

Date of issue: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE</b>
<b>DATE AND TIME:</b>	WEDNESDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER, 2017 AT 5.30 PM (OR UPON THE RISING OF THE SACRE MEETING)
<b>VENUE:</b>	THE VENUE, THE CURVE - WILLIAM STREET, SLOUGH, BERKSHIRE, SL1 1XY
<b>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)</b>	NADIA WILLIAMS  01753 875015

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



**ROGER PARKIN**  
Interim Chief Executive

**AGENDA**

**PART I**

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	Apologies for absence.	
1.	Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 18th June 2012	1 - 2
2.	The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (RE) - Pan Berkshire SACRE led Consultation	3 - 14
3.	Pan Berkshire Agreed Syllabus RE Review 2017 -	15 - 20



**AGENDA**  
**ITEM**

**REPORT TITLE**

**PAGE**

Points to Consider

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| 4. | Religious Education: Realising the Potential -<br>Ofsted Report | 21 - 70 |
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**Press and Public**

You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before the Committee considers any items in the Part II agenda. Please contact the Democratic Services Officer shown above for further details.

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**Agreed Syllabus Conference – Meeting held on Monday, 18th June, 2012.**

**Present:-**

**Committee 1 – Christian Denominations and Other Faiths**

Zara Choudhary (Islam), Hardip Singh Sohal (Sikhism)

**Committee 2 – Church of England**

Jo Fageant, Christine Isles

**Committee 3 – Representatives of Teacher Associations**

Lynda Bussley (National Union of Teachers) (Chair)

**Committee 4 – Representatives of the Local Authority**

Councillors Bains, Brooker, M S Mann and Wright

**Also in attendance**

Maggie Stacey (LA support), Ashpreet Singh (observer)

**Apologies for Absence:- None**

**PART 1**

**7. Minutes of the last meeting held on 8th February, 2012**

**Resolved** - That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved.

**8. Presentation on the final draft of the revised RE syllabus**

The Chair, Lynda Bussley, invited Jo Fageant, Chair of the Slough SACRE to present the final draft of the revised syllabus for Religious Education for Slough schools. The full draft document was presented to all members shortly before the meeting and this document was referred to during the presentation.

Meetings between teachers, faith groups and other interested parties had taken place to improve the document. A successful meeting for members of Christian Denominations and Other Faiths (Committee A) had been held on March 19<sup>th</sup>. This meeting had allowed this group to make contributions to the draft, such as to amend the key faith concepts, and members who attended this meeting were thanked for the contribution. Members of all faith groups, including those from the Slough SACRE had also contributed to support materials for teachers, which were available on the internet.

Key areas of the syllabus were outlined. These included the non-compulsory methods for planning lessons, the continued use of an eight level scale for attainment descriptors and the foundation stage section, much of which had remained the same as the previous syllabus. It was emphasised that the theme and intention of the guiding questions for the syllabus was for pupils to “learn about religion” and “learn from religion”. Also outlined was the higher key stages, including the provision for 16-19, which set a basic minimum of six hours a year of teaching of the subject and the appendices of the syllabus

## **Agreed Syllabus Conference - 18.06.12**

which outlined compulsory questions and what would be expected that children would learn and achieve in their studies.

It was noted that no teaching staff from Slough schools had contributed to the pedagogic side of the syllabus review. Consultants working with Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council had worked on the design of the final document.

The Chair thanked Jo Fageant for presenting the syllabus and it was proposed that the approval of the syllabus be put to a vote.

**Resolved** - That the presentation of the final draft of the revised syllabus for religious education be noted and that the syllabus be put to a vote for approval.

### **9. Vote to decide whether to accept the revised syllabus**

The Chair proposed that the agreed syllabus be put to a vote. All Committees that made up the Agreed Syllabus Conference agreed to approve the syllabus and to recommend to Cabinet that the syllabus be formally approved for introduction into Slough's schools from 1st September, 2012.

**Recommendation** - That Cabinet be asked to formally approve the revised Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education for introduction into Slough's schools from 1st September, 2012.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.15 pm and closed at 6.04 pm)

**The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education**  
**Pan-Berkshire SACRE-led Consultation**  
**Summer term 2017**

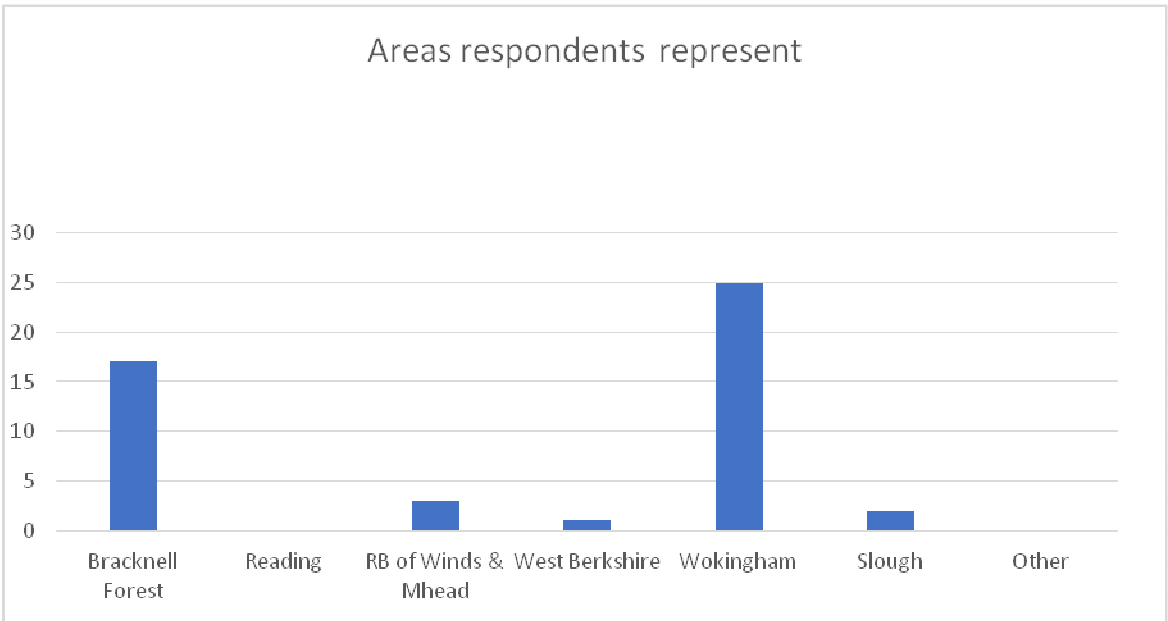
**1.0 Background**

The pan-Berkshire consultation was open for approximately 2 months. Respondents were able to complete the consultation document on-line or on a paper-based copy. The majority completed the on-line survey with only 3 paper-based surveys submitted. There was an increase in submissions on 10<sup>th</sup> July following the reminder email.

**Number of responses – 49**

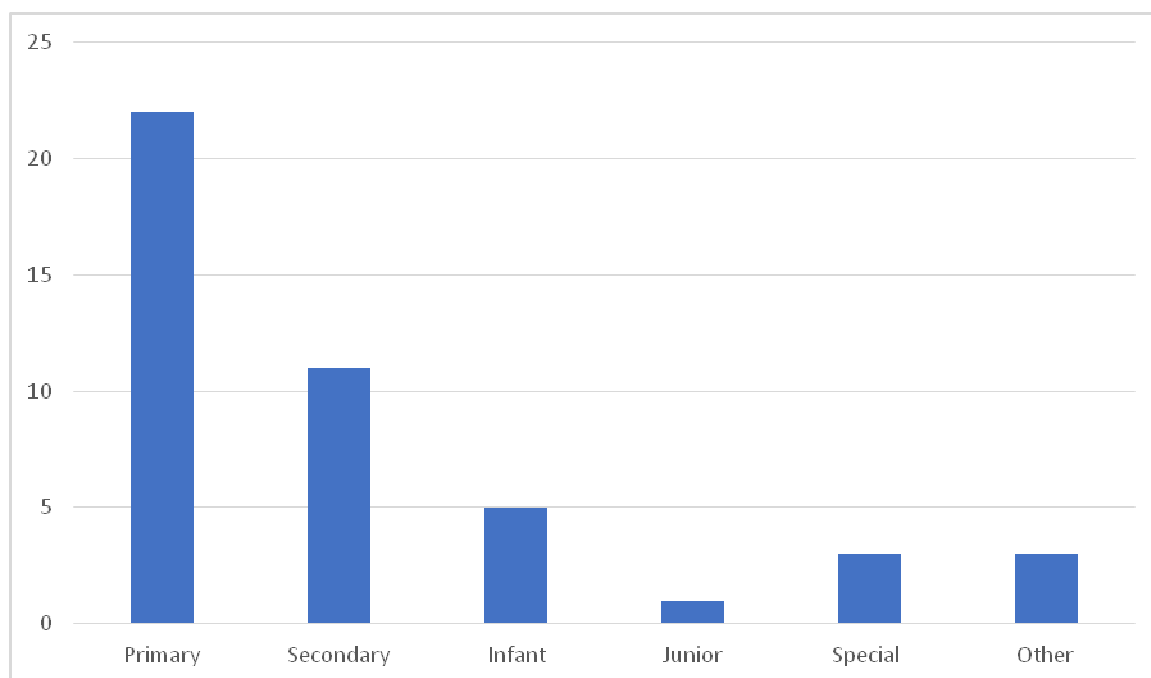
**Where from:**

**Chart 1**



**Role within organisation**

Respondents came from a wider range of roles with largest number being class teachers (10) followed by Head of Department (5) and Head teachers (4). In total 33 respondents are school based, with the remainder in a range of other roles. See appendix 1 for the full range of roles.

**Chart 2 – Type of school**

## 2.0 On-going consultation

17 respondents said they would like to be part of the teacher consultation group, and received on-going updates; however, 2 of these people have not been included in the table in Appendix 4 as they did not provide their name or email address. (The email addresses have been removed from the table for confidentiality reasons for distribution of this report).

9 people responded saying they would participate in the consultation day, one person did not give their name or email address, so have not been added to the table.

The individuals who have indicated their interest in being involved in both activities are in **blue type**.

## 3.0 Responses to syllabus

### 3.1 In response to the question:

***Which aspects of the current agreed syllabus would you like to remain the same?***

11 of the 29 who responded stated that they would like all or most of the current

syllabus to remain the same. The other respondents gave some specifics on the areas they would like to stay the same. See responses in Appendix 2.

Blue type indicates responses from people who requested the syllabus stay largely unchanged.

3.2 In response to the question:

***Which aspects of the agreed syllabus would you like to see revised? (Please give reasons for this change and your suggestions as to how you would like it to be)***

9 of the 28 respondents were happy with the current syllabus. Two were unsure due to lack of experience (see red type). The remaining respondents gave specific comments.

See Appendix 3 for responses.

## **APPENDIX 1**

Head teacher – 4

Assistant head – 1

Class teacher – 10

Head of department – 3

Head of department (RE) – 5

Children's ministry coordinator – 1

Representative of teacher's associations – 1

Representing Sikh faith – 1

RE leader – 2

RE coordinator – 1

Head of RS and chair of Wokingham SACRE – 1

KS2 leader and year 6 teacher – 1

On the SACRE group and delivers RE lessons – 2

RE and PSHE coordinator – 1

Tutor – 1

EYFS and RE leader – 1

Voice rep for SACRE – 1

Clerk to SACRE – 1



## APPENDIX 2

*Which aspects of the current agreed syllabus would you like to remain the same?*

1. The breadth of questions which open up discussions linked to the 3 strands - belonging, believing, behaving.
2. All of them
3. We like split into 'Belonging, believing and behaving' and hooking learning on a question. One of my favourites is 'Does the world belong to God?' Great answers and thinking even from Infants. Very thought provoking. The exemplar expectations were useful too.
4. The syllabus provides a good range of coverage which is delivered easily and links the similarities between each faith.
5. I feel that the current syllabus offers very clear guidance on how teachers should structure schemes of learning around the two strands. Overall, I find it very useful in its current state.
6. All
7. The majority of the syllabus could stay the same
8. Most of it
9. The religions that are covered and the questions.
10. I teach Year 3 and find all the current topics accessible and relevant.
11. Like the learning 'about' and learning 'from'. Would like the enquire, explore, reflect, evaluate model
12. Most of it
13. The approach using 'Believing' 'Behaving' 'Belonging' when exploring faith
14. I'm quite happy with most of it. I like the three themes: Behaving, Believing and Belonging.
15. Interfaith Dialogue KS3 Judaism KS3 optional unit Christianity KS3 Islam KS3
16. Learning from other religions
17. The focus on learning about and learning from religion. Focus on believing / behaving / belonging, in some form.
18. Teaching ideas /examples for key questions key questions

19. The enquiry-based nature of the syllabus
20. From previous experience in other school I like the three elements of Believing, Belonging, Behaving
21. The overarching enquiry questions that are answered deeply by the end of the unit, the enquiry that links to concrete objects and experience, the investigation, the evaluation and most importantly, the expression where the children can express their own views and present them openly. This structure works effectively in our school. The coverage of the different main religions works well. The main holidays/celebrations that are covered are effective and comparison can be easily noticed between religions.
22. We follow an adapted version of this for our SEN pupils. We embed some of the key points covered across our curriculum where appropriate and will deliver RE as cross curricular days rather than weekly lessons.
23. Key questions to explore across the Key Stage. Coverage of different religions.
24. Religions split across year groups. More spiritual thinking as they progress in year groups
25. All
26. Starting with exploration question
27. I'm really happy with the current agreed syllabus. It works well for the children in our school.
28. I think the syllabus works really well - it gives a strong starting point for good RE teaching
29. Primarily Christian Teaching with choice of other religions for in depth study. The broad spectrum of faith study.

