Excellence and distinctiveness

Guidance on RE in Church of England schools
Abridged from the National Society Guidance 2005

September 2011
Key recommendations

- That governors in Voluntary Aided schools adopt their local agreed syllabus for RE, provided it is based on the National Framework, with the addition of Diocesan Guidelines.
- That the standards of teaching, learning and achievement in RE in Church of England schools are at the highest level.
- That at least 5% of curriculum time is devoted to RE.
- That Christianity has a central role in the RE curriculum, usually taking up between two-thirds and three quarters of the time available.
- That appropriate teaching about other faiths and world views is given in all church schools.
- That all pupils are entered for an accredited qualification in Religious Studies at the end of Key Stage 4.
- That all students in the 16 – 19 age groups have the opportunity to take an A level qualification in Religious Studies.
RE in a distinctively Christian school

In an Anglican school, the educational process is rooted in the living faith of the school. This goes beyond the ethos of the school to affect the planning and teaching in every curriculum area. Religious Education is not just an academic subject, but, lying at the very heart of the curriculum, has an important role in reflecting and conveying the distinctively Christian character of the school.

In developing this distinctive approach to RE shaped by the National Framework, schools should consider what lies at the heart of the Christian faith. This can be expressed in relation to the Framework’s two attainment targets.

Learning about religion

We learn about:

- The God who reveals the truth about himself and humanity through creation, the giving of the law, his action in history and through the prophets;
- The God who reveals himself ultimately in Jesus his Son, living among us and dying and rising for us;
- The God who reveals himself in his Spirit working in the living faith of the Church experienced through scripture, tradition and reason.

Learning from religion

We learn from:

- An empathetic response to the Christian faith and a critical engagement with it;
- Responding personally to the transforming power of Jesus Christ;
- Developing a vision for life that transcends a dull materialism and recognises the reality of the spiritual realm;
- Understanding ourselves and others, celebrating our shared humanity and the breadth of human achievement;
- Examples of Christian living which give priority to the claims of justice, mercy, holiness and love.

RE does not exist in a vacuum; it comes as a challenge to the learner’s existing values and practices. It involves and confronts the individual in a way no other subject can. As Rowan Williams has observed, RE should help pupils see why religion is a deep and serious matter. A vision of education inspired by Jesus Christ is a catalyst for a process of formation for the whole person and the whole human family.
RE is key to fulfilling the purpose of a church school as described by the late Lord Runcie when he was Archbishop of Canterbury:

- to nourish those of the faith;
- to encourage those of other faiths;
- to challenge those who have no faith.

Maintaining the balance between these intentions will always require skill and tact and will need to reflect local circumstances.

**Therefore RE in church schools should help pupils to:**

- think theologically and explore the great questions of life and death, meaning and purpose;
- reflect critically on the truth claims of Christian belief;
- see how the truth of Christianity is relevant today and face the challenge of Jesus’ teaching in a pluralist and post modern society;
- develop the skills to handle the Bible text;
- recognise that faith is not based on a positive balance of probabilities but on commitment to a particular way of understanding God and the world;
- respond in terms of beliefs, commitments and ways of living;
- develop a sense of themselves as significant, unique and precious;
- experience the breadth and variety of the Christian community;
- engage in thoughtful dialogue with other faiths and traditions;
- become active citizens, serving their neighbour;
- find a reason for hope in a troubled world;
- understand how religious faith can sustain them in difficult circumstances and in the face of opposition.
Teaching about world faiths and world views

RE in church schools should also help pupils to:

- learn about other faiths, their beliefs, traditions and practices and from them through encounter and dialogue;
- recognise and respect those of all faiths in their search for God;
- recognise areas of common belief and practice between different faiths;
- enrich and expand their understanding of truth while remaining faithful to their own tradition;
- enrich their own faith through examples of holy living in other traditions;
- recognise the common human quest for justice, peace and love and the common goal of the survival of life on this planet.

