not be influential in this way of experiencing the world for any given individual, but is influential in wider society.

7 The reframing of RE as an education in religion and worldviews does not imply that religious and non-religious worldviews are studied in equal measure. 'Worldviews' here does not function as solely representing non-religious worldviews – 'worldviews' incorporates both religious and non-religious worldviews.

8 Where it is taken to imply something organised, there is a risk that the concept of worldview may privilege conventional religious categories. This is because non-religious worldviews are often not as organised as religions. However, the purpose of the RW approach is to open up just such questions, and to examine how worldviews – religious and non-religious – work. Some might argue that Humanists UK, for example, present Humanism as an organised non-religious worldview.

9 The field of worldviews does not have a single disciplinary foundation. Benoit et al. (2020) explore its place in the discourse of a variety of disciplines (e.g. religious studies, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, theology). 'Religion' similarly is explored across a wide range of disciplines in academia. This adds to the challenge of RE in an RW approach, but does not seem to undermine it.

10 The term 'worldviews' has been explored above. The fact that it is contested, that some people think it is not a clear enough term, and that it has limitations, such as the implication for some that it is limited to sight and perspectives, should not mean that it cannot be used. Many important concepts are understood in different ways – the term 'religion' is rejected by some scholars but is accepted as a polysemous term by many other scholars and non-experts. As 'religion' is not pinned down, so 'worldviews' can retain its complexity. Tharani (2021) notes its value as a 'can-opener' term – one that helps us to look inside the content. In the RW approach it is used as a pedagogical tool (Wright and Wright 2023, Cooling 2024).

C5 Subject knowledge in school and community contexts

While it seeks to set a standard across all types of schools, the NSE is flexible in its application, allowing for local creativity and local agreed syllabuses, and including guidelines for dioceses and other religious foundation settings, and curricula for MATs and other academy trusts. The three frameworks in this Handbook illustrate how different contexts can lead to different interpretations and applications of the NSE.

C5.1 School knowledge about religion and worldviews

Teachers and other educationalists[26] acknowledge the difference between the kind of knowledge used and created by academics and professionals (e.g. laboratory researchers at the CERN Large Hadron Collider) and the knowledge transmitted and examined in the classroom (e.g. school physics). For example, while 9–11-year-olds learn that gravity is a force, 14–16-year-olds learn that gravity is not in fact a force but a force field. Then at university, they learn that it is a force field *theory*. This has implications for an education in religion and worldviews, for example:

- school knowledge about religion and worldviews is not the same as university knowledge; school knowledge necessarily involves simplification and selection, which may include teaching some ideas about religion and worldviews that are not wholly accurate but are sufficient at the stage of pupils' learning. That means teaching some ideas about religion and worldviews which are appropriate for the stage of pupils' learning and will become more complex and accurate as they mature in their thinking. For example, primary pupils might learn that karma means 'you reap what you sow': good actions earn good karma, bad actions earn bad karma. Secondary pupils might learn that understanding of karma differs significantly by tradition, such as the Bhagavad Gita's teaching that rather than balancing positive and negative karma, only 'desireless actions' that do not result in karma will cut the ties from the wheel of life, death and rebirth (samsara). At university, students might learn that karma may not refer to personal moral consequences, rather to a more generalised ontology of causal connections.
- an additional layer of complexity is that school knowledge about religion and worldviews is not necessarily identical with faith/worldview community knowledge either. It should connect with it, of course, as people are entitled to fair and accurate representations of their traditions.

C5.2 The relationships between the school subject and worldview communities

While it is essential that the substantive content about religious and non-religious worldviews is accurate and fair, this is not the same as the way worldview communities would present it in their nurturing community.

The school subject of RE is not nurture into or advocacy for any particular worldview. Rather, it equips pupils for an educational endeavour that enables them to understand worldviews – to understand how people engage with the content of religious and non-religious traditions, aware of a range of responses from those inside and outside the traditions themselves, including lived realities and scholarly perspectives, and how this study illuminates their own worldviews – and how their own worldviews, in turn, illuminate their studies. That is very different from simply presenting pupils with information about traditions.

Having said that, this approach will include understanding some of the mainstream teachings or 'orthodoxies' of different traditions, and their varying impact on people within these traditions; it will welcome input and information from faith and worldview communities as essential for this. However, in addition, the subject will also include examination of: the nature of religion itself; different ways in which it is understood; the implications of privileged voices within these structures; and the findings of scholars within and outside these traditions. For example, adherents within religious traditions may be unaware of critical scholarly material on their traditions (such as biblical scholars questioning the authorship of letters said in the text to be by the apostle Paul; or proposed analyses of Meccan and Medinan surahs by scholars in Islamic studies).

The selection of such material is an educational decision, which needs to be transparent, justified and age-appropriate. The NSE offers a set of criteria upon which to base selection, for a syllabus or curriculum. A school's context gives an additional set of criteria. In the language of Ofsted in England, schools need to think about the appropriate intent behind their curriculum when selecting content, as fitting their school situation. And, of course, statutory requirements should be followed.

Part of the educational purpose of an RW approach is for pupils to be able to consider who might legitimately represent mainstream and minority voices of a tradition, and why. Pupils will examine the relationship between a range of voices representing the tradition or community and the individual voice of the adherent. Care will need to be taken with the sensitivities of children from families whose traditions are being studied. Research shows the dissonance experienced by pupils who encounter a mismatch between the characterisations of the organised worldview presented at their school and their own lived experience (Moulin 2011).

Part of the role of the worldview communities is to be able to support this educational project, such as by providing a range of voices, with an acknowledgement of where the voices sit within the communities.

> The relationship between worldviews community knowledge, the academic community and the RE community reflects the different constituencies they serve.

C5.3 Implications

The relationship between worldviews community knowledge, the academic community and the RE community reflects the different constituencies they serve. Bearing this in mind, along with the history, tradition and modern expressions of different worldview, this Handbook proposes that the priority of content selection and curriculum construction must be around the NSE.

The Handbook recognises the need for a partnership between the school subject communities and the faith/worldview communities, not least for the accurate and fair presentation of variety within traditions. However, communities' aspirations for representation, even advocacy, must be in the service of the curriculum subject, rather than the curriculum serving the communities.[27]

There is a robust debate among scholars of religion, such as Tim Fitzgerald, Bruce Lincoln and Russell McCutcheon, about how religion should be handled in academic study. McCutcheon captures his view in the title of his revised essay collection, *Critics not Caretakers: Redescribing the public study of religion* (2023).

C5.4 Schools with a religious character

The NSE offers a benchmark for a high-quality education in religion and worldviews. The REC project offers this to those responsible for RE in schools with a religious character, to guide on the teaching of religion and worldviews. It does not prevent such schools from teaching their own worldview traditions in other ways, in addition to this approach. The work of the Catholic Education Service and its 2023 RE Directory shows how the RW approach can be applied within a religious character school context.

C6 Connecting the RW approach and the NSE to past and current practice

C6.1 Roots of the approach

The RW approach is not entirely new. It emerges from within the rich history of religious education in the UK. These brief references to the work of some of RE's most significant recent scholars are simply designed to remind readers that the current turn to an education in religion and worldviews has its roots in the intellectual traditions of the subject.

Interpretive RE approach

From the **interpretive RE approach** of Robert Jackson (1997), for example, it draws on the idea of ethnography and lived experience, identifying contextual individual and communal worldviews within wider organised/institutional worldviews, and the importance of interpretation for all learners – adherents in understanding their own tradition(s) and for outsiders looking into the tradition. The skills of attentive listening to other voices, dialogue and reflexivity in responding to the worldviews encountered are vital for the success of RW approaches in education.

Human development RE model

From the **human development RE model** of Michael Grimmitt (1987), for example, it emphasises the importance of the interaction between the 'life-worlds' of the pupil and the 'life-worlds' of the religious (or non-religious) adherent. The RW approach recognises the power and significance of learners identifying their own positionality in relation to the worldviews they study. An RW approach accepts and embraces the idea that 'everyone stands somewhere' and pupils' studies of worldviews will be deepened where they are able to learn from the worldviews they encounter.

Critical realist RE model

From the **critical realist RE model** of Andrew Wright (e.g. 2015), for example, RW approaches connect to the emphasis on the importance of a clear understanding of the epistemic assumptions of worldviews and of learners. The critical realist emphasis on truth-seeking and on philosophical considerations about the nature of truth, knowledge, belief and evidence, draw attention to the ways in which different worldviews claim to describe the reality of the human condition. Members of different communities (including religions) may see their worldview as a shared vision of the truth about humanity.

C6.2 The current context of the NSE

The NSE sets out an RW approach to the selection of content and of teaching and learning approaches. There are resonances between this approach and current models of RE. For example:

C6.2.1 Freathy et al., Exeter

The RE-searcher's model (2015) sets out three elements of RE:

- Representation: the object of study; what is to be known about religion(s) and worldview(s)
- Research: learning about and applying methods and interpretations
- Reflect: the learner evaluates their own worldviews, in the context of the study of religion(s) and worldview(s).

As with the OFSTED model below, the NSE statements connect with these elements.

The work at Exeter University has included involvement in the 'Big Ideas' project (see Section C6.2.4 below), as well as expanding on the RE-searchers model as applied to worldviews, big ideas *in* and *about* religion(s) and worldview(s), and metacognition (Freathy et al. 2015, 2017; Freathy and John 2019a and 2019b). There are strong resonances with the RW approach in this Handbook.

C6.2.2 OFSTED

In England, the OFSTED religious education research review (2021[28]) similarly sets out three types of knowledge:

- 'substantive' knowledge: knowledge about various religious and non-religious traditions
- 'ways of knowing': pupils learn 'how to know' about religion and non-religion
- 'personal knowledge': pupils build an awareness of their own presuppositions and values about the religious and nonreligious traditions they study.

The NSE approach reflects these three dimensions:

- Statements a–f (Content) fit with the category of substantive knowledge
- Statements g–i (Engagement) fit with the category of ways of knowing
- Statements j–k (Position) fit with the category of personal knowledge.

There is an ongoing debate on the nature of personal knowledge, as well as on the relationship between personal knowledge and personal worldviews.

Note that key to the NSE is how its three elements intertwine. It is not a list, but a process of engagement between the pupil and the world via the subject content.

> There is an ongoing debate on the nature of personal knowledge, as well as on the relationship between personal knowledge and personal worldviews.

C6.2.3 Big Questions in Classrooms

A research project on multidisciplinary approaches in religious education was undertaken by RE Today Services (2019–2022) as part of the Templeton World Charity Foundation *Big Questions in Classrooms* programme.

In their research project, *Challenging Knowledge in Religious Education*[29], RE Today created a series of resources for teachers to introduce and embed disciplinary approaches in upper primary and secondary school RE.

They built on the work of Freathy et al. (see Section C6.2.1 above), and base their resources on three elements that connect with the NSE:

- object of study: the substantive content of religion(s)/worldviews; factual, conceptual and theoretical knowledge
- methods of study: learning about and applying the intellectual tools and methods used to establish that knowledge
- subject: the learners recognise their worldviews and how these affect their understanding about religion(s)/worldviews.

C6.2.4 Big Ideas

The 'Big Ideas' approach developed by Barbara Wintersgill and colleagues establishes six 'big ideas' as criteria for the selection of content for RE (Wintersgill 2017, Wintersgill et al. 2019). It was influential in the direction of the CoRE final report, and that document's original Statement of Entitlement (2018). The Big Ideas themselves do not include the element of personal worldviews set out in the CoRE report and this Handbook, but while statements a–f in the revised NSE in this document are not the same as the Big Ideas, the influence of the Big Ideas project sits behind the NSE.

C6.2.5 Hermeneutical approaches

The Understanding Christianity resource from RE Today[30] takes a hermeneutical approach to text. It draws attention to 'behind the text' questions (around authorship, sources, context, reliability etc.), 'within the text' questions (meanings and interpretations) and 'in front of the text' questions (around the relationship between the text and the reader). This last category introduces pupils to the hermeneutical concepts of the horizons of the text and the reader, and supports pupils in participating in an interpretive cycle for themselves. This hermeneutical approach influences the RW approach advocated in this Handbook, with a particular connection between pupils' horizons and personal worldviews. (Pett and Cooling 2018; Bowie 2018, 2020, Bowie and Coles 2018, Bowie 2020, Bowie et al. 2022)

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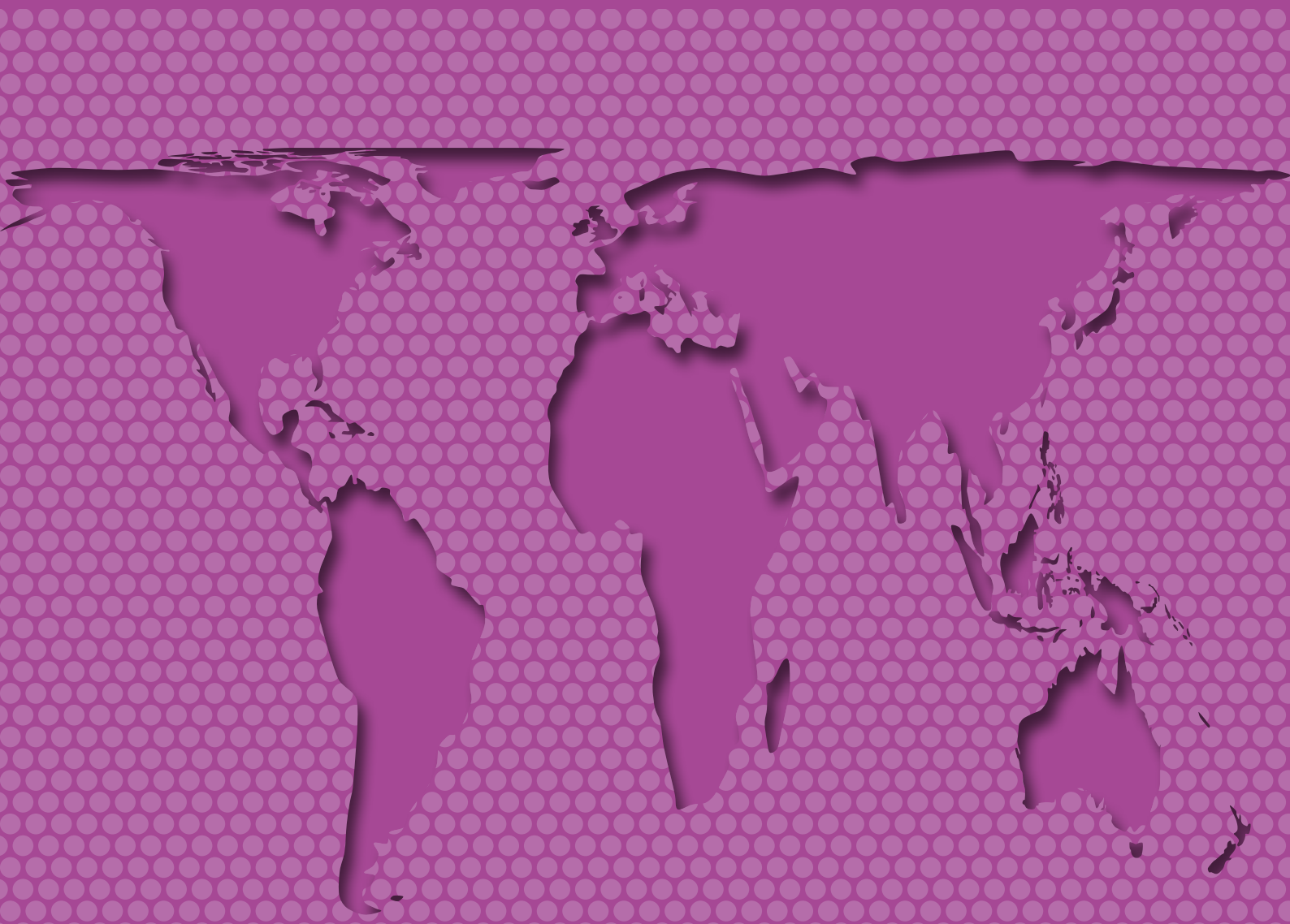


D. Religion and Worldviews project:

The three frameworks

Content
Three frameworks based on the NSE and the draft resource (2022), exemplifying three ways of applying an RW approach to the development of a curriculum in three specific contexts.

