

Curriculum planning

Schools need to plan their religious Education (RE) curriculum with consideration of their schools cohort and local demographics.

Using the 2018 syllabus is not about reinventing the wheel. All Schools should review their existing curriculum and keep what they consider to be outstanding and strong RE. The next step is then to consider how this fits with the statutory requirements of the new syllabus and plan the rest of the curriculum accordingly. Included with this document are exemplars of whole school planning using the 2018 agreed syllabus for all key stages.

The aims of the syllabus are for pupils:

- to develop religious literacy;
- to acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other principal religions and world views represented in the United Kingdom;
- to develop an understanding of the influence of the beliefs, values and traditions on individuals, communities, societies and cultures;
- to develop attitudes of respect towards other people who hold views and beliefs different from their own;
- to develop the ability to make reasoned and informed judgements about religious issues, with reference to the principal religions and world views represented locally and in the United Kingdom.

Religions deal with some of the most profound and difficult questions in human life, questions such as:

- What is the purpose of life?
- How should people treat each other?
- How do we explain and cope with death and suffering?

Religions approach these issues in complex ways, in ways of life, culture and action, as well as ritual, tradition, story, symbol and belief. Religious Education must take account of this depth and complexity, helping pupils to an understanding appropriate to their age and aptitude.

To do this RE needs:

- to develop pupils' skills;
- to enable them to ask questions;
- to discover information, to approach new material with empathy;
- to reflect on their learning. Pupils should not only acquire knowledge but also be able to use their knowledge to understand their world, build community, and develop their personal position.

Throughout the RE curriculum pupils should be encouraged to **explore** religions, **engage** with their knowledge, and **reflect** on their learning and their lives.

The 2018 syllabus recommends that all key stages use 'Enquiry' methods and when planning and delivering units of work. When planning units of work a range of approaches to learning that match different types of enquiry should be used, for example:

- 'Big Questions' are used as the focus of an enquiry

- use experiential and creative activities where pupils can develop their insight into the 'experience' of religion
- use reasoned argument and debate where pupils can explore controversial issues
- using investigative and interpretative skills where pupils need to gather, analyse and present information
- planning sequences enquiries to make sure pupils build effectively on prior learning and can see the relevance of their investigations
- the enquiry process allows pupils' to progress in RE and this progression is defined and assessed.

The benefits of enquiry approaches are;

- Pupils develop a deeper understanding, going beyond simply learning facts to handling ideas and questions.
- Pupils increase confidence as learners; discussion is no longer so teacher-led.
- More sustained learning is achieved, not the fragmented pattern of work often seen in RE. Learners follow through their enquiries building on their thinking across a number of sessions.

Using the progression documents

The Progression Documents are designed to support teachers with the preparation of schemes of work. The progressions contain information on the important knowledge appropriate to each key stage, as well as suggestions for vocabulary, questions and activities. Following the progressions should enable students to develop an understanding of the religion or non-religious worldview and what it means to live one's life as a follower of the religion or world view today.

These progressions are not designed to tell teachers how to teach RE. They are a guide to what core content is recommended to be covered in order for students to develop a sound understanding. The content can be taught systematically, through focused study on a religion or humanism, or more thematically using perspectives from each to inform a wider study of topics such as 'Belief in a god or gods'; 'What is Religion?'; 'How can I know the difference between right and wrong?'; 'Beliefs about death'; or 'Does life have any meaning?'. Either way, opportunities should be made to relate, compare, and contrast the variety of beliefs and values and to make links between them. Students should also be presented with the opportunity to reflect upon, evaluate, and critique what they learn, and make connections with their own lives and experiences.

The progression documents of the religions and humanism differ because what is important in each case may be different although common themes are evident. Although the progression documents provide students with the opportunity to develop an understanding of many of the commonly agreed beliefs and values shared by followers of the religions and of humanism, they do not claim to represent the authoritative word on any religion or on humanism. Not all agree, and opportunities should be made to explore where diversity exists, and the debates that go with it.