The allocation of teaching time

We recommend that in church schools between two-thirds and three-quarters of RE curriculum time is spent in the study of Christianity and that other faiths and positions are covered in the remainder of the time (ie no more than one-third). This may represent a higher proportion of time on Christianity than is recommended in the agreed syllabus, but it is essential to fulfil the requirements of the distinctive Christian character of the school. Diocesan Boards of Education should offer further guidance and support in this matter that relate to specific local Agreed Syllabuses.

Flexible delivery and high standards in RE:

Religious education must be planned for high standards. There are different ways that schools can do this. All schools, 4-19, must plan sufficient time for the subject to be well taught. Subject leaders for RE, senior staff, head teachers and governors will all take an interest in ensuring provision enables the best possible standards. This might be done in various ways:

- Many schools use one or two weekly lessons of RE as the standard way of running the curriculum plan. The advantages of this are that pupils get used to the RE lesson, the progress they make can be steady and continuous and teachers ‘know where they are’. The main disadvantage is that pupils’ weekly experience of RE can be too spread out for the deeper learning that the subject requires to flourish.
- Some schools use a themed curriculum approach to RE. A series of lessons in the humanities are themed for RE, e.g. for half a term, and
pupils spend five hours a week or more doing RE and relating study to history or geography. In the next half term, the focus may be more on one of the other subjects. The main advantages of this are that pupils get a deeper and more continuous experience of RE. A disadvantage is that some schools use arbitrary themes or fail to plan RE into the programme at sufficient depth. Specialist teachers involvement in planning is crucial.

- Some schools use an 'RE Week' or an 'RE Day' to focus learning, then follow up the ‘big experience’ with linked lessons over several weeks. Such ‘big events’ planning is demanding of teachers, but can for example help the whole school to focus and develop the subject. A day is about 5 hours, so is not, of course, a substitute for a term’s work! Effective work on a week about respect for all religions, or a ‘Creation Week’, or a week on Spring Celebrations in different faiths is possible, as are many other themes. The key to success is clarity about the RE learning that is planned.

### The purpose of RE

In the National RE Framework (page 7) there is a strong statement of the importance of religious education. It provides a good basis for establishing the purpose of RE in Church of England schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Framework</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Religious education provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning of 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.</td>
<td>RE is no longer just about the phenomena of religion, but addresses directly the essential reality and nature of God. The Christian understanding of God, revealed through the life and work of Jesus Christ, and as understood by the Church, is the heart of the matter.</td>
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<td>It develops pupils’ knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other principal religions, other religious traditions and other world views that offer answers to questions such as these. It offers opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development.</td>
<td>In church schools, pupils are entitled to know and understand Christianity as received and handed on by the Church of England. Pupils are also entitled to have an understanding of traditions other than their own, which they are likely to encounter in their life’s journey.</td>
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<td>It enhances pupils’ awareness and understanding of religions and beliefs, teachings, practices and forms of expressions, as well as of the influence of religion on individuals, families, communities and cultures.</td>
<td>The role of religious communities in the past and today in advancing causes, from the abolition of slavery to making poverty history, should be an important part of RE’s contribution to the creation of community life in a church school.</td>
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Religious education encourages pupils to learn from different religions, beliefs, values and traditions, while exploring their own beliefs and questions of meaning. It challenges pupils to reflect on, consider, analyse, interpret and evaluate issues of truth, belief, faith and ethics and to communicate their responses.

**Pupils are entitled to explore their own beliefs in response to the great traditions, an essential basis for developing any religious understanding. This enables them to discern and locate ‘the Spirit that is within them’ that ‘leads...into all truth’.

Religious education encourages pupils to develop their sense of identity and belonging. It enables them to flourish individually within their communities and as citizens in a pluralistic society and global community. Religious education has an important role in preparing pupils for adult life, employment and lifelong learning.