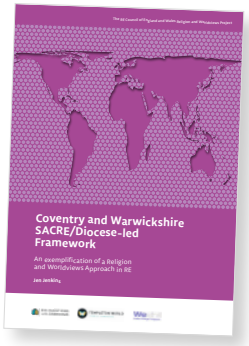
Intended audience
These are intended to be of interest to all parties, particularly syllabus developers, curriculum writers, teachers, inspectors, advisers and resource developers.

In 2022, after an open tendering process, three framework teams were selected by the REC to participate in this project. Their task was for each to develop a framework for an RW curriculum, based on the National Statement of Entitlement (NSE) and the guidance offered in the Draft Resource (REC, 2022), accompanied by sample units of work and examples of pupil responses. The purpose was to test the NSE and the guidance, and to demonstrate ways in which these could be interpreted and applied in different contexts.

The three frameworks are exemplars but not templates. They all reflect specific contexts and have applied the NSE accordingly. As such, they exemplify a process that other ASCs, MATs or schools might follow to apply the NSE and accompanying guidance when developing a curriculum for their own contexts.

SACRE/Diocese-led Framework

This team, led by adviser Jen Jenkins, worked to create a framework for a locally agreed syllabus for two SACREs, Coventry and Warwickshire. Working with the Diocese of Coventry and the members of the two SACREs, the team took account of the contrasting nature of diverse, urban Coventry and predominantly monocultural, suburban and rural Warwickshire. This draws on the particular connection between Coventry and other parts of the world in relation to reconciliation and peace-making. The selected units of work show the progression along one of the framework's key concepts from 4 to 14.



MAT-led Framework

This team, led by Subject Specialist Lead Nikki McGee, worked within the Inspiration Trust MAT, seventeen academies in Norfolk and north Suffolk. Their particular context includes the application of a particular approach to knowledge in their curriculum, and their framework reflects that, as well as the geographical, historical and religious/non-religious context of East Anglia. The RE context includes the Norfolk 2019 agreed syllabus's use of the disciplines of theology, philosophy and human and social sciences. These disciplinary strands are embedded in the Trust's RE curriculum, and can be seen in, for example, the emphasis of philosophical questions and methods in their framework. The selection of units shows progression along one strand of the curriculum from 4 to 14.

Teacher-led Framework

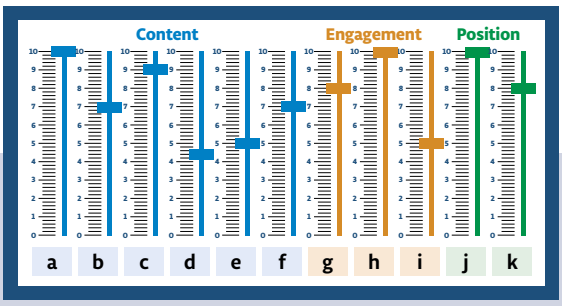
This team, led by Gillian Georgiou, comprised teachers across the country, in different contexts: primary and secondary, community, Church of England, academy, urban, suburban and rural. It addressed the challenge: what do you do to introduce an RW approach when you already have a syllabus or curriculum in place? In response, its framework is set up to allow the curriculum leader or teacher to address a series of questions about the unit they are teaching, so as to apply an RW approach to existing units. The framework is in two forms – one at the curriculum level and one at the unit level. The units of work are selected to show how the framework can be applied in a range of school and curriculum contexts.

Note:
Both the SACRE-led and Teacher-led Frameworks are written to offer examples for those in community schools, foundation schools, schools with a religious character, academies and free schools.

Appendix Making progress: two illustrations

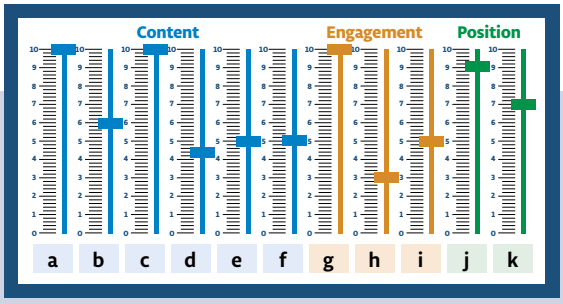
Illustration I: outlining units

This illustration offers some snapshots of the kinds of curriculum and classroom experiences that would reflect the requirements, showing how pupils can engage with religion and worldviews, and an indicator of what progression can look like using the NSE. They are thumbnail sketches of units rather than detailed planning outlines (for examples of those, see the frameworks). The advantage of these snapshots is that they reflect a deepening engagement with content; the limitation is that this presentation does not set out what happens across each year group, in order to clarify where pupils go next, and what they build upon in their learning (for more on that, see the MAT-led and SACRE/Diocese-led Frameworks).



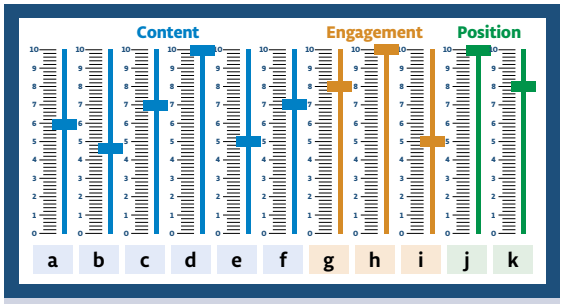
4–5-year-olds use photographs to observe home lives of some people from a religious tradition, from at least two different contexts, and can see that not everyone is the same. (Add a non-religious example if this is not present among pupils.)

a, c, g, **h**, j[31]



5–7-year-olds look at some religious artwork from a diverse range of contexts (such as pictures of Jesus from around the world) and connect them with some stories or texts that help to interpret the artwork (e.g. related gospel accounts). They notice how the different ways of expressing the stories in art are more or less familiar and think about why (e.g. according to their own contexts). They are introduced to a selection of voices to help them find out that such stories may be important in some people's lives as part of organised worldviews, and find out why (e.g. they may include important people, and ideas about how to live). They find out that all kinds of different people may see the stories as important, but not everyone, and that sometimes this is to do with belief in God.

a, b, **c**, **g**, j

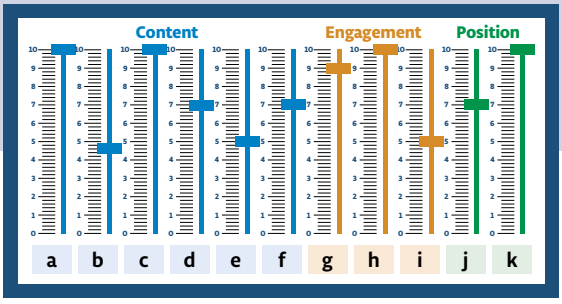


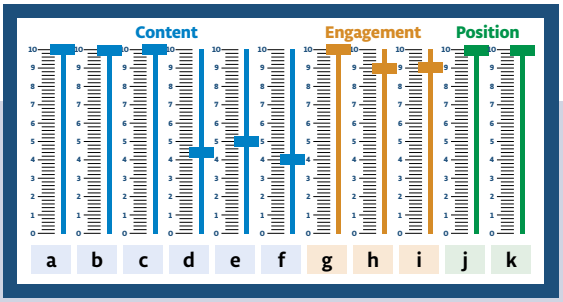
7–9-year-olds ask questions about meaning and purpose in life, expressing their own ideas and saying where these ideas come from. They explore how religious worldviews help some people make sense of life and affect how they live day to day. For example, they talk to adherents about what it means to believe there is a God, or to believe in salvation, or submission, or karma and *samsara* – how these ideas can transform a person's life. They examine some texts and stories that illustrate these big concepts and find out ways in which they are interpreted. They reflect on the difference it makes to these interpretations if someone is an adherent or not, including pupils' own perspectives.

a, c, **d**, g, **h**, **j**

9–11-year-olds ask a question about the difference that context makes to one's worldview. For example, after thinking about their own context, they use and interrogate data, interviews and visual images to examine the differences it makes to be a Muslim in a Muslim-majority country (e.g. Indonesia) and a Muslim-minority country (e.g. UK), including opportunities and challenges, and how these shape their lived experience – not just intellectual ideas. They reflect on whether it is similar if someone is non-religious in a secular society or a religious society. They reflect on their own context again, and consider how it influences their own worldviews.

a, **c**, e, g, **h**, **j**, k



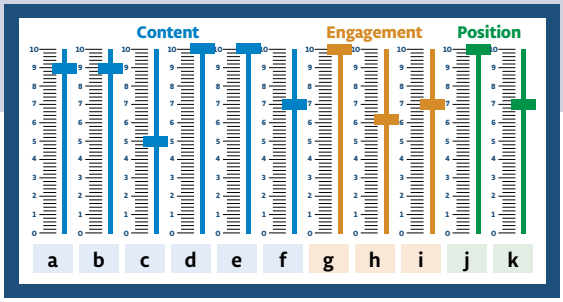


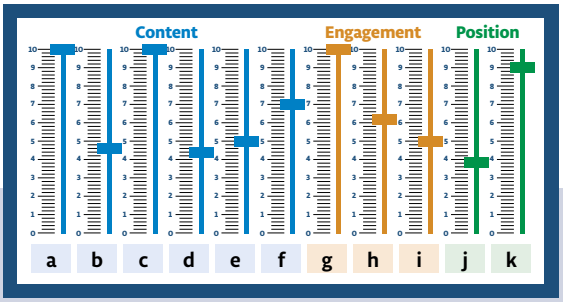
11–12-year-olds ask a question such as 'What is religion?' They examine a range of common features of religion and carry out some research into their importance in the lives of members of the school and local community, and reflect on the role any of these features play in their own lives – whether they are religious or not. By analysing these, they get an insight into the flexible role religion can play in people's lives and worldviews, including their own responses. Having looked at the diversity of expression of religion in people's lives, they can then analyse and evaluate a range of contested academic definitions of religion, reflecting on the impact of a person's worldview on their understanding of 'religion'.[32]

a, **b**, **c**, **g**, h, i, **j**, **k**

12–13-year-olds ask questions about the diversity and complexity of non-religious worldviews. They look at data that shows how some people who are non-religious incorporate some spiritual or supernatural beliefs and what might be termed religious practices into their lives and worldviews. They recognise that for most non-religious people, however, these things do not matter. Pupils consider Humanism as an example of a naturalist, materialist non-religious worldview, with responses to questions about the nature of ultimate reality, how we know anything, ideas of meaning and purpose, and a vision of the good life. Through talking with Humanists, they reflect on the impact of being Humanist on a person's believing, belonging and behaving. They weigh up the idea that Humanism might be presented as a form of organised non-religious worldview, whether it is legitimate to differentiate between Humanism and humanism (see Section B3.4 above), and the extent to which their own personal worldview overlaps with Humanism or humanism.[33]

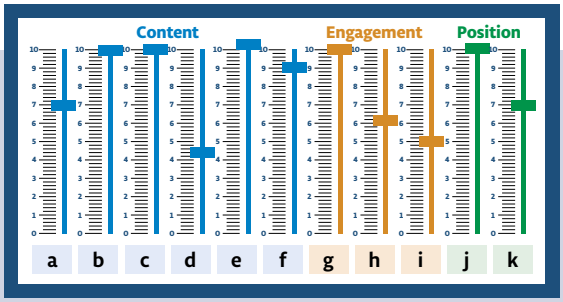
a, b, **d**, **e**, **g**, **j**





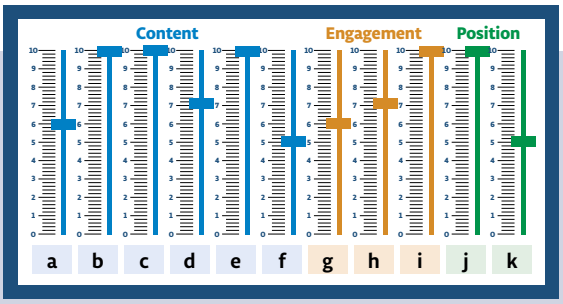
13–14-year-olds ask questions about how religions change over time. They explore how significant concepts developed through the ages (e.g. using theological methods to understand Trinity as expressed in art, or theories of atonement in Christian traditions; or the miraculous nature of the Qur'an in Islamic traditions) and how practices develop in place (e.g. RS methods to explore how the Buddha's teaching was adapted as it spread to, for example, Sri Lanka, China, Tibet and the West, exploring how the importance of the story of the life of the Buddha varies across these contexts). They use these studies to inform their understanding of how such ideas shape cultures and worldviews, and enable them to examine questions of power and influence. They reflect on which methods were most effective in getting to the heart of the matter, and examining why they think so, reflecting on the impact of their personal worldviews on their choices and responses.

a, **c**, **f**, **g**, j, **k**



14–16-year-olds examine the relationship between institutional and individual worldviews by exploring ethical issues (e.g. Roman Catholic doctrines on sanctity of life and data on Catholic people's attitudes to birth control), or by considering how religion/non-religion is presented in RE in comparison with lived realities (e.g. textbook presentations of religions alongside sociological data on the diverse adherence and practice of religions in India; data on the permeable boundary between religion and non-religion in the UK). They suggest different explanations for these relationships, reflecting on questions of tradition, continuity, change, power and culture. They select and apply appropriate disciplinary tools to evaluate the explanations, recognising the impact of context. Throughout the unit, they reflect on the sources of their own worldviews in the light of their learning.

b, **c**, **e**, f, **g**, **j**



16–19-year-olds reflect on the legal and political dimensions of worldviews, in relation to religious, ethical and social concerns. They examine the influence of religious and non-religious traditions on attitudes to the environment, to medical advances, to justice and equality in relation to gender, sex and race, and account for the changes across different contexts, using theological and philosophical methods and applying ethical theories (e.g. changing interpretation and application of ancient texts/teachings to accommodate technological advances and societal changes; contrasting responses between secular and religious contexts to the growth of Pentecostalism in, for example, the USA, Britain, Latin America, Africa or East Asia). Students examine their own worldview assumptions and how they affect their responses to these issues, with a growing awareness of the impact of context on their own and others' worldviews.

b, **c**, d, **e**, f, g, h, **i**, **j**

Illustration 2: focusing on the engagement element

This offers an example of what progress might look like using the NSE. The focus here is on making progress in terms of the process of engagement (NSE strands g–i, how pupils examine and engage with the content – incorporating 'ways of knowing'). Syllabuses themselves will need to develop their own outcomes, dependent upon the kinds of questions and content they set out.

5–7s

- Ask questions; find things out using e.g. observation, interviews, interpreting stories, texts and art, using data and recognising where it comes from; recognise that sometimes people give different answers to questions.