## APPENDIX 3

***Which aspects of the agreed syllabus would you like to see revised? (Please give reasons for this change and your suggestions as to how you would like it to be)***

1. A broader spread of faiths being taught through both Key Stages. If this is introduced earlier then children would be able to begin to see multi-faith links in Upper Key Stage 2. Key Stage 2 Behaving: page 31 - some confusion with the examples given 'Kashrut' or 'Ramadan' linked to questions relating specifically to Christianity. This can cause concern & confusion to teachers not fully immersed in background knowledge, feeling they are missing something! Keeping examples linked to the faith in question avoids any worry about incorrect teaching. I also think the word 'Relational' should be included and introduced to the syllabus as a concept to consider. This could be added alongside questions relating to 'Behaving' & living out parents beliefs/traditions as a way of introducing faith as a personal choice & not an imposition of older generations or contemporaries. There are many faith stories where individuals encounter God in various ways and this would be a helpful link to understand 'Relational' alongside the 3 B's.
2. None
3. Glossary style sheet describing top 20 key terms for each faith. Teacher can pick up and use easily.
4. None particularly, it works well as it is
5. Rightly so, the syllabus is clearly linked to religious belief but perhaps explore in more depth philosophy and ethics and how the two can intertwine and overlap. I feel like students are very interested in ethical debate and it would be useful to see a sample SOW on how we could make philosophy and ethics a main aspect in units.
6. No change
7. I have no strong opinion about this
8. Islam. I feel it's important in today's world.
9. Maybe exploring more religions - looking at the main festivals.
10. None
11. Review the amount of Old Testament links in the Christianity element of the syllabus. There seems to be quite a lot on the life of Jesus - so much of the

OT links into Jesus' life which makes the Bible such an amazing book. Also lots to learn from some of the OT characters that relate to issues students face today.

12. Assessment ideas along with examples: meeting/exceeding/emerging
13. I would like to see more variety of religions in KS3 and perhaps more guidance for KS4.
14. Revise Christianity and Islam in light of the new GCSE specifications.
15. It needs to become a much smaller and more easy to use document - it is large compared to the National Curriculum for other subjects. All content should be in one place - not with large appendices which also need to be referred to. This is because it makes it difficult and time consuming to use. Something compact and specific, all on one / sequential pages would be better. Maybe under each religion, a list of areas of learning (beliefs, places of worship, festivals etc), key concepts to get across under each section, and key enquiry questions, maybe with clearly stated 'optional' bits with it.
16. Give examples of planning for Key Stages. How to go about breaking a religion down into topics/chunks.
17. I think it is very hard to follow and takes a lot of planning. A scheme of work would be helpful
18. Some further guidance about which religions to teach in which year group and how non-faith schools vs faith schools could structure their RE curriculum
19. **Unsure**
20. I think that as they progress into upper KS2, in Christianity units in particular there needs to be more usage of deeper questions/investigation about Christian events, that link to trips particularly so that clear progression of conceptual ideas and expression is evident in tasks when compared to other year groups. Perhaps parts of the Bible or other religious texts could be used as a reference point. Furthermore, could there be more explicit units about how religions sit together in society peacefully and learn from each other?
21. **I haven't taught RE here so find it hard to comment on this.**
22. Perhaps breaking down the questions further into phases, or LKS2 and UKS2 to support other teachers plan.
23. More clear cut - each year takes on more specific aspects of each religion
24. **For us, it works well as it is.**

25. More focus on other faiths from Christianity

26. I'm really happy with the current agreed syllabus. It works well for the children in our school.

27. I think it would be better if the syllabus was less flexible - so that all religions were taught rather than the option to choose

28. Personally I would like to see relatively few changes and a longer period of syllabus stability so that a common understanding can develop.

## APPENDIX 4

Table 2

	Name	Where from	Email
1	Catherine Jinkerson	Wokingham Baptist Church	
2	Nicole Lovejoy	Sandhurst School	
3	Sukhdev Bansal	SACRE Wokingham	
4	Anika Jhani	Whitegrove	
5	Jass Taggar	Wildridings Primary	
6	Linda Galpin	Wokingham Sacre	
7	B S Cresswell	Piggott School Wokingham SACRE	
8	C Jones	Crowthorne	
9	Clodagh Bieniek	Wooden Hill Primary School	
10	Hannah Hillier	Rivermead Primary School	
11	David Maycock	Addington SEN School	
12	Laura Haworth	Radstock Primary School	
13	Beth Johnstone	Westende Junior School	
14	Sally Keenlyside	All Saints CE Primary	
15	Madeline Diver	Bracknell Forest SACRE	

**APPENDIX 5**

***Would you like to participate in the faith/belief group representative consultation day? This will be held at Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, RG40 1BN Wednesday 4th October 10am - 3pm (you do not have to be present the entire day) People representing faith and belief groups on the 6 Berkshire SACREs are invited to attend to review together the syllabus content relevant to their religion/belief system***

**Table 3**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Where from</b>	<b>Email</b>
1	Jo Watt	West Berkshire SACRE	
2	Madeline Diver	Bracknell Forest SACRE	
3	Sally Keenlyside	All Saints CE Primary	
4	Linda Galpin	Wokingham SACRE	
5	Anika Jhani	Whitegrove	
6	Sukhdev Bansal	SACRE Wokingham	
7	Nicole Lovejoy	Sandhurst School	
8	Catherine Jinkerson	Wokingham Baptist Church	

Jan Lever

Pan-Berkshire Hub Manager

On behalf of the 6 Berkshire SACREs August 2017

jan@janlevergroup.com

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**PAN-BERKSHIRE AGREED SYLLABUS FOR RE REVIEW 2017 - POINTS TO CONSIDER**

THE FOLLOWING POINTS ARE AN OUTLINE TO ENSURE ALL SACRES  
CONSIDER THE MAIN POINTS RAISED IN THE SUMMER CONSULTATION AND  
AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AND DRIVERS.

**Overview**

To consider:

1. National context and non-statutory framework for RE, 2016
2. Responses from consultation...what to keep, what to consider changing  
(Summary of Summer consultation attached - Paper 1)

POINTS 3-9 BELOW ARE COVERED IN POINTS TO CONSIDER PAPER 2  
below

3. Which religions are mandatory at which Key Stage?

Currently

KS1 Christianity and Judaism

KS2 Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism

KS3 Christianity, Buddhism and Islam

4. Retain AT1 and 2? Learning About and From religion
5. Assessment...levels? In a landscape beyond levels
6. Early Years...updated Early Years framework 2014 and 2017
7. Retain the Key Questions as they are?
8. Print revised syllabus or online?
9. Appendices?

Points to consider...details

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Berkshire-RE-Syllabus.pdf>

This is the link to the current pan-Berkshire agreed syllabus for RE for your reference (hard copy also attached).

1. National context and non-statutory framework for RE, 2016  
The RE Council of England and Wales has just published the Interim Report from the Commission on RE taking place this year.  
Most of the points raised are for further consultation but the key points need to form the backdrop for the syllabus review.

The drive nationally over the last year or so has been towards ensuring religious literacy and holistic understanding of the whole narrative of the religions studied. This involves pupils gaining sound understanding of the concepts and beliefs underpinning them.

The current syllabus already makes this clear in the Believing/Behaving/Belonging 3Bs approach embedded throughout. Teachers want to keep the 3 Bs according to the Summer consultation.

Understanding Christianity project designed its teaching materials to emphasise the beliefs, concepts, theology core to Christianity.

The other drive is the enquiry approach since this was recommended in the last Ofsted report on RE,  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/.../religious-education-realising-the-potential>

We also need to be mindful of the programmes schools are currently using and not interrupt good practice by making unnecessary changes to the syllabus e.g. the Oxford Diocese scheme of work or Discovery RE scheme of work

2. Responses from consultation...what to keep, what to consider changing (Summary of Summer consultation attached) Paper 1  
The key points raised are detailed below but the original paper is attached for reference.

The main messages are:

DON'T MAKE TOO MANY CHANGES. IT IS WORKING AS IT IS. WE LIKE IT. WE ARE TOO BUSY TO COPE WITH MUCH CHANGE. WE CAN'T AFFORD NEW RESOURCES.  
WE LIKE THE 3 Bs. KEEP THE ENQUIRY APPROACH. WE LIKE THE BIG QUESTIONS.

WE WOULD LIKE MORE GUIDANCE ON ASSESSING LEARNING IN RE.

POINTS 3-9 BELOW ARE COVERED IN POINTS TO CONSIDER PAPER 2 below

1. Which religions are mandatory at which Key Stage?

Currently

KS1 Christianity and Judaism

KS2 Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism

KS3 Christianity, Buddhism and Islam

The above pattern shows which religions are the mandatory 'required' religions to be taught at each Key Stage in the current agreed syllabus. Of course schools can cover more than these but the thinking here is that if each religion is mandatory at one Key Stage they will all be encountered at least once during Key Stages 1-3, before GCSE Religious Studies is undertaken. Christianity needs to be included at every KS to fulfil statutory requirements.

The questions for SACREs to consider are...

Is this pattern still OK?

Should any of these religions be 'required' earlier or later or even be 'required' in more than one Key Stage?

Is there a better way?

Do we need to include Humanism as a 'required' belief system?

Suggestion:

Key Stages 1 and 2

Could we lift the barrier between KS1 and 2 and say the 'required' religions needing to be encountered by the end of Key Stage 2 are:

Christianity in every year group plus

Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism

Schools could decide when they deliver which religion alongside Christianity.

If the syllabus maintains its recommended enquiry approach through the big questions this would be perfectly possible and is probably more in line with the reality of what is happening in Berkshire schools already.

Key Stage 3

Christianity in every year group plus:

At least 2 other religions/belief systems in depth from

Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Humanism

This would leave the choice of religions in KS3 up to the school giving flexibility in terms of preparation for GCSE courses and according to the demographic of the school.

Or any other suggested patterns you think would work.

Page 17 in Bournemouth agreed syllabus (link below) shows another option.

<https://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/childreducation/Schools/SACREdocuments/SACREdocs/Bournemouth-and-Poole-Agreed-Syllabus.pdf>

Another suggestion would be to include KS4 in with KS3 so we have a Primary school set of required religions...to be encountered before the end of KS2 (or maybe a number of religions to be encountered by the end of KS2 selecting from...as well as Christianity) and a Secondary school set of 'required religions' to be encountered during KS 3 and 4, or more realistically

this might be setting down a number of religions to be encountered by the end of KS4 as well as Christianity.

## 2. Retain AT1 and 2? Learning About and From religion

The National Curriculum framework for RE (2013, non-statutory) moves away from 2 attainment targets and suggests 3 strands of expectations:

- A. Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews
- B. Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and non-religious worldviews
- C. Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and non-religious worldviews  
(NCFRE pages 11-12)

Some syllabi are reflecting this,

An example

The Poole and Bournemouth agreed syllabus published in 2016 adopts the 3 strand approach  
(see link above)

Some are keeping the 2 attainment targets.

Some have taken away the labels of AT1 and AT2 but kept the content and put it under different headings!

The most important factor is to keep the syllabus as easy to understand and translate into practice in the classroom as possible.

## 3. Assessment...levels? In a landscape beyond levels

Teachers are looking for more guidance on how to assess RE in a landscape in which schools are devising their own methods of assessment, since the government has removed the national 'levels'.

The format of the syllabus will determine what the guidance on assessment looks like. If we retain the 2 attainment targets the assessment process will need to reflect this.

If we move towards the 3 strands of the national non-statutory framework, the assessment expectation would reflect this.

The Oxford Diocese has devised its own assessment process to serve the Oxfordshire agreed syllabus.

Discovery RE has its own colour-coded assessment process helping teachers tease out the different aspects of RE learning:

Green: personal resonance  
Blue: Knowledge and understanding  
Red: Critical thinking and evaluative skills

This will depend on previous decisions on nature of the syllabus.

4. Early Years...updated Early Years framework 2014 and 2017  
This would be a straightforward process of updating the language aligned to the most recent EYFS framework.
5. Retain the Key Questions as they are?  
We need to be mindful that teachers have planned their schemes of work based on a selection of the current questions so too much change would cause a lot of extra work. Some of the questions could be tidied up in terms of wording and maybe new ones added.
6. Print revised syllabus or online?  
Teachers seem to be happy with online resources and obviously this would be the cheapest option. Maybe giving those who attend the launch events (if we run any) a usb stick with the syllabus on it?
7. Appendices?  
The suggestion is that the appendices are removed from the actual syllabus document and become available online under a new title e.g. Additional/Support materials  
This may make the statutory body of the syllabus itself more straightforward for people and would certainly make it appear slimmer and more manageable.  
This will depend on what is decided about the syllabus itself, which religions are 'required' when etc as if teachers have a choice of which religions they do at each KS all the options need to be included in the statutory body of the document, making it clear what the choices might be.

JL 4/10/17

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# Religious education: realising the potential

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Religious education (RE) makes a significant contribution to pupils' academic and personal development. It also plays a key role in promoting social cohesion and the virtues of respect and empathy, which are important in our diverse society. However, the potential of RE was not being realised fully in the majority of the schools surveyed for this report.

The report identifies barriers to better RE and suggests ways in which the subject might be improved. The report is written for all those who teach RE, for those who lead the subject, and for headteachers of primary and secondary schools.

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**Age group:** 5–18

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**Published:** October 2013

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**Reference no:** 130068



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## Executive summary

Religious education (RE) should make a major contribution to the education of children and young people. At its best, it is intellectually challenging and personally enriching. It helps young people develop beliefs and values, and promotes the virtues of respect and empathy, which are important in our diverse society. It fosters civilised debate and reasoned argument, and helps pupils to understand the place of religion and belief in the modern world.

