

Section 2

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2.1 Aims

Teaching should equip pupils with systematic knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews, enabling them to develop their own ideas, values, and identities. It should develop in pupils an aptitude for dialogue so that they can participate positively in society with its diverse religions and secular and non-religious worldviews.

Pupils should gain and deploy the skills needed to understand, interpret, and evaluate texts, sources of wisdom and authority and other evidence. They should learn to articulate clearly and coherently their personal beliefs, ideas, values, and experiences while respecting the right of others to differ.

The curriculum for Religious Education should aim to ensure that all pupils:




<p>A. Know about and understand a range of religions and non-religious worldviews, so that they can:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe, explain, evaluate, and analyse beliefs and practices, recognising the diversity which exists within and between communities and amongst individuals; • identify, investigate, and respond to questions posed, and responses offered by some of the sources of wisdom found in religions and worldviews; • appreciate and appraise the nature, significance, and impact of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.
<p>B. Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and non-religious worldviews, so that they can:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain reasonably their ideas about how beliefs, practices and forms of expression influence individuals and communities; • express with increasing discernment their personal reflections and critical responses to questions and teachings about identity, diversity, meaning and value, including ethical issues; • appreciate and appraise varied dimensions of a religion or a non-religious worldview.
<p>C. Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and non-religious worldviews, so that they can:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • find out about and investigate key concepts and questions of belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, responding creatively; • enquire into what enables different individuals and communities to live together respectfully for the wellbeing of all; • articulate beliefs, values, and commitments clearly in order to explain why they may be important in their own and other people's lives.

(Adapted from 'A review of Religious Education in England' Pages 12-14 Religious Education Council 2013)

2.2 Three Aspects of Study linked to Aims (EERRCC)

<p>Engaging Encounter with Religions and Non-religious Worldviews (EE)</p>	<p>Acquire knowledge of religious beliefs, practices and values in principal religions/non- religious worldviews represented in Great Britain and beyond e.g. 6 principal religions, other religions, and secular philosophies, e.g. Humanism.</p> <p>Develop an understanding of the influence of religious beliefs, practices and values on individuals, communities, societies, and cultures.</p> <p>Describe, explain, evaluate, and analyse beliefs, values, and practices. Within this aspect a pupil should study beliefs; teachings; practices and ways of life; expression and language. In simple terms what people believe; what they do and how they express themselves. The concepts which underpin a religion or non-religious belief system should be the basis for all encounters within religion and non-religious worldviews.</p>
<p>Reasoned Response to Religions and Non-religious Worldviews (RR)</p>	<p>Develop the ability to make reasoned critical responses and informed judgements about religious and moral issues.</p> <p>Explore and learn to communicate their own beliefs, values, and experiences in terms of the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural aspects of life by: <i>developing an awareness of the fundamental questions of life raised by human experience and how religions seek to answer them;</i> <i>responding to such questions by relating religious beliefs, practices and values to their own understanding and experience; reflecting on their own beliefs, values, and experiences in the light of their study.</i></p> <p>Within this aspect, pupils should study issues of identity, belonging and diversity; meaning purpose and truth; values and commitments. In simple terms making sense of who we are; making sense of life and making sense of right and wrong.</p>
<p>Connecting Communities in Religions and Non-religious Worldviews (CC)</p>	<p>Develop understanding of how and why people put their beliefs into action in many diverse ways.</p> <p>Explaining the diversity within and across religious communities/worldviews Comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences in those communities.</p> <p>Explain reasonably their ideas about how beliefs, practices and forms of expression have come to influence individuals and communities; Appreciate and appraise a religious/ non-religious worldview.</p> <p>Within this aspect pupils should use the skills of interpretation, analysis, and explanation to engage in an open and sensitive exploration of religious and non-religious worldviews.</p>

