

RE in the school curriculum in different school types

RE is a statutory subject in each year of the school curriculum of maintained schools. Academies and Free Schools are contractually required through the terms of their funding agreements with DfE to make provision for the teaching of RE to all pupils on the school roll, and Academies in Sheffield are warmly invited by SACRE to use this syllabus, a local, contemporary, practical, supportive and widely approved framework for RE.

The Sheffield 2014 RE Agreed Syllabus has been developed in line with the strategic priorities of the Local Authority and in consultation with the City Wide Learning Body.

RE offers distinctive opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, cultural, social and moral development. RE lessons should offer a structured and safe space during curriculum time for learners' own reflections on meaning and values in life. Teaching in RE should engage pupils in discussion, dialogue and debate which enables them to make their reasoning clear and which supports their cognitive and linguistic development. Teaching in RE lessons should also allow for timely and sensitive responses to be made to unforeseen events of a religious, moral or philosophical nature, whether personal, local, national or global.

The breadth of RE: from local to global

The law requires that RE in schools that are not designated with a religious character

“must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.”

This means that from ages 4-19 pupils learn about diverse religions and worldviews including Christianity and the other principal religions. Some schools with a religious character will prioritise learning one religion, but all types of school should recognise the diversity of our city, our region, the UK and the world and the importance of learning broadly and deeply about religions and world views, including those with a significant local presence. This may include some minority religious communities as well as those named above.

What must we teach? RE and the law.

The statutory requirements for Religious Education in schools

The main statutory requirements relating to RE in schools and the Local Authority's responsibilities are in the Education Acts 1996 and 2002, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, the Children Act 2004 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The Department for Education also published its current guidance in "Religious Education in English Schools: Non-Statutory Guidance 2010". The key points are:

- **RE For every child.** RE must be provided for all registered pupils on the school roll, from reception classes through to 16-19s in the sixth form. This does not include nursery schools, nursery classes or sixth form colleges but does include as far as practicable PRUs and special schools.
- **Parents' rights.** Parents may withdraw their children from RE lessons and require that they are given alternative religious instruction (subject to certain provisions). Schools may have a policy setting out their approach to provision and withdrawal.
- **Teachers' rights.** If they choose not to, teachers cannot to be required to teach RE.
- **The scope of the syllabus.** At community, foundation and voluntary controlled schools without a religious character RE must be taught in accordance with the Local Authority's Agreed Syllabus
- **Faith schools.** Denominational voluntary aided schools with a religious character are not required to use the Agreed Syllabus but must follow the requirements of their trust deed or the tenets of their denomination where the trust deed does not specify requirements. The Agreed Syllabus must be taught, however, where parents request it and the child cannot reasonably attend a school where the Agreed Syllabus is being taught.
- **Education, not religious nurture.** RE provided in compliance with the Agreed Syllabus must not be denominational in character but it is permissible to teach about denominational differences. It must however "reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain."
- **Inspection.** The provision and quality of RE is subject to inspection by OFSTED or by denominational inspection systems in the schools to which they apply.
- **RE in Academies.** Academies are required by their Funding Agreements with DfE to teach RE to all their pupils but are not **required** to use their local Agreed Syllabus. Sheffield SACRE warmly invites them to do so however, because this syllabus is local and has been agreed with all major stakeholders.
- **Sheffield SACRE and its work.** The Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to maintain a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) to advise the Authority on matters connected with RE.

- **Heads and governors: responsible for RE.** In relation to community schools, foundation and voluntary schools without a religious character, the Authority, Governing Body and Headteacher have responsibilities to ensure that legal requirements are followed.

British values

School inspection, from September 2014, explores and judges the contribution schools make to actively promoting British values.

RE makes a key educational contribution to pupils' explorations of British values

Teaching the Nottinghamshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education will enable pupils to learn to think for themselves about British values.

Questions about whether social and moral values are best described as 'British values' or seen as more universal human values will continue to be debated, but for the purposes of teachers of RE, the subject offers opportunities to build an accurate knowledge base about religions and beliefs in relation to values. This in turn supports children and young people so that they are able to move beyond attitudes of tolerance towards increasing respect, so that they can celebrate diversity.

Values education and moral development are a part of a school's holistic mission to contribute to the wellbeing of all people within our communities. The RE curriculum focuses learning in some of these areas, but pupils' moral development is a whole school issue.