7–9s

As above, also

- ask questions and consider the best ways to find answers
- use the methods above with awareness of (for example) organised teachings and individual lived experiences; historical/ contemporary contexts; ritual or artistic forms of expression
- weigh up how sufficient sources are (e.g. one interview or six; one quote or an extended passage; one example or several)
- recognise that people disagree, and some answers leave space for mystery and wonder.

7–9s

As above, but also

- recognise that different questions can fit with subject disciplines, including (for example) theology, philosophy, a social science, creative arts
- become aware of basic assumptions of these (e.g. 'insider/ outsider' perspectives)
- examine beliefs, teachings, ways of living with a range of methods (e.g. experiment, interview, qualitative and quantitative data)
- basic evaluative methods (e.g. reliable methods/ sources/ findings; generalisable conclusions; coherence with tradition etc.)
- recognise that some important questions leave space for mystery and paradox.

11–14s

As above but also

- reflect on different ways that disciplines generate knowledge, aware of assumptions
- use content from different methods, or apply these appropriately to investigations, examine beliefs, teachings and lived experience (e.g. using hermeneutical approaches to texts; interpreting artistic forms of expression; case study, discourse analysis, experimental method, ethnography, surveys)
- become aware of the place of dialogue, debate and disagreement in construction of knowledge
- apply specific evaluative tools
- become aware of non-western ways of knowing
- become aware that 'even if all possible scientific questions be answered the problems of life have not been touched at all' (Wittgenstein).

14–19s

As above, but also

- select and apply these disciplinary ways of thinking to increasingly challenging issues, both contemporary and in the past
  - *within religious communities* (e.g. how theology responds to changes in prevailing cultures, such as questions around gender and sexuality; the impact of critical realism and non-realism on debates about God in Christianity)
  - *between communities* (e.g. relationships between atheist, secularist, and/or Humanist thought; between non-religion and religion; compare religion in India or China with religion in UK)
  - *and beyond religious communities* (e.g. dialogues and debates about the nature of religion, its place in societies and cultures, its roles in relation to prejudice, equality and justice, in politics, in colonialism and national identities etc.)
  - recognise the roots of such debates and the range of ways of handling them
- appreciate that many questions remain unresolved, and will themselves reflect different worldviews.

Endnotes

1 https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resource/national-content-standard-1st-edition-2023/

2 See the animation, Nobody Stands Nowhere [www.theosthinktank.co.uk/comment/2021/05/12/worldviews-film]

3 https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resource/national-content-standard-1st-edition-2023/

4 See, for example, David Voas and Abby Day (2010) Recognizing secular Christians: Toward an unexcluded middle in the study of religion, (ARDA Guiding Paper Series). State College, PA: The Association of Religion Data Archives at The Pennsylvania State University, from www.thearda.com/research/guiding-papers; *Faith Matters*, 2013 (YouGov/University of Lancaster), for Westminster Faith Debates. For infographics on these data and other relevant surveys, see RE Today's Investigating Worldviews Series , www.natre.org.uk/resources/termly-mailing/secondary-investigating-worldviews/ and www.natre.org.uk/resources/termly-mailing/bqic-secondary-challenging-knowledge-in-re/.

5 www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2023/1261.html

6 www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/r-fox-v-ssfe.pdf

7 https://www.afterre.org/

8 This is a method used in social science research. I encountered it in the Understanding Unbelief project, and have used it in resources supporting that project (https://research.kent.ac.uk/understandingunbelief/research/public-engagement-projects/understanding-unbelief-in-the-re-classroom/); also in resources developed for the Challenging Knowledge in RE research project from RE Today: e.g. *Investigating God* (2021) ed. Fiona Moss for primary and *Studying God* (2021) ed. S Pett for secondary.

9 See also the examples using the mixing desk analogy for pupils' personal worldviews developed in *Investigating Worldviews* (2021) ed. F Moss (for primary) and *Studying Worldviews* (2021) ed. S Pett (for secondary), also part of the Challenging Knowledge in RE research project from RE Today. (See note 8 for links)

10 This strategy was originally developed by Sarah Northall, formerly Head of RE at Chipping Norton Secondary School. See it in basic form in *More than 101 Great Ideas* ed. Rosemary Rivett, and applied to ideas of God using the discipline of psychology in *Investigating God*, ed. Fiona Moss for primary and *Studying God* for secondary. (See note 8 above for links)

11 Dawn Cox, papers produced as part of the 2023 Edge Hill Summer School www.edgehill.ac.uk/event/religious-education-summer-school-2023/

12 See *Studying Worldviews*, ed. Stephen Pett, RE Today 2021.

13 See David Lewin, as above, note 7.

14 One way of addressing this question, using this approach as outlined, can be seen in *Investigating How We Live*, ed. Fiona Moss, RE Today 2022 and *Investigating Sikh Worldviews*, ed. S. Pett, RE Today 2024

15 For example, *Picturing Islam*, *Picturing Muslims* (2019) S. Pett and L. Blaylock, RE Today

16 For example, Understanding Humanism https://understandinghumanism.org.uk/

17 See Adam Robertson (2022) "A journey to 'England's Nazareth'" in REtoday, 39:2, 26–27

18 See, for example, *Studying Religion* (2022) ed. S. Pett, RE Today

19 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a80f307e5274a2e87dbcba1/GCSE_RS_final_120215.pdf

20 Nottingham University project led by Tim Hutchings, Céline Benoit and Rachael Shillitoe, https://mediaspace.nottingham.ac.uk/playlist/dedicated/1_naaf156b/1_qdl2vxca

21 See, for example, Christopher R. Cotter and David G. Robertson (2016) *After World Religions: reconstructing religious studies*, Routledge.

22 See p. 31 in Hedges, P (2021) *Understanding Religion: theories and methods for studying religiously diverse societies*, University of California Press.

23 See Dawn Cox's bibliography for a more complete list of contributing scholars https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resource/bibliography/

24 https://catholiceducation.org.uk/schools/religious-education/item/1000034-religious-education-curriculum-directory

25 See, for example, the work of James Sire (*The Universe Next Door* (IVP 2020)) and Anne Taves ('From religious studies to worldview studies', *Religion*, 50(1), 138 (2020)), offering worldview questions from religious and non-religious perspectives.

26 See, for example, Christine Counsell's blog https://thedignityofthethingblog.wordpress.com/2018/03/27/in-search-of-senior-curriculum-leadership-introduction-a-dangerous-absence/ and Rosalind Walker on school science knowledge: https://rosalindwalker.wordpress.com/2018/01/14/the-nature-of-school-science-knowledge/#more-357

27 This is a controversial point and will need further discussion and reflection. The relative role of educationalists and members of faith communities in the selection of content for RE has oscillated over the decades.

28 OFSTED Research review series: religious education (2021) www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education/research-review-series-religious-education

29 See project publications for primary schools: www.natre.org.uk/resources/termly-mailing/bqic-primary-big-questions-big-answers/ and for secondary schools: www.natre.org.uk/resources/termly-mailing/bqic-secondary-challenging-knowledge-in-re/

30 For more information, see www.retoday.org.uk/school-support/understanding-christianity/

31 Note that the NSE statement letters here show the main focus of the units (in bold) and the background statements, reflecting the mixing desk metaphor from page 34

32 For resources to support this unit outline, see *Studying Religion*, (2022) ed S. Pett. RE Today.

33 For resources to support this unit outline, see *Investigating Non-religious Worldviews* (2023) ed. S Pett, RE Today.

Religious Education Council of England and Wales

NATIONAL CONTENT STANDARD FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL OF ENGLAND AND WALES

JULY 2023

First Edition

National Content Standard for Religious Education

This document sets out a National Content Standard for the subject within the context of National Plan for Religious Education (RE) which would embed the standard into the planning and delivery of the subject in England.

This document draws on The Religious Education Council of England and Wales Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom project, as well as other relevant national publications from the last 5 years. The Draft Resource, published by the RE Council's project, proposes a standard (called a National Entitlement Statement). This document is set out in the style of the National Curriculum and outlines how a National Content Standard for the subject might apply in different types of school. The appendices summarise relevant sources and evidence that have been considered when developing this National Content Standard.

Contents

What is a National Plan for Religious Education?

The proposed National Plan for RE builds on the principles set out in the Commission on RE (2018) and reflects changes that have impacted the education sector since that time, including to initial teacher training and early career development, the expansion of the academy schools programme and a further decline in the level and quality of provision for RE, evidenced for example, in DfE school workforce data and the Ofsted Research Review (2021).

This proposal calls on the government to take action to secure:

1. A refreshed vision for the subject, based on a religion and worldviews approach. So through careful selection of knowledge for the curriculum (see page 6), the subject will explore the nature of religion and worldviews, and the important role that religious3 and non-religious4 worldviews play in all human life. This means enabling all pupils to become knowledgeable, open-minded, critical participants in public discourse, who make academically informed judgements about important matters of religion or belief which shape the global landscape. It is a subject for all pupils, whatever their own family background or personal beliefs and practices.
2. high quality teaching for all pupils, in whatever school they attend, planned and delivered by those with a secure knowledge of their curriculum area.

For this reason, it is proposed that:

3. a **National Content Standard** for RE/an education in religion and worldviews be established to set a benchmark for what constitutes high quality in this subject (see page 4)

a. Where Academies are free to determine their own curriculum, the Funding Agreement should be amended to specify the nature of the provision required to secure the expected quality of RE/education in religion and worldviews, with the effect that the published syllabus for the subject in these contexts must demonstrate due regard to the National Content Standard.

b. systems are established, including through the inspection process, **to hold more effectively to account**, those schools that are failing to have due regard to a National Content Standard.

To support the above two recommendations, a **sustained programme of investment** in teacher education, linked to the early career framework and ongoing professional development is required. For this reason, is it proposed:

a. that the proportion of lessons of secondary RE/education in religion and worldviews taught by people who are trained to teach the subject is increased by **reintroducing bursaries** and **other measures** to recruit trainees

b. that those training as primary teachers have **sufficient RE/education in religion and worldviews specific training** to feel confident in the classroom

c. that financial investment is made in **regional RE/education in religion and worldviews hubs** to extend opportunities for schools and teachers to draw upon relevant expertise in their region including through local communities of religion or belief.

Towards a National Content Standard

At the heart of the National Plan for Religious Education is the need to establish a benchmark for what constitutes high quality in the subject – a National Content Standard. Such a benchmark could be used in clarification of regulations about the nature of provision required in Academy schools and may helpfully provide non-statutory guidance for the arms-length curriculum body, Oak National Academy, and its partners, in the upcoming development of a fully resourced curriculum in RE next academic year. Likewise, the National Plan and National Content Standard may support Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education and others with responsibility for RE to play their part in raising standards for all children.

In the first instance, we set out National Content Standard (page 5) drawing upon a range of sources and presented in the style of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. This approach recognises that, whilst the sources set out in the appendices establish that all state funded schools must teach RE, neither primary legislation nor supplementary documents such as academy funding agreements, provide a benchmark for the breadth, depth and level of ambition of the curriculum. Without a National Content Standard therefore, Religious Education lacks parity with the subjects of the National Curriculum despite its statutory place at the core of the basic curriculum (see Education Act 2002 S80 on page 16). This is followed by a reference section setting out the source selection which provides essential material for the creation of this National Content Standard.

A National Content Standard

Religious Education programmes of study

In the style of the National curriculum in England

NOTE: Whenever the term 'worldviews' is used in this document, it means religious and non-religious worldviews.

Purpose of study[1]

An education in religion and worldviews should:

- introduce pupils to the rich diversity of religion and non-religion, locally and globally, as a key part of understanding how the world works and what it means to be human
- stimulate pupils' curiosity about, and interest in, this diversity of worldviews, both religious and non-religious
- expand upon how worldviews work, and how different worldviews, religious and non-religious, influence individuals, communities and society
- develop pupils' awareness that learning about worldviews involves interpreting the significance and meaning of information they study
- develop pupils' appreciation of the complexity of worldviews, and sensitivity to the problems of religious language and experience
- induct pupils into the processes and scholarly methods by which we can study religion, religious and non-religious worldviews
- enable pupils, by the end of their studies, to identify positions and presuppositions of different academic disciplines and their implications for understanding
- give pupils opportunities to explore the relationship between religious worldviews and literature, culture and the arts
- include pupils in the enterprise of interrogating the sources of their own developing worldviews and how they may benefit from exploring the rich and complex heritage of humanity
- provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on the relationship between their personal worldviews and the content studied, equipping them to develop their own informed responses in the light of their learning.

Attainment targets

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

[1] [1]RE Council Worldviews Project: Draft Resource 2022, page 17

Selecting content

It is vital that syllabus writers and curriculum developers make wise decisions on the selection of knowledge for a curriculum. Time for RE is limited, and the religion and worldviews approach is intended to avoid a proliferation of content, not least because of the impossibility of comprehensive coverage of the diversity of religious and non-religious traditions. The criteria for deciding content include the following:

1. Legal Framework: The relevant legal requirement operates (see page 11), which for most schools and academies without a religious character is that RE 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (Education Act 1996 Section 375). For most schools and academies with a religious character RE is determined by the governors and in their trust deed or equivalent. This primary legislation along with case law, set an expectation that pupils will develop knowledge and understanding of the matters of central importance for the religious and non-religious worldviews studied.

2. Intention: The National Content Standard must frame the intent behind the content selection. The treatment of that content then contributes to the progression of understanding of the elements in the National Content Standard, and the links between them.

3. Inclusive Principle: Best practice in RE, as well as European and domestic legislation, has established the principle that RE in schools without a religious character should be inclusive of both religious and non-religious worldviews. Schools should ensure that the content and delivery of the RE curriculum are inclusive in this respect (noting that this does not imply equal time between religious and non-religious worldviews). All religious and non-religious worldviews studied must have fair and accurate representation.

4. **Contextual Factors:** Local context is important, including school character, local community character, pupil knowledge and experience, teacher knowledge and experience. Local context also includes the history of local areas, allowing opportunities for local studies that connect teaching and learning with the geographical and historical background.

5. **Collectively Enough Principle**: Pupils need to gain 'collectively enough' or 'cumulatively sufficient' knowledge (OFSTED 2021), not total coverage. In this context, 'collectively enough' needs to relate to the National Content Standard, with its three broad strands of content, engagement and position.

6. **Coherency:** Schools should be able to give a clear account of their curriculum choices and carefully consider how they will enable the construction of a coherent curriculum for pupils.

Subject Content

This exemplar content should be read within the context of the legal framework including the primary legislation cited above for different types of school, and case law which together set an expectation that pupils will develop knowledge and understanding of the matters of central importance for the religious and non-religious worldviews studied.

The material below is indicative of the breadth, depth and ambition of the curriculum content about religious and non-religious worldviews, that is required in a curriculum that would meet this National Content Standard. However, schools are not required by law to teach this exemplar content. The standard builds on the legal framework in its assumption that the content of a curriculum in this subject will be age appropriate and focus on religious and non-religious worldviews rather than on content which is the focus of a different curriculum subject. Likewise, for all pupils to have equal access to high quality education in religion and worldviews, the subject must be given adequate time and resources commensurate with its place as a core component of the basic curriculum.