2.3 Curriculum Examples of the 3 aims in action using an historical lens to study RE

Curriculum Examples			
	<p><i>Engaging Encounters</i></p> 	<p><i>Reasoned Responses</i></p> 	<p><i>Connecting Communities</i></p> 
EYFS	Explore belonging to different types of Christian families. Talk about different beliefs.	Invite different local Christians to talk about their worldview. How have the local people made sense of the world around them?	Ask questions such as 'Have you always done that? Have you always believed that? Can they connect it to history?'
KS1	Explore changes in a local religious community, how celebrations of some festivals have changed, tell any local worldview stories of key people.	Ask children to talk to parents/carers and grandparents about the ways in which it has changed (or not). Reflect on how and why views and practices may have changed.	Talk about the stories/traditions which have been passed down and about those which have changed. How do the past community relate to this one now? Legacy?
LKS2	Explore local places of worship/secular meeting places. Include buildings that used to be places of worship but may have changed their purpose. Explore key people.	Look at their history, how they may have changed. What has influenced and shaped the changes in the local religious/non-religious community? Are they changes for good or not so good?	Explaining the diversity within and across the religious communities/ worldviews. Comparing and contrasting the similarities & differences in those communities. What has been their legacy?
UKS2	Look at the census data published in 2022 on religious affiliation for the local/regional area. Meet people of religious/non-religious belief.	Explore how and why people put their beliefs into action in many diverse ways over time. Identify the diversity and suggest reasons for it.	Compare previous data from the last census. Suggest reasons for changes in attitudes and affiliation to religious/non-religious groups.
KS3	Encounters with faith visitors and places of worship. Use these opportunities to ask questions about modern religious and moral issues.	Explore, develop, and justify personal worldviews on a range of contemporary religious and moral issues.	Look at the shared history of the Abrahamic traditions through historical, theological, and philosophical lenses.

2.4 Curriculum Choices - Insights from the Ofsted RE Review Paper May 2021 & Research

2.4.1 Ofsted & the Curriculum

The current Education Inspection Framework refers to the three areas for curriculum design which are identified within this syllabus:

- **Intent:** the extent to which the school curriculum sets out the knowledge and skills that pupils gain at each stage.
- **Implementation:** the way the curriculum is taught and assessed in order to support pupils to build knowledge and to apply that knowledge as skills.
- **Impact:** What pupils are able to do and achieve as a result of the education they receive.

During the writing of this agreed syllabus review, a new Ofsted Review of Religious Education was published. This highlighted the real paradigm shift that was beginning to take place within the subject from a **'World Religions' Paradigm to a 'Worldviews' Paradigm**. This is because society's religious & non-religious landscape has evolved and there is need to build up **accurate** knowledge of the complexity & diversity of global religion & non-religion in the world today. ¹

Ofsted's review of Religious Education highlighted the need to recognise educators make different claims about the nature of the subject and broadly speaking the report recognises teachers, practitioners & researchers do not have well-established conventions to discuss the different types of knowledge that appear in Religious Education curriculums. ²

A **World Religions Paradigm**, one that has existed for over 20 years emphasises a set of characteristics that make a religion what they are eg festivals, rituals, leaders, love etc. There can be a tendency to present 'a canonical or normalised' view of a particular religion', argues Dr Kathryn Wright ³. This can avoid teachers presenting the diversity of belief and base content on a largely western Christian colonial understanding of religion and thus not appreciate the '*diversity, divergence and change within a religion or worldview*.' This in turn reinforces stereotypes.

A **Worldviews Paradigm** on the other hand Wright argues '*reflects the complex, diverse, changing, and plural nature of worldviews. It recognises diversity within and between organised worldview traditions, as well as influences upon personal worldviews. It explores the significance of doctrine and practice, as well as lived experience, and involves a multi-disciplinary approach to study. A key point made in the Commission on RE (2018) is that **everyone has a worldview**.*' ⁴

The Ofsted Review of RE (May '21) identifies 3 different types of knowledge in line with inspection practice within their work in other subjects:

1. **Substantive knowledge & concepts**
2. **Ways of knowing**
3. **Personal knowledge**

¹ Ofsted RE review May 2021 Pg. 4 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education>

² Ofsted RE review May 2021 Pg. 8 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education>

³ Kathryn Wright June 2021 - An Ambitious Religion and Worldviews Curriculum for All - REonline <https://www.reonline.org.uk/leadership/curriculum/>

⁴ Commission on Religious Education. (2018) *Religion and worldviews: the way forward. A national plan for RE*. London: Religious Education Council of England and Wales

Substantive Knowledge & Concepts – This is identified by the Ofsted review as: ⁵

1. Ways people express religion and non-religion in their lives, **including diverse lived experiences** and the **complexity of the fluid boundaries** between different traditions.
2. Knowledge about **artefacts & texts associated** with different religious and non-religious traditions (eg sacred texts, practices, literature, stories, art, and practices that bind communities within a tradition together).
3. Concepts of **‘religion’ and ‘non-religion’** and debates around these ideas, ‘prayer’, ‘sacred’, and ‘moksha’.
4. **Concepts** that relate to religious and non-religious traditions, such as ‘dharma’, ‘incarnation’, ‘ritual’, ‘authority’.