The past 10 years have seen some improvements in RE in schools. More pupils recognise its value and nearly two thirds of them left school with an accredited qualification in the subject in 2012. The range and quality of resources to support teaching in this subject are much better than they were.

However, evidence from the majority of schools visited for this survey shows that the subject's potential is still not being realised fully. Many pupils leave school with scant subject knowledge and understanding. Moreover, RE teaching often fails to challenge and extend pupils' ability to explore fundamental questions about human life, religion and belief.

Ofsted's previous report on RE in 2010, *Transforming religious education*, highlighted key barriers to better RE and made recommendations about how these should be overcome. The current survey found that not enough has been done since 2010.

The structures that underpin the local determination of the RE curriculum have failed to keep pace with changes in the wider educational world. As a result, many local authorities are struggling to fulfil their responsibility to promote high-quality religious education. In addition, other changes to education policy, such as the introduction in 2010 of the English Baccalaureate (the EBacc), have led to a decline in RE provision in some schools.<sup>1</sup>

Part A of this report discusses eight major areas of concern:

- low standards
- weak teaching
- problems in developing a curriculum for RE
- confusion about the purpose of RE
- weak leadership and management
- weaknesses in examination provision at Key Stage 4

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<sup>1</sup> The DfE describes the EBacc as follows: 'The English Baccalaureate... is not a qualification in itself. The measure recognises where pupils have secured a C grade or better across a core of academic subjects – English, mathematics, history or geography, the sciences and a language.' For further information, see:

[www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/englishbac/a0075975/the-english-baccalaureate](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/englishbac/a0075975/the-english-baccalaureate).

- gaps in training
- the impact of recent changes in education policy.

Part B of this report provides examples of effective practice in using enquiry as a basis for improving pupils' learning, high-quality leadership and management in primary and secondary schools, and effective approaches in special schools. Overall, however, such good practice is not sufficiently widespread.

The report is based on evidence drawn from 185 schools visited between September 2009 and July 2012.<sup>2</sup> It also draws on evidence from a telephone survey of a further 30 schools, examination results, other reports published by Ofsted, extended discussions with teachers, members of standing advisory councils on religious education (SACREs)<sup>3</sup> and other RE professionals, and wider surveys carried out by professional associations for RE. The sample of schools did not include voluntary aided schools or academies with a religious designation, for which separate inspection arrangements exist.

## Key findings

- Weaknesses in provision for RE meant that too many pupils were leaving school with low levels of subject knowledge and understanding.
- Achievement and teaching in RE in the 90 primary schools visited were less than good in six in 10 schools.
- Achievement and teaching in RE in the 91 secondary schools visited were only good or better in just under half of the schools. The picture was stronger at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3.
- Most of the GCSE teaching seen failed to secure the core aim of the examination specifications: that is, to enable pupils 'to adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion'.
- The provision made for GCSE in the majority of the secondary schools surveyed failed to provide enough curriculum time for pupils to extend and deepen their learning sufficiently.
- The teaching of RE in primary schools was not good enough because of weaknesses in teachers' understanding of the subject, a lack of emphasis on subject knowledge, poor and fragmented curriculum planning, very weak assessment, ineffective monitoring and teachers' limited access to effective training.
- The way in which RE was provided in many of the primary schools visited had the effect of isolating the subject from the rest of the curriculum. It led to low-level

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<sup>2</sup> For details of the schools visited, see Annex B.

<sup>3</sup> Every local authority must set up a standing advisory council on religious education (SACRE) to advise the authority on matters connected with RE.

learning and missed opportunities to support pupils' learning more widely, for example, in literacy.

- The quality of teaching in the secondary schools visited was rarely outstanding and was less than good in around half of the lessons seen. Common weaknesses included: insufficient focus on subject knowledge; an over-emphasis on a limited range of teaching strategies that focused simply on preparing pupils for assessments or examinations; insufficient opportunity for pupils to reflect and work independently; and over-structured and bureaucratic lesson planning with a limited focus on promoting effective learning.
- Although the proportion of pupils taking GCSE and GCE examinations in RE remains high, in 2011 nearly 250 schools and academies did not enter any pupils for an accredited qualification in GCSE.
- Around half of the secondary schools visited in 2011 and 2012 had changed, or were planning to change, their curriculum provision for RE in response to changes in education policy. The impact of these changes varied but it was rarely being monitored carefully.
- Assessment in RE remained a major weakness in the schools visited. It was inadequate in a fifth of the secondary schools and a third of the primary schools. Many teachers were confused about how to judge how well pupils were doing in RE.
- Access to high-quality RE training for teachers was poor. Training had a positive impact on improving provision in only a third of the schools visited; its impact was poor in a further third. Many of the schools surveyed said that support from their local authority and SACRE had diminished.
- Leadership and management of RE were good or better in half the schools visited; however, weaknesses were widespread in monitoring provision for RE and in planning to tackle the areas identified for improvement.
- The effectiveness of the current statutory arrangements for RE varies considerably. Recent changes in education policy are having a negative impact on the provision for RE in some schools and on the capacity of local authorities and SACREs to carry out their statutory responsibilities to monitor and support it.

## Recommendations

The Department for Education (DfE) should:

- review the current statutory arrangements for RE in relation to the principle of local determination to ensure these keep pace with wider changes in education policy, and revise or strengthen these arrangements as appropriate
- ensure that the Key Stage 4 examination specifications for RE promote better learning by focusing more strongly on deepening and extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of religion and belief
- ensure that the provision for religious education is monitored more closely, particularly in secondary schools.

The DfE should work in partnership with the professional associations for RE to:

- clarify the aims and purposes of RE and explore how these might be translated into high-quality planning, teaching and assessment
- improve and coordinate the provision for training in RE, both nationally and locally.

Local authorities, in partnership with SACREs and agreed syllabus conferences, should:

- ensure that sufficient resources are available for SACREs and agreed syllabus conferences to carry out their statutory functions with regard to RE and provide schools with high-quality guidance and support
- review their expectations about arrangements for RE, particularly at Key Stage 4, to ensure that schools have sufficient flexibility to match their provision more effectively to pupils' needs
- work in partnership with local schools and academies to build supportive networks to share best practice.

All schools should:

- ensure that learning in RE has a stronger focus on deepening pupils' understanding of the nature, diversity and impact of religion and belief in the contemporary world
- improve lesson planning so that teaching has a clear and straightforward focus on what pupils need to learn and engages their interest.

Primary schools should:

- raise the status of RE in the curriculum and strengthen the quality of subject leadership by improving the arrangements for developing teachers' subject expertise, sharing good practice, and monitoring the quality of the curriculum and teaching

- improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum to increase opportunities for pupils to work independently, make links with other subjects and tackle more challenging tasks.

Secondary schools should:

- ensure that the teaching of RE at GCSE level secures good opportunities for pupils to discuss and reflect on their learning, and extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of religion and belief
- ensure that the overall curriculum provision for RE is challenging and has greater coherence and continuity
- improve their monitoring of RE to ensure that any changes in provision are carefully evaluated in terms of their impact on pupils' progress and attainment.

## **Part A: Religious education in schools – the eight key challenges**

### **Low standards**

**Too many pupils leave school with scant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.**

1. In three fifths of the lessons seen, both in primary schools and throughout Key Stage 3, a key weakness was the superficial nature of pupils' subject knowledge and understanding. While pupils had a range of basic factual information about religions, their deeper understanding of the world of religion and belief was weak. For example, as pupils moved through primary and secondary education, inspectors noted that most pupils had had insufficient opportunity to develop:
  - an ability to offer informed responses to a range of profound religious, philosophical or ethical questions
  - an understanding of the way in which the beliefs, practices, values and ways of life of specific religions and non-religious world views are linked
  - an understanding and interpretation of the distinctive nature of religious language
  - a deepening understanding of the diverse nature of religion and belief in the contemporary world
  - a more sophisticated understanding of the impact, both positive and negative, that religion and belief can have on individuals and society.
2. The heavy focus on philosophical, social and moral issues in GCSE and GCE A-level RE meant that, in most of the schools visited, pupils at Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form did not redress this weakness in subject knowledge. As a result, too many pupils were leaving school with a very low level of religious literacy.

3. The weaknesses in pupils' achievement that were highlighted in the 2010 report were also evident in the schools visited for this survey.
  - Pupils rarely developed their skills of enquiry into religion: to ask more pertinent and challenging questions; to gather, interpret and analyse information; and to draw conclusions and evaluate issues using good reasoning.
  - Pupils' understanding was fragmented and they made few connections between different aspects of their learning in RE.
  - Evidence that pupils were making any meaningful links between 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion was very limited.
4. The 2010 report highlighted the concern that too many pupils were leaving school with a very limited understanding of Christianity. Many of the schools visited for the previous report 'did not pay sufficient attention to the progressive and systematic investigation of the core beliefs of Christianity'. The development of this understanding remains one of the weakest aspects of achievement. The current survey included a specific focus on the teaching of Christianity in 30 of the primary schools inspected, and the evidence suggests this is still a major concern. Inspectors judged pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity to be good or outstanding in only five of the schools. It was judged to be inadequate in 10 of them, making teaching about Christianity one of the weakest aspects of RE provision.
5. The lack of knowledge and understanding of religion inhibited pupils in considering how the study of religion and belief might have implications for exploring purpose, meaning and value in their own lives.
6. Local authorities are required by law to produce an agreed syllabus for RE for their schools. A key objective of many agreed syllabuses is to foster pupils' ability to 'learn from' their study of religion and belief. This includes reflecting on and responding to their own and others' experiences in the light of their learning about religion and belief. A key indicator of pupils' success in meeting this objective is that they can bring a deepening subject knowledge and understanding to their reflections. Where this depth was lacking, the principle that pupils should 'learn from' religion and belief was impoverished.

## **Weaknesses in teaching**

### **Too much RE teaching lacks challenge and does not extend pupils' thinking sufficiently.**

7. RE teaching in primary schools was less than good in six in 10 schools visited because of:
  - weaknesses in teachers' understanding of the subject
  - poor and fragmented curriculum planning

- weak assessment
  - ineffective monitoring
  - limited access to effective training.
8. In the secondary schools visited, the quality of teaching was rarely outstanding and, at Key Stage 3, was less than good in around half of the lessons observed. Common weaknesses included:
- an over-emphasis on a limited range of teaching strategies, which focused mainly on preparing pupils for assessments or examinations
  - limited opportunities for pupils to reflect and work independently
  - over-structured and bureaucratic lesson planning with insufficient stress on promoting effective learning.
9. The previous report highlighted the skills of enquiry as key to improving teaching in RE. Inspectors saw some evidence that enquiry was being used more, but the teachers using such approaches were not always aware of their purpose.
10. Inspectors noted a number of factors that inhibited the use of enquiry in enhancing pupils' learning.
- **Not capitalising on a good start.** Elements of enquiry were used at the start of a topic but were not sustained. For example, pupils were asked to identify questions but teachers rarely extended these into a genuine investigation.
  - **Rushing too quickly to 'learn from' religion.** Teachers had gained the impression that every lesson should include some element of personal reflection, so the opportunity to sustain the enquiry was limited by rushing pupils towards a personal response before they had investigated it properly.
  - **Not taking risks.** Teachers were unwilling to open up enquiry in case pupils asked challenging or controversial questions with which they felt ill-equipped to deal.
  - **Not being clear enough about the focus of the enquiry.** Teachers adopted an enquiry approach but did not intervene to make sure that the pupils maintained a focus on the key questions driving the enquiry.
  - **Not giving pupils enough time to process their findings and extend their enquiry.** Teachers provided opportunities for gathering and summarising factual information but then moved the pupils quickly to a superficial summary instead of extending and deepening their understanding of the material.
  - **Limiting enquiry by directing pupils to a 'happy end'.** Teachers signalled to pupils that they wanted a positive 'right answer' about the value



of religion, limiting the opportunity to explore more controversial possibilities.

- **Focusing too much on the product of the enquiry rather than the process.** Teachers drew attention to the way in which the pupils presented what they had found out rather than extending the enquiry into more challenging areas of evaluation and reflection.
11. In the secondary schools visited inspectors identified a wider range of factors that limited the effectiveness of teaching, including the following.
- **Learning objectives communicated mechanistically.** At the beginning of many of the RE lessons observed, teachers expected the pupils to copy the objectives for the lesson into their books. Too often this process was highly formulaic and took up too much time. Rather than opening up the 'story' of the learning, it reduced pupils' interest. Frequently, teachers did not tell the pupils how the lesson would develop. In the best practice, however, the teacher and pupils discussed what the lesson would be about and where it was leading.
  - **Over-complex lesson planning.** Many teachers used a generic form for lesson planning. While seeking consistency is understandable, many of the plans seen required teachers to refer to a large number of cross-curricular and whole-school issues. Because teachers were more anxious to complete the plan than concentrate on securing high-quality RE learning, the focus on RE was often sacrificed. One lesson plan seen, for example, required teachers to provide information on: reading and literacy strategies, including key words and literacy objectives; numeracy skills; links to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; higher-order Bloom's questions; and progress indicators.
  - **Over-use of assessment levels to review progress in lessons at the expense of genuine reflection on learning.** A common weakness, allied to the mechanistic use of learning objectives, was teachers' constant requests to pupils to review their progress by referring to RE levels or sub-levels of attainment, rather than asking them to reflect on and discuss whether they had gained a deeper insight into the topic. Assessment for learning became formulaic: simply the checking of progress against the level descriptions.
  - **Learning driven by too many tasks.** The most recent Ofsted report on English, *Moving English forward*, noted that: 'some teachers appear to believe that the more activities they can cram into the lesson, the more effective it will be'.<sup>4</sup> This was also common in many RE lessons seen. Superficially, pupils were active throughout the lesson, but the tasks did not build their understanding progressively. The purpose of, and links between, tasks were often not made clear.