In relation to religion and belief, pupils must be taught:

Content[2]

- **Nature/formation/expression**: What is meant by worldview and how people's worldviews are formed and expressed through a complex mix of influences and experiences
- **Organised/individual:** How people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or institutional worldviews
- **Contexts:** How worldviews have contexts, reflecting time and place, are highly diverse, and feature continuity and change.
- **Meaning and purpose:** How worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience
- **Values, commitments and morality:** How worldviews may provide guidance on how to live a good life
- **Influence and power:** How worldviews influence, and are influenced by, people and societies

Engagement

- **Ways of knowing:** The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing.
- **Lived experience:** The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people.

[2] RE Council Worldviews Project: Draft Resource 2022. Expanded statements in the table on page 19f of this document.

- **Dialogue/interpretation:** The field of study of worldviews is to be shown as a dynamic area of debate

Position

- **Personal worldviews reflexivity:** Pupils will reflect on and potentially develop their personal worldviews and make scholarly judgements in the light of their study in the light of their study of religious and non-religious worldviews.
- **Personal worldviews impact:** Pupils will reflect on how their worldviews affect their learning

Making good progress

NOTE: As was stated on page 5, whenever the term ‘worldviews’ is used in this document, it refers to religious and non-religious worldviews.

The National Content Standard is intended to set a standard and a benchmark for an education in religion and worldviews, although there is no single correct way to deliver it. Religious education is part of the statutory basic curriculum and not the National Curriculum. This means that, unlike the core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum, there is no single descriptor of the subject content which must be followed for schools to which the National Curriculum applies. Furthermore, the legal framework for RE in different types of school, means that responsibility for setting the curriculum content, rests with different authorities.

For all these reasons, the national content standard does not recommend one model for making good progress. Instead, one possible example is offered here which demonstrates the breadth, depth and ambition of subject content around which progression needs to build. Two further examples may be found in the Draft Resource pages 42-45.

Standards for EYFS

4-5 year olds might use photographs to observe home lives of some people from a religious tradition, from at least two different contexts. They notice some things that are the same in the homes and some that are different. They notice that some things in their own homes are the same and some are different, and that not everyone is the same. (a, c, g, h, j)*

Standards for Key stage 1

5-7 year olds might look at some religious artwork from a diverse range of contexts (such as pictures of Jesus from around the world) and connect them with some stories or texts that help to interpret the artwork (e.g. gospel accounts pictured). They notice how the different ways of expressing the stories in art are more or less familiar and think about why (e.g. according to their own contexts). They are introduced to a selection of voices to help them find out that such stories may be important in some people’s lives as part of organised worldviews, and find out why (e.g. they may include important people, and ideas about how to live). They find out that all kinds of different people may see the stories as important, but not everyone, and that sometimes this is to do with belief in God. (a, b, c, g, j)

Standards for Lower Key stage 2

7-9 year olds might ask questions about meaning and purpose in life, expressing their own ideas and saying where these ideas come from. They might explore how religious worldviews help some people make sense of life and affect how they live day to day. For example, they might talk to adherents about what it means to believe there is a God, or to believe in salvation, or submission, or karma and samsara – how these ideas can transform

a person's life. They might examine some texts and stories that illustrate these big concepts and find out ways in which they are interpreted. They may reflect on the difference it makes to these interpretations if someone is an adherent or not, including pupils' own perspectives. (a, c, d, g, h, j)

Standards for Upper Key stage 2

9-11 year olds might ask a question about the difference that context makes to one's worldview. For example, after thinking about their own context, they might use and interrogate data, interviews and visual images to examine the differences it makes to be a Muslim in a Muslim majority country (e.g. Indonesia) and a Muslim minority country (e.g. UK), including opportunities and challenges, and how these shape their lived experience – not just intellectual ideas. They might reflect on whether it is similar if someone is non-religious (e.g. Humanist) in a secular society or a religious society. They might reflect on their own context again and consider how it influences their own worldviews. (a, c, e, g, h, j, k)

Standards for Lower Key stage 3

11-12 year olds might ask a question such as 'what is religion?' They might examine a range of common features of religion and carry out some research into their importance in the lives of members of the school and local community, and reflect on the role any of these features play in their own lives. By analysing these, they get an insight into the flexible role of religion in people's lives and worldviews, including their own responses. Having looked at the diversity of expression of religion in people's lives, they can then analyse and evaluate a range of contested academic definitions of religion, reflecting on the impact of a person's worldview on their understanding of 'religion'. (a, b, c, g, h, i, j, k)

Standards for Upper Key stage 3

12-14 year olds might ask questions about how religions change over time. They might explore how significant concepts developed through the ages (e.g. using theological methods to understand Trinity as expressed in art, or theories of atonement in Christian traditions; or the miraculous nature of the Qur'an in Islamic traditions) and how practices develop in place (e.g. RS methods to explore how the Buddha's teaching was adapted as it spread to, for example, Sri Lanka, China, Tibet and the West, exploring how the importance of the story of the life of the Buddha varies across these contexts). They might use these studies to inform their understanding of how such ideas shape cultures and worldviews and enable them to examine questions of power and influence. They might reflect on which methods were most effective in getting to the heart of the matter, and examining why they think so, reflecting on the impact of their personal worldviews on their choices and responses. (a, c, f, g, j, k)

Standards for Key stage 4

Note: Religious education is statutory for all pupils at key stage 4, unless withdrawn by their parents, whether or not they study a course leading to an accredited qualification in the subject, such as GCSE Religious Studies. This National Content Standard assumes that all pupils will have the opportunity to make progress in RE, just as would be expected if they continued to study any other subject in the curriculum, and that teaching time will be provided commensurate with its status as part of the basic curriculum.

14-16 year olds[3] might examine the relationship between institutional and individual religious and non-religious worldviews by exploring ethical issues (e.g. Roman Catholic doctrines on sanctity of life and data on Catholic people's attitudes to birth control), or by considering how religion/non-religion is presented in RE in comparison with lived realities (e.g. textbook presentations of religions alongside sociological data on the diverse adherence and practice of religions in India; data on the permeable boundary between religion and non-religion in the UK). They suggest different explanations for these relationships, reflecting on questions of tradition, continuity, change, power and culture. They select and apply appropriate disciplinary tools to evaluate the explanations, recognising the impact of context. Throughout the unit, they reflect on the sources of their own worldviews in the light of their learning. (b, c, e, f, g, j)

Standards for Key Stage 5

Note: Religious education is statutory for all pupils at key stage 5, whether or not they study a course leading to an accredited qualification in the subject, such as A level Religious Studies. The exception to this rule is that pupils may choose to withdraw themselves from the subject once they reach 18 years of age or parents may withdraw them before this age.

16-19 year olds[4] might reflect on the legal and political dimensions of worldviews, in relation to religious, ethical and social concerns. They might examine the influence of religious and non-religious traditions on attitudes to the environment, to medical advances, to justice and equality in relation to gender, sex and race, and account for the changes across different contexts, using theological and philosophical methods and applying ethical theories (e.g. changing interpretation and application of ancient texts/ teachings to accommodate technological advances and societal changes; contrasting responses between secular and religious contexts to the growth of Pentecostalism in, for example, the USA, Britain, Africa or East Asia). Students might examine their own worldview assumptions and how they affect their responses to these issues, with a growing awareness of the impact of context on their own and others' worldviews. (b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j)

[3 and 5] Adapted from RE Council Worldviews Project: Draft Resource 2022, page 44 Note: Three models are provided in the Draft Resource and each serve as an example of what progress might look like using the National Content Standard (NCS).

How the National Content Standard would be applied in different types of school.

Content Standard sets a benchmark for the minimum standard of Religious education that all parents can expect following an education in a state funded school. Schools with the freedom to plan their own syllabus for Religious education would be expected to ensure that their syllabus was similar in breadth, depth and ambition to the national content standard. The following table shows how this Standard would be applied in different types of school.

		Standard		
Type of school	Curriculum Legislation as it relates to Religious Education	Standards set out by their governors and in their trust deed or equivalent.	Church of England Statement of Entitlement on Religious Education, Religious Education Directory (CES) Other entitlement statements for schools with a religious character	National **content** standard for RE
(a) Community, foundation and VA or VC schools **without** a religious character that follow an Agreed Syllabus	Statutory	Not applicable	Not applicable	Recommended to the Agreed Syllabus Conference as a benchmark for high quality RE
(b) Academies and Free Schools ***without*** a religious character	Statutory	Not applicable	Not applicable	Comparable in breadth, depth and ambition to the NCS
(c) Academies which are former VC or Foundation schools with a religious character that followed an Agreed Syllabus	Statutory	Not applicable	Expected	Comparable in breadth, depth and ambition to the NCS
(d) Academies with a religious character, current and former VA schools with a religious character	Statutory	Statutory	Expected	Comparable in breadth, depth and ambition to the NCS
(e) Foundation and Voluntary Controlled Schools with a religious character that follow an Agreed Syllabus	Statutory	Statutory	Expected	Recommended to the Agreed Syllabus Conference as a benchmark for high quality RE

[End of the National Content Standard]

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Appendix A: Sources and Evidence

These sources are quoted for reference in their original form, and do not form part of the National Content Standard.

1. **Primary Legislation and Funding Agreements on RE in different types of school**

A. **Introduction: Religious Education in English Schools (2010)**

This section is an extract from the most recent government guidance on Religious education.

The RE curriculum in different types of schools

In all maintained schools RE must be taught according to either the locally agreed syllabus or in accordance with the school's designated religion or religious denomination, or in certain cases the trust deed relating to the school.

Community, foundation and voluntary-aided or voluntary-controlled schools without a religious character

RE must be taught according to the locally agreed syllabus adopted by the LA by which the school is maintained.

Foundation and voluntary-controlled schools with a religious character

RE provision in foundation and voluntary-controlled schools with a religious character is to be provided in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. However, where the parent of any pupil at the school requests that RE is provided in accordance with provisions of the trust deed relating to the school (or, where there is no provision in the trust deed, in accordance with the religion or denomination mentioned in the order designating the school as having a religious character), then the governors must make arrangements for securing that RE is provided to the pupil in accordance with the relevant religion for up to two periods a week unless they are satisfied that there are special circumstances which would make it unreasonable to do so.[26]

Voluntary-aided schools with a religious character

In these schools RE is to be determined by the governors and in accordance with the provisions of the trust deed relating to the school or, where there is no provision in the trust deed, with the religion or denomination mentioned in the order designating the school as having a religious character.

However, where parents prefer their children to receive RE in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus, and they cannot reasonably or conveniently send their children to a school where the syllabus is in use, then the governing body must make arrangements for RE to be provided to the children within the school in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus unless they are satisfied that there are special circumstances which would make it unreasonable to do so. If the LA is satisfied that the governing body is unwilling to make such arrangements, the LA must make them instead.[27]

Academies

Academies are all-ability, state-funded schools managed by independent sponsors, established under Section 482 of the Education Act 1996. Some academies have a religious character.

All academies are required, through their funding agreements (see page 17), to teach RE.

26 Schedule 19(3), School Standards and Framework Act 1998

27 Schedule 19(2), School Standards and Framework Act 1998

B. Primary Legislation on Religious Education

A Education Act 1996, Section 375

(3)Every agreed syllabus shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

B School Standards and Framework Act 1998 Schedule 19

Required provision for religious education.

Introductory

1(1)In this Schedule "the required provision for religious education", in relation to a school, means the provision for pupils at the school which is required by [F1section 80(1)(a) or 101(1)(a) of the Education Act 2002] to be included in the school's basic curriculum.

(2)In this Schedule "agreed syllabus" has the meaning given by section 375(2) of [F2the Education Act 1996].

Community schools and foundation and voluntary schools without a religious character

2(1)This paragraph applies to—
(a)any community school; and
(b)any foundation or voluntary school which does not have a religious character.
(2)Subject to sub-paragraph (4), the required provision for religious education in the case of pupils at the school is provision for religious education in accordance with an agreed syllabus adopted for the school or for those pupils.
(3)If the school is a secondary school so situated that arrangements cannot conveniently be made for the withdrawal of pupils from it in accordance with section 71 to receive religious education elsewhere and the [F3local authority] are satisfied—

(a)that the parents of any pupils at the school desire them to receive religious education in the school in accordance with the tenets of a particular religion or religious denomination, and

(b)that satisfactory arrangements have been made for the provision of such education to those pupils in the school, and for securing that the cost of providing such education to those pupils in the school will not fall to be met from the school's budget share or otherwise by the authority,

the authority shall (unless they are satisfied that because of any special circumstances it would be unreasonable to do so) provide facilities for the carrying out of those arrangements.

(4)If immediately before the appointed day the school was a grant-maintained school (within the meaning of the Education Act 1996), and in relation to the school or any pupils at the school the appropriate agreed syllabus as defined by section 382 of that Act was a syllabus falling within subsection (1)(c) of that section, then until—

(a)the end of such period as the Secretary of State may by order prescribe, or

(b)such earlier date as the governing body may determine,

the required provision for religious education in the case of the school or (as the case may be) those pupils is provision for religious education in accordance with that syllabus.

(5)No agreed syllabus shall provide for religious education to be given to pupils at a school to which this paragraph applies by means of any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of a particular religious denomination (but this is not to be taken as prohibiting provision in such a syllabus for the study of such catechisms or formularies).

Foundation and voluntary controlled schools with a religious character

3(1)This paragraph applies to any foundation or voluntary controlled school which has a religious character.

(2)Subject to sub-paragraph (4), the required provision for religious education in the case of pupils at the school is provision for religious education—

(a)in accordance with any arrangements made under sub-paragraph (3), or

(b)subject to any such arrangements, in accordance with an agreed syllabus adopted for the school or for those pupils.

(3)Where the parents of any pupils at the school request that they may receive religious education—

(a)in accordance with any provisions of the trust deed relating to the school, or

(b)where provision for that purpose is not made by such a deed, in accordance with the tenets of the religion or religious denomination specified in relation to the school under section 69(4),

the foundation governors shall (unless they are satisfied that because of any special circumstances it would be unreasonable to do so) make arrangements for securing that such religious education is given to those pupils in the school during not more than two periods in each week.

(4)If immediately before the appointed day the school was a grant-maintained school (within the meaning of the Education Act 1996), and in relation to the school or any pupils at the school the appropriate agreed syllabus as defined by section 382 of that Act was a syllabus falling within subsection (1)(c) of that section, then until—

(a)the end of such period as the Secretary of State may by order prescribe, or

(b)such earlier date as the governing body may determine,

that syllabus shall be treated for the purposes of sub-paragraph (2)(b) as an agreed syllabus adopted for the school or (as the case may be) those pupils.

Voluntary aided schools with a religious character

4(1)This paragraph applies to any voluntary aided school which has a religious character.

(2)The required provision for religious education in the case of pupils at the school is provision for religious education—

(a)in accordance with any provisions of the trust deed relating to the school, or

(b)where provision for that purpose is not made by such a deed, in accordance with the tenets of the religion or religious denomination specified in relation to the school under section 69(4), or

(c)in accordance with any arrangements made under sub-paragraph (3).

(3)Where the parents of any pupils at the school—

(a)desire them to receive religious education in accordance with any agreed syllabus adopted by the **[F3**local authority**]**, and

(b)cannot with reasonable convenience cause those pupils to attend a school at which that syllabus is in use,

the governing body shall (unless they are satisfied that because of any special circumstances it would be unreasonable to do so) make arrangements for religious education in accordance with that syllabus to be given to those pupils in the school.

(4)Religious education under any such arrangements shall be given during the times set apart for the giving of religious education in the school in accordance with the provision for that purpose included in the school's basic curriculum by virtue of **[F4**section 80(1)(a) or 101(1)(a) of the Education Act 2002**]**.