For a long time Religious Education has had concepts on which to build an understanding of the religious/non-religious world. There are well-established conventions within RE to refer to ways of categorising subject-specific concepts:

1. Concepts that are common to religious and non-religious experience eg love, peace, joy.
2. Concepts that are common to multiple forms of religious experience eg sacrifice, prayer, worship.
3. Concepts specific to a religious tradition eg the Christian notion of ‘incarnation’.

There may well be a fourth group of concepts suggests Dawn Cox which has often been neglected:

4. Concepts debated within a specific religion which are peculiar to a sect or denomination eg transubstantiation, purgatory (Roman Catholics). ⁶

This substantive knowledge provides the coat hangers or golden threads running through the key stages on which pupils build their knowledge but careful selection of content to study in Religious Education becomes vital as it is widely recognised that there is far too much content to study. Ofsted notes that *‘simply covering a greater number of religious and non-religious traditions (as inclusive as that sounds) is no guarantee of a high quality RE curriculum. This overloads the curriculum and might lead to superficial caricatures of religious and non-religious traditions.’* ⁷

A key question for curriculum design then is **How do we decide what Ofsted calls ‘collectively enough’ substantive content?**

Disciplinary Knowledge or Ways of Knowing

This is the knowledge that comes from how a subject works. Christine Counsell defines this as the organising structures of a discipline. It is about looking at substantive knowledge through *different ways of knowing*. It is about using specialist knowledge, skills, tools, norms, methods, and modus operandi associated with the body of substantive knowledge.⁸

⁵ Ofsted RE review May 2021 Pg. 9 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education>

⁶ Dawn Cox (2021) <https://missdcoblog.wordpress.com/2020/07/18/the-golden-threads-substantive-concepts-in-re/>

⁷ Kathryn Wright June 2021 - An Ambitious Religion and Worldviews Curriculum for All - REonline <https://www.reonline.org.uk/leadership/curriculum/>

⁸ Counsell, C. (2018) Taking curriculum seriously in ‘Impact: Designing a curriculum: Developing strategies to support access to knowledge’, *Journal of Chartered College of Teaching* Issue 4, Autumn 2018 <https://impact.chartered.college/article/taking-curriculum-seriously/>

The problem here though is that Religious Education isn't often seen as a subject or discipline by itself at higher academic levels. It has been suggested that Religious Education is made up from different disciplines and is therefore multidisciplinary; Some argue at a higher education level that *Religious Studies* encompasses different disciplinary fields and is therefore 'one' discipline in itself.⁹

Some argue the subject includes theology, philosophy, and the human/social sciences.¹⁰ Richard Kueh Ofsted HMI for RE also includes history, literacy, and science.¹¹ The different 'ways of knowing' could also include studies in Religious Education which include sociology, anthropology, art, language, politics, economics, cultural studies, to name but a few. Suffice to say there is much debate about what the main disciplines used in Religious Education are.

Wright argues these other disciplines *'give pupils a set of tools that they can use to look at an issue or a concept and critically engage with it, in a disciplined way. It helps students to understand where knowledge has come from and how valid the claims are that it makes'*.¹²

Ofsted suggests we need to start with what religion and non-religious worldviews are and use the right tools in order to make sense of them, eg RE Today give a good example for studying 'God' through a theological and psychological lens in their recent publication on Big Questions, Big Answers (2021)¹³. Or in another example we may use an historical lens to think about empirical data from the Reformation. A key question for curriculum design here is ***Are pupils developing their ability to handle substantive knowledge by developing their disciplinary knowledge?***

Personal Knowledge

This is about the perspectives and experiences that pupils themselves bring to the classroom. It is about knowledge that enables pupils to better understand and interrogate their own positionality, presuppositions, values, and their place in the world.

Provision for the spiritual development of pupils currently includes developing their:

- * ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) & perspectives on life
- * knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths, feelings, and values¹⁴.

The THEOS group recently published an animation about the concept of worldviews together with a set of materials teachers can use called *Nobody Stands Nowhere*.¹⁵ Similarly REOnline are publishing a set of papers on personal Worldview stories which helps us define personal knowledge.¹⁶

Kathryn Wright, CEO from Culham St Gabriel's has recently suggested that personal knowledge may look like this:

⁹Cush, D. (2021) One discipline, many methods? A contribution to the debate about disciplines in RE/Religion and Worldviews: Part 1 In *Professional Reflection: The Journal of NATRE* pp.53-58

¹⁰ Georgious & Wright (2018) <https://balancedre.org.uk/>

¹¹ <https://www.reonline.org.uk/leadership/case-studies/dr-richard-kueh/>

¹² Kathryn Wright June 2021 - An Ambitious Religion and Worldviews Curriculum for All - REonline <https://www.reonline.org.uk/leadership/curriculum/>