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<sup>4</sup> *Moving English forward* (110118), Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110118](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110118).

- **Narrow use of digital technology.** Teachers were using digital technology increasingly, especially presentation slides. While sometimes this technology was used effectively to engage and focus pupils, too often it left pupils little scope to think for themselves. In many cases the presentation slides defined the outcome of the lesson, leaving little or no opportunity for pupils to explore their own ideas or questions independently: all the thinking had already been done for them. Generally, technology in secondary schools was limited to the teacher's use, with little use of it by the pupils for research or presentation.
- **Too much unstructured discussion and group work.** Providing opportunities for discussion was a common feature of many of the RE lessons seen. However, too often the tendency was to allow any opinion or viewpoint to stand unopposed, reinforcing a view among pupils that, in matters related to religion or morality, one opinion was as valid as any other. There was insufficient focus on exploring weaker or stronger lines of argument. It was rare to find teachers establishing a climate in which pupils recognised that their opinions needed to be underpinned by good reasoning, and that some points of view were better supported and argued for than others.

## Curriculum problems

### Weaknesses in the curriculum limited the effectiveness of RE

12. A recurring theme from the survey visits was that many subject leaders found it difficult to develop a curriculum for RE that was effective in securing progression, continuity, coherence, breadth and balance in pupils' learning.
13. The quality of the curriculum was less than good in nearly two thirds of the primary schools visited. It was good or better in just under two fifths of the secondary schools and inadequate in 11.
14. Almost half of the primary schools visited had tried to develop new approaches towards RE, often through a more creative approach to curriculum planning that was also being developed to teach other subjects, such as history or geography. However, for a number of reasons, headteachers and subject leaders found it difficult to incorporate RE within this approach. They rarely chose RE content to drive a topic and the subject was therefore always trying to fit in with the other subjects. In addition, the schools often found it difficult to incorporate the prescription of the locally agreed syllabus within their more integrated curriculum.
15. The reasons for the lack of progress in improving the RE curriculum in primary schools included the following.
  - **Providing RE teaching through short topics led to fragmented rather than sustained learning.** This was reported in detail in the 2010 report and it remains a factor that inhibited progress in improving the

primary RE curriculum. The majority of the primary schools visited organised RE in six half-termly units a year, taught in weekly 45-minute or 60-minute sessions. Few schools could explain clearly why they had adopted this provision.

- **The selection and sequencing of RE topics often lacked a clear rationale.** Many of the primary schools visited did not use clear criteria when planning the RE curriculum. They frequently relied on published schemes of work, but these varied in quality and were not always easy to understand. Teachers were rarely able to explain how any unit of work built on previous learning. The narrow content of too many units failed to engage pupils in broader key ideas or questions. It was common for older pupils to say that they were repeating work they had done previously. Greater challenge in the learning was not obvious.
- **Many RE topics lacked a clear structure.** Weak planning commonly meant units of work lacked coherence. This usually reflected the lack of subject expertise of those involved in planning or the tendency for teachers to choose tasks at random from the scheme of work. It often involved confusion about how to link and integrate 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion.
- **Very little thought was given to assessment when planning the curriculum.** In the schools where the RE curriculum was not good enough, it was rare to find any consideration of how pupils' progress would be assessed. As a result, teachers were often unclear about the level of challenge they needed to provide and how this might extend pupils' earlier learning.
- **RE was sometimes confused with the school's wider contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.** Some schools still confused RE with other subjects or aspects. It was not uncommon, for example, to find schools presenting evidence in RE portfolios about pupils 'learning from' religion that included work from the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, charity activities, visits to old people's homes, Christmas pantomimes or literacy work on topics such as 'feelings'. While these were worthwhile activities, they were not evidence of 'learning from' religion.
- **Many agreed syllabuses and guidance did not provide effective models of curriculum planning.** Some recent agreed syllabuses and their accompanying guidance provided examples of good practice in using enquiry, but these were not sufficiently widespread and it was taking time for them to have an impact. While some new syllabuses aspired towards an enquiry-based approach, they lacked the necessary detail and guidance. Some examples of planning that accompanied agreed syllabuses were poor, often compounding teachers' confusion about RE.

16. In the secondary schools, weaknesses in the curriculum often related to a lack of clarity about the purpose of the subject at Key Stage 3. A persistent problem

was that planned work was not sufficiently challenging. Too often it failed to capitalise on the higher levels of thinking that pupils can bring to their learning from Key Stage 2. Pupils frequently commented that the work they did when studying religions was not challenging enough.

17. In order to tackle this, an increasing number of departments visited were moving towards a Key Stage 3 curriculum which concentrated more heavily on GCSE-style, 'issues-based', social, moral or philosophical topics such as 'Rights and Responsibilities' or 'The Environment'. However, these changes often resulted in a lack of balance and continuity in the overall secondary RE curriculum. In practice, it meant that pupils were not developing a sufficient level of knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. As a result, when they came to try to apply religious perspectives to various moral or social issues they did not have the depth of knowledge they needed.
18. Many RE subject leaders to whom inspectors spoke commented that they did not have enough guidance about ways of developing more challenging topics about religion and belief. Too often they moved to study social and ethical issues because they could not see a way of making the direct study of religion challenging and engaging. It was rare to find topics related to, for example, the study of deeper aspects of religious belief, the controversial nature of religion, or the changing patterns of religion and belief in the contemporary world.

## **A confused sense of purpose**

### **Confusion about the purpose and aims of RE had a negative impact on the quality of teaching, curriculum planning and the effectiveness of assessment.**

19. The 2010 report highlighted that a key factor limiting the effectiveness of RE teaching was many teachers' uncertainty about the rationale for, and the aims and purposes of, RE. In particular, the report noted the need to produce further guidance for teachers about defining attainment and progress in RE, and how to structure learning and assessment.
20. The current survey found further evidence of teachers' confusion about what they were trying to achieve in RE and how to translate this into effective planning, teaching and assessment. In many of the schools visited, the subject was increasingly losing touch with the idea that RE should be primarily concerned with helping pupils to make sense of the world of religion and belief.
21. The confusion about the purpose of RE is exemplified in a number of ways.
  - Many primary teachers, including subject leaders, were finding it difficult to separate RE from the more general, whole-school promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
  - Many schools showed a strong tendency to detach learning in RE from the more in-depth study of religion and belief. Too often teachers thought they

could bring depth to the pupils' learning by inviting them to reflect on or write introspectively about their own experience rather than rigorously investigate and evaluate religion and belief.

- In the primary schools visited, considerable weaknesses in teaching about Christianity frequently stemmed from a lack of clarity about the purpose of the subject. For example, Christian stories, particularly miracles, were often used to encourage pupils to reflect on their own experience without any opportunity to investigate the stories' significance within the religion itself.
  - Much GCSE and, increasingly, Key Stage 3 work focused primarily on the study of philosophical, moral and social issues. The work lacked any significant development of pupils' understanding of religion and belief – and frequently distorted it.
22. Assessment of RE was inadequate in a third of the primary schools and a fifth of the secondary schools visited. A key reason for this was a lack of clarity about defining attainment and progress in RE. Widespread misunderstanding of the levels of attainment led to poor practice in assessing pupils' progress.
  23. Inspectors found that the rationale for RE in much of the guidance teachers were using lacked coherence and was too complex or blurred. A key factor preventing RE from realising its potential was the tension between, on the one hand, the academic goal of extending and deepening pupils' ability to make sense of religion and belief and, on the other, the wider goal of contributing towards their overall personal development. Teachers will struggle to plan and teach the subject effectively while this tension remains unresolved.
  24. There is still an urgent need to clarify the purpose of RE for teachers and to promote this through straightforward guidance. Such guidance should set out, clearly and coherently, the subject's rationale, its core aims, the content to be studied, appropriate approaches to learning, and the way in which attainment and progress are defined.

## Limitations in leadership and management

**The leadership and management of RE are not strong enough to secure the improvements that are needed.**

25. The effectiveness of the leadership of RE was a crucial factor affecting standards and the quality of provision. However, inspectors also found that too many schools were not giving a high enough priority to RE and this was having an impact on the progress that pupils were making.
26. Many schools showed some strengths in the leadership of RE. Subject leaders often had a high level of commitment and many headteachers, notably in primary schools, saw RE as playing a key role in promoting their school's values. However, too often, this aspiration was not translated into high-quality provision. In practice, RE often had a very low priority, and its provision and effectiveness were not carefully monitored and improved.

27. The low priority given to RE in many of the primary schools visited was reflected in a variety of ways.
  - Monitoring of the quality of teaching was often superficial and did not focus sufficiently on the quality of the pupils' learning.
  - RE lessons were often squeezed out by other curriculum areas. It was not uncommon for inspectors to find long gaps in pupils' RE books when no work had been done. However, monitoring of the teaching of RE frequently did not identify or tackle this problem.
  - Very little provision was made for staff training in RE or for subject leaders to work alongside colleagues to develop their practice.
  - In over half of the schools visited, some or all of the RE was taught by someone other than the class teacher.
  - Subject leaders often had no clear idea about the relative strengths and weaknesses of pupils' progress in RE. As a result, improvement plans for RE rarely focused on raising standards.
  - RE was often isolated from developments in the wider curriculum.
28. The effectiveness of the leadership and management of RE in many of the secondary schools visited was also a concern. Inspectors found too much variability in the nature, quality and effectiveness of their provision for RE. The overall allocation of time for RE and the deployment of staff and resources to the subject were being reduced in around a quarter of the schools visited. This is considered in more detail later in the report.
29. There were also weaknesses in the quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning. There was a more positive picture of subject leaders' use of data to track pupils' progress at Key Stage 4; most of the schools visited had detailed evidence about performance at GCSE. However, in most cases, these data were not being analysed or used effectively; very often the subject leader had not had enough guidance in interpreting the information. There was little effective use of data to evaluate the quality of provision at Key Stage 3.
30. Improvement planning often focused on identifying ways of boosting the examination results of specific groups of pupils at GCSE. However, it failed to identify more fundamental problems in teaching and the curriculum that needed to be tackled in order to improve provision and raise standards.
31. A standard model for timetabling RE within the curriculum of secondary schools no longer existed: schools were exploring a variety of models. However, few of the schools had a clear rationale for the changes they made in their provision or had a robust programme of monitoring to evaluate the impact of the changes on pupils' progress and attainment.



## Weaknesses in examination provision at Key Stage 4

**Most GCSE teaching in RE failed to achieve the core aim of the examination specifications, that is, to enable pupils to 'adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion'.**

32. The 2010 report highlighted concerns that the GCSE specifications and examinations were not providing a good enough platform for extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of religion. The findings of this survey confirm that this remains a significant concern.
33. Many of the GCSE specifications in religious studies focus heavily on the study of philosophical, moral and social issues, with pupils being expected to apply religious perspectives to them. This approach frequently leads pupils to a superficial and often distorted understanding of religion. In the schools visited, work related to investigating religions and beliefs was often too easy. One pupil expressed a common view: 'We don't really need to understand the fundamental beliefs and practices of a religion in order to take this exam; we just have to repeat what the religion teaches about various issues.'
34. Often, pupils' understanding was not only superficial but involved a distorted understanding of religious life. While pupils could usually identify, for example, that Catholics and Protestants had different views about a range of ethical issues, they could rarely explain why these differences existed, discuss how a member of each denomination would approach a moral decision, or describe the diversity within the traditions.
35. Teaching in many of the GCSE lessons observed placed too much emphasis on ways of passing the examination rather than focusing on extending pupils' learning about religion and belief. Two related factors contributed to this.
  - Curriculum provision for GCSE in many of the schools left insufficient time to deepen pupils' understanding of the subject. A number of the schools visited had recently switched to providing a full-course qualification in the time they had previously allocated to a short course.
  - Many course specifications and examination questions encourage formulaic learning because of the superficial connections pupils are forced to make between religious perspectives and philosophical, ethical or social issues.
36. The current reforms to qualifications at Key Stage 4 provide an opportunity to reshape the examination specifications for RE to ensure they provide a better, more rigorous basis for extending and deepening pupils' subject knowledge and understanding. Schools need to consider carefully the time they allocate to examination study in RE to protect this important aim.

## Gaps in training

### **The quality of specialist expertise and access to training to support teachers' professional development in RE are often weak.**

37. The 2010 report highlighted concerns about the low level of subject expertise and the limited training opportunities in RE in many of the schools surveyed. The evidence from this survey indicates that access to high-quality training in RE is a continuing – and growing – concern. Training had a positive impact on improving provision in just over a quarter of the schools surveyed, and was inadequate in about a third.
38. The high proportion of non-specialist teaching of RE in secondary schools remains a problem. In around a third of the schools visited, a lack of subject expertise limited the effectiveness of the teaching of RE.
39. The National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) survey of RE in secondary schools, carried out in July 2012, found a quarter of the 625 schools responding to its survey reported a decline in the level of specialist RE staffing.<sup>5</sup> It also found that, in nearly half of the schools that responded, at least one in 10, and in some cases one in five, RE lessons were taught by teachers whose main time was spent in another curriculum area. The most recent DfE workforce survey also reported that only 73% of RE lessons in secondary schools were taught by teachers with a subject-related post-A-level qualification, compared with 87% in history and 84% in geography.<sup>6</sup>
40. In many of the primary schools visited, the senior leadership or RE subject leader acknowledged that the level of subject expertise among the staff was generally weak. Many of the teachers to whom inspectors spoke did not feel confident about teaching RE. They were often worried they might 'say the wrong thing' or were unsure about what they were trying to achieve in RE. Discussion with newly qualified or recently qualified primary teachers confirmed that very few had had any significant RE training during their initial training and sometimes had had little opportunity to teach RE in their placement schools.
41. Some primary headteachers openly acknowledged that because of a lack of confidence about RE, some staff preferred to take their planning, preparation and assessment time during these lessons, handing responsibility for the subject to a qualified teaching assistant or supply teacher.