(5)Any arrangements under sub-paragraph (3) shall be made by the governing body, unless the **[F3**local authority**]** are satisfied that the governing body are unwilling to make them, in which case they shall be made by the authority.

(6)Subject to sub-paragraph (3), the religious education given to pupils at the school shall be under the control of the governing body.

C. Education Act 2002 Section 80

Basic curriculum for every maintained school in England

(1)The curriculum for every maintained school in England shall comprise a basic curriculum which includes—

(a)provision for religious education for all registered pupils at the school (in accordance with such of the provisions of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (c. 31) as apply in relation to the school),

(b)a curriculum for all registered pupils at the school [F1who have ceased to be young children for the purposes of Part 1 of the Childcare Act 2006] but are not over compulsory school age (known as "the National Curriculum for England")

D. Extracts from relevant Case Law (text in bold added for clarity)

Fox versus the Secretary of State for Education (2015) and Bowen versus Kent County Council (2023)

A. The key paragraph in **the Fox case** in relation to this document is as follows:

The Strasbourg jurisprudence shows that the duty of impartiality and neutrality owed by the state do not require equal air-time to be given to all shades of belief or conviction. An RE syllabus can quite properly reflect the relative importance of different viewpoints within the relevant society. The same would seem to follow for a region or locality. The duty might therefore be described as one of "due" impartiality. No criticism can be or is made therefore of s 375(3) of the 1996 Act. In addition, of course, a generous latitude must be allowed to the decision-maker as to how that works out in practical terms. But ***the complete exclusion of any study of non-religious beliefs for the whole of Key Stage 4, for which the Subject Content would allow, would not in my judgment be compatible with A2P1.(74)***

B. The Bowen case builds on the Fox judgment and Justice Constable takes Justice Warby's conclusions a step further. He states:

"it is plain from Fox that a religious education curriculum must, in order to be compliant with the HRA 1998, cover more than religious faith teaching. ***The content of religious education teaching must include, at least to some degree, the teaching of non-religious beliefs (such as humanism)" [68].***

C. It is important also to note Justice Warby's description of the application of his judgment as follows:

"I should make clear, for the avoidance of doubt, that the above conclusions have been arrived at with reference to the position of ***schools or academies which do not have a religious character****. Schedule 19 of the 1998 Act makes different provision as to RE in schools that do have a religious character (see paras 3 and 4)." (82)*

2. Academy Funding Agreements:

The Funding Agreement is the contract between the Secretary of State for Education and the academy that sets out the terms on which the academy is funded. The Funding Agreement specifies how the academy is run, its duties and the powers the Secretary of State has over the academy. The model funding agreements up to 2010, included the following statement in relation to RE in Academies that were previously required to follow the local agreed syllabus:

"subject to clause 27 , the Academy Trust shall ensure that provision shall be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph 2(5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, *[and having regard to the requirements of the QCDA's national framework for religious education in schools*]"

After the closure of QCDA, the section in italics above was removed, with the consequence that the only expectation on Academy Schools was that they provide RE in each year group but with no definition of what constitutes RE or the standards that should be expected.

Mainstream Supplemental Funding Agreement

Curriculum

2.U The Academy Trust must provide for the teaching of religious education and a daily act of collective worship at the Academy.

2.V The Academy Trust must comply with section 71(1)-(6) and (8) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as if the Academy were a community, foundation or voluntary school, and as if references to "religious education" and "religious worship" in that section were references to the religious education and religious worship provided by the Academy in accordance with clause [2.W]/[2.X]/[2.Y][***select as appropriate].***

*[**Clauses 2.W – 2.Y reflect the requirements for religious education and daily collective worship – mark the clauses that do not apply as 'Not used'**]*

2.W **[This clause applies where an academy is designated with a religious character but was not previously a VC school or a foundation school designated with a religious character. Please also use this clause if an academy was previously a VC school but has gone through a significant change process to adopt VA characteristics in parallel with converting to an academy]** Subject to clause 2.V, **where the Academy is designated with a religious character** (in accordance with section 124B of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 or further to section 6(8) of the Academies Act 2010):

a) provision must be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the tenets of the Academy's specified religion or religious denomination. This is subject to paragraph 4 of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which applies as if the Academy were a voluntary aided school with a religious character;

b) the Academy Trust must comply with section 70(1) of, and Schedule 20 to, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as if the Academy were a foundation school with a religious character or a voluntary school, and as if references to "the required collective worship" were references to collective worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Academy's specified religion or religious denomination;

c) the Academy Trust must ensure that the quality of religious education given to pupils at the Academy and the contents of the Academy's collective worship given in accordance with the tenets and practices of its specific religion or religious denomination are inspected. The inspection must be conducted by a person chosen by the Academy Trust, and the Academy Trust must ensure that the inspection complies with the statutory provisions and regulations which would apply if the Academy were a foundation or voluntary school designated as having a religious character.

2.X Subject to clause 2.V, **where the Academy has not been designated with a religious character** (in accordance with section 124B of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 or further to section 6(8) of the Academies Act 2010):

a) provision must be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph 2(5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998;

b) the Academy must comply with section 70(1) of, and Schedule 20 to, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as if it were a community school or foundation school without a religious character, except that paragraph 4 of that Schedule does not apply. The Academy may apply to the Secretary of State for consent to be relieved of the requirement imposed by paragraph 3(2) of that Schedule.

2.Y ***[This clause only applies where an academy was previously a VC school or foundation school designated with a religious character. If an academy was previously a VC school but has gone through a significant change process to adopt VA characteristics in parallel with converting to an academy then please use clause 2.W instead]*** Subject to clause 2.V, the requirements for religious education and collective

worship are as follows:

a) subject to paragraph 3 of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which will apply as if the Academy were a foundation school or voluntary controlled school with a religious character, provision must be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996;

b) the Academy Trust must comply with section 70(1) of, and Schedule 20 to, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as if the Academy were a foundation school with a religious character or a voluntary school, and as if references to "the required collective worship" were references to collective worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Academy's specified religion or religious denomination;

c) ***[Additional sub-clause to be added if the academy is designated with a denominational religious character - CE etc. rather than 'Christian']*** the Academy Trust must ensure that the quality of the religious education given to pupils at the Academy and the contents of the Academy's collective worship, given in accordance with the tenets and practices of its specific religion or religious denomination, is inspected. The inspection must be conducted by a person chosen by the Academy Trust and the Academy Trust must secure that the inspection complies with statutory provisions and regulations which would apply if the Academy were a foundation or voluntary school designated as having a religious character.

2.Z The Academy Trust must comply with paragraph 2A of the Schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 in relation to the provision of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education.

2.AA The Academy Trust must prevent political indoctrination, and secure the balanced treatment of political issues, in line with the requirements for maintained schools set out in the Education Act 1996,and have regard to any Guidance.

3. Summary of a National Statement of Entitlement

The following summary was developed by the Religion Education Council of England and Wales Education Committee and the RE Policy Unit in 2020. It aimed to provide a summary of the Commission on RE (2018) National Statement of Entitlement. It was included in public documentation in what was commonly known as 'CoRE on a Page'. It has been used between 2020 and 2022 by teachers, advisers and other stakeholders to explain the basis of a religion and worldviews approach. It has largely been superseded by the Draft Resource (see p.14)

A summary of the proposed National Entitlement to Religion and Worldviews

Pupils are entitled to be taught, by well qualified and resourced teachers, knowledge and understanding about:

a. what religion is and worldviews are, and how they are studied;
b. the impact of religion and worldviews on individuals, communities and societies;
c. the diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews in society;
d. the concepts, language and ways of knowing that help us organise and make sense of our knowledge and understanding of religion and worldviews;
e. the human quest for meaning, so that they are prepared for life in a diverse world and have space to recognise, reflect on and take responsibility for the development of their own personal worldview

4. Ofsted Research Review Series: Religious Education

The purpose of this review published in 2021, was to identify factors that contribute to high-quality school RE curriculums, the teaching of the curriculum, assessment and systems. Ofsted stated that it would then use this understanding of subject quality to examine how RE is taught in England's schools where RE falls under Ofsted's inspection remit. Both in terms of evidence-led policy making and the inspection process, this would suggest that, a National Content Standard would need to be informed by the findings set out below.

Summary of features that may be found in high-quality RE according to recent research:

1. **Curriculum progression and debates about knowledge in RE**
   - A consideration of the knowledge that pupils build through the RE curriculum, because accurate knowledge about religion and non-religion can be beneficial for achieving different purposes and aims for RE.
   - High expectations about scholarship in the curriculum to guard against pupils' misconceptions. What is taught and learned in RE is grounded in what is known about religion/non-religion from academic study (scholarship).
   - Carefully selected and well-sequenced substantive content and concepts.
   - 'Ways of knowing' are appropriately taught alongside the substantive content and are not isolated from the content and concepts that pupils learn.
   - A consideration of when pupils should relate the content to their own personal knowledge (for example, prior assumptions).

2. **Substantive content and concepts in RE**
   - 'Collectively enough' substantive content and concepts in the RE curriculum to enable pupils to grasp the complexity of a multi-religious, multi-secular world. This substantive knowledge is a representation and reconstruction of religious and non-religious traditions and concepts.
   - Representations of religious and non-religious traditions that are as accurate as possible. Leaders and teachers might use scholarship to construct representations so that pupils do not learn misconceptions.
   - Depth of study in certain areas of the RE curriculum to provide pupils with detailed content that is connected with the concepts and ideas that they learn. Without this, more complex discussions about religion and non-religion will be superficial. Leaders and teachers can make intelligent selections for depth of study to indicate a range of religious and non-religious ways of living.
   - Detailed knowledge of specific religious and non-religious traditions (such as their stories, narratives, texts and testimonies) in the RE curriculum to enable pupils to make useful connections between content.
   - A well-sequenced RE curriculum that prepares pupils with the prior knowledge (including content, concepts and vocabulary) they need for subsequent topics. The importance of this is very clear in the case of controversial and sensitive topics. Leaders and teachers might identify the necessary background knowledge that pupils need to learn for a topic and make sure that the curriculum is ordered to accommodate this.

3. **'Ways of knowing' in RE**
   - A curriculum design that includes 'ways of knowing' as a form of knowledge that pupils build through the RE curriculum. This helps pupils learn about the construction of substantive knowledge, its accuracy, its reliability and how provisional that knowledge is. Pupils are therefore prepared to think in critical and scholarly ways about the representations of religion and non-religion that they learn through the curriculum and encounter in the world beyond.
   - A sequenced RE curriculum that includes scholarly methods and tools that pupils learn.

- Subject leaders and teachers who make good decisions about which 'ways of knowing' pupils need to learn and who match the 'ways of knowing' to the substantive content.
- Curriculum impact that includes pupils recognising the type of specialist discourse they are engaging in when asking questions, using methods and making claims about different content in the RE curriculum. This might have been achieved, for example, because pupils have learned how disciplinary discourses construct knowledge about religion/non-religion or how groups or families of methods explore religious and non-religious traditions.

4. 'Personal knowledge' in RE

- An RE curriculum that does not induct pupils into any religious tradition (in settings where the EIF applies to RE).
- A curriculum that builds pupils' awareness of their own assumptions and values about the content that they study ('personal knowledge').
- Precise, detailed and fruitful content (substantive content and concepts) that subject leaders and curriculum designers have selected to build pupils' 'personal knowledge'. Not all substantive content is equally appropriate to select as the basis for developing pupils' 'personal knowledge'.
- Subject leaders and teachers who adeptly identify specific content for the development of 'personal knowledge' because they recognise that some pupils may not otherwise see the immediate value of that content.

5. Interplay, end goals and competencies

- A curriculum that focuses pupils' learning on ambitious subject-specific end goals, rather than covers excessive amounts of content superficially.
- Curriculum impact that is achieved by pupils building up accurate knowledge about the complexity and diversity of global religion and non-religion. This provides pupils with many of the ingredients for cultural and civic competencies that are important to many RE teachers.
- Clear curriculum content that subject leaders and curriculum designers have planned to illustrate 'ways of knowing' and to develop pupils' 'personal knowledge'.
- A clear connection between the 'ways of knowing' that pupils learn, the 'personal knowledge' that pupils develop through the curriculum and the substantive content and concepts on which both depend.
- Subject leaders of RE who are aware of the ways that the RE curriculum can be susceptible to distortion and have ensured that it does not become distorted.

6. Teaching the curriculum

- Leaders and teachers who consider, when they select classroom activities, how the activities will enable pupils to remember the RE curriculum in the long term.
- Teachers whose judgement about classroom activities is informed by insights from cognitive science about learning, as well as subject-specific insights about the nature of the RE content to be learned. These 2 insights are more important than generic concerns about whether activities are superficially 'engaging'.
- Leaders and teachers of RE who ensure that, in choosing an appropriate classroom activity, they are clear about what pupils are supposed to learn from it (the curriculum object).
- Teachers who recognise that the success of classroom strategies, methods and procedures depends, to an extent, on whether pupils have sufficient prior RE knowledge (from the curriculum) to succeed at the activity.
- Teaching activities that will continue to draw on, and to remind pupils of, parts of the RE curriculum that pupils have already covered. This enables pupils to learn the RE curriculum in the long term.

7. Assessment

- Different types of assessments are used appropriately:

    - Formative assessments can help teachers identify which pupils have misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge, and what those specific misconceptions or gaps are. This can inform teachers about common issues, so they can review or adapt the curriculum as necessary. Formative assessments are less useful in making judgements about how much of the whole curriculum has been learned and remembered.
    - Where summative assessments are used for accountability purposes, leaders can ensure that they are sufficiently spaced apart to enable pupils to learn the expanding domain of the curriculum.
    - The purpose of the test should guide the type of assessment, the format of the task and when the assessment is needed.
    - RE assessment needs to relate to the curriculum, which sets out what it means to 'get better' at RE.
    - Leaders and teachers can consider whether existing assessment models in RE do in practice treat the curriculum as the progression model.
    - Leaders and teachers can design RE assessments that are fit for purpose, in that they are precisely attuned to the knowledge in the RE curriculum that they intend for pupils to learn.
- Leaders who ensure that assessments are not excessively onerous for teachers.
- Professional development opportunities for leaders and teachers to reflect on how different assessment questions and tasks in RE can frame teachers' and pupils' expectations about engaging with religious and non-religious traditions.

8. Systems, culture and policies

- Sufficient curriculum time allocated to RE in order for leaders to deliver an ambitious RE curriculum.
- Subject-specialist staffing, so that pupils are taught RE by teachers with appropriate subject professional knowledge.
- Access to high-quality in-service training for leaders and teachers of RE to develop their professional subject knowledge.
- Subject leadership that can identify high-quality sources of training (for example, through subject associations and organisations) to further their RE knowledge in policy, subject content, subject pedagogy and RE research.

5. Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom: developing a worldviews approach. A Draft Resource for curriculum developers

The Draft Resource sets out a rationale for a religion and worldviews approach, building on the developments since the 2018 Commission report. It was primarily written to inform three Framework Development Teams, working over 18 months to apply the Handbook guidance to their own contexts. During this process, the Draft Resource is being tested and revised as necessary, before the publication, scheduled for 2024, of a final Handbook, three example frameworks, sample units of work and pupil responses.

