

# Programme of study (non-statutory): Religious education

## Key stage 4 and years 12 and 13

### Curriculum aims

Learning and teaching activities in religious education (RE) contribute to the achievement of curriculum aims for all young people to become:

- successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

### The importance of religious education

RE provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human. It develops students' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other principal religions, other religious traditions and other world views that offer answers to questions such as these. It offers opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development. It enhances students' awareness and understanding of religions and beliefs, teachings, practices and forms of expression, as well as of the influence of religion on individuals, families, communities and cultures.

RE encourages students to learn from different religions, beliefs, values and traditions while exploring their own beliefs and questions of meaning. It challenges students to reflect on, consider, analyse, interpret and evaluate issues of truth, belief, faith and ethics and to communicate their responses.

RE is a statutory subject in the curriculum. There are no statutory programmes of study at national level. In 2004, the Department for Education and Skills and the QCA published a non-statutory national framework for RE, to be used by local agreed syllabus conferences for the development of agreed syllabuses for RE, and by faith communities for the development of RE programmes in their schools. Schools are legally required to teach RE according to their local agreed syllabus or, in schools with a religious character, according to their governors' policy. The content of this non-statutory RE programme of study is the same as the 14–19 element of the non-statutory national framework. The presentation and headings follow the format of the programmes of study for other subjects at key stage 4, to enable cross-curricular planning to take place.

RE encourages students to develop their sense of identity and belonging. It enables them to flourish individually within their communities and as citizens in a pluralistic society and global community. RE has an important role in preparing students for adult life, employment and lifelong learning. It enables students to develop respect for and sensitivity to others, in particular those whose faiths and beliefs are different from their own. It promotes discernment and enables students to combat prejudice.

# Key concepts

There are a number of key concepts that underpin the study of RE. Students need to understand these concepts in order to deepen and broaden their knowledge, skills and understanding.

## Beliefs, teachings and sources

- Analysing teachings, sources, authorities and ways of life in order to understand [religions and beliefs](#) in historical and cultural context.
- [Understanding and analysing](#) beliefs, values and attitudes as related to the [human quest for meaning](#).

## Practices and ways of life

- Explaining and evaluating the [impact](#) of religions and beliefs on how people live their lives.
- [Analysing the ways](#) in which the impact of religions and beliefs can vary according to context.

### Religions and beliefs

This includes systems of thought that are religious and non-religious, theistic and non-theistic, western/Abrahamic and eastern/Dharmic.

### Understanding and analysing

Teachings, sources, authorities, practices and ways of life can help individuals and communities to give expression to their questions and answers in various ways. This could include understanding and analysing beliefs as expressions of the human quest for meaning, as experiences of the quest, and as answers to it.

### Human quest for meaning

This contributes to students' spiritual and moral development and to their growing confidence, sense of freedom and responsibility.

Spiritual development is part of the overall aims of education. It is open to everyone, not confined to the development of religious beliefs or conversion to a particular faith. Although difficult to define, spiritual development may be said to have the following aspects: beliefs, sense of awe, wonder and mystery, experiencing feelings of transcendence, search for meaning and purpose, self-knowledge, relationships, creativity, feelings and emotions. Moral development may be said to include the will to behave morally as a point of principle, knowledge of codes of conduct, criteria for responsible moral judgements, and ability to make judgements.

As students aged 14 to 16 grow toward cognitive, social and emotional maturity, their growing awareness of the human quest for meaning facilitates their spiritual and moral development and enriches their sense of identity in relation to beliefs and their sources.

### Impact

These could include ideals, such as unity, equality and peace, or unexamined assumptions, such as those on causes of conflict, on religion or on wealth and poverty, that underpin decisions and lifestyles. They can be critically explored through discussions of news events, religious doctrines, stories or school events, the possible motives of the people in them and the implications of statements from religious or community leaders.

### Analysing the ways

This includes making conscious use of some principal methods by which religion, spirituality and ethics are studied, taking into account how the context and assumptions of the study can change the perception of the religious practice or way of life studied.