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<sup>5</sup> *An analysis of a survey of teachers on the impact of the EBacc on student opportunity to study GCSE RS*, NATRE, 2012; [www.natre.org.uk/free.php](http://www.natre.org.uk/free.php).

<sup>6</sup> Full data can be found in the Statistical First Release (see table 14) ; [www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001062/index.shtml](http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001062/index.shtml).



42. The evidence indicates a link between access to training in RE and the overall effectiveness of the subject, particularly in primary schools. In the majority of cases, this was directly linked to the capacity of the local authority to provide such training and support. In nearly every case where such support was not available, it had a direct and negative impact on the effectiveness of the teaching and subject leadership. RE was generally better where the locally agreed syllabus was well conceived with clear accompanying guidance, but too often the capacity of local authorities to provide this support was diminishing.
43. These findings about weaknesses in access to training to support teachers of RE are reflected in the conclusions of the 2013 report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on RE. Its report, *RE: the truth unmasked*, noted:
- ‘in nearly 40% of schools RE teachers have inadequate access to continuing professional development.’<sup>7</sup>

## **Impact of recent education policy changes on RE in schools**

### **Recent changes in education policy have significant negative implications for the provision and support of RE.**

44. Since 2011, a range of RE professional associations including the RE Council for England and Wales (REC), National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE), the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE), and the Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) have expressed concerns to Ofsted that recent changes in education policy have been having a negative impact on the provision of and support for RE, both nationally and locally. These concerns have been reinforced by the 2013 APPG report which concluded:

RE has been the unintended victim of a combination of major policy changes rather than the subject of a deliberate attack. Nevertheless, the combined impact of so many severe setbacks in such a short time has been to convey the message that, even though it is a statutory subject, RE is of less value than other subjects.

45. The policies referred to have included:
- the decisions to exclude RE from the list of EBacc subjects and to remove short courses from the headline measures of school performance
  - the reduction in teacher training places for RE and, in 2013, the withdrawal of bursaries for RE trainee teachers

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<sup>7</sup> The All Party Parliamentary Group on Education, *RE: the truth unmasked – the supply of and support for religious education teachers*, Religious Education Council of England and Wales, 2013; <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/appg/news/2013-03-18/appg-re-final-report-the-truth-unmasked>.

- the way in which the roles and responsibilities of local authorities and SACREs for RE have not kept pace with wider changes: these include the expansion of the academies programme and reductions in local government spending
  - the decision not to fund an RE subject review in England to run in parallel with the DfE review of the National Curriculum and the loss of publicly funded national support for curriculum development work in the subject.
46. The professional associations and the APPG cited a range of evidence to support their concerns that these changes were having a considerable and detrimental impact on RE. For example, the 2012 NATRE survey reported widespread concerns about secondary schools that were reducing GCSE provision, failing to meet their statutory responsibilities for the subject, and reducing curriculum time and staffing for RE.<sup>8</sup>
47. Ofsted's current survey of RE and an analysis of recent GCSE data have substantiated some of these concerns, although the evidence is not always conclusive, partly because of the relatively small sample of schools visited. In addition, Ofsted does not directly monitor the work of SACREs and local authorities in relation to RE. However, in around half of the secondary schools visited between January 2011 and July 2012 headteachers described pressures to reduce provision for RE because of what they perceived were the demands of recent changes in education policy.
48. In relation to the exclusion of RE from the list of EBacc subjects and the removal of short courses from the headline measures of school performance, it is too early to come to a definitive conclusion about their impact on GCSE entries. Ofsted's survey evidence is inconclusive. However, the overall numbers entered for a GCSE qualification in religious studies in England fell from around 427,000 in 2012 to 390,000 in 2013. There has also been a significant shift away from short-course to full-course GCSE. In 2013 full-course GCSE numbers in England rose by around 10% in 2013 to nearly 240,000, but short-course numbers fell by almost 30% to 150,000.
49. There is evidence, however, of a more significant reduction in the provision for RE in some schools. The headteachers of these schools cited decisions about the EBacc and short-course GCSEs as reasons for the changes they were making.
- In school A, pupils taking the full range of EBacc subjects were no longer taught any RE; this failure to meet statutory requirements was coupled with reduced staffing for RE. The result was that more pupils in Key Stage 3 were taught RE by non-specialists and the quality of the teaching had declined.

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<sup>8</sup> *An analysis of a survey of teachers on the impact of the EBacc on student opportunity to study GCSE RS*, NATRE, 2012; <http://www.natre.org.uk/free.php>.

- In school B, RE was no longer a timetabled subject. It had been replaced by the tracking of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum.
  - In school C, provision for RE at Key Stage 4 had been reduced by two thirds and pupils could no longer take a full-course GCSE as an option.
  - In school D, RE at Key Stage 4 had been removed from the curriculum and replaced by termly RE conferences. Planned visits to places of worship in Years 8 and 9 had been dropped because pupils would no longer be taking RE at GCSE level.
  - Throughout school E, RE was no longer taught by specialists; instead it was taught by tutors in tutorial time, along with PSHE and citizenship, with a negative impact on the quality of the pupils' learning.
50. In addition, a growing number of schools were adjusting their curriculum to increase the number of pupils taking a full-course GCSE, but without considering the impact on the pupils' learning and the overall balance of the RE curriculum, as in the following examples.
- In some schools pupils were being prepared for the full-course GCSE in the time previously given to a short course. This time was insufficient to deepen and extend pupils' subject knowledge and understanding.
  - Other schools were starting GCSE early – in Year 8, in one school. This gave insufficient time for the subject at Key Stage 3, meaning that many of the pupils did not have the necessary maturity and basic subject knowledge to engage effectively with some of the challenging issues at GCSE level.
51. The capacity and effectiveness of SACREs to undertake their pivotal role in determining, supporting and monitoring RE is under increasing pressure in many local authorities.
52. The successful expansion of the academies programme means that a growing number of schools are moving outside local authority control and are therefore no longer required to follow the locally agreed syllabus. Some authorities now have very few, if any, secondary schools but they are still required to resource and produce a locally agreed syllabus for Key Stages 3, 4 and 5.
53. Many SACRE members have reported deterioration in the quality of professional expertise they receive as well as declining financial support from their local authority. The National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) reports that financial pressures make it increasingly difficult for many SACREs to find the expertise and resources to fulfil their statutory duties for RE effectively. A 2012 survey by NASACRE found that an increasing number of SACREs described reduced professional development opportunities in RE, a loss of professional advice and consultant posts for RE in local authorities, and a reduced number of advanced

skills teachers for the subject. These were among the major challenges facing the SACREs.<sup>9</sup>

54. In addition, the loss of publicly funded national support for curriculum development work in RE has further isolated RE from wider changes in education and reduced the support for SACREs in addressing the need for curriculum development work highlighted in the previous Ofsted report.
55. The reduced capacity of SACREs was reflected in the increasing difficulties faced by many of the schools visited in obtaining guidance and support from their SACRE. Schools in a number of local authorities reported that they had had no support or guidance for implementing their new agreed syllabus.
56. The 2013 APPG report found, similarly:

The ability of SACREs to provide support for teachers at a local level has been dramatically reduced by local authority funding decisions and the impact of the academisation programme.<sup>10</sup>

57. Ofsted's 2010 report recommended a review of the current legal arrangements to ensure that they provided the best basis for securing high-quality RE. In particular, the report questioned whether the principle of local determination was working effectively. It also recommended that if the current arrangements were maintained, stronger mechanisms should be established for supporting local authorities and SACREs, and holding them to account for their work in relation to RE.
58. The DfE has reaffirmed its policy that RE is locally determined, but has taken no specific action in relation to the 2010 recommendations. However, the gulf between local authorities that support and monitor RE effectively and those that find this role impossible continues to widen. Whether local determination still provides the best basis for improving the quality of RE in schools should therefore be reviewed urgently.

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<sup>9</sup> NASACRE survey of local authority support for SACREs, 2012; [www.nasacre.org.uk/media/file/NASACRE\\_QtoS\\_apl11.pdf](http://www.nasacre.org.uk/media/file/NASACRE_QtoS_apl11.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Education, *RE: the truth unmasked – the supply of and support for religious education teachers*, Religious Education Council of England and Wales, 2013; <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/appg/news/2013-03-18/appg-re-final-report-the-truth-unmasked>.

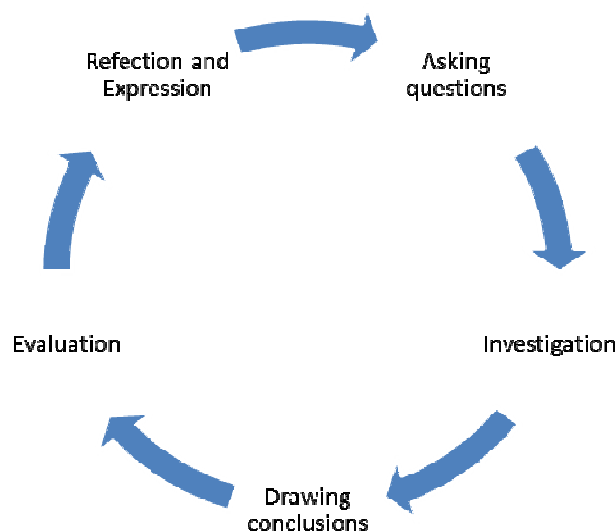
## Part B: Learning from the best

59. Underlying the eight challenges in Part A of this report is the fundamental need to improve the teaching, curriculum and leadership of RE in schools to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. Part B provides examples of good practice in four key areas:

- placing enquiry at the heart of learning – as a key to improving teaching
- high-quality leadership and management in primary schools – as a key to improvement and raising the status of RE
- forward-thinking leadership and management in secondary schools – as a key to securing provision for RE for the future
- effective RE in special schools – adapting RE to meet the distinctive needs of pupils who have learning difficulties.

### Placing enquiry at the heart of learning

60. The current report highlights, as did the 2010 report, that in the most effective RE teaching, enquiry is placed at the heart of learning. However, few of the schools visited had a well-defined approach to this. Enquiry was most effective and consistent where it was based on a straightforward model – for example:



61. Effective enquiry in RE:

- **is not age limited** – effective enquiry was found at all ages
- **involves sustained learning** – in which pupils set up the enquiry, carry it out, evaluate their learning and revisit the questions set
- **starts by engaging pupils in their learning** – making sure they can see the relevance and importance of the enquiry and how it relates to their own concerns

- **allows pupils time to gather information and draw conclusions before asking them to reflect on or apply their learning** – the focus on ‘learning from’ usually comes later as they ask the key question – so what?
- **enables pupils to reconsider their initial thinking and extend their enquiry as they begin to see new levels of possibility** – if pupils have identified key questions at the outset, they reconsider these, add more, or re-prioritise them
- **allows pupils to use their creativity and imagination** – ensuring that experiential learning and opportunities to foster spiritual and creative development are built into the process of enquiry
- **emphasises ‘impersonal evaluation’** – asking pupils to give well-founded reasons and justify their conclusions or views rather than simply expressing their personal feelings or responses to the enquiry.

Good examples of learning based on enquiry are described in the case studies below.

### Using ‘big questions’ to give a context for enquiry

62. Engaging pupils from the outset in ‘big questions’ provides a context for carrying out an investigation.

In history, **Year 5** pupils had been studying the impact of a sea disaster on a fishing community. In RE they used a worry box to record any things that distressed them about life today. This led to a discussion about bereavement and how different religions make sense of death. The teacher used a range of resources (such as Michelangelo’s *Last Judgement*) to stimulate questions about life after death. One pupil said, ‘I thought heaven was supposed to be nice!’ Pupils investigated the response of two religions (Christianity and Hinduism) to the question: ‘What happens when we die?’ They showed exceptional independence in completing the task, quickly gained a good range of viewpoints about life after death, and engaged seriously and sensitively when sharing their ideas and findings.

A **Year 7** class with lower-attaining pupils was investigating the five pillars of Islam. The teacher used the game of Jenga to explore the idea of creating strong foundations and introduced the question: ‘Why are pillars so important to Muslims?’ The pupils were introduced to the idea of being a detective – looking for clues, trying to work out motives, weighing up evidence, in-depth investigations – to set up mini-research tasks into the five pillars. The pupils engaged themselves with this very effectively and made excellent progress. By the end they were able to explain how the pillars related to the idea of strong foundations, how commitment was important, how duties can be enjoyed, and understood the idea of the ‘power of five’.

## Using reflection and creativity effectively to deepen pupils' understanding of religious material

63. The most effective RE teaching integrated opportunities for reflection and creativity effectively within the process of enquiry which arose directly from pupils' engagement with religious material.

In a **Year 3 class** studying the topic of angels, the teacher gave the pupils a range of images to help them decide on words they would use to describe an angel. Their ideas included 'shy', 'secretive', 'protective', 'powerful' and 'frightening'. An atmosphere of reflection was skilfully created using music and silence. Pupils were given a series of scenarios to extend their ideas: how would they greet an angel; what questions would they ask an angel? The topic led to an extended study of the idea of angels.