**Most adults see themselves as belonging to a particular religious tradition (72% Christian in the 2001 census). In a Church of England school pupils are entitled to develop a strong sense of being part of a worldwide, growing faith.

It enables pupils to develop respect for and sensitivity to others, in particular those whose faiths and beliefs are different from their own. It promotes discernment and enables pupils to combat prejudice.

**This is a proper goal for Church of England, as for other, schools. Teaching about other faiths will include, at the right stages, a consideration of issues of truth.

### Managing RE in church schools

“Church schools ... should ensure that ... the character and quality of religious education are a particular concern of the headteacher and governing body.”

["The Way ahead’ 4.6]

In **Voluntary Aided** schools the management of RE is a distinctive role of the governors and headteacher. From 1944 onwards successive Education Acts have placed the responsibility for the provision of RE with the governors, in accordance with the school’s trust deed. In practical terms most VA schools have adopted syllabuses or followed guidance provided by the Diocesan Boards of Education. In the light of the publication in 2004 of a National Framework for RE, in which the Church of England has had a stake, it is expected that in many dioceses this model will change, so that VA schools will be encouraged by DBEs to adopt their local authority’s agreed syllabus. It is the intention of this Guidance to provide material which can be used as a supplement to these agreed syllabuses to ensure that RE in church schools is provided that is in keeping with the distinctively Anglican character of Church of England schools.
This material should also be a useful source of additional advice for the planning of RE in Voluntary Controlled schools which are required in law to provide RE in accordance with their local agreed syllabus.

In implementing the advice in this Guidance governors and headteachers will need to consider the following management issues:

- **All governors should be aware of:**
  - the legal requirements for RE in a church school
  - the advice of their DBE on the development of the RE curriculum
  - the RE syllabus adopted, including the faiths to be studied
  - the standards achieved in the subject in the school

- **Religious Education should be managed separately from Collective Worship with separate policy documents and responsibilities. Ideally there should be separate coordinators for each area, though it is recognised that this may be difficult in smaller schools.**

- There should be a clear and detailed policy document for RE outlining the school’s vision and aims for the subject and the learning outcomes for each key stage or year group. It should be revised regularly in consultation with staff, managers and governors. It should outline the school’s policy on the parental right of withdrawal from RE and how the school will deal with this issue.

- There should be a subject leader or coordinator appointed for RE (if possible a practising Christian) with sufficient training (initially or through CPD) to be confident and competent to support colleagues in the delivery and assessment of the curriculum.

- **RE should regularly form part of the school’s improvement plan and self-evaluation procedures. The National Society’s self-evaluation toolkit provides assistance in this process.**

- A detailed curriculum and scheme of work should be drawn up and agreed with all the teachers who will teach RE. This must be in accordance with the syllabus adopted by the governors.

- No less than a full 5% of curriculum time (and ideally more) must be assigned for RE in a clearly identifiable way. This does not of course include the time spent in Collective Worship.

- Sufficient resources should be provided to deliver the curriculum in an exciting and dynamic way, including books, artefacts, ICT and video materials. This should be at a level at least equivalent to the level that is provided for foundation subjects.

- **RE should be allocated time within the CPD programme for both the subject leader and for all teachers who teach the subject.**

- A link governor, preferably one of the foundation governors, should liaise with the subject coordinator and keep the full governing body informed of these contacts and of the needs of the subject. The subject leader should make a regular report to the governing body.