At the heart of the Commission on RE final report, was a National Statement of Entitlement indicating that all children in schools are entitled to an education in religion and worldviews. This national statement of entitlement provides a shared vision for the subject that will be interpreted for, and applied in, a variety of different contexts by syllabus writers and curriculum designers.

• reflects the changing religious and secular non-religious diversity of the UK and the world
• is inclusive of, and relevant to, children and young people, whose worldviews may range across the secular religious and non-religious
• approaches the subject from the perspective of worldviews (incorporating religious and non-religious worldviews, personal and communal, individual and organised, plural and diverse) to help pupils navigate the diverse, complex world around them, in relation to religion and belief. The place for this education in religion and worldviews is the subject currently called Religious Education in legislation in England.

To meet this entitlement, pupils must be taught to understand the nature of worldviews, in relation to religion and belief, including:

CONTENT	
Core statements	*Expanded statements*
a. Nature/formation/expression What is meant by worldview and how people's worldviews are formed and expressed through a complex mix of influences and experiences	The nature and variety of worldviews, and how people's worldviews are formed through a complex mix of influences and experiences, including (for example) rituals, practices, texts, teachings, stories, inspiring individuals, the creative arts, family, tradition, culture, and everyday experiences and actions. How these may also act as ways of expressing and communicating worldviews.
b. Organised/individual How people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or institutional worldviews	How people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or institutional worldviews (e.g. how individual worldviews may be consciously held or tacit; how individual and organised worldviews are dynamic; how individual worldviews may overlap to a greater or lesser extent with organised worldviews)
c. Contexts How worldviews have contexts, reflecting time and place, are highly diverse, and feature continuity and change.	How worldviews have contexts, reflecting their time and place, shaping and being shaped by these, maintaining continuity and also changing; how they are highly diverse and often develop in interaction with each other. (This applies to organised worldviews as well as to individual worldviews.)
d. Meaning and purpose How worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience	How worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience, such as questions of existence, meaning, purpose, knowledge, truth, identity and diversity. How worldviews may play different roles in providing people with ways of making sense of existence and/or their lives, including space for mystery, ambiguity and paradox.
e. Values, commitments and morality How worldviews may provide guidance on how to live a good life	How worldviews may provide a vision of, and guidance on, how to be a good person and live a good life, and may offer ideas of justice, right and wrong, value, beauty, truth and goodness. How individuals and communities may express their values through their commitments.
f. Influence and power How worldviews influence, and are influenced by, people and societies	How worldviews influence people (e.g. providing a 'grand narrative' or story for understanding the world) and influence the exercise of power in societies (e.g. on social norms for communities, or in relation to conflict or peace-making). How society and people can also influence and shape worldviews.

ENGAGEMENT	
Core statements	*Expanded statements*
g. Ways of knowing The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing.	The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing. Questions and methods should be carefully chosen, recognising that there are different understandings of what knowledge is deemed reliable, valid, credible, truthful etc.
h. Lived experience The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people.	The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people (e.g. religious, non-religious, embodied, diverse, fluid, material, experiential) in relation to local and global contexts, recognising the complex reality of worldviews as they are held, shared and expressed by people in real life.
i. Dialogue/interpretation The field of study of worldviews is to be shown as a dynamic area of debate.	The field of study of worldviews is to be encountered as a dynamic area of dialogue and debate, and one which engages with practices of interpretation and judgement within and between religious and non-religious communities.
POSITION	
Core statements	*Expanded statements*
j. Personal worldviews: reflexivity Pupils will reflect on and potentially develop their personal worldviews in the light of their study.	Pupils will come to understand their own worldview in greater depth, and how it relates to the worldviews of others, becoming more reflective and reflexive. As they develop this awareness of their positionality in relation to that of others, they will make informed judgements on how (far) this understanding prepares them for life in a diverse world
k. Personal worldviews: impact Pupils will reflect on how their worldviews affect their learning	Pupils will develop their understanding of how their encounters with the subject content of RE are affected and shaped by their worldviews, whether conscious or not, and that this is also true for everyone else. They will reflect on how (far) their learning may have an impact on their worldview.

6. Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Toledo Guiding Principles

The following is taken from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office website:

Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) is a human right which has been guaranteed under international law within the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) since 1966. Article 18 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, states that 'everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion'.

FoRB is not just the freedom to hold personal thoughts and convictions, but also being able to express them individually or with others, publicly or in private. It includes the freedom to:

- subscribe to different schools of thought within a religion
- change one's religion or beliefs, including to leave or abandon religions
- hold non-religious beliefs

No-one should experience discrimination for exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief. This right prohibits the use of coercion to make someone hold or change their religion or belief. It also protects a person from being required to state an affiliation with any particular religion or belief.

As with all human rights, FoRB belongs to people, whether alone or as members of a group, and not to the religion or belief itself. This means that it does not protect religions, or religious figures, from criticism.

In July 2022, the FCDO hosted an International Ministerial on FoRB. At this conference a Statement on FoRB and Education was made, of which the UK Government was a signatory. The full statement is available here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-education-statement-at-the-international-ministerial-conference-2022/statement-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-education

This statement says that signatories will commit to:

- prioritising inclusive curricula and teaching, matched to all students' needs, regardless of their background, that provides foundational skills for all. In addition, curricula should provide positive and accurate information about different faith and belief communities and combat negative stereotypes
- support teaching that promotes the equality of all individuals, regardless of their religion
- protecting education establishments and ensuring all students have access to education regardless of their faith or any other characteristic. This includes ensuring access to safe alternative spaces for education in emergencies and protracted crises
- promoting international efforts to support education reform, emphasising the benefits of pluralism and the importance of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief. Regular evaluation of education materials and practices should be carried out to ensure that these standards are always maintained

In addition, the Toledo Guiding Principles (2007) published by the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) and ODOHR (Organisation for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) are relevant in this context. The introduction to the principles states that:

The Guiding Principles are designed to assist not only educators but also legislators, teachers and officials in education ministries, as well as administrators and educators in private or religious schools to ensure that teaching about different religions and beliefs is carried out in a fair and balanced manner.

The Key Guiding Principles set out in the document are:

Whenever teaching about religions and beliefs in public schools is provided in OSCE participating States, the following guiding principles should be considered:

1.Teaching about religions and beliefs must be provided in ways that are fair, accurate and based on sound scholarship. Students should learn about religions and beliefs in an environment respectful of human rights, fundamental freedoms and civic values.

2.Those who teach about religions and beliefs should have a commitment to religious freedom that contributes to a school environment and practices that foster protection of the rights of others in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding among members of the school community.

3.Teaching about religions and beliefs is a major responsibility of schools, but the manner in which this teaching takes place should not undermine or ignore the role of families and religious or belief organizations in transmitting values to successive generations.

4.Efforts should be made to establish advisory bodies at different levels that take an inclusive approach to involving different stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of curricula and in the training of teachers.

5.Where a compulsory programme involving teaching about religions and beliefs is not sufficiently objective, efforts should be made to revise it to make it more balanced and impartial, but where this is not possible, or cannot be accomplished immediately, recognizing opt-out rights may be a satisfactory solution for parents and pupils, provided that the opt-out arrangements are structured in a sensitive and non-discriminatory way.

6.Those who teach about religions and beliefs should be adequately educated to do so. Such teachers need to have the knowledge, attitude and skills to teach about religions and beliefs in a fair and balanced way. Teachers need not only subject-matter competence but pedagogical skills so that they can interact with students and help students interact with each other in sensitive and respectful ways.

7.Preparation of curricula, textbooks and educational materials for teaching about religions and beliefs should take into account religious and non-religious views in a way that is inclusive, fair, and respectful. Care should be taken to avoid inaccurate or prejudicial material, particularly when this reinforces negative stereotypes.

8.Curricula should be developed in accordance with recognised professional standards in order to ensure a balanced approach to study about religions and beliefs. Development and implementation of curricula should also include open and fair procedures that give all interested parties appropriate opportunities to off er comments and advice.

9.Quality curricula in the area of teaching about religions and beliefs can only contribute effectively to the educational aims of the Toledo Guiding Principles if teachers are professionally trained to use the curricula and receive ongoing training to further develop their knowledge and competences regarding this subject matter. Any basic teacher preparation should be framed and developed according to democratic and human rights principles and include insight into cultural and religious diversity in society.

10.Curricula focusing on teaching about religions and beliefs should give attention to key historical and contemporary developments pertaining to religion and belief, and reflect global and local issues. They should be sensitive to different local manifestations of religious and secular plurality found in schools and the communities they serve. Such sensitivities will help address the concerns of students, parents and other stakeholders in education.

7. Statutory requirements for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development and Fundamental British Values.

All maintained schools must meet the requirements set out in section 78 of the Education Act 2002 and promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of their pupils. Through ensuring pupils' SMSC development, schools can also demonstrate they are actively promoting fundamental British values.

Accountability
As part of a section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors must consider pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development when forming a judgement of a school. However this advice should not be read as guidance for inspection purposes. Ofsted publish their inspection framework and handbook, which set out how schools are assessed in relation to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Schools should refer to Ofsted's documents to understand what inspectors look for in assessing this."

Ofsted **School inspection handbook** EIF 2022 - Updated 11 July 2022

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
299. Inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This is a broad concept that can be seen across the

school's activities, but draws together many of the areas covered by the personal development judgement.

300. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils includes developing their:

- ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life
- knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths, feelings and values
- sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them
- use of imagination and creativity in their learning
- willingness to reflect on their experiences

8. Statutory Guidance: What schools must publish online

This guidance places a responsibility on schools to ensure that parents and carers have access to information about what their children are learning in each subject of the curriculum. The publication of the curriculum can also be accessed by Ofsted inspection teams as an aspect of making judgements about the breadth, balance and ambition of the curriculum or, if concerns are raised, lead to a decision to carry out a section 8 inspection (See extract from the Ofsted Handbook for inspection below.)

The guidance is copied below:

Curriculum
You must publish:

- the content of your school curriculum in each academic year for every subject - this includes mandatory subjects such as religious education, even if it is taught as part of another subject or subjects, or is called something else

Ofsted Handbook for inspection extract

37. As is the case for all schools, a good or outstanding school may still receive an urgent inspection (carried out under section 8) at any time in certain circumstances (see part 4). For example, we may decide that we should inspect a school earlier than its next scheduled inspection if:

- concerns are identified about the breadth and balance of the curriculum (including whether the statutory requirement to publish information to parents is not met.

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FAQs

National Content Standard for Religious Education in England

Why?

For too many years, the level and quality of provision for RE around England has been reported as inconsistent at best. This means 1000s of pupils in our schools are denied their entitlement, established in law, to high-quality religious education.

The NCS provides clarification about excellence of approach to RE and exemplifies how schools and academies can fulfil current legal and contractual requirements effectively.

Aims?

One major barrier to improving this situation is the lack of an agreement about what is meant by 'a high-quality religious education'. Unlike a subject included in the National Curriculum, RE has no national programme of study document to act as a benchmark.

The NCS aims to embed a common standard for RE in all types of state funded school in England to meet the REC's vision for all pupils in all schools to receive high quality provision for the subject..

Who?

The REC hopes that by establishing the NCS as a benchmark, the document will support a range of stakeholders in RE including:

- SACREs and Academy Trusts
- Initial Teacher Trainers and providers of CPD
- Those making judgements about what constitutes a high-quality curriculum for RE
- Resource providers including Oak National Academy and publishers

Origins?

The NCS was developed around extracts from a draft resource for syllabus writers . This resource has been the focus of extensive consultation and scrutiny for the last 12 months and is due to be published in its final form in Spring 2024 alongside three exemplar curriculums. It draws upon relevant publications including the Ofsted Research Review (2021).

Read the NCS here

Frequently asked questions

Religious Education Council of England and Wales

Read a blog about the NCS here

Indicative

The NCS uses the familiar style of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Unlike the National Curriculum Programmes of study however, it does not prescribe content but instead provides an exemplar for the sort of **breadth, depth and ambition** in a high-quality RE curriculum.

It does not recommend a particular approach to the subject.

What RE is

The exemplar content should be read within the context of the legal framework including the primary legislation cited for different types of school, and case law which together set an expectation that pupils will develop **knowledge and understanding of the matters of central importance** for the religious and non-religious worldviews studied.

...What it is not

The standard **builds on the legal framework** in its assumption that the content of a curriculum in this subject will be **age appropriate** and **focus on religious and non-religious worldviews** rather than on content which is the focus of a **different curriculum subject.**

Criteria

for selecting content

- Legal Framework
- Intention
- Inclusive Principle
- Contextual Factors
- 'Collectively enough' principle
- Coherency

For all pupils to have equal access to high quality education in religion and worldviews, the subject **must be given adequate time and resources** commensurate with its place as a core component of the basic curriculum.

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Faith Trail Update

Overview

Since the first trail (Wimbledon) took place in October 21, there have been 27 trails!

Wimbledon was followed by Balham (June 22), then Southfields (September 22) and most recently by Tooting in June 24. There were 10 trails between the first trail and summer 23. In the year 23-24, 17 schools took part with the Wimbledon, Balham and Southfields all running twice in both autumn and summer and Tooting for the first time in the summer.

16 different schools have taken part so far, with 4 new schools due to do their first one this autumn. For some schools, the Faith Trail has become an established part of their curriculum offer and hence they have attended each year.

This initiative cannot take place without the generous offer of the hosts of the places of worship to make their sacred spaces available and to provide their time, and often that of others of their worshippers to enable some small group work to take place.

All the schools report positively about how much their children benefit from the experience, verbally at the time, but getting written feedback is a challenge. However, some examples follow.

Feedback

From the pupils: some soundbites from Our Lady of Victories' (Y5) last Wimbledon visit:

"I really enjoyed seeing where other religions meet up and who they worshipped and how they celebrated."

"I never realised all these buildings and faiths are so close."

Temple "It was very intricately decorated and the outside was so tranquil. I loved meditating. It was very spiritual."

Synagogue "I really enjoyed looking inside the Torah as it was interesting to see other languages."

Church "I really enjoyed looking at the intricate designs such as the stained glass window and overall it was very interactive."

They all mentioned the beautiful paintings at the temple, loved the meditation, enjoyed looking at the Torah and wearing a kippah, appreciated being put into small groups at the church and loved the church dog!

From a host: feedback from the minister Pete Herbert-James from Alderbrook and Allfarthing's visit to Balham Baptist church last June:

"It was a delight and total pleasure to welcome the children to our church building. I found all the children to be very polite, friendly, and respectful. They showed a genuine curiosity about how we operate as a church community, as well as in the beliefs and values that underpin our practices, and they asked some very pertinent and thoughtful questions. Equally, it felt like the children enjoyed their experience, that they felt very relaxed in entering our building, and comfortable enough to be open and honest about their experiences and questions. We hope that we can serve schools in this way again and host further groups."

From a teacher's perspective (Hotham at Balham):

1) *How would you assess the value of this activity*:

a) for yourself and other participating staff?
Staff enjoyed this trip ….as children were engaged. It also made RE lessons more meaningful as they understood significance of objects. For example, the prayer mat and timings of prayers in the Mosque were much easier for them to understand than when we spoke about this in our lesson.

b) *in relation to your RE curriculum?*
Very relevant. All places of worship showed symbolism, prayer and places of worship.

c) *for the pupils' personal development?*
Children grew a deeper respect for each other on this trip. We had some pupils who were Muslim who began to pray in the Mosque.

d) for the local faith communities?
Good for children to see communities come together. In the Mandir, there were lots of adults who joined us who were able to discuss how they pray and enjoy a prayer with us.