A **Year 8** class focused on why Buddha is often portrayed sitting down. After examining a series of *mudras* (bodily postures of the Buddha), pupils considered their initial responses: 'What can I see?' 'What might it mean?' This task was undertaken in an atmosphere of stillness which prompted the pupils to move beyond their initial ideas to offer observations such as 'he appears tranquil', 'a good listener', and so on. Subsequent discussion probed these ideas further in terms of pupils' ideas about peace and tranquillity, and explored the symbol of the lotus, ideas of darkness and light, and the imagery of the Bodhi tree. The session set the scene for subsequent study of the life and impact of the Buddha by engaging pupils' interest through personal responses to Buddhist imagery.

## Using enquiry effectively when investigating religions

64. Where RE worked well, teachers gave pupils carefully structured opportunities to find out for themselves, make their own connections and draw their own conclusions.

In a highly effective **Year 2** lesson on Diwali, following work on the story, the teacher distributed a wide range of resources (including artefacts, DVD clips, books, ICT links) about the festival across a number of work stations. The pupils' task was to visit each work station to find out as much as they could about the festival, seeing if they could make links between the different resources and the story they had been studying. The pupils found the tasks exciting and quickly worked together using a wide range of skills. They were able to speculate about possible meanings of objects (for example, the templates for mehndi patterns) and then revise their ideas when they gathered more information. They made important links between the features of the celebration and the story (diva lamps and the celebration of Sita's return), and identified the symbolism of the artefacts (the way Rama is shown to be a god).



## Using enquiry approaches to promote questioning and discussion about religious material

65. Using the approach of philosophical enquiry can deepen and extend pupils' investigation into religion.

One school successfully employed a Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach in the teaching of aspects of RE. Pupils were set problems to solve as a feature of work in RE. For example, in a topic on ritual, Year 4 pupils generated key questions for further investigation, including: 'Would it matter if you missed a ritual?'; 'What is the difference between a ritual and a routine?'; 'What rituals are important to me?'; 'Are there any bad rituals?'; 'How would I feel if my ritual was taken away from me?'<sup>11</sup>

In another school, a Year 7 class used a similar approach to explore the design argument for the existence of God. Pictures of a flower and a computer were used to explore the idea of 'design'. What do we mean by 'designed'? Are only human products designed? Is the natural world designed? The approach was developed with pupils building on each other's ideas ('I agree/disagree with you because ...'). The story of Paley's watch led a further discussion of God as a designer. Pupils made outstanding progress, were very engaged throughout the lesson and demonstrated high levels of insight into the argument.

## Using digital technology to support enquiry

66. Particularly in primary schools, teachers were increasingly using high-quality, web-based resources to stimulate pupils' learning and provide examples of living religious practice. Similarly, pupils made greater use of technology to research RE topics and present their findings.

In one school, **Year 6** pupils had laptops with access to the school's Wi-Fi and intranet. They used the laptops for a task on Judaism, a religion which they had not studied before. Each of six groups had a named Jewish artefact connected to Shabbat. The task was to carry out a mini enquiry into its nature and use. Each group was challenged to research information and produce a digital presentation to summarise its findings. The technology was integral to the learning, easily accessed, and provided information that the pupils could not have found from books.

## Building the skills of effective argument into the process of enquiry

67. In the following example, the processes of enquiry were built systematically into GCSE work.

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<sup>11</sup> More details about this example can be found on the Ofsted good practice website. [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-enquiry-based-religious-education-%E2%80%98philosophy-for-children%E2%80%99-practice](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-enquiry-based-religious-education-%E2%80%98philosophy-for-children%E2%80%99-practice).



In a school where GCSE provision was highly effective, the teaching focused strongly on developing the skills of argument, embedding these skills into pupils' thinking rather than simply asking them to practise examination techniques. Pupils used the WAWOS technique, described below, to sharpen their learning. This involved a five-stage approach:

**W**hat do you think and why?

**A**pply religious teaching as an example.

**W**hat is another point of view?

**O**ffer religious teachings for another point of view.

**S**uggest how your response might impact on your life or learning.

This five-fold approach was used to shape class discussions, develop written work, focus assessment and set targets for improvement.

68. Despite these and many other examples of effective practice, teachers need further support to translate the principles of good enquiry into curriculum planning, teaching and assessment. In particular, guidance is needed on:
- a clear rationale for the place of enquiry in RE – for example, how the principle of asking open-ended critical questions about religion is balanced with the need to respect differences of opinion and lifestyle
  - breadth and balance in selecting enquiries, based on a clear, shared understanding of the rationale for RE
  - an appropriate repertoire of approaches to learning that match different types of enquiry, for example:
    - using experiential and creative activities where pupils need to develop their insight into the 'experience' of religion
    - using reasoned argument and debate when pupils are exploring controversial issues
    - using investigative and interpretative skills when pupils need to gather, analyse and present information
  - how to sequence enquiries to make sure pupils build effectively on prior learning and can see the relevance of their investigations
  - how the process of enquiry can be built into the way pupils' progress in RE is defined and assessed.

## High-quality leadership and management in primary schools

69. Effective RE in primary schools was invariably the result of high-quality leadership and management.

## Effective subject leadership

70. Senior leaders took an active interest in RE, discussed priorities with the subject leader and provided a wider whole-school context to promote improvement. Effective subject leaders had a clear vision for RE. They kept themselves fully abreast of current developments and maintained strong links with local support networks. They took an active approach to planning, monitoring and improving the subject, and they routinely briefed senior leaders and governors about it.

In a school judged 'satisfactory' by Ofsted in its whole-school inspection, teaching and learning had been identified as priorities for improvement. The headteacher chose RE as a context for development work to promote pupils' independence and more effective discussion. The subject leader undertook training in thinking skills, introduced these within RE and then shared them more widely across the school. As a result, the pupils' RE improved significantly and the subject took the lead in promoting good learning across the school.

In another school where RE was highly effective, the subject leader had worked closely with the staff to identify a set of 'Top Ten' expectations so there would be a shared understanding of the key features of effective RE teaching:

- encouraging pupils to ask 'why' questions
- posing challenging questions
- insisting on openness and understanding
- seeking to challenge stereotypes
- promoting 'subject dispositions'<sup>12</sup> throughout the day
- having high expectations about discussion
- using key vocabulary
- using previously assessed work to plan learning
- giving pupils time to discuss gritty [sic] issues
- providing opportunities to talk about spirituality.

As a result, the quality of RE provision was highly consistent across the school.

## Effective monitoring, self-evaluation and improvement planning

71. Monitoring and improvement were effective when they focused clearly on raising standards and improving provision. Staff and pupils were actively involved in evaluating the subject and identifying improvement priorities.

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<sup>12</sup> This term was used by the school, reflecting a feature of their local Agreed Syllabus.

Responding to the 2010 Ofsted report, a subject leader identified the need to evaluate the quality of the pupils' understanding of Christianity and the effectiveness of the provision for teaching about it. Monitoring activities had this as their focus. The outcome of the evaluation was shared with the staff and led to significant improvements in the teaching about Christianity across the school.

In another school, the subject leader carried out an annual 'mind-mapping' exercise with all the staff to explore the subject's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) and identify areas for improvement. A small group of pupils met regularly to discuss their experience of RE and contribute to improvement.

## Effective professional development

72. Where professional development was effective, the subject leader discussed training priorities with the senior leadership team and ensured that these were incorporated into the subject improvement plan. A strategic approach was adopted towards training for RE, capitalising effectively on opportunities as they arose.

The subject leader had identified that the provision for RE (six mini-units a year, taught weekly) tended to fragment learning and isolated the subject from the rest of the curriculum. She recognised a professional development need in terms of helping staff rethink their approach to planning RE. She worked in collaboration with two colleagues who were confident about teaching RE to trial a different approach for one term. They taught RE as a single topic over three weeks. This led to much more sustained learning and forged stronger cross-curricular links. The outcomes were shared at a staff meeting as part of wider staff training in RE.

In another school, the subject leader recognised that the newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and other new staff often arrived at the school expressing low levels of confidence about teaching RE. In response, she targeted the CPD opportunities on these staff, building a strong RE component into their induction programme and, as a result, strengthening subject expertise across the school.

## Effective curriculum planning

73. The subject leader established a clear approach to planning RE which was discussed by and agreed with the staff. They were clear about their responsibilities for planning and assessment. Planning was carefully monitored and discussed routinely with the relevant staff.

The subject leader worked with the staff to develop an agreed enquiry-based approach to planning the RE curriculum. The principles behind effective enquiry were shared to ensure staff understood how to build

these into their teaching of RE. The principles were then translated into a model for planning, with examples of good practice to guide the staff.

The initiative was followed up, both with regular meetings with year groups to discuss the emerging planning and also at staff meetings where good practice was shared. As a result, teachers' confidence about planning independently rose sharply and the overall quality of RE improved across the school.

In another school the subject leader met the year-group teams each term to discuss the following term's plans; to identify, for example, how RE would link to other areas of the curriculum and to ensure the focus for any topic was clearly defined and understood. The focus of the meetings was to ensure that varied opportunities to incorporate RE within the curriculum were understood and exploited. Well-coordinated, rich and imaginative RE developed across the school as a result, including:

- focus days when the whole school took time out to concentrate on an RE theme, often related to a festival
- specific RE topics taught weekly or in a short block
- wider topics where RE-related work could be effectively integrated such as work on Judaism as part of a World War 2 history-led topic.

## Effective assessment

74. Assessment was effective when:

- RE subject leaders had agreed clear procedures and practices to support it
- arrangements were manageable and realistic
- planning clearly identified expectations and opportunities to assess pupils' progress.

The subject leader clearly identified assessment opportunities, both formal and informal, in each unit of work. All plans had a set of clearly identified and differentiated expectations for what pupils would be able to do by the end of the topic. Pupils had 'I can' statements and routinely assessed their own RE work. Teachers recorded pupils' progress by annotating the plans with evidence of pupils' achievement, including their oral contributions. A carefully annotated portfolio of work in RE was maintained to exemplify standards. A wide variety of monitoring strategies was used, including scrutiny of RE books, checks of marking and planning, and pupil voice surveys, as well as direct observations of teaching and learning. These all helped to ensure consistency and provided a way of evaluating the impact of the arrangements on provision. The findings were summarised to provide 'the big picture', thus sharing good practice as well as raising points for improvement.

## Forward-thinking leadership and management in secondary schools

75. Part A of the report highlights concerns about the provision for RE in secondary schools. Schools are being encouraged to design a curriculum flexibly to best meet the needs of their pupils. RE needs to explore this flexibility, since leaders and managers who look ahead are key to securing the provision of RE in the future.
76. In responding to recent education policy, almost half of the 51 secondary schools visited between January 2011 and July 2012 had changed or were in the process of changing how they provided RE. Many of these changes were not well thought through and represented a deterioration in the quality of RE. However, a number of the schools visited had responded to the challenges by developing innovative approaches. Not all of these would work in all circumstances, but each one worked well in the context of the individual school.
77. In all cases, two factors were crucial:
  - Decisions about the RE curriculum were based on a carefully considered rationale, taking account of the school's distinctive context, the needs of its pupils and the subject.
  - The school monitored and reviewed the impact of the changes on standards and the quality of the pupils' learning.

### Creating a coherent approach to RE

78. A characteristic of good leadership in RE was a clear and consistent approach.

A school that wanted to ensure that RE at Key Stage 3 was more challenging and coherent used the publication of a revised agreed syllabus as a springboard for developing a more rigorous approach towards the study of religion and belief.

For example, a well-structured unit in Year 7 enquired into the idea of Jesus as the son of God and explored a variety of viewpoints. In Year 8, a unit exploring the place of religion in the contemporary world led pupils to a task in which they investigated whether religions could get on well together. Work in Year 9 included a unit on liberation theology, investigating whether the church should campaign actively for social justice in the modern world.

The pupils explained how each unit of work built on their previous learning and they clearly grasped the idea that RE involved developing their ability to ask questions, find things out, evaluate different opinions and draw conclusions. They became more enthusiastic about the subject, valuing the significant opportunities it provided to develop their skills of argument and express their own opinions.

## Developing new models of curriculum provision

79. Some subject leaders were successfully exploring different ways of organising RE within the curriculum.

One school had combined a number of different approaches to construct a highly innovative curriculum for RE.

In Year 7 it was taught by a team of primary-trained teachers as part of an integrated programme incorporating three themes: Believing in God, The Origins of the World, and a study of the teachings of Jesus. In Year 8 it was taught as a discrete subject with a focus on the study of world religions. In Years 9 and 10 all pupils followed a Humanities GCSE course which included work on Islam in the West, Judaism and the Holocaust, and Christianity and Apartheid. In Year 11 all pupils took a short-course GCSE in RE as part of English and taught by the English team.

The students were enthusiastic about how RE helped them to clarify and think through their own beliefs and values; to begin to deal with moral dilemmas that they faced in everyday life; to show respect for other people's views, as well as to challenge those with which they disagreed; and, to value and celebrate diversity as an opportunity rather than to regard it as a problem.

## Rejuvenating RE

80. Inspectors visited a number of schools where the subject leadership had successfully revitalised RE.

A school which had limited previous success in RE went about renewing the subject by resetting the vision for it, establishing a new name – 'Social and Religious Studies' (SRS) – and a set of key aims to spell out what they wanted students to achieve by the time they left.

The curriculum started from the social context of the pupils' learning to aid their understanding and engagement. The RE department produced a strapline to reflect this – 'One world where we all fit in' – and the curriculum was designed to take this vision forward. It moved into the study of religions and how they have an impact on the world, personally, locally, nationally and globally. It showed the valuable contribution religion can make and how it might challenge pupils' thinking.

Each year had a key question, prominently displayed in classrooms and driving the learning, with GCSE taking the lead from Year 9 onwards.

- Year 7: Where does community fit?
- Year 8: How does religion fit in locally, nationally and globally?
- Year 9: Where do we look for meaning? In God? In the world? In suffering? In others?

