

Religious Education

Key Concepts

As the syllabus is agreed in each locality the key concepts that are explored are not the same however the Leicestershire syllabus is concept led and for primary includes:

Christianity: *God, Creation and Fall, People of God, Incarnation, Gospel, Salvation and Kingdom of God*

Hindu dharma: *Samsara and moksha, Brahman (God) and atman, Karma and dharma*

Islam: *God/Tawhid, Iman (faith), Ibadah (worship), Akhlaq (virtue/morality)*

Judaism: *God, Torah, The People and the Land*

Sikhism: *God, Values (Nam Simran, kirat karna, vand chhakna, seva) ,The Gurus Panth (community)*

When considering key concepts in RE, it is important to consider how pupils will develop increasing understanding of wide areas of RE subject knowledge, and also how pupils can develop religious literacy, including the skills of:

- investigating religions and worldviews through varied experiences, approaches and disciplines;
- reflecting on and expressing their own ideas and the ideas of others with increasing creativity and clarity;
- becoming increasingly able to respond to religions and worldviews in an informed, rational and insightful way.

Religious Education Council for England and Wales (2013) (https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/RE_Review_Summary.pdf)

National Curriculum Purpose of Study and Aims

RE is not part of the National curriculum but part of the basic curriculum. It legally has to be taught in all year groups in all schools.

The curriculum is put together by a group called the SACRE in each local authority.

In Leicester City:

The core purpose of RE is to engage pupils in exploring and responding to challenging questions raised by religion and worldviews, so that they can develop the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to appreciate and appraise varied responses to these questions, including their own.

In Leicestershire:

The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.

This is then broken down into three aims that are explored through the pedagogy used in teaching each question in the syllabus:

- make sense of a range of religious and non-religious beliefs
- understand the impact and significance of religious and non-religious beliefs
- make connections between religious and non-religious beliefs, concepts, practices and ideas studied

Specific pedagogical considerations

The recent OFSTED Research review for RE

The review warns against overloading the curriculum which may lead to ‘*superficial caricatures of religious and non-religious traditions.*’ Trevor Cooling. The review supports the idea of digging deeper into particular religious or non-religious worldviews. It also suggests ideas about what might form part of that study.

‘*At the very least, subject leaders can ensure that the planned representations express the variety of religion and non-religion (for example, ways of living found in Abrahamic traditions, dharmic traditions and non-religious traditions).*’ OFSTED Research Review for RE 2021

The curriculum should carefully select and cover substantive content and concepts in order to build a **schema of knowledge about religious and non-religious traditions**, rather than covering excessive amounts of content superficially.

The content covered must be sufficient for pupils to grasp a bigger picture about the place of religion and non-religion in the world. Examples of concepts and further ideas about what might form part of that study are outlined in the review.

The review identifies **three areas of subject-specific knowledge** in RE:

- Substantive knowledge about various religious and non-religious traditions;
- Disciplinary knowledge (different ‘ways of knowing’) that enables pupils to understand and use some of the methods and techniques associated with studying religious and non-religious traditions;
- Personal knowledge that enables pupils to better understand and interrogate their own position, presuppositions and values.

What might progression look like? What do look out for and emphasise in your teaching

Pupils should study certain areas of the RE curriculum in depth and acquire a range of detailed knowledge of different concepts and ideas, which they remember long term. Drawing on this prior knowledge should enable them to consider more complex ideas about religion. Religious and non-religious worldviews are relevant now to huge communities of people and need to be taught as such

Key misconceptions and specific issues to be aware of:

- Representing religious and non-religious worldviews as monoliths where people believe and do all the same things. Religious and on-religious communities are diverse and this diversity needs to be acknowledged and where possible exemplified. One simple way of doing this is using language such as some Hindus believe, many Muslims etc.
- The importance of improving subject knowledge about the religious and non-religious worldviews that are being talked about
- The misunderstanding of what RE is as a subject- it is not about making people religious or promoting religion. (see aims above)

Further questions for reflection

- Would you recognise the symbols for Christianity and principle religions represented in GB?
- How do teachers encourage children to articulate their own views?
- Is RE taught thematically or systematically in your placement school?

(James and Stern, 2019)

Resource links

[National Association of Teachers of Religious Education](#)

[Understandinghumanism.org.uk](#)

[Religious Studies - BBC Bitesize](#)

[Truetube.co.uk](#)

[Visitmymosque.org](#)

Key questions when observing or teaching this subject

How are children’s communication, investigation, interpretation and critical thinking skills developed through lessons?

How are attitudes such as open-mindedness, respect, tolerance and reverence developed through RE?

How do teachers encourage children to learn about, and from, religions and worldviews?

How is RE taught practically, and what are the benefits of this?

How are children introduced to a range of artefacts?

Further reading

[Diocese of Leicester: RE resources](#)

[Ofsted Research Review \(2021\)](#)

[Welcome to the RE Today Primary Curriculum \(NATRE\)](#)

[Ofsted subject report: RE \(2024\)](#)

James, M. and Stern, J. (2019) *Mastering Primary Religious Education*. London: Bloomsbury.