Other comments

While feedback is overwhelmingly positive, some minor criticisms have been made. One or two schools found it too much for their class to do three places on the same day, or that they did not have enough - or had too much time at one of the venues. Sometimes they found it difficult to understand all of the explanations given by hosts, either because they found the accent hard to understand where English was not the first language or because the children did not know the terminology. We intend to produce a glossary of terms related to visits to places of worship in the next RE subject leaders' meeting and provide this to teachers before embarking on a visit.

Angela Rundle

September 2024

Activist SACREs in 2024

35+ things a good SACRE can do!

Any SACRE could be passive and reactive -some are - but this is a plea for activism from SACREs. I hold the view that any SACRE, large or small, expert or developing, should consider how to take action in pursuit of its mission to guard and develop standards in RE. NATRE has a very strong interest in SACRE effectiveness and is pleased to support our many teacher members who serve on SACREs.

We think that SACREs are more powerful than we have yet seen – statutory bodies, in all local authorities, with representation from religion, professionalism and democratic structure are powerful, but often don't notice their powers. Both dependent upon the LA, and independent of it, the SACREs that do most for RE are powerful indeed.

I like the idea of activism, because it represents the capacity of the SACRE to make a difference, rather than merely maintain itself. Perhaps a rule of thumb for activism might be 'does this SACRE innovate at least one project every year?' Is yours an activist SACRE?

35+ things a good SACRE can do:

teacher representatives can initiate any or all of these.

Flexing the activists' muscles.

1. **Ask the LA for money – or offer to raise money for your work by being entrepreneurial.** Tackle the question of the SACRE's own funding needs. I think NASACRE has an important role here, to disseminate best practice in funding SACREs. Some SACREs manage without anyone to pay the cost of stamps or web updates, and others can find tens of thousands of pounds of local authority money from a core services budget for working parties and agreed syllabus work. Connecting the work of SACRE with citizenship and community cohesion is a route some have taken here. This is, for some SACREs, the essential first step to becoming activist.

2. **Monitor and praise.** Monitoring schools' performance through reading OFSTED reports (this data not as good as it was, so needs supplementing by GCSE and provision data from Secondary schools and any possible sources from Primary schools, especially with regard to self evaluation in schools (the 'Watchsted' website is searchable for RE comments.). Will MATs be able to give us some data as their work unfolds? ASK them!! Celebrate success, and seek to find at least three schools in each key stage that are 'beacons' for quality RE ~ then spread the word about them.

3. **Information on provision.** Send out questionnaires to schools, or to pupils, (named or even anonymous?) to support teachers in the endless 'status skirmishing' required of RE subject leaders in their battle for more of the buns, rather than just the crumbs. Information is power here – can your schools say 'we know we need to improve, because of what SACRE say'? Can they say that they know how to improve because of their SACRE's advice? If schools ask SACRE for help do they get it? *If not, what's the point?*

4. **Offer professional development.** Providing or organising CPD and INSET for teachers, with faith communities to the fore (using the expertise of SACRE members?), running conferences for a day, to bring SACRE members, teachers and governors together, or doing courses on new syllabuses, guidance, schemes of work or planning. Staffordshire, Leicestershire, Gloucestershire and Plymouth are just a few examples who do this, along with many others. The training offer should be on every SACRE's agenda, and every SACRE's events

on 'RE Hubs'. Work collaboratively with other local SACREs – good practice in South Yorkshire could be a model.

5. **Inspect the inspectors.** Monitoring OFSTED inspection performance and complaining to the office of HMCI. (Could we do that 21st century Biblical contextualisation activity, where students write up 'the parable of the good OFSTED inspector'?) Why don't they mention RE even if its non-compliant, or if its excellent? This needs challenging locally and nationally. Join in with NATRE's program here, thanks to the indomitable Deborah Weston. SACREs might take this up with inspection contractors or regional commissioners.

6. **Try a resource project.** Activist SACREs offer local religions chances to resource RE in local, authentic and contemporary ways. Make a booklet, website or video of photos, contacts, teaching and learning activities related to a dozen places of worship in the Local Authority area, as Leicestershire, Somerset, Blackburn and Coventry have done. This makes schools grateful to SACREs – and can even attract a grant or produce some revenue!

7. **Give authentic faith community voices an audience among teachers.** Write from faith to school: Redbridge's excellent briefing papers on Sikh dress, observing Ramadan, Jehovah's Witnesses and RE, and other topics are all good models. And it doesn't have to be written: Video, web, photopack or visiting speaker work even better. Tackle the issues

8. **Tell parents.** Publishing a parents' leaflet, to highlight the value of community involvement in RE. Show off some pupils work! (Barnsley once did this with their SACRE annual report) This could significantly shift one of RE's perennial problems, that parental attitudes always seem at least a generation out of date. DFE's contribution here was nice, but could be bettered! Can NASACRE make your work national?

9. **Gather information.** Monitoring standards and examination results, time for RE, subject leadership and other aspects of provision. Information is power in this context, and local authorities can reasonably be asked to provide information to the SACRE. Northamptonshire's approach is exemplary, among many others. Leicestershire and North Yorkshire did surveys that led to improved budgets for syllabus revision. Easy to use survey software and thus gather all important email addresses for your data sheets and contact listings *(you do have these, don't you?)*

10. **Exemplification.** Get together some pupils' work that exemplifies standards in RE with reference to the local syllabus, at levels 1-8. The exemplification is important to establish standards, and such projects have a powerful impact, specially for those new to an area or new to a syllabus. As for example Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Leicester and Hertfordshire local authorities have all done this, to the great benefit of their teachers.

11. **Run a local parliament of religions** for 14-18 year olds. Can we think of a better way of helping young citizens see the place of faith in the 21st century? Inter faith projects model the best of RE and are always exciting. Prince-now-king Charles did one – make him your role model! Dozens of SACREs including Thurrock, Islington, Stoke, Bradford and Lancashire have done these events with some grant funds available and some support from LA budgets for diversity and inclusion.

12. **Organise an arts competition:** RE improves where it gets more creative, and the linked curriculum models increasingly popular in primary schools can make this very useful. Design the cover for the new syllabus ~ as children in Gloucestershire, Lincoln and Hereford have done. Why not relate faith and spirituality to poetry, drama or creative writing too? NATRE's 'Art in Heaven' competition is a model and can be run with a local SACRE round, as Sandwell and Wakefield – who published a booklet of brilliant work and ran an art show in the Minster - have done recently (see www.NATRE.org.uk/spiritedarts)

13. **Help the SEND schools and teachers.** Some SACREs have used the LA's good offices to give particular support to SEND+ schools and practitioners for RE, and others have made a section of their Agreed Syllabus that addresses this clearly and helpfully. Training and CPD can go with this. Well done Wolverhampton, Doncaster and Lancashire for organising here.

14. **Facilitate some exhibitions.** In Croyden, Wakefield, Newham and Coventry, hundreds of children from dozens of schools attended and learned from exhibitions at the faith community buildings of several religions over a period of years. Copy that. Inter Faith Centres in, for example, Leicester, Kirklees, Lancashire, Derby City, co-ordinate visits and visitors to contribute to this purpose. Or invite the national faith community bodies to mount a 'Jewish Way of life' for your schools to visit. Or similar.

15. **Do an essay competition.** RE today and partners promoted an essay competition on the spiritual principles for life in conjunction with the Templeton Foundation. Thousands entered. A SACRE would be an ideal local partner for this. We may even be able to put you in touch with a grant to provide the money for prizes and administration.

16. **Book the stage.** Arrange a pupil performance, like those hundreds inspired by the long-ago RE Festival of 1997, or the JC 2000 millennium arts festival or the RE Council's more recent promotion. NATRE has a display which we hire out! Linking this to a syllabus launch, or an annual lecture is powerful, and involves the interaction of pupils and teachers with SACRE members.

17. **Get lecturers.** Set up an annual lecture series for all those interested in RE, as happens in Hounslow, Redbridge, Westminster or Kent for example. Link it to the publication of the annual SACRE report, and invite the director to preside: directors need to know about RE at its best. Hounslow get about 60 to theirs. *I can't imagine any reason why a SACRE wouldn't at least run an annual lecture.*

18. **Be the voice of religion in the Local Authority.** Contribute to civic inter faith work, e.g. in inter-faith forums with the local Catholic or Anglican Diocese or other faith and belief groups. Send and ask for representatives. Ask Leicester City about this. Wandsworth SACRE give multicultural and community cohesion guidance to the schools too. Some SACREs have even widened the net to advise the police or social workers about local religion and worldviews.

19. **Celebrate the grassroots.** Make a presentation to the Education Cabinet or Committee about the SACRE's grass roots work with pupils, teachers and schools. Make them proud of the religious and belief communities involved, and the sense of inclusion SACRE can create. Most LAs aspire to be more religiously inclusive than they are. *Be the solution to their perceived needs.*

20. **Smoke out the key voices.** Invite key people to speak to the SACRE's annual conference: would this invitation to speak help the Chair of the Education Committee or the new Education / Children's Services director to clarify his / her own thinking on RE? What about locally prominent religious leaders? Politicians? Nothing concentrates the mind like having to speak thoughtfully to a plural audience. Norfolk SACRE had a significant influence on Rt Hon Charles Clarke (a local MP in Norwich) when he was Secretary of State. Plymouth had a hotline to

the RE-committed Luke Pollard MP. The APPG for RE in Parliament has over 100 interested MPs – yours?

21. **Listen to teachers.** Ensure that serving RE teachers are heard every time SACRE meets: do the LA and Union seats get filled by people with RE expertise, or without? Can the SACRE arrange to have more in-touch voices present? Could half day cover be paid, or could it be a standard item on the agenda to hear a report of good practice from the classroom? *Some SACREs have a representative from NATRE on the Teachers' Committee. Yours? Why not?*

22. **Serve 16-19s.** Run an active learning day conference for post sixteen students, to model for schools great ways of providing RE for all in the sixth forms. Link it to tertiary college students as well, to show them what they're missing. Ask in Lancashire, Cumbria, Hertfordshire or Gloucester for experience. The 'dare2engage' initiative, hosted by Youthscape, a Christian agency, is a way to get started with this.

23. **Every year, innovate.** Make sure there's an annual working party of teachers and faith representatives on a key topic: current favourites might include special needs and RE, RE and adaptive learning, assessment, RE three to sevens, RE and PSHE / RSE, British Values, GCSEs and A levels or citizenship.

24. **Go visiting.** Arrange your meetings around the faith communities: Three meetings a year could enable six religions to host your SACRE over two years. Hospitality always develops community, as Westminster's SACRE might testify. Lancashire SACRE have met at a Hindu Temple and then at a Mosque.

25. **Get well advised.** Use the RE adviser, and if no adviser is available, explore the use of an RE consultant for briefing and supporting the SACRE and pursuing its business. Many SACREs from Tower Hamlets to Newcastle have done this and been pleased with the increased professionalism resulting. 15 days of real professional time is worth more than the cash it costs to the activist SACRE.

26. **Draw attention to yourself ~ be noisy!** If the local authority is being inspected, aim to get a paragraph in the report, praising the best of your work. Ask for an appointment with the inspectorate, and supply your SEF, development plan annual report and syllabus as required. Expect to be noticed in any other ways too: in any local government re-organisation SACREs must be recognised as a core service. Blowing the trumpet will help RE. If they ignore you, play a noisy attention seeking game.

27. **Be publicists**. Let schools and teachers know about prizes and awards for RE, e.g. fellowships from Farmington, science and religion awards from the Faraday Institute or the Templeton Foundation, the Church College Trusts or the Sandford St Martin Trust Award for media excellence in religion and belief. Or set one up of your own, and *ask some local firms, or the library service, to sponsor the prizes and exhibit the winners*.

28. **Tackle the GCSE / KS4 illegality in some schools, praise the provision in others.** Use Freedom of Information requests to get information about excellent and non-compliant schools (NATRE holds this from its FOI requests program). I'm interested currently to provide a planned course of 10 6 hour non-examined RE units for 14-16s. Quality costs – I am looking for SACREs who will invest a couple of thousand pounds in this together. lat@retoday.org.uk

29. **Check RE on school websites.** Write to heads about the provision of RE described on their websites. Praise the good ones, and ask for more from the weaker examples. *Every school is required by law to specify its curriculum – obviously including RE – on its website*.

30. **Advice on withdrawal.** Draw attention to advice from e.g. NAHT and NATRE on withdrawal from RE, published in 2018 and supported by the DfE

31. **Support local groups.** NATRE has a link network of over 370 groups for teachers of RE. But many SACREs could really help these often small and struggling but professionally friendly groups. Can you grow one or more in your area? Can the Clerk to SACRE help just a little with publicity or administration? Have a joint SACRE / teachers' group meeting?

32. **Lobby nationally**. Every meeting of a SACRE could (should?) result in a letter to DFE! Or some other nationally powerful institutions (Unions? Faith community bodies?) which need (honestly) the benefit of your experience and grass roots local knowledge. *Activists propose such letters at SACRE meetings, and follow up the replies*.

33. **Tackle the teaching shortage.** Don't give up on teacher supply. If the SACRE asks the local authority who is teaching RE, or uses inspection reports to identify shortfalls in specialist teaching, then it can take action to improve the most intractable problem RE faces. Does the local ITT course or training school provider speak to the SACRE? Contact the University, and see if joint training is a good idea.

34. **Education Sunday:** this annual opportunity for faith to remember education could be taken up at the civic level and among inter faith groups much more than it is. Details are published annually by the Churches' Joint Education Policy Committee. Your chance to get involved? Other national marker days, such as for holocaust remembrance or inter faith week are suitable foci too.

35. **Check your own pulse.** Use the evaluation toolkit to work on yourselves as an effective SACRE. Audit the effectiveness of your own work, and seek to develop the role and influence of the SACRE every year. If this feels out of date, ask NASACRE to update…

Most of these ideas, in one form or another, are culled from my years of SACRE engagement and from RE Today's wide experience of working with SACREs. Therefore they are all already happening somewhere. Making more happen in more places is a definite possibility. It may suggest some new directions for some SACREs. Get active, all you SACRE members.

From the NATRE Spirited Arts competition:

RE Today Services

Isabelle, Charlotte and Astrid (all age 12) entered a group piece of artwork titled 'Mother Earth'.

The religions that inspired our work were Hinduism and Paganism. Hinduism inspired us because of the Hindu belief that Brahman, the Hindu God, is in everything and is. But the original idea of Mother Earth came from the Pagan religion, based on the worshipping of nature and that God is like a mother because she has given us life and continues to sustain us.

This work is spiritual because it may remind people that the earth is a gift to us, we belong it and should look after it. This, therefore, is very relevantat the momentbecause humans are at a stage in their existence in which they really need to start caring and putting the earth and others before their own desires.

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held at the Town Hall, Wandsworth, SW18 2PU on Monday, 4th March, 2024 at 7.30 p.m.

Group A – Christian and Other Religious Denominations:
Mr Dominique Joseph Clem (Seventh-day Adventist Church)
Ms Sharon Coussins (Wimbledon Synagogue)
Ms Saffi Haines (Society of Friends),
Mrs Maria Liddy (Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark),
Mr Paul Phillips (Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is),
Mr Charan Singh (Khalsa Centre Gurdwara)
Mr Harbans Singh Mehta (Khalsa Centre Gurdwara).