- Year 10: Where does religion fit in... to conflict... to society... to medicine?

### **Creating effective examination provision at Key Stage 4**

81. A number of the schools visited were exploring new ways of securing GCSE provision for RE.

One school decided to restructure its provision to secure RE in the Key Stage 4 curriculum. Previously, all pupils had taken a short-course GCSE, but the success of this was limited. The school decided to balance the priorities of sustaining high-quality GCSE RE provision for a substantial cohort of pupils with securing a reasonable level of provision for core RE for all pupils.

Key Stage 3 was reduced to two years and the school introduced a series of substantial 40-hour taster courses in Year 9 across a range of optional GCSE subjects, including RE. Many pupils opted to take the RE taster, which focused on GCSE-style topics. The quality of teaching on the taster course was excellent. The school predicted that, on the basis of pupils' early option choices, a cohort of over 60 pupils was likely to take full-course GCSE in Year 10.

Pupils not taking the taster course or the GCSE course did not study RE in Year 9, but would have the equivalent of one period a fortnight of core provision across Years 10 and 11 as part of a 'carousel' of PSHE, citizenship and RE.

### **Developing positive attitudes towards RE**

82. Inspectors visited a number of schools that had developed new and effective approaches to RE.

A school which had been in special measures, with a very challenging set of improvement priorities, took the bold step of developing a new approach to RE. Pupils' attitudes towards RE had been very negative, particularly at Key Stage 4, where GCSE results in the subject had been very poor.

The school decided to introduce a series of 'Viewpoint' day conferences on RE-related topics throughout Years 10 and 11 to rebuild the subject and forge links with a range of local religious communities. When inspectors visited, the Year 10 pupils had just been involved in a highly successful Viewpoint day on prejudice and persecution. They spoke very positively about the event as a memorable experience which had opened their eyes to issues they had not thought about much before. A representative from a local religious community who contributed to the day was very impressed by the pupils' high levels of interest: they were not afraid to ask very searching questions.



83. Inspectors found some of the most innovative thinking about the future of RE within the secondary curriculum in academies, where the freedom to develop new models of provision was evident. This finding highlights the value of local authorities, and SACRES, working with academies to strengthen local support networks to share good practice.
84. A theme that ran through discussions with senior leaders in secondary schools related to the requirement in some, but not all, locally agreed syllabuses that all pupils should follow an accredited course of study as part of the statutory requirements for RE at Key Stage 4. Some senior leaders saw this as inflexible. In an educational climate that encourages the tailoring of a school's curriculum to the needs of its pupils, this was seen as unhelpful and as stifling innovation.

### Effective RE in special schools

85. A key strength in all the special schools visited was the recognition of RE's potential to contribute considerably to pupils' learning and personal development.
86. Leadership of RE was a strength in most of the special schools visited and in particular:
  - the commitment and enthusiasm of the subject leader
  - strong training and professional development
  - effective and creative teaching approaches, with an emphasis on experiential and practical learning
  - the good use of links with local religious communities to enrich the pupils' learning.
87. In one school, for example, the inspector reported:

Pupils enjoy RE very much. They are encouraged to be active partners in learning. This ensures the subject makes a powerful contribution to pupils' personal development, including their self-knowledge and self-esteem. They grow in confidence and respond positively to learning about and from religion.

The use of a wide range of resources, particularly sensory artefacts, contributes significantly to pupils' good progress in lessons. The provision of practical, visual and first-hand experiences enables pupils to engage effectively with the material and ideas they are exploring. Teachers use a variety of approaches to enable pupils to communicate their thoughts and feelings, and demonstrate what they know and understand. Interactive whiteboards enliven learning and good use is made of photographic evidence to record pupils' learning in RE.

88. A key limiting factor was the difficulty of adapting the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus to ensure that it met the pupils' specific learning needs,



particularly where their needs were complex and profound. Subject leaders found this process very challenging. The principle of 'making it simpler' did not work effectively. Although, in most of the schools, subject leaders attended RE training or support groups, they reported that these did not usually provide effective guidance about adapting the syllabus.

89. However, the 'good practice' visit to a secondary special school provided an example of a more radical approach to the teaching of RE which placed the distinctive needs of the pupils at the heart of learning. The subject leader had developed 'Five Keys into RE': a structure for planning the subject for pupils who have special needs.<sup>13</sup> This placed the pupil rather than the mainstream agreed syllabus content at the centre of what was taught. The subject leader said:

'As pupils in our school need time to process RE themes, we should select only the pure essence of what should be taught.'

90. The Five Keys help teachers to focus their planning.

### **Key 1: Connection – what links can we make with our pupils' lives?**

A bridge is created between the religious theme and the child, meaning that learning is deeper: 'The story of Diwali begins with the idea that sometimes we go away, but it is good to be back home. We establish the link between pupils' experiences of respite care, their daily journeys home, and the story of Rama returning from exile.'

### **Key 2: Knowledge – what is the burning core of the faith?**

It is important to look into the heart of the religious theme to understand precisely what needs to be taught: 'Key knowledge includes pupils' understanding that Jesus loved everyone, especially if they were poor or unhappy; or that Sikhs have special teachers called gurus. By cutting out peripheral information and going straight to the core, we teach what is central and powerful.'

### **Key 3: Senses – what sensory elements are in the religion?**

It is important to include sensory experiences that are linked to RE. For example, a theme about Jewish prayer could involve wrapping a child in a large *tallit*, taking Makaton signs from the Shema, such as 'heart', 'gate', 'children', 'love'; and signing these to Jewish liturgical music, or touching a favourite picture between the eyes to show its importance.

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<sup>13</sup> Details of the good practice visit can be found on Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-inclusive-approach-religious-education-special-school-little-heath-school](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-inclusive-approach-religious-education-special-school-little-heath-school).

#### **Key 4: Symbols – what are the symbols that are most accessible?**

Symbols are an important way of conveying the spirituality of religion. They can be held like a brass *Ek Onkar* (the Sikh idea of the unity of God). They can be the focus of art work or experienced directly using a hoop to represent the *kara* (the Sikh bracelet), and travelling around it again and again by walking or in a wheelchair. This would show the eternity of God.

#### **Key 5: Values – what are the values in the religion that speak to us?**

While pupils who have special needs may face many challenges, like other young people they have a strong sense of values. They are aware of others helping them in their lives and the importance of saying thank you. So, for example, a unit on the life of the Buddha might use a traditional Buddhist story to focus on the importance of patience. This links with pupils needing to wait for help with their work, or waiting for the school transport to arrive.

The 'Five Keys' reflect the fact that some pupils who have special needs need time to discover the deeper meaning of RE.

## Notes

### The survey

The report is based on evidence from inspections of RE between September 2009 and July 2012 in 90 primary schools, 91 secondary schools, including six special schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, hearing impairment, complex learning needs, or profound and multiple learning difficulties. In addition, evidence was gathered from five visits made to schools in which good practice in RE had been identified, including a secondary special school. In all, inspectors observed 659 lessons, or parts of lessons.

The sample did not include schools that had been judged to require special measures or had been given a notice to improve. The number of schools in the survey that had been judged satisfactory at their previous section 5 inspection was also limited, because a proportion of such schools were being monitored by inspectors and were therefore not available for subject inspections. In autumn 2012, a telephone survey was undertaken of 30 secondary schools which had not entered any pupils for a GCSE qualification in RE in 2011. The survey explored the reasons for this.

The report also refers to evidence from other reports published by Ofsted, extended discussions with teachers, members of SACREs and other RE professionals, examination results, and wider surveys carried out by RE professional associations.

### Examination data

The past four years have seen a continued rise in the number of pupils entered for A- and AS-level examinations in religious studies (RS), building on the success of the subject at GCSE. In 2013, around 19,000 pupils in England took A-level GCE RS compared to just over 17,000 in 2009. Nearly 30,000 pupils were entered for AS-level courses in 2013 compared with around 22,000 in 2009. The performance of pupils in these examinations has remained fairly stable over that time and results compare well with other subjects. In 2013, 25.8% of A-level pupils gained A\* to A grades and around 21% of AS-level pupils gained a grade A.

The past four years have seen a change in the number and pattern of entries for GCSE courses in RS in England. In 2009 just over 425,000 pupils were entered for a GCSE in RS. Of these around 165,000 were entered for the RS full course and just over 261,000 for the RS short course. In 2013, the number of pupils taking an RS GCSE had fallen to around 390,000 and the balance had changed. Full-course entries had risen significantly to nearly 240,000 while numbers taking the short course had fallen to around 150,000. The most significant change occurred between 2012 and 2013 when short-course GCSE numbers fell by nearly 30%. GCSE results are broadly similar to those reported in 2010. In 2013 in England, 72.1% of full-course pupils gained A\* to C grades, with 30.6% receiving the highest A\* or A grades. In the short course in England in 2013, 53.5% gained A\* to C grades with 18.3% achieving the highest A\* or A grades.

## Summary of inspection data

### Primary

	Judgement (number of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness (90)	2	36	50	2
Achievement (90)	2	34	53	1
Teaching (90)	1	42	45	2
Assessment (87)	1	16	42	28
Curriculum (90)	2	30	55	3
Leadership and management (90)	5	42	41	2
Subject training (85)	1	21	38	25

### Secondary

	Judgement (number of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness (91)	4	40	37	10
Achievement (91)	4	40	36	11
Teaching (91)	5	44	36	6
Assessment (77)	5	18	40	14
Curriculum (91)	5	29	46	11
Leadership and management (91)	6	40	37	8
Subject training (81)	2	20	31	28

## Further information

### Ofsted publications

*Making sense of religion* (070045), Ofsted, 2007;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070045](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070045).

*Moving English forward* (110118), Ofsted, 2012;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110118](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110118).

*Transforming religious education* (090215), Ofsted, 2010;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090215](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090215).

### Other publications

*An analysis of the impact of the EBacc on student opportunity to study GCSE RS*, National Association of Teachers of Religious Education, 2012;  
[www.natre.org.uk/free.php](http://www.natre.org.uk/free.php).

*Face to face and side by side: a framework for partnership in our multi-faith society* (9781409803157), Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008;  
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/facetofaceframework>.

*NASACRE survey of local authority support for SACREs*, National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education, 2011;  
[www.nasacre.org.uk/media/file/NASACRE\\_QtoS\\_apl11.pdf](http://www.nasacre.org.uk/media/file/NASACRE_QtoS_apl11.pdf).

*RE: the truth unmasked – the supply of and support for religious education teachers*, report from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Education, Religious Education Council of England and Wales, 2013;  
<http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/appg/news/2013-03-18/appg-re-final-report-the-truth-unmasked>.

*Religious education in English schools: non-statutory guidance 2010* (DCSF-00114-2010), Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010;  
[www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00114-2010](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00114-2010).

*Religious education: the non-statutory framework*, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004;  
[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090605160101/qca.org.uk/qca\\_7886.aspx](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090605160101/qca.org.uk/qca_7886.aspx).

## Annex A: Context and recent developments in religious education

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. Although RE is a statutory subject, it is not part of the National Curriculum. The content of RE in maintained schools is determined at local authority level and each authority must review its agreed syllabus 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'.<sup>14</sup>

Each local authority must set up a standing advisory council on religious education (SACRE) to advise the authority on matters connected with RE. Each council comprises four representative groups: Christian and other religious denominations, the Church of England, teachers' associations and the local authority.

RE must be provided for all registered pupils in maintained schools and academies, including those in Reception classes and sixth forms.

Academies must provide RE in accordance with their funding agreements. The model funding agreements broadly reflect the provisions that apply to local authorities and schools in the maintained sector. In the case of academies that do not have a religious designation, this means they must arrange for RE to be taught to all pupils in accordance with the general requirements for agreed syllabuses. In other words, they should also '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'. Academies are not, however, required to follow any specific locally agreed syllabus.

RE in voluntary aided schools must be provided in accordance with the trust deed of the school and the wishes of the governing body. In community and voluntary controlled schools, it must be provided in accordance with the local agreed syllabus. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RE and this right should be identified in the school prospectus.

The survey evidence on which this report is based includes academies, community and voluntary controlled schools, but does not include voluntary aided schools with a religious character, for which there are separate inspection arrangements for RE. It is for the governing body of voluntary aided schools with a religious character to ensure that their RE is inspected under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.<sup>15</sup> The

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<sup>14</sup> Education Reform Act 1988, section 8 (3); [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40/section/8/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40/section/8/enacted).

<sup>15</sup> Education Act 2005, section 48; [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/section/48/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/section/48/enacted).

GCSE and GCE examination statistics quoted in this report relate to all schools in England.

In 2004, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority produced, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, *The non-statutory national framework for religious education*.<sup>16</sup> Its purpose was to support those with responsibility for the provision and quality of RE in maintained schools. The intention of the Framework was to give local authorities, SACREs and relevant authorities with responsibility for schools with a religious character a shared understanding of the knowledge and skills that pupils should gain through their religious education at school.

The Framework incorporated two attainment targets: 'learning about' religion and belief (AT1) and 'learning from' religion and belief (AT2). These set out the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils of different abilities and maturities are expected to have at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. The majority of local authorities, but not all, incorporated these targets into their locally agreed syllabuses.

In January 2010, the then Department for Children, Schools and Families published new non-statutory guidance on RE entitled *Religious education in English schools*.<sup>17</sup> Although the publication is still available, following the change of government in May 2010, the Department for Education's website states that it is no longer deemed to be a definitive statement of the Department's guidance on RE.

In 2011 the Religious Education Council for England and Wales (REC)<sup>18</sup> introduced a strategic plan designed to:

- promote high-quality RE
- influence public policy and understanding of RE
- promote a coherent professional development strategy for RE
- secure adequate and sustainable resources for RE.

