

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This new guidance is for everyone with a responsibility for, involvement in or interest in religious education. Its introduction points to many changes over the last several years, including: new illustrative RE programmes of study for secondary education published in 2007; a new RE programme of learning for primary education published in January 2010, ahead of the implementation of the new primary curriculum in September 2011; new types of schools, including the establishment of minority faith schools in the maintained sector; the importance of cross-curricular dimensions such as identity, cultural diversity and community cohesion; the establishment of citizenship in the curriculum; and increasing flexibility and variances in the way that RE is located in the curriculum through, for example, integrated cross-curricular learning.

## 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF RE

Chapter 2 of the guidance rehearses the importance of RE as a subject in its own right and in the contributions it makes to promoting ‘the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, mental and physical development of pupils and of society’ as required by the *Education Act 2002*. It summarises RE as a subject which:

- **provokes challenging questions** about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs, the self, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human. It develops pupils’ knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other principal religions, and religious traditions that examine these questions, fostering personal reflection and spiritual development;
- **encourages pupils to explore their own beliefs** (whether they are religious or non-religious), in the light of what they learn, as they examine issues of religious belief and faith and how these impact on personal, institutional and social ethics; and to express their responses. This also builds resilience to anti-democratic or extremist narratives;
- **enables pupils to build their sense of identity and belonging**, which helps them flourish within their communities and as citizens in a diverse society;
- **teaches pupils to develop respect for others**, including people with different faiths and beliefs, and helps to challenge prejudice;
- **prompts pupils to consider their responsibilities** to themselves and to others, and to explore how they might contribute to their communities and to wider society. It encourages empathy, generosity and compassion.

## 3. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Chapter 3 is a detailed but succinct description of the legal framework regulating RE in maintained schools in England. Footnotes cite all the relevant legislative bases of this framework<sup>1</sup>.

- the **legal basis of RE** in the curriculum of maintained schools
- the **role and responsibilities** of:
  - a **local authority (LA)**
  - a **standing advisory council on religious education (SACRE)**
  - the occasional body called an **agreed syllabus conference (ASC)**, which every LA is required to establish and support

<sup>1</sup> The nine pages of Chapter 3 may be particularly helpful especially to headteachers, governors, members of SACREs and ASCs and, for example, trainee teachers of RE.

- the **RE curriculum** in different types of schools. Brief paragraphs specifically cover:
  - Community, foundation and voluntary-aided or voluntary-controlled schools without a religious character;
  - Foundation and voluntary-controlled schools with a religious character;
  - Voluntary-aided schools with a religious character;
  - Academies.
- **inspection**
- the **responsibilities of governors and headteachers**. This paragraph states:
  - *Governing bodies and headteachers, like LAs, must:*
    - *ensure that RE is provided as part of the school's basic curriculum, following the locally agreed syllabus, unless they are schools with a religious character which are free to determine their own syllabus;*
    - *provide an annual report to parents or carers giving brief particulars of progress and achievements in all subjects including RE.'*
- **RE provision and the workforce**, [again detailed by type of school]
- **parents and pupils**
- **complaints**

#### 4. GUIDANCE AND GOOD PRACTICE

Chapters 4 – 6 of the guidance set out the details of guidance and good practice for:

- LAs working in partnership with SACREs and ASCs [Chapter 4];
- School governors and headteachers [5];
- People who manage, plan, teach and support RE [6].

These chapters all include thumbnail case studies, and conclude with checklists of the central questions for each of the above groups of people<sup>2</sup>.

***[The checklists are reproduced in full in the Appendix to this Summary].***

#### 5. FURTHER REFERENCES

Chapter 8 comprises a comprehensive list of professional associations, government agencies, publications and websites relating to RE in schools. Full website addresses are given.

#### **Appendix to Summary DSS 09/10 30**

**Religious Education in English Schools – Non-Statutory Guidance 2010** - Ref. DCSF-00114-2010

*[The following checklists are reproduced as they appear in the original publication]*

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the publication's Contents page lists the checklists for Chapter 6 at the end of Chapter 6, but they actually appear at the end of Chapter 7. The page numbers given are, though, correct.

**The full guidance can be viewed/downloaded at:** <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk> > **Entering DCSF-00114-2010 in the Search field, or on Teachernet:**  
<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/subjects/re/guidance/>

**Copies of the publication can also be obtained from: DCSF Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham, NG15 0DJ, Tel: 0845 60 222 60, Fax: 0845 60 333 60.**

## 1. Checklist for an effective partnership between an LA and its SACRE/ASC

- Do the LA and its SACRE/ASC carry out their **statutory duties**?
- Is SACRE/ASC properly resourced and well supported by **subject specialist advice and training**?
- Do members of the SACRE/ASC have a **shared vision and understanding** of their aims and purpose, seeking to sustain their positive work in the light of **changing needs and priorities**?
- Are SACRE/ASC **meetings** purposeful and focused on the major priorities of improving the quality of RE in schools?
- Is the SACRE/ASC well informed about **the quality of RE in schools** and about **wider LA and national priorities and developments** affecting the subject?
- Has the LA adopted a **high quality agreed syllabus** that provides a good grounding for planning, teaching and learning in RE and enables the schools to deliver RE as part of a coherent curriculum?
- Is there an effective process of reviewing, revising, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the locally agreed syllabus?
- How far does the SACRE's partnership with the LA enable it to help teachers and schools **raise standards** in RE and the quality of RE teaching?
- How far does the SACRE **contribute effectively to the community cohesion agenda** by supporting inclusion in schools and improving engagement within the community?