¹³ <https://shop.retoday.org.uk/200349> Big Questions Big answers. (2021)

¹⁴ Ofsted RE review May 2021 Pg.23 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education>

¹⁵ <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/comment/2021/05/12/worldviews-film> (2021)

¹⁶ <https://www.reonline.org.uk/resources/telling-my-worldview-story/> (2020/21)

What it is....	What it isn't....
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding one's own positionality • Understanding what has shaped one's own worldview e.g. influences, background • About becoming a meaning maker or interpreter • Awareness of bias and assumptions one brings to what one is learning • Self-understanding in relation to what one is learning • Reflexivity i.e. the fact of someone being able to examine their own feelings, reactions, and motives and how this influence what they do or think in a situation. • Equipping young people to be good researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This isn't though just PSHE, personal development or SMSC; • Pupils' personal opinions • Pupils personal beliefs • Saying if you agree or disagree with something. <p>Used with permission from Dr K Wright CEO@cstg.org.uk</p>

'In RE, a religious and non-religious worldviews approach involves helping pupils to develop their personal worldview in conversation with the content and methods of study in the subject. As they move through their education, it helps them to make judgements about the content studied, the methods used, and their own perspectives, in the light of evidence and argument. This draws pupils' attention to ideas of critical scholarly 'positionality', as practised in academic study at undergraduate level and beyond.' (Pg.13 <https://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/REC-Worldviews-Project-Draft-Handbook-single-pages.pdf> 2022)

A key question for curriculum design here is *When and how do teachers develop pupils personal knowledge and what other content can they draw upon?*

2.4.2 Curriculum design, Key Stages 1-3. Key questions to consider arising from the ongoing debate:

- How can we prevent superficiality (a tick list approach to substantive content & disciplines) & encourage deeper thinking? How selective are we? What is collectively enough content?
- Are we already including disciplinarity, (ways of knowing), in our curriculum/lessons? How do we know? Do we need to emphasise the disciplines more to pupils?
- Should we use a framework (e.g. RE-searchers, BIG ideas) to teaching the disciplines across key stages or should it be fluid?

At the time of writing there are a few examples of how this might actually work in classroom practice. Ofsted hope to publish more examples during the next 18 months. (2022/23) The Religious Education Council (REC) is currently running a three-year project, supported by the Templeton World Charity Foundation, to develop guidance for syllabus writers and curriculum developers for implementing a religion and non-religious worldviews approach. Here are a few practical examples:

1. **RE-searchers Project**- uses a variety of methodologies to study worldviews.
<https://www.reonline.org.uk/research/the-re-searchers-approach-critical-dialogic-and-inquiry-led-re-for-the-primary-school/>
2. **Norfolk Agreed Syllabus 2019** – Based on Balanced RE uses questions from 3 disciplinary fields to frame the curriculum. The syllabus is publicly available:
<https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/teaching-and-learning/religious-education-agreed-syllabus>
3. **Curriculum Planning Document on REONLINE** – A tool to help review a curriculum using a disciplinary approach.
4. <https://www.reonline.org.uk/teaching-resources/re-in-a-broad-and-balanced-curriculum-a-practical-tool/>
5. **Big Ideas in RE – Exeter University** framing a curriculum around 6 big ideas
<https://www.reonline.org.uk/news/big-ideas-for-religious-education/>
5. **Putting Big Ideas into Practice in Religious Education** By Barbara Wintersgill with Denise Cush
6. **Who is Jesus?** produced by the University of Exeter. Who is Jesus? provides an innovative examination of the figure of Jesus through a variety of different cultural, religious, and disciplinary lenses.¹⁷
7. **Canterbury Christchurch University project on Teaching Islam as a worldview**- Kate Christopher and Lynn Revell have asked what big ideas need to be taught in terms of Islam as a worldview.
<https://www.reonline.org.uk/resources/islam-as-a-worldview-muhammad-ali/>
8. **Innovative RE: Case Studies** – The examples from Bickleigh Down school and Aylesford School illustrates engagement with the concept of diversity/plurality of beliefs and practices.
<https://www.gold.ac.uk/faithsunit/current-projects/reforreal/caswe-studies/>
<https://vimeo.com/468905612/2df730a4f3>
9. **RE Online**- Culham support in partnership with Canterbury University Islam as a worldview KS2-5
<https://www.reonline.org.uk/resources/islam-as-a-worldview-muhammad-ali/>