## Expressing meaning

- Interpreting and evaluating many different sources and forms of religious, spiritual, moral and cultural expression.

## Identity and belonging

- Explaining and analysing viewpoints on issues connecting personal and communal identity.

## Meaning, purpose and truth

- Analysing and synthesising insights on ultimate questions that confront humanity.

## Values and commitments

- Synthesising evidence and arguments about moral values and how they can relate to beliefs and experience.
- Evaluating own and others' values in order to make informed, rational and imaginative choices.

### Many different sources and forms

This includes writing, speaking, silence, art, music, dress, dance, food, ritual, artefacts, relationships, behaviour codes and social action.

### Identity

People can have multiple identities that may be determined by a combination of faith, culture, environment and choice.

### Explaining and analysing

This could include analysing identities and beliefs in ways that strengthen students' understanding of cultural identities, sharpen their powers of argument and deepen their commitment to respect.

### Ultimate questions

Ultimate questions have no single answer agreed by all religions and beliefs. These questions face everyone, in the form of ethical, spiritual or philosophical challenges. They can be about the significance and value of human life, the existence of God, the nature of being human, the causes of suffering or the qualities of a good life. There are many other such questions, considered by most religious and philosophical traditions to be profound questions confronting humanity. Ultimate questions could include opportunities for students to articulate their own questions and personal responses, making critical connections between beliefs, practices and issues, and handling complexity and ambiguity.

### Synthesising evidence and arguments about moral values

This could include exploring religious and moral arguments on, for example, abortion, and combining these arguments with an appreciation of the doctrinal or philosophical principles and contextual pressures that might lead people to decide.

### Evaluating

As young people aged 14 to 16 develop their sense of identity, they learn to internalise more complex definitions of right and wrong and to use them, with increasing independence, in relation to a range of issues in their family, neighbourhood and world, for example in discussions about wealth, stereotyping, the environment or conflict. They learn to respond to issues by reference to both belief and experience, and to appreciate how context can change moral choices. In this way they gain a sense of personal autonomy in preparation for adult life.

# Key processes

These are the essential skills and processes in RE that students need to learn to make progress.

## Learning about religion

Students should be able to:

- investigate and interpret [significant issues](#), in the light of their own identities, experiences and commitments
- present coherent, detailed arguments about beliefs, ethics, values and issues, with independence and critical awareness of their methods of study
- use and develop [specialist vocabulary](#) and critical arguments, with awareness of their power, limitations and ambiguity
- use and evaluate the rich, varied forms of [creative expression](#) in religious life.

## Learning from religion

Students should be able to:

- [reflect critically](#) on their opinions in the light of their learning about religions, beliefs and questions
- develop their independent values and attitudes on moral and spiritual issues related to [their autonomy, identities, rights and responsibilities](#)
- [evaluate](#) issues, beliefs, commitments and the influence of religion, including philosophical, spiritual and ethical perspectives
- use skills of [critical enquiry, creative problem-solving and communication](#) through a variety of media to respond to issues of identity, meaning and values in a wide range of contexts.

### Significant issues

This could include philosophical issues, for example whether there is a purpose and design to human existence, and moral issues, for example whether individual freedoms should be curbed in order to protect the environment. Issues should be explored by reference to students' experience and to religious and philosophical traditions.

### Specialist vocabulary

This includes vocabulary on the study of religions and beliefs in general, for example *revelation, theistic, pluralism, duty, source, mystical, rational*, and vocabulary that is specific to religious and philosophical traditions. This vocabulary should be taught so that it can be spelt and pronounced appropriately.

### Creative expression

This could include experiences of using sacred texts and other primary sources, observing or taking part in worship, meditation or rituals, and using the creative arts to express ideas. The experiences should be offered to students with guidelines that make the educational purpose of the activity clear. Some experiences should be voluntary.

### Reflect critically

This includes being able to express and justify their own opinions, show how their beliefs, attitudes, feelings and experiences have changed, and demonstrate their awareness of how sources, authorities, contextual factors and pressures might influence them and their peers.