Group B – Church of England:
Mr Shaun Burns (Southwark Diocesan Board of Education)
Ms Rachel Croft (Church of England representative)
Miss Sharon Cunningham (Church of England representative)

Group C – Teachers' Associations:
Ms Clare Hewitson (NEU)
Ms Clare Beecher (NEU)

Group D – Local Authority:
Councillor Sana Jafri (Chair)
Councillor Rosemary Birchall
Councillor Denise Paul.

In attendance:
Rev. Susan Bolan (St Paul's Wimbledon Parkside)
Mr Andrew Hough, Head of School Participation and Performance
Mrs Angela Rundle, SACRE Officer
Mrs Ruth Wright, Democratic Services Officer

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies for absence were received from:
Mr Jon Fayle (Humanists UK)
Ms Jyotika Pandya (Hindu Education Board UK),
Ms Anna Madden (NAHT)
Councillor Mrs Angela Graham
Ms Brigitte Sayers-Eugster (NASUWT) (on maternity leave)

Councillor Jafri thanked the hosts at the Gurdwara and the tour immediately before the meeting. Mr Singh Mehta, as President of the Gurdwara provided details about Sikhism and the centre (attached to the minutes) and members answered questions with Mr Singh.

2. Minutes - 2nd October 2023

RESOLVED – With the correction to state that Mrs Liddy was present at the meeting, it was unanimously agreed that the minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education meeting held on 2nd October 2023 were a correct record.

3. Membership

Councillor Jafri welcomed Miss Sharon Cunningham, as a Church of England representative from the Southwark Diocese and is an RE teacher at St Michael's CE Primary School in Southfields. Ms Anna Madden the Headteacher from Our Lady of Victories RC Primary School joined as a NAHT representative.

There were no questions or comments about membership.

Mrs Wright reminded members of the WhatsApp group as a supplemental communication to emails. If any member wished to be part of the group, they need to email her with their mobile number.

4. SACRE annual report 2022-23

Mrs Rundle referred to the highlights in the report, which was written using the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (NASACRE) template and goes to the DfE. The secondary school outcomes for Wandsworth were well above the average nationally in most grade indicators. Nationally the indicators had fallen. The points average had increased during the Covid-19 marking schemes of 2022but now were closer to the 2019 averages. Most Wandsworth community and all voluntary-aided schools had put forward students for an RE GCSE. A-Level results had increased to 97 percent from 2022.

Mrs Rundle explained that by law each school must teach RE to students up to 18 years, but not necessarily towards an exam. She added that she does question schools who do not enter students for GCSE and A-Levels, to ascertain the reasons why and offer any assistance. Ark Academy Putney now offers GCSE as an option although the first students have not yet taken the exam. Ernest Bevin Academy, which became an academy in March 2023, had not put any students forward for RE exams. It was recognised that RE lessons are not always called that. Instead, some schools name their subject Philosophy, Beliefs and Ethics, or Religious Studies. Most of those would use the same exam boards, although Philosophy was a discrete subject.

Otherwise, schools tended to teach RE in Personal, Health and Social Education lessons, or something similar. The reason why schools may not teach RE as an exam subject was due to a lack of specialist teachers and a hesitancy to pursue the exams without such a teacher in charge. It was not uncommon for schools to only have one specialist RE teacher.

RESOLVED – details noted for information.

5. Ofsted annual report 2022-23

Mrs Rundle explained that the Ofsted picture regarding inspections was poor. Although inspections had occurred, not much of their reports related to RE. The result appeared to reduce the status of the subject and did not ensure that statutory requirements were adhered to. In addition to the points raised in item 4, the national picture for RE was of concern.

In the previous year, there was one primary school 'deep dive' in Wandsworth, but none in secondary schools, meaning that a very small sample was available in the public domain for review. Mrs Liddy stated that schools could not choose what subject was assessed in a deep dive. She added that Catholic schools had their own religious inspection scheme. Church of England and Methodist schools also had a separate religious inspection framework.

Ms Hewitson advised that 'RE Today' produced resources for children up to Year 3, and will publish resources for up to Year 6 by the end of the year. A subscription was needed to access the lesson plans and assessments. Ms Hewitson stated that subscriptions were £270 or £370 annually, depending on the level requested. She offered to check the subscription terms and relay them on to members. Mrs Rundle added there was a lack of freely accessible resources nationally for RE. Because of the different local syllabuses, publishers did not find it cost effective to produce a large range. Furthermore, schools with a religious character used resources provided or recommended by their Diocese or similar. Mr Burns remarked that it was positive that the local areas were covered by their own locally agreed syllabus and curriculum. Though as such, national resources had to be used carefully.

Mr Burns stated that an RE subject report from Ofsted was due to be published, but that more deep dives were needed for its compilation. It was hoped that NASACRE would also contribute towards the report.

Mrs Rundle opined that there should be an update to the national guidance on RE. Updated guidance would help to raise the subject's profile and need for it being taught in schools. Also, the current one was over 20 years old, and so had not taken into account the last two census returns.

RESOLVED – details noted for information.

6. RE Hubs newsletter

The latest RE Hubs newsletter was shared before the meeting and Mrs Rundle added that she had shared it with RE subject leads. There were no questions on the item.

RESOLVED – details noted for information.

7. School interfaith working

Mrs Rundle reported that the Faith Trails continued to go well, and described a Faith Direct event that occurred before the pandemic, which complemented the Trails. Some members of SACRE were involved in Faith Direct and said that it was very positive. Richmond still ran their Faith Direct events, which Ms Coussins mentioned that she participated in. Wandsworth's Faith Direct took place in the Town Hall for secondary school aged children, but had not been held post pandemic. Mrs Rundle asked whether secondary school children could be targeted in a relaunch of the scheme. The idea was that ten students in Years 8 and 9, with some prior knowledge of the different faiths, would be invited to question various faith and belief-based representatives. The event would be held during a school day and in school hours. Artifacts and other resources could be used on each table. The students would speak with representatives for ten minutes each, accompanied by one of their teachers. Advanced prepared questions, on any topic, could be raised by the students. There was a positive response from those present in SACRE, as they believed that the event would further support understanding of faiths to facilitate empathy and respect and counter discrimination. It would also enable discussions around unity and diversity and to assist with RE lessons and exams. Mrs Rundle added that a venue would be needed, together with faith leaders who could commit their time to make the event work. She added that Amelia Willis, Voluntary Sector Development Manager was also keen on starting such an event in Wandsworth.

It was recognised that it may be difficult for schools to choose just ten students, so it would be good if the event could run twice a year to broaden the reach. Mrs Rundle stated that St Cecilia's School had attended Faith Direct in the past. Mr Clem added that he had attended a similar event at Chestnut Grove and had received feedback. Therefore, considerations could include an event being held in a school, rather than the students going elsewhere.

Rev. Bolan discussed a similar project that was run in Surrey. Their faith representatives went to various primary schools, though were beginning to go into secondary schools when she left the area. The events were positive and facilitated friendship between the representatives. Presentations covered what each faith had in common and included discussions on initiation, marriage, festivals and differences, to draw out the richness of each faith. The events were popular, the children engaged well and asked good questions.

Councillor Jafri and Mrs Rundle agreed to help organise the event with Mr Hough. Mrs Rundle told members that she would be willing to contact schools regarding hosting an event and/or send children to participate at a different venue. She added that faith representatives needed to be able to answer challenging questions, and they could attend in pairs.

Mr Burns relayed that RE Hubs ran support courses for helping schools with similar events.

RESOLVED – details noted for information. Action to be progressed with a view to pilot an interfaith event in May/June 2024. Rev. Bolan to provide a written statement for schools to receive. Mrs Rundle to arrange dates and draft a model framework with a steering group of five or six others. Mrs Wright to circulate the

details to SACRE members for them to consider participating. Faith Direct to be relaunched in November 2024.

8. Future Meeting Dates

RESOLVED – the next meeting dates were noted as being on:

- Monday 10th June 2024 at the Buddhapadipa Temple
- Monday 30th September 2024 at Wandsworth Town Hall
- Monday 3rd March 2025 at Balham Seventh-day Adventist Church.

9. Any other business

Events
Ms Hewitson advised that Finton House School were sponsoring 'The Life exhibition, The story of Jesus – kids' style', hosted at Trinity Road Chapel between 20th and 24th May. Members were welcome to attend.

Ms Coussins reminded members of the invitation to the Interfaith Passover Seder event on 25th April at Wimbledon Synagogue.

RESOLVED – Mrs Wright agreed to circulate details of the events with SACRE members.

The meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.

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The Philosophy of Sikhism in Simple Words

Sikhism is a religion founded in the 15th century in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent by Guru Nanak Dev Ji. At its core, Sikhism is a belief system that highlights the importance of living a truthful, righteous, and compassionate life while recognizing the presence of one divine creator, known as Waheguru. Here's a simplified explanation of the philosophy of Sikhism:

Oneness of God (Ik Onkar): Sikhism teaches that there is only one God, who is formless, timeless, and beyond human comprehension. This concept is encapsulated in the phrase "Ik Onkar," which means "One God." Sikhs believe that all of creation originates from this one divine source.

Equality (ਮਨੁੱਖ ਕੀ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਆਰਾ ਸਗਲ ਹੋਇ): Sikhism rejects the idea of social hierarchies based on caste, creed, race, or gender. According to Sikh teachings, all human beings are equal in the eyes of God, and everyone should be treated with respect and dignity.

Selfless Service (Seva): Sikhs are encouraged to engage in selfless service to humanity. Seva involves acts of charity, kindness, and compassion towards others, without expecting anything in return. Through seva, Sikhs aim to contribute positively to society and alleviate the suffering of others.

Honest Living (Kirat Karni): Sikhism promotes the idea of earning a livelihood through honest and ethical means. Sikhs are encouraged

to work hard and earn their living through legitimate means, while avoiding dishonesty, corruption, and exploitation.

Devotion to the Guru (Gurmat): Sikhs revere the teachings of the Sikh Gurus, as well as the scripture known as the Guru Granth Sahib. Gurmat highlights the importance of following the guidance of the Guru in both spiritual and worldly affairs, seeking enlightenment and spiritual growth through meditation, prayer, and righteous living.

The Five Ks of Sikhism in Simple Words

The Five Ks are five articles of faith that Sikhs are mandated to wear as a symbol of their commitment to their faith and their identity as Sikhs. These five articles are:

Kesh (Uncut Hair): Sikhs are required to maintain uncut hair as a symbol of their acceptance of the natural form that God has given them. Uncut hair represents the rejection of vanity and the acceptance of God's will.

Kanga (Wooden Comb): The kanga is a small wooden comb that Sikhs carry with them at all times to maintain the cleanliness and tidiness of their hair, which is kept long as per Sikh tradition.

Kara (Steel Bracelet): The kara is a steel bracelet worn on the wrist as a reminder of the unbreakable bond between the Sikh and their faith. It symbolizes the eternity of God and the Sikh's commitment to living a righteous life.

Kachera (Cotton Undergarments): The kachera is a specific type of undergarment worn by Sikhs as a symbol of modesty, chastity, and self-discipline. It serves as a reminder to exercise self-restraint and maintain purity in thoughts and actions.

Kirpan (Ceremonial Sword): The kirpan is a ceremonial sword carried by Sikhs as a symbol of their duty to defend the oppressed and uphold justice. It represents the Sikh's commitment to standing up against injustice and protecting the weak and vulnerable.

These five articles of faith serve as outward symbols of Sikh identity and values, reminding Sikhs of their commitment to their faith and their duty to live according to its principles. They also help foster a sense of unity and solidarity among Sikh communities around the world.

Conclusion

In essence, Sikhism is a religion that highlights the importance of living a life of truth, righteousness, and selfless service, while recognizing the oneness of God and the equality of all human beings. The Five Ks serve as visible symbols of Sikh identity and values, reminding Sikhs of their commitment to their faith and their duty to uphold its principles in thepir daily lives. Through these teachings and practices, Sikhs strive to cultivate a sense of spiritual awareness, compassion, and social responsibility, contributing to the well-being of society and the world at large.

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Sikh Virtues relating to the 5 Ks.

The 5 Ks were created by the 10th Guru – Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 during Khalsa Panth. The Guru introduced the 5 Ks for several reasons:

- Adopting these common symbols would identify members of the Khalsa.
- Because all members of the Khalsa wear the 5 Ks the members of the community are more strongly bound together.
- Each K has a particular significance:

The meaning of the 5 Ks

The 5 Ks taken together symbolise that the Sikh who wears them has dedicated themselves to a life of devotion and submission to the Guru.

The 5 Ks are 5 physical symbols worn by Sikhs who have been initiated into the Khalsa.

The five Ks are:

- Kesh (uncut hair)
- Kara (a steel bangle)
- Kanga (a wooden comb)
- Kaccha - also spelt, Kachh, Kachera (cotton underwear)
- Kirpan (steel sword)

Kesh - uncut hair

Various reasons and symbolisms have been put forward for the Sikh practice of keeping hair uncut.

- Throughout history hair (kesh) has been regarded as a symbol both of holiness and strength.
- One's hair is part of God's creation. Keeping hair uncut indicates that one is willing to accept God's gift as God intended it.
- Uncut hair symbolizes adoption of a simple life, and denial of pride in one's appearance.
- Not cutting one's hair is a symbol of one's wish to move beyond concerns of the body and attain spiritual maturity.
- A Sikh should only bow his head to the Guru, and not to a barber.
- It is a highly visible symbol of membership of the group.

- It follows the appearance of Guru Gobind Singh, founder of the Khalsa.

Sikh women are just as forbidden to cut any body hair or even trim their eyebrows, as Sikh men are forbidden to trim their beards.

Kara – a steel bangle

- A symbol of restraint and manners.
- A symbol that a Sikh is linked to the Guru.
- It acts as a reminder that a Sikh should not do anything of which the Guru would not approve.
- A symbol of God having no beginning or end.
- A symbol of permanent bonding to the community-being a link in the chain of Khalsa Sikhs (the word for link is 'kari').
- The Kara is made of steel, rather than gold or silver, because it is not an ornament.

Kanga - a wooden comb

This symbolises a clean mind and body, since it keeps the uncut hair neat and tidy. It symbolises the importance of looking after the body which God has created. This does not conflict with the Sikh's aim to move beyond bodily concerns; since the body is one's vehicle for enlightenment one should care for it appropriately.

Kachha - special underwear

This is a pair of breeches that must not come below the knee. It was a particularly useful garment for Sikh warriors of the 18th and 19th centuries, being very suitable for warfare when riding a horse. It's a symbol of chastity.

Kirpan - a ceremonial sword

There is no fixed style of Kirpan, and it can be anything from a few inches to three feet long. It is kept in a sheath and can be worn over or under clothing.

There is no fixed style of Kirpan, the ceremonial sword.

These swords are laid in the front of the altar.

The Kirpan can symbolise:

- Spirituality
- The soldier part of the Soldier-Saints
- Defence of good
- Defence of the weak
- The struggle against injustice
- A metaphor for God

For a Sikh the fact that the Guru has instructed the Sikhs to wear the 5 Ks is an entirely sufficient reason, and no more need be said. The symbols have become greatly more powerful with each passing year of Sikh history. Every Sikh remembers that every Sikh warrior, saint, or martyr since 1699, and every living member of the Khalsa, is united with them in having adopted the same 5 Ks.

Khalsa Centre Gurdwara

Tooting, London.

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