During the writing of this agreed syllabus review we recognise the **paradigm shift** in Religious Education will take time to develop fully and to that end we have tried to include some different approaches as part of our own transition towards a Worldviews paradigm shift whilst recognising there are several research projects currently in motion. These will give more clarity as they are trailed in schools and inform future syllabus design and classroom practice as we encourage schools to adopt new ideas over

¹⁷https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/collegeofsocialsciencesandinternationalstudies/education/research/groupsandnetworks/reandspiritualitynetwork/Who_is_Jesus.pdf

the next five years. Indeed the most recent draft REC handbook may help us clarify expectations in religious education over the next few years.¹⁸

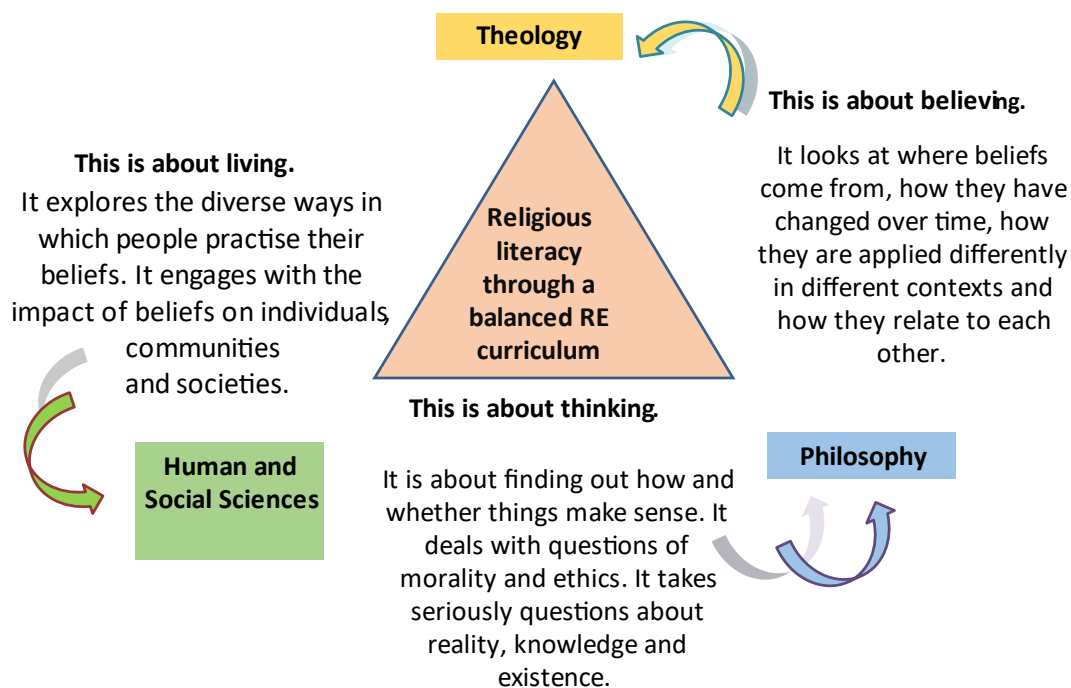
2.4.3 Balanced Religious Education – An example of ‘ways of knowing’

As discussed, the study of Religious Education and worldviews is rooted in a range of academic disciplines of study. Whilst research into the specific disciplines that are involved in the study of Religious Education is an ongoing conversation, it is helpful to consider three main disciplines eg theology, philosophy, and human/social sciences. As Gillian Georgiou puts it:

‘Students of Religious Education tend to go on to study one of three key disciplinary areas, which necessarily contain a degree of confluence and interrelation – theology, philosophy, and the human/social sciences (an umbrella term for a collection of subjects that explore what it means to be human, e.g. sociology, psychology, anthropology)’.¹⁹

For the purposes of this syllabus, the following diagram is helpful when it comes to curriculum design, and the selection and use of enquiry questions, (See Teachers Handbook Part 1 Planning guidance) :

How do some of the disciplinary areas underpin curriculum design in RE? ²⁰



¹⁸ Taking Curriculum Seriously Christine Counsell Sep 2018 <https://impact.chartered.college/article/taking-curriculum-seriously/>

¹⁹ Balanced RE Thoughts on curriculum design Sept 2018 <https://impact.chartered.college/article/balanced-re-thoughts-re-curriculum-design/>

²⁰ This approach is rooted in the thinking of Dr Kathryn Wright, Mrs Jane Chipperton, Mrs Gillian The intellectual property of this multi-disciplinary approach sits with these advisers. The definitions of this approach above sits with CEEO (Church of England Education Office). Used with permission from all involved.