- The subject leader for RE should maintain good links with the local parish, involving clergy and lay people in the delivery of the subject where appropriate. Pupils’ work should be displayed in the church from time to time.
Additional considerations in secondary schools

- Sufficient qualified specialist staff should be employed to teach all RE lessons.
- The Head of Department should receive an appropriate teaching and learning responsibility payment that reflects the special status that the subject has in a church school. In a VA school it is particularly important to appoint as an RE Head of Department someone with a personal Christian commitment [School Standards and Framework Act 1998 section 60(5)].
- The minimum 5% of curriculum time applies to all pupils of compulsory school age (ie 11 – 16). It is also essential to ensure there is suitable provision of RE in the curriculum for 16 – 19 year old students, though not necessarily within the weekly timetable. More intensive provision through day conferences for whole year groups is a successful and innovative model established in some dioceses.
- The minimum expectation for Key Stage 4 in church schools should be that all pupils are entered for a GCSE Short Course in RS with sufficient Christian content; many church schools enter the complete cohort for the full GCSE course; some enter more able candidates for AS level at the end of year 11. Where there are post 16 students there should be well-resourced provision for AS and A2 courses in RS.
- The RE department should have a distinct and generous budget that reflects the special status of the subject in a church school. There should be sufficient provision for ICT and a dedicated specialist room for each full-time teacher of RE.
- The Head of Department should liaise with the heads of other subject areas to ensure that appropriate cross-curricular links are made.

Distinctiveness in the RE classroom

In what ways is the RE in a church school different from RE in a community school? This section assumes that a church school will already be aiming at the highest possible standards in RE; it therefore deals only with those issues that are distinctive of a church school.

Planning and preparation will include:
- Opportunities to explore the experience of the Church’s year;
- Study of the story of the local Christian community with its saints and martyrs;
- Visits to places of worship, especially the local parish Church and the Cathedral, to develop the understanding of the church as a living community;
- Welcoming visitors from the local parish to share their experience of Christian belief and life;
- Liaison with the local parish to enable these visits and links to occur.
The classroom environment will provide:
- High quality displays that reflect the Church’s year;
- Displays of the best Christian writing and reflection;
- Support for the pupils’ confident use of religious language;
- A well-used set of bibles in language that can be understood by the learners and examples of bibles and prayer books from a variety of contexts;
- The facility to listen to Christian ‘psalms and hymns and spiritual songs’ from a wide variety of traditions;
- Access to Christian artefacts that are used with care, respect and confidence;
- A sacred space that can be used as a focus for prayer and silent reflection;
- Encouragement of mutual respect based on Christian values, where pupils and teachers are able to talk openly and freely about their own personal beliefs and practice without fear of ridicule.

The quality of learning in RE enables:
- High achievement in RE reflecting its importance in a church school;
- Pupils to be enthusiastic about their work in RE;
- Pupils to make excellent and appropriate progress in their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the Anglican tradition;
- Pupils from Christian families to talk openly about their beliefs and values in lessons and to grow in their faith;
- Pupils from other faith backgrounds to understand and be encouraged in their faith;
- Pupils with no religious background to face the challenge of the Christian faith;
- Pupils of all backgrounds to have a safe place to explore the place of doubt and certainty in a maturing faith.

The quality of teaching in RE relies on teachers who:
- Have excellent subject knowledge and the ability to speak with confidence about Christianity, the Anglican tradition and the other faiths studied;
- Are willing to speak about their personal beliefs and doubts;
- Show respect and sensitivity for their pupils as they search for personal faith and meaning;
- Are able to use religious language accurately;
- Provide opportunities for prayer and spiritual reflection in their classrooms.

The contribution of RE to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a church school is distinctive because these four aspects of the school curriculum are inextricably rooted in the reality of God the Holy Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Religious Education curriculum in a church school is the place where excellent and distinctive SMSC is seen most clearly.
**Spiritual development**

*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful.*

*Psalm 139.13-14*

Spiritual development within RE in a church school enriches and encourages the pupils’ discovery of God the creator, of their ‘inmost being’ and of the wonder of the environment.

