

Religious Education

Non-statutory programme of learning for a statutory subject¹

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

Curriculum aims

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

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

Why is this area of learning important?²

Religious education provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human. It develops children's knowledge and understanding of religions and beliefs³, including Christianity, other principal religions, other religious traditions and other world views.

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

Explanatory text:

1. Religious Education is a statutory subject in the curriculum of all maintained schools, and they are legally obliged to provide it. This programme of learning is based on the non-statutory national framework for RE (DfES and QCA, 2004). RE must be taught according to the locally agreed syllabuses (for community schools, voluntary schools and foundation schools without a religious character). Voluntary controlled and foundation schools with a religious character should normally teach the locally agreed syllabus unless parents request that RE is taught in accordance with the trust deeds and faith of the school. Voluntary aided schools with a religious character should teach RE in accordance with the trust deeds and faith of the school. Academies and Trust schools should provide RE in accordance with their funding agreement or trust deeds.

In order to promote national consistency and quality in RE, in the context of a coherent curriculum, this programme of learning is intended to be used by local agreed syllabus conferences and faith communities to determine what children should be taught in RE.
2. This statement is based on the 'Importance of RE' statement found in the non-statutory national framework for RE (2004) and the secondary RE programmes of study.
3. The phrase 'religions and beliefs' should be taken to include religious and secular world views, and their associated practices.

1. Essential knowledge

Children should build secure knowledge of the following⁴:

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

2. Key skills⁶

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

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

3. Breadth of learning

Children should be enabled to develop their understanding of the essential knowledge and key ideas by drawing on an appropriate balance of religions and beliefs as contexts for learning. The religions and beliefs drawn on should include Christianity in each of the early, middle and later phases⁷.

At least two other principal religions should be included during primary education as a whole⁸.

To ensure that all children's voices are heard, it is recommended that there are opportunities to study other religious traditions such as the Baha'i faith, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism, and secular world views, such as humanism⁹. A religious community with a significant local presence¹⁰ could also form a context for learning. Understanding of key ideas can also be promoted through themed studies, experiences of dialogue between and within beliefs, and visits or encounters with people of a variety of religions and beliefs. Children should learn to use appropriate specialist vocabulary.

Explanatory text:

4. Understanding these concepts is the basis of effective learning in RE.
5. People can express a sense of meaning through their big questions about life (e.g. where do I come from?), through their commitment to standards of behaviour (e.g. 'do not steal') through their beliefs and practices (e.g. the practice of prayer, meditation, religious dancing or singing).
6. Key skills run through all areas of learning and are derived from the personal development framework 'Essentials for Learning and Life'.
7. Where possible, this should include Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Free Church (e.g. Methodist or Baptist) and Pentecostal branches of Christianity across the whole primary phase.
8. This should include at least one from Judaism and Islam, and at least one from Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism, across the whole primary phase.
9. Over the primary phase as a whole, children should draw on both religious and non-religious world views.
10. This could include, for example, the traditional religions of Africa or China.