### Autonomy, identities, rights and responsibilities

This could include exploration of principles, attitudes and experiences that inform views on, for example, prejudice, discrimination and what may constitute justified forms of protest against injustice. Understandings of right and wrong should be taught and developed in the light of beliefs, teachings and sources. Values and attitudes should be developed with conscious reference to complex and pluralistic contexts.

### Evaluate

This includes being able to understand reasons for a belief or commitment they do not share, and to empathise with the experiences of those with whom they do not agree. It also includes being able to acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of their own beliefs, and to see their attitudes, values and behaviour as others see them.

### Critical enquiry, creative problem-solving and communication

This could include, for example, reporting on involvement in a community cohesion project that investigated the role of religion in a conflict, and proposed or predicted solutions. The experience should enable students to make critical connections between their involvement and their understanding of beliefs and practices, and to have perspective on their own growth and learning.

# Range and content

This section outlines the breadth of the subject on which teachers should draw when teaching the key concepts and key processes.

The study of RE should include:

- [opportunities to study Christianity](#), either directly as a religion or indirectly through philosophical or ethical issues, or both
- [opportunities to study one or more other principal religions](#), either directly as religions or indirectly through philosophical or ethical issues, or both
- opportunities to study a range of [philosophical and ethical issues](#) that are of relevance to young people's experience or aspirations and that make reference to some [religious and philosophical traditions](#).

## **Opportunities to study Christianity**

This could include Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, non-conformist and Pentecostal branches of Christianity, both in Britain and globally.

## **Opportunities to study one or more other principal religions**

These include, as listed in the non-statutory national framework, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.

## **Philosophical and ethical issues**

Philosophical issues could include the existence of God, the origins of the universe and of life, the causes and implications of suffering, the nature and limits of religious language and the sources of right and wrong. Ethical issues could include ethical decision making, religion and science, spirituality and religious freedom, relationships, rights and responsibilities, sexuality, health, alcohol and drugs, prejudice and discrimination, consumerism and advertising, crime and punishment, equality and justice, war and peace, the environment and climate change, animal rights, inter-religious dialogue and collaboration.

## **Religious and philosophical traditions**

These include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, the Baha'i faith, Jainism, Zoroastrianism and secular philosophies such as Humanism.

# Curriculum opportunities

During the key stage students should be offered the following opportunities that are integral to their learning and enhance their engagement with the concepts, processes and content of the subject.

The curriculum should provide opportunities for students to:

- access the sources, images and sounds that are key to their study, using texts and [ICT](#) as appropriate
- [discuss, explore and question](#) concepts, images and practices
- visit places of worship, inter-faith centres or other centres, observing or taking part in worship or rituals, as appropriate
- discuss, reflect on and develop arguments about philosophical and [ethical issues](#)
- engage in community projects, dialogue or social action, reflecting on its importance for themselves and others
- encounter people from different religious, cultural and philosophical groups, who can express a range of convictions on religious and moral issues, where possible
- evaluate concepts, practices and issues, paying attention to beliefs and experience, using reasoned, balanced arguments
- use a range of [forms of expression](#) to communicate their ideas and responses, including exploring and recording how their thoughts, feelings and experiences have changed
- explore the connections between RE and [other subject areas](#).

## **ICT**

This could include using the internet to research places of worship and using email to communicate with people of different faiths in different countries.

## **Discuss, explore and question**

This could include opportunities for students to develop and express their own questions, share each other's responses and study the answers offered by religions and beliefs. It could include being involved in a local community cohesion project, and identifying and analysing the diverse ways that beliefs impact on life at local community, social and global levels.

## **Ethical issues**

This could include a wide variety of topics, for example the difference between right and wrong, the application of principles to issues in crime/punishment, war/peace, family life, relationships, use of money and property, entertainment, employment, technology, and religious and cultural tolerance.

## **Forms of expression**

This could include creative and thoughtful use of art, dance, drama, writing and ICT.

## **Other subject areas**

This could include arts, humanities, language, literature, technology and science.