**This is promoted through:**

- exploring their relationship with God and the sense that they are his children, unique and loved by him;
- exploring and experiencing prayer and worship from a variety of Christian traditions;
- giving thanks to God for all aspects of school life;
- discussing and reflecting upon key questions of meaning and truth such as the existence of God, the origins and purpose of the universe, good and evil, life after death;
- considering the value of human beings and their relationship with God, with one another and with the natural world;
- discovering how the creative and expressive arts enable spiritual development;
- opportunities to discuss feelings and emotions openly;
- recognising and encouraging the use of personal and group gifts and talents;
- opportunities to develop their gift of imagination and creativity;
- encouraging curiosity and questioning so that their own views and ideas on religious and spiritual issues can be developed within a secure environment where faith is valued;
- developing a sense of personal significance and belonging;
- encountering Christian fellowship.

**Moral development**

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

*Romans 12.2*

Moral development in RE in a church school is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, which offer pupils a secure foundation stone on which to make decisions and build their lives.

**This is promoted through:**

- developing a sense of right and wrong based on the teaching of Jesus Christ;
- recognising the values identified within the Bible: truth, justice, trust, love, peace, compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption;
• learning to follow a path through the conflicting demands of faith, family, peers, society, the media and the world of ideas;
• recognising the importance of personal integrity;
• developing mutual respect across racial and religious divides;
• recognising that people’s rights also imply responsibilities;
• developing a sensitive conscience.

Social development

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples.
John 13.34-35

Social development in RE in a church school develops pupils’ understanding of what it means to live in a Christian community where Jesus’ command to love one another is put into practice.

This is promoted through:
• developing a sense of empathy, compassion and concern for others;
• building relationships within the school and between the school, the parish and the local community;
• considering how Christian beliefs affect decisions at local and national level;
• investigating social issues from the perspective of Christianity and of other faiths, recognising the common ground and diversity that exists between them;
• providing opportunities for pupils to articulate their own views on a range of current issues and to show respect for the opinions of others and a willingness to learn from their insights.

Cultural development

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
Galatians 3.28

Cultural development in RE in a church school provides opportunities to develop an understanding of Christianity as a worldwide, multi-cultural faith that has an impact on the lives of millions of people.

This is promoted through:
• promoting an understanding of Christianity from a global perspective through encounters with people, literature and the creative arts from different cultures;
• exploring the diversity of Christianity worldwide with particular reference to the diversity of the Anglican community;
• considering the relationship between British and European culture and Christianity;
• appreciating the diversity of cultures within Britain.
**Key Christian topics and concepts**

Church of England schools are committed to offering their pupils a sufficient understanding of Christianity as a vibrant, world-wide faith. The purpose of this section is to enable schools and teachers to ensure that, in adopting their local agreed syllabus, there is sufficient emphasis given to those key Christian topics and concepts that are vital for this understanding. By using this section as a checklist it is possible to identify those areas that need to be added to the content of the agreed syllabus.

Church of England schools should encourage an emphasis on the church as people more than buildings and on the church as wider than a single parish. Teaching should reflect accurately the wide range of types and styles of being an Anglican. In a worldwide perspective Anglicanism represents an important ‘bridge’ between the catholic and protestant traditions.

**Teachers will need to select and adapt material from this list that is appropriate to the age and ability of their pupils.** The amount of content included assumes an education in church schools from the Foundation Stage until the end of Key Stage 4.

The material is presented in three charts simply as a way of organising the concepts and not as a programme of study.

### Some key Christian texts

*Pupils should encounter and be familiar with some of the great statements of Christian belief and worship, including:*

- The Lord’s prayer
- The ten commandments
- Jesus’ summary of the law
- The apostle’s creed
- Some psalms such as 23, 121, 150
- Liturgical material such as the Collect for Purity, the Gloria, Greetings, the Grace
- The structure of the Eucharist
- The Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis
- Scripture passages such as Romans 8.38-39, 1 Corinthians 13, Hebrews 12.1-2
- Some of the great prayers such as the prayers of St Richard of Chichester, St Ignatius Loyola and St Francis of Assisi
- Some of the great traditional hymns as well as more recent examples
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<th>The Church’s year</th>
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Being an Anglican