In 2012, as part of this strategy, the REC launched an RE subject review in England to run in parallel with the DfE review of the National Curriculum.

Also in 2012, an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on RE was formed to provide a medium for parliamentarians and organisations with an interest in RE to discuss the current provision of RE, press for continuing improvement, promote public understanding and advocate rigorous education for every young person in religious

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<sup>16</sup> *Religious education: the non-statutory framework*, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004; [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090605160101/qca.org.uk/qca\\_7886.aspx](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090605160101/qca.org.uk/qca_7886.aspx).

<sup>17</sup> *Religious education in English schools: non-statutory guidance 2010* (DCSF-00114-2010), Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010; [www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00114-2010](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00114-2010).

<sup>18</sup> The Religious Education Council of England and Wales was established in 1973 to represent the collective interests of a wide variety of professional associations and faith communities in deepening and strengthening provision for religious education.

and non-religious world views. The APPG's first major area of investigation has been into the supply of, and support for, teachers of RE.



## Annex B: Providers visited

### Primary schools

Adel Primary School  
 Anderton Park Primary School  
 Annesley Primary and Nursery School  
 Aston Springwood Primary School  
 Bathampton Primary School  
  
 Beamont Community Primary School  
 Bevington Primary School  
 Bigland Green Primary School  
 Bilton Grange Community Primary School  
 Brackenbury Primary School  
 Brandhall Primary School  
 Brettenham Primary School  
 Brook Field Primary School  
 Broughton Primary School  
 Brown Clee CofE Primary School  
 Burnley Brow Community School  
 Chiltern Primary School  
 Churchtown Primary School  
 Clayton Village Primary School  
 Cotwall End Primary School  
 Courtney Primary School  
 Crackley Bank Primary School  
 Darley Churchtown CofE Primary School  
 Digby the Tedder Primary School  
 Eastcombe Primary School  
 Eden Park Primary School Academy  
 Elson Junior School  
 Fairburn Community Primary School  
 Farmilo Primary School and Nursery  
 Farnborough Road Junior School  
 Farsley Springbank Junior School  
 Ford Primary School

### Local authority

Leeds  
 Birmingham  
 Nottinghamshire  
 Rotherham  
 Bath and North East Somerset  
 Warrington  
 Kensington and Chelsea  
 Tower Hamlets  
 North Yorkshire  
 Hammersmith and Fulham  
 Sandwell  
 Enfield  
 Swindon  
 Northamptonshire  
 Shropshire  
 Oldham  
 Kingston upon Hull City of Sefton  
 Bradford  
 Dudley  
 South Gloucestershire  
 Staffordshire  
 Derbyshire  
 Lincolnshire  
 Gloucestershire  
 Torbay  
 Hampshire  
 North Yorkshire  
 Nottinghamshire  
 Sefton  
 Leeds  
 Plymouth

Forest View Junior School  
 Frodsham Manor House Primary School  
 Galton Valley Primary School  
 Ghyllside Primary School\*  
 Godwin Junior School  
 Gomeldon Primary School  
 Gotham Primary School  
 Grange Junior School  
 Greatham Primary School  
 Greenacres Junior Infant and Nursery School  
 Heron Cross Primary School  
 Herons Moor Community Primary School\*  
 Holbeach Bank Primary School  
 Holden Lane Primary School  
 Hollyfield Primary School  
 Hope Primary School  
 Hutton Rudby Primary School  
 James Watt Primary School  
 Kempsey Primary School  
 Kentmere Primary School  
 King Charles Primary School  
 Kings Worthy Primary School  
 Ladybrook Primary School  
 Long Row Primary School  
 Lostock Primary School  
 Mayfield Primary School  
 Middlewich Primary School  
 Morton Primary School  
 Mossfield Primary School  
 Normanton Junior School  
 Queen Victoria Primary School  
 Rhyl Primary School  
 Richard Durning's Endowed Primary School  
 Rillington Community Primary School  
 Salisbury Road Primary School

Nottinghamshire  
 Cheshire West and Chester  
 Sandwell  
 Cumbria  
 Newham  
 Wiltshire  
 Nottinghamshire  
 Swindon  
 Hampshire  
 Oldham  
 Stoke-on-Trent  
 North Somerset  
 Lincolnshire  
 Stoke-on-Trent  
 Birmingham  
 Derbyshire  
 North Yorkshire  
 Birmingham  
 Worcestershire  
 Rochdale  
 Cornwall  
 Hampshire  
 Stockport  
 Derbyshire  
 Bolton  
 Cambridgeshire  
 Cheshire East  
 Derbyshire  
 Salford  
 Wakefield  
 Dudley  
 Camden  
 Lancashire  
 North Yorkshire  
 Plymouth

Scout Road Primary School\*  
 Seaham Trinity Primary School  
 Seaton Primary School  
 South Wonston Primary School  
 Spooner Row Primary School, Wymondham  
 St John's CofE Primary School  
 St Paul's Church of England Primary School  
 St Thomas Community School  
 Stivichall Primary School  
 Tirlbrook Primary School  
 Trewidland Community Primary School  
 Ugborough Primary School  
 Walesby CofE Primary School  
 Wensley Fold (VC) Church of England Primary School\*  
 Westfield Primary School  
 White Rock Primary School  
 Wilberforce Primary School\*  
 Worsley Mesnes Community Primary School

Calderdale  
 Durham  
 Devon  
 Hampshire  
 Norfolk  
 Salford  
 Gloucestershire  
 Manchester  
 Coventry  
 Gloucestershire  
 Cornwall  
 Devon  
 Nottinghamshire  
 Blackburn with Darwen  
 Halton  
 Torbay  
 Westminster  
 Wigan

### **Secondary schools**

Abraham Moss High School  
 Alder Community High School  
 Alderman White School and Language College\*  
 Banbury School\*  
 Bartley Green School A Specialist Technology and Sports College  
 Beckfoot School\*  
 Belgrave High School\*  
 Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School\*  
 Bournemouth School for Girls  
 Bramhall High School  
 Broadoak Mathematics and Computing College  
 Calderstones School  
 Canons High School  
 Capital City Academy  
 Carlton Bolling College

### **Local authority**

Manchester  
 Tameside  
 Nottinghamshire  
 Oxfordshire  
 Birmingham  
 Bradford  
 Staffordshire  
 Hertfordshire  
 Bournemouth  
 Stockport  
 North Somerset  
 Liverpool  
 Harrow  
 Brent  
 Bradford

Cheney School*	Oxfordshire
Cheslyn Hay Sport and Community High School	Staffordshire
Chesterfield High School*	Sefton
Chipping Campden School	Gloucestershire
Clayton Hall Business and Language College	Staffordshire
Countesthorpe Community College*	Leicestershire
Crown Woods School	Greenwich
Didcot Girls' School*	Oxfordshire
Dorcan Technology College*	Swindon
Downend Comprehensive School*	South Gloucestershire
Finham Park School*	Coventry
Fitzharrys School	Oxfordshire
Fullbrook School	Surrey
Goffs School*	Hertfordshire
Grangefield School and Technology College	Stockton-on-Tees
Hamilton Community College	Leicester
Hasland Hall Community School	Derbyshire
Haven High Technology College*	Lincolnshire
Haybridge High School and Sixth Form*	Worcestershire
Highfield Humanities College	Blackpool
Highfields School	Derbyshire
Hyde Technology School and Hearing Impaired Resource Base	Tameside
James Calvert Spence College	Northumberland
John Cabot Academy	South Gloucestershire
John Ruskin School	Cumbria
John Spendluffe Technology College	Lincolnshire
Joseph Swan School*	Gateshead
Kenton School*	Newcastle upon Tyne
King's Grove School	Cheshire East
Lutterworth College*	Leicestershire
Marsh Academy	Kent
Martley, the Chantry High School*	Worcestershire
Maryhill High School*	Staffordshire
Monkwearmouth School	Sunderland
Moreton Community School	Wolverhampton

Mount Grace School	Hertfordshire
Myers Grove School*	Sheffield
New College Leicester	Leicester
Oasis Academy Immingham	North East Lincolnshire
Park High School*	Harrow
Portchester Community School	Hampshire
Prospect School*	Reading
Queen Elizabeth's Community College*	Devon
Quintin Kynaston School*	Westminster
Ralph Thoresby School	Leeds
Redcar Community College A Specialist Visual and Performing Arts Centre*	Redcar and Cleveland
Regents Park Community College	Southampton
Severn Vale School*	Gloucestershire
Shireland Collegiate Academy	Sandwell
Sir Thomas Rich's School	Gloucestershire
Smestow School	Wolverhampton
St James School	Devon
Stockport School	Stockport
Sutton Centre Community College*	Nottinghamshire
Tarporley High School and Sixth Form College*	Cheshire West and Chester
The Bishop David Brown School	Surrey
The Bulmershe School	Wokingham
The Burton Borough School	Telford and Wrekin
The Chauncy School*	Hertfordshire
The Corsham School A Visual Arts College*	Wiltshire
The Dearne High – A Specialist Humanities College	Barnsley
The Heath School	Halton
The Nobel School	Hertfordshire
The Tiffin Girls' School*	Kingston upon Thames
The Warwick School	Surrey
The Wye Valley School	Buckinghamshire
Thomas Mills High School	Suffolk
Thurston Community College	Suffolk
Tytherington High School	Cheshire East
Wardle High School*	Rochdale

West Park School\*  
 Whickham School  
 William de Ferrers School  
 Wrockwardine Wood Arts College\*

Derby  
 Gateshead  
 Essex  
 Telford and Wrekin

### **Special schools**

Ashgate Croft School  
 Northern House School\*  
 Phoenix Primary EBD School  
 Royal Cross Primary School  
 Stanley School  
 Windlehurst School

### **Local authority**

Derbyshire  
 Oxfordshire  
 Walsall  
 Lancashire  
 Wirral  
 Stockport

### **Good practice case study**

Little Heath School  
 Rushey Mead School  
 Smannell and Enham Church of England (Aided) Primary School  
 The Bankfield School

### **Local authority**

Redbridge  
 Leicester  
 Hampshire  
 Halton

\* The provider has closed or converted to an academy since it was visited.

## The Current Context for RE – October 2017

An overview of the key reports

1. In 2013 OFSTED produced a report on the state of RE, called Realising the Potential. This report gave evidence of the poor state of RE teaching across all types of schools, focusing particularly on the poor teaching of Christianity. Assessment came in for particular criticism; the collection of spurious data was the main issue.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/religious-education-realising-the-potential>

2. On the back of that report, a Church of England report, called Making a Difference found evidence of a similar situation across Church of England schools, identifying poor teaching, lack of CPD and insufficient rigour.

<https://tinyurl.com/yaq7qntm>

3. In early 2015, the Religious Education Council published the findings of the review of RE, which set out the basis for the guidance document later the same year. This moved away from the two attainment targets to a three-strand approach: Enquiry into the nature or religion and belief; knowledge and understanding of Christianity and knowledge and understanding of a range of other religions and world views. This recommended that in addition to Christianity, it should be a minimum of one additional faith per Key stage. The guidance document, that accompanied it, seemed to suggest one additional faith/belief per phase. The thinking seemed to be that depth was to be preferred over breadth. It was also at this point that the enquiry method was made prominent in the thinking of RE. It also began to set out a system of progression, that recognised that it needed to be built into the curriculum. The guidance document set out some end of phase outcomes for each of the three strands. At the time that assessment was moving away from levels, this was the first step towards an alternative.

<http://reonlineorg.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Religious-Education-in-the-New-Curriculum-2015.pdf>

4. These documents were followed later in 2015 by the Living with Difference report into religious literacy across the nation. This report identified the lack of religious knowledge in the media and business, as well as in education. It recommended that the profile of religion needed to be raised across the nation and taken seriously.

<https://corablivingwithdifference.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/living-with-difference-community-diversity-and-the-common-good.pdf>

5. At a similar time, the RE for Real report was published; this called for a greater teaching of religion as it is lived and experienced by people today. Evidence from pupils called for the opportunity to encounter real faith; they wanted more RE and better RE that equipped them better for life in modern Britain.

<https://www.gold.ac.uk/media/documents-by-section/departments/research-centres-and-units/research-units/faiths-and-civil-society/REforREal-web-b.pdf>

6. September 2017 saw the publication by NATRE of the State of the Nation report into RE provision in secondary schools. This report concluded that RE is not being given its statutory provision in about 26% of schools; academies are the most likely to be failing in their duty in terms of time allocation, curriculum and trained staff, but maintained schools and schools with a religious character were also not always fulfilling their statutory duty. The report calls on OFSTED to look at the provision of RE and comment on curricula that do not include RE, as not meeting the requirement for a broad and balance curriculum. Additional training and support for non-specialist teachers has also been called for.  
<https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Free%20Resources/SOTN%202017%20Report%20web%20version%20FINAL.pdf>
7. The most recent publication has been the interim report form the Commission on RE, which catalogues the current failings of RE and make some broad and courageous recommendations, which if implemented would signal a change in the provision of RE. They are calling for a national statement of entitlement, which would apply to ALL schools. This statement talks about the nature and content of RE, using the word “worldviews” as the default. It is also calling for an expanded role for SACRES and much greater training in RE for student teachers. Like the NATRE report it calls on OFSTED to comment on whether RE is offered in accordance with statutory requirements. As this is the interim report the findings are still open for discussion.  
Find the full report here: <http://www.commissiononre.org.uk/religious-education-for-all-commission-interim-report/>  
And the consultation survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CoREConsult1>.

**Our current syllabus review needs to be set against the background of these reports, so any time you can spend looking at these reports will help us to produce a syllabus fit for the next 5 years.**