- **Mutual Tolerance.** Schools do not accept intolerant attitudes to members of the community: attitudes which reject other people on the basis of race, faith, gender, sexual orientation or age are rightly challenged. The baseline for a fair community is that each person's right to 'be themselves' is to be accepted by all. Tolerance may not be enough: RE can challenge children and young people to be increasingly respectful and to celebrate diversity, but tolerance is a starting point. It is much better than intolerance.
- **Respectful attitudes.** In the RE curriculum attention focusses on developing mutual respect between those of different faiths and beliefs, promoting an understanding of what a society gains from diversity. Pupils will learn about diversity in religions and worldviews, and will be challenged to respect other persons who see the world differently to themselves. Recognition and celebration of human diversity in many forms can flourish where pupils understand different faiths and beliefs, and are challenged to be broad minded and open hearted.
- **Democracy.** In RE pupils learn the significance of each person's ideas and experiences through methods of discussion. In debating the fundamental questions of life, pupils learn to respect a range of perspectives. This contributes to learning about democracy, examining the idea that we all share a responsibility to use our voice and influence for the wellbeing of others.
- **The Rule of Law:** In RE pupils examine different examples of codes for human life, including commandments, rules or precepts offered by different religious communities. They learn to appreciate how individuals choose between good and evil, right and wrong, and they learn to apply these ideas to their own communities. They learn that fairness requires that the law apply equally to all, irrespective of a person's status or wealth.
- **Individual liberty.** In RE, pupils consider questions about identity, belonging and diversity, learning what it means to live a life free from constraints. They study

examples of pioneers of human freedom, including those from within different religions, so that they can examine tensions between the value of a stable society and the value of change for human development.

Additional Support and Guidance

As well as this statutory syllabus, SACRE have provided a wide range of guidance and support materials for the teacher of RE. These include key items to help teachers:

- a. **Launch the syllabus with our 'ready to use' presentation.** A PowerPoint presentation to use with staff and governors in every school to introduce the new syllabus and to provide an inspiring vision of the place and value of RE in every child's education.
- b. **Put the RE poster up in classrooms and staffrooms.** The Sheffield SACRE RE Poster (ready to print and available to adapt).
- c. **Use the exemplar medium term plans.** Twelve ready to use medium term exemplar plans for pupils across the age range 4-14.
- d. **Write more plans to the standard template.** A blank template of a curriculum investigation plan for teachers to use in writing their own plans for RE.
- e. **Improve confidence and subject knowledge with our Beginners' Guides.** Beginners' Guides to the six religions in the syllabus and to Humanism - for the teacher to use as a 'first base' reference point when they teach a religion with which they are less familiar
- f. **Use the pyramids to describe RE outcomes clearly:** a PDF of the three pyramids for use as a classroom or staffroom poster.

Which Religions and Beliefs are to be Studied?

It is through teaching RE's aims and Attainment Targets that high standards in RE can be established. Pupils' experience of the subject is the focus for their exploration of human experience and beliefs. It is also important that pupils are taught in depth and detail about particular religions and beliefs through each of the key stages.

This Agreed Syllabus requires schools to contribute to enabling pupils in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton to develop an overall understanding of the six principal religions in Great Britain. The balance between depth of understanding and the coverage of material in these religions is important, so the syllabus – as did earlier versions – lays down the recommended religions to be taught at each key stage. This is in line with the law, which states that RE shall have regard to 'the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'. There is an emphasis on the depth of study of religions and beliefs, rather than mere 'coverage'.

This can be seen as a minimum entitlement to learning about religions, and some schools may plan the study of more religions than this minimum through the choice they make about units of work. A wider range than the minimum may be especially appropriate where pupils from many religions are present in one class or school. The syllabus thus promotes continuity and progression between schools. Schools may plan some RE that goes beyond the minimum requirements – for example in response to topical events or local needs – but regard must be given to the importance of enabling pupils to study religions and beliefs in depth.

Additionally, schools may use material from other religious traditions and belief systems represented in the school, the local area, the region or the UK, such as Rastafari, the Baha'i Faith, the Jehovah's Witnesses, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Brahma Kumaris or Humanists.

The Agreed Syllabus requires religions to be studied in depth as follows:

	Schools should consider the pupils they serve in deciding whether to go beyond the minimum entitlements to learning about religions, which are:	<p>This is the minimum requirement. Many schools may wish to go beyond the minimum. Schools should consider the pupils they serve in deciding whether to go beyond the minimum entitlements to learning about religions.</p>
EYFS including Reception	Christianity Religions and beliefs represented in the local area	
Key Stage 1	Christianity and either Judaism or Islam Pupils may also learn from other religions in thematic units.	
Key Stage 2	Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam Pupils may also learn from other religions in thematic units.	
Key Stage 3	Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam (an additional study of Judaism and Hinduism may be undertaken) Pupils may also learn from other religions in thematic units.	
Key Stage 4	At least two religions including Christianity (through a recognised national RS qualification course such as GCSE full or short RS courses or CoEA RS) Pupils may also learn from other religions in thematic units.	
16–19 RE for All	Belief systems or life stances as appropriate Pupils may also learn from other religions in thematic units.	