

Ofsted RE Research Review (May 2021) - Summary

The review recognises that there is no single way of constructing and teaching a high-quality RE curriculum. It identifies three areas of subject-specific knowledge in RE:

1. **Substantive knowledge** about various religious and non-religious traditions;
2. **Disciplinary knowledge** (different ‘ways of knowing’) that enables pupils to understand and use some of the methods and techniques associated with studying religious and non-religious traditions;
3. **Personal knowledge** that enables pupils to better understand and interrogate their own position, presuppositions and values.

The report identifies some common features of a high-quality RE curriculum, based on the research reviewed:

- The curriculum should **carefully select and cover substantive content and concepts** (“collectively enough”) in order to build a schema of knowledge about religious and non-religious traditions, rather than covering excessive amounts of content superficially. The content covered must be sufficient for pupils to grasp a bigger picture about the place of religion and non-religion in the world.
- The RE curriculum must ensure that **what is taught and learned in RE is grounded in what is known about religion or non-religion from academic study**. This helps prevent pupils from developing misconceptions about religion and non-religion, particular through generalising, stereotyping or essentialising ways of believing, living and thinking.
- **Pupils should study certain areas of the RE curriculum in depth** and acquire a range of detailed knowledge of different concepts and ideas, which they remember long term. Drawing on this prior knowledge should enable them to consider more complex ideas about religion. Leaders and teachers should select this ‘depth of study’ from contrasting religious and/or non-religious traditions so that pupils avoid developing misrepresentations.
- **The curriculum must be well sequenced** to ensure that pupils learn the knowledge they need for later topics.
- Teachers and leaders should **carefully consider when pupils should relate the content to their own personal knowledge** (for example, their own prior assumptions).
- Teachers and leaders must ensure that **the way in which the curriculum is taught and assessed focuses pupils’ attention squarely on the knowledge they need to learn**.
- **Leaders must ensure that adequate curriculum time is given to RE**, so that leaders can deliver an ambitious curriculum [*the Dearing Report sets the expectation at 5% of curriculum time dedicated specifically to RE, not to an amalgamation of RE and other curriculum subjects, such as Humanities, PSHE, Citizenship, etc.*]
- **Leaders must ensure that there is sufficient training and professional development** so that teachers have appropriate subject professional knowledge.

Ofsted will publish a review of the quality of RE curriculums in spring term 2022. This will be based on ‘deep dives’ carried out during inspections under the EIF.