## 2. Checklist for governors and headteachers

- Do all pupils make **progress in achieving the learning objectives** of the RE curriculum?
- Is RE **well led and effectively managed**?
- Are standards, achievement and quality of provision in RE regularly and effectively **self-evaluated**?
- Are those teaching RE suitably **qualified and trained in the subject**? Do they have regular and effective opportunities for CPD?
- Are teachers aware of RE's contribution to developing pupils' understanding of religion and belief and its impact as part of the **duty to promote community cohesion**?
- Where appropriate, do pupils have opportunities to take courses leading to an **accredited qualification** in the subject?
- Is clear information provided for **parents** on the RE curriculum and the right to withdraw?
- Are teachers aware that they **do not have to teach** RE?
- Is RE **resourced, staffed and timetabled** in a way that means the school can fulfil its **legal obligations** on RE and pupils can make good progress?
- Where there are **insufficient teachers** in a school who are prepared to teach RE, does the headteacher ensure that pupils receive their RE entitlement?

## 3. Checklist for managing the right of withdrawal

- Is the school careful to ensure that RE is of **educational value** to all pupils, whatever their belief background, thus reducing the likelihood of parental/carers requests for withdrawal?
- Does the school ensure that the nature, objectives and content of RE are **shared with parents**?
- Are parents or carers notified about plans for RE as part of the curriculum for the coming session for their child's class?
- Does the school have a **procedure in place** for parents or carers who want to withdraw children from RE?
- Does the **organisation of the curriculum** allow parents to exercise the right of withdrawal?
- What **practical implications** arise from a request by parents to withdraw a child from RE and how might they be addressed?
- Are **all those who teach RE** aware of the school's procedures?
- Are **all teachers aware of their own right not to have to teach RE**?

## 4. Checklist for people who manage, plan, teach and support RE

- What implications do the **school's ethos, values and aims** have for the provision of RE? For example, the school's specialist status, religious character, or the nature of the school's community.
- What about the school's **overall curriculum priorities**? Are statutory requirements for RE being met? Is RE's contribution in terms of raising standards and achievement being taken into account?
- Will RE be **taught separately**, be **combined** with other subjects, or **both**?
- Will RE be taught **every week, term or year** in the key stage? Is the programme of study required by the agreed syllabus properly met? Is the provision evaluated as part of the school's self-evaluation process?
- What about **curriculum design**? Does the RE curriculum ensure an appropriate balance between RE-led units, whether systematic or thematic, and cross-curricular units?
- How will the organisation of the RE curriculum be **adapted to suit individual pupils** with different abilities and needs? For example, the needs of the most able pupils can be met by accelerating their learning, and the needs of less high-achieving pupils can be met by reinforcement techniques.
- How will the design of the RE curriculum help pupils to make a smooth **transfer from one key stage to the next** and to make **steady progress** within a key stage? For example, through the provision of bridging units to support transition from key stage 2 to 3.
- What about **curriculum enrichment**? What might need to be added to the RE curriculum to enrich pupils' learning in terms of, for example, fieldwork, LOtC [*learning outside the classroom*], and special focus days?

## 5. Checklist for monitoring and evaluating RE provision

- Have RE curriculum decisions been based on the **principles of effective planning**? Has there been sound application of these principles?
- Can the **parental right of withdrawal** be accommodated, where necessary? Does the model of curriculum delivery take into account how provision might be adapted?
- **Do pupils value and recognise the contribution RE makes to their understanding** - of different communities and ways of life, and to the concept of diversity?
- Do pupils have real opportunities to explore and gain **first-hand experience of religious and cultural diversity**?
- Does the school **help pupils to deepen their understanding** - of their own beliefs and values? Of other people's?
- Does RE provide **a context to build relationships with the local communities** - including those groups with whom it is more difficult to forge links?
- Within the school, does RE provide **a voice for religious and other minority groups**? Does it develop a culture of mutual understanding and respect?
- **Does the school treat religion and belief seriously**? Does it model ways of building respect?
- Does the school know enough about **the diversity of religion and ethical perspectives within the local community**? Does it explore ways of making links with those communities?
- **In a largely mono-cultural school**, how well is RE working to foster a broader awareness of cultural and religious diversity?

## 6. Checklist for planning RE post 14

- **Do the pupils have opportunities to:**
  - reflect on, express and justify their own opinions and beliefs about religion and religious, philosophical, moral and spiritual questions?
  - develop their own values and attitudes so that they can recognise their rights and responsibilities in light of their learning about religion and belief?
  - relate their learning to the wider world, gaining a sense of personal autonomy in preparation for adult life?

- develop skills that are useful in a wide range of careers and in adult life generally, especially skills of critical enquiry, creative problem-solving, and communication in a variety of media?
  - have their achievements in RE recognised by an approved qualification?
- **If the pupil is to study RE wholly or partly in a further education college:**
  - has appropriate provision been made?
  - is it coherent and of good quality?
- **Has a parent or pupil exercised their right of withdrawal?** Has this been taken into account in RE planning?