4. Curriculum progression

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

EARLY ¹¹	MIDDLE	LATER
Across the area of learning		
<p>E1. to explore a range of religious and moral stories and sacred writings, and talk about their meanings</p> <p>E2. to name and explore a range of celebrations, worship and rituals in religions or beliefs, recognising the difference they make to individuals, families and local community¹²</p> <p>E3. to identify and suggest meanings for religious symbols, using a range of religious and moral words and exploring how they express meaning¹³</p> <p>E4. to recognise the importance for some people of belonging to a religion or holding special beliefs, in diverse ways, and the difference this makes to their lives</p> <p>E5. to communicate their ideas about what matters most, and what puzzles them most, in relation to spiritual feelings and concepts¹⁴</p> <p>E6. to reflect on how spiritual qualities and moral values relate to their own behaviour¹⁵.</p>	<p>M1. to explore and discuss some religious and moral stories, sacred writings and sources, placing them in the context of the belief system¹⁶</p> <p>M2. to investigate and suggest meanings for celebrations, worship and rituals, thinking about similarities and differences¹⁷</p> <p>M3. to describe and interpret how symbols and actions are used to express beliefs¹⁸</p> <p>M4. to recognise that people can have different identities, beliefs and practices, and different ways of belonging</p> <p>M5. to investigate questions of meaning and purpose in life, speculating about questions and opinions¹⁹</p> <p>M6. to investigate questions of right and wrong in life, thinking about questions and opinions²⁰.</p>	<p>L1. to describe and discuss some key aspects of religions and beliefs²¹</p> <p>L2. to investigate the significance and impact of religion and belief in some local, national and global communities²²</p> <p>L3. to consider the meaning of a range of forms of religious expression²³, identifying why they are important in religion and noting links between them</p> <p>L4. to reflect on the challenges of belonging and commitment both in their own lives and within traditions, recognising how commitment to a religion or belief is shown in a variety of ways</p> <p>L5. to describe and begin to understand religious and other responses to ultimate and ethical questions²⁴</p> <p>L6. to reflect on ideas of right and wrong and their own and others' responses to them.</p>
<p>Explanatory text:</p> <p>11. Each area of learning should build on children's experiences and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure continuity of curriculum provision and their continuing progress.</p> <p>12. Celebrations refer to annual festivals such as Christmas, Easter, Pesach, Id-ul-Fitr or Diwali. Worship usually refers to daily or weekly ceremonies at home or in a sacred building. Rituals can be rites of passage, e.g. those marking birth or growing up; rituals can also be used in the context of worship, e.g. wudu at the start of daily prayers in Islam. Similarities and differences and the impact on daily life can be noted, e.g. believing in God's compassion may lead people to help others.</p> <p>13. The expression of a sense of meaning could be explored and responded to through the arts, e.g. in appreciation of religious art or music or learning about the position of hands/posture in prayer or meditation.</p> <p>14. This could include naming and thinking about experiences such as love, wonder, thankfulness, joy and sadness, or questions such as why we care for people or for things.</p> <p>15. This could include thinking about spiritual qualities such as reverence or openness, and moral qualities such as forgiveness of people who hurt us.</p>	<p>Explanatory text:</p> <p>16. Stories and their meanings should be understood as part of the sources of a belief system.</p> <p>17. Thinking about similarities and differences could mean wondering about differences between birth and naming rituals across religions, or about similarities between religious services with different names, such as Mass, Eucharist, Communion and the Lord's Supper. This should include investigation of the importance of these practices and ways of life to believers.</p> <p>18. Beliefs and ideas can be expressed in many different forms, including art, music, dress, dance, food, artefacts, behaviour codes and social action.</p> <p>19. Questions of meaning and purpose could include wondering about where life comes from, what people hold to be most precious or significant in life, or what happens when people or animals die, and discovering beliefs about these questions.</p> <p>20. Questions of right and wrong should include learning about the values arising from religions and beliefs.</p>	<p>Explanatory text:</p> <p>21. Children could describe and discuss the key aspects, including the questions that beliefs ask and answer, their key teachings and sources of authority, and the people, stories and traditions that influence the beliefs and values of followers.</p> <p>22. This could include, for example, how giving to charity might be based on a deep sense of the unity of humankind, or on a commitment to follow a divine commandment.</p> <p>23. Forms of expressing meaning could include, for example, Indian dance, Arab calligraphy or Sikh sewa (service).</p> <p>24. Beginning to understand responses to ultimate questions could include discussing and sharing beliefs on issues such as the meaning and value of human life, the existence of God, the causes of suffering or whether there is life after death. There are many such questions that are answered differently by most religious and philosophical traditions. Understanding responses to such questions means recognising that they have no certain answers agreed by all. Children should be encouraged to ask and think about their own and each other's questions, their sources of inspiration and views about truth, as well as exploring the responses of individuals and communities.</p>

5. Cross-curricular studies

Children should have opportunities:

- a. to develop and apply skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, particularly through representing questions, information and views through a variety of spoken, written, statistical and technological media, and using databases and discussion to generate information and ideas
- b. to extend their personal, emotional and social development, particularly through sharing ideas, discussing beliefs and reflecting on challenging questions that develop positive attitudes and dispositions, such as self-awareness, respect for all, open-mindedness, appreciation and wonder. In doing this, children improve their enjoyment of learning, performance and confidence
- c. To make links to other areas of learning and to wider issues of interest and importance, particularly through reflecting on stories and their meanings, thinking about scientific and religious explanations, investigating ethical and religious aspects of the past, of our impact on the environment and the way society is organised. Children can enjoy exploring how beliefs and practices are expressed through language and artistic forms. They can learn to value their own wellbeing and development through reflecting on inspiring experiences and feelings.