Parish life

*RE in a Church of England school enables pupils to expand their understanding of the Church by learning about everyday life in a parish.*

- Priests, vicars and curates
- Lay leaders: churchwardens and PCCs
- Worship: Eucharist, services of the Word
- Music in worship
- Baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals
- Evangelism, Alpha, Emmaus, Credo, etc
- Home groups
- Pilgrimages and retreats
- Activities for children and young people
- Community involvement

Resources

Websites

### Church of England sites
- [www.natsoc.org.uk](http://www.natsoc.org.uk)
- [www.cofe.anglican.org](http://www.cofe.anglican.org)
- [www.anglicancommunion.org](http://www.anglicancommunion.org)
- [www.culham.ac.uk](http://www.culham.ac.uk)
- [www.assemblies.org.uk](http://www.assemblies.org.uk)

### Gateway sites
- [www.reonline.org.uk](http://www.reonline.org.uk)
- [www.theredirectory.org.uk](http://www.theredirectory.org.uk)

### Professional association sites
- [www.pcfre.org.uk](http://www.pcfre.org.uk)
- [www.retoday.org.uk](http://www.retoday.org.uk)
- [www.areiac.org.uk](http://www.areiac.org.uk)
- [www.nasacre.org.uk](http://www.nasacre.org.uk)

### Christian sites
- [www.stapleford-centre.org/](http://www.stapleford-centre.org/)
- [www.churchnet.org.uk](http://www.churchnet.org.uk)
- [www.christian-teachers.org](http://www.christian-teachers.org)

### National sites
- [www.bbc.co.uk/schools/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/)
- [www.channel4.com/learning](http://www.channel4.com/learning)
- [www.teachers.tv](http://www.teachers.tv)
- [www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

### Sources of artefacts and posters
- [www.articlesoffaith.co.uk](http://www.articlesoffaith.co.uk)
- [www.tts-shopping.com](http://www.tts-shopping.com)
- [www.festivalshop.co.uk](http://www.festivalshop.co.uk)
- [www.wildgoose.ac/pcet.php](http://www.wildgoose.ac/pcet.php)

### Aid agencies
- [www.christian-aid.org.uk](http://www.christian-aid.org.uk)
- [www.tearfund.org](http://www.tearfund.org)
- [www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk)
- [www.reep.org](http://www.reep.org)
**Planning Guidance:**
How to create medium and short term planning from the RE Programme of study

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
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| **Step1:** Key question | **Either**: use the key question suggested in the syllabus or Diocesan Guidelines  
**Or**: devise a key question of your own. Ensure that the key question fits with the themes from page. Make sure that the key question is sufficiently open to allow enquiry. Make sure that it has a clear focus on learning about and from religion and belief. Explain where this unit/question fits into key stage planning e.g. how it builds on previous learning in RE; what other subject areas does it link to, if appropriate. | |
| **Step 2:** Key Learning objectives, learning outcomes & assessment | **Use the Key Learning objectives**  
**Select** more detailed learning outcomes for the key question. Ensure there is a balance of learning about and from religion. Are the learning outcomes set at the appropriate level for your children do they need to be further differentiated? Use the level descriptions on pXX to develop specific levelled “I can...” statements as appropriate to the age and ability of the pupils. These ‘I can...’ statements are found in the details of each unit. Many further examples are in the assessment guidance on the Syllabus disc. These “I can” statements help you to integrate assessment for learning within the unit. There is then no necessity for an end of unit assessment within each unit. | |
| **Step 3: Content** | **Select** relevant content from column 5 of the programme of study to explore this key question. In general, depth is preferable to breadth. Other content can be used as appropriate to achieve the outcomes. | |
| **Step 4: Teaching & learning activities** | **Develop** active learning opportunities and investigations, using some engaging stimuli, to enable pupils to achieve the levelled outcomes. Don’t forget the skills you want pupils to develop. Make sure that the activities allow pupils to practise these skills. | |
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