

Shropshire Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education



Non-Statutory Guidance

This guidance is produced to supplement the implementation of the Shropshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (RE). The statutory requirements can be found in a separate publication and also on the RE pages of the Learning Gateway. The contents of the guidance have been produced in response to the consultation and feedback based on the review of the syllabus in 2018/2019 and are set out under the broad headings raised by schools and SACRE members.

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1. As a new subject leader how can I go about implementing the syllabus in my school?

To begin with you will need to understand the legal requirements of the Shropshire agreed syllabus by familiarising yourself with the syllabus booklet. Secondly, it would be helpful to find out what your school is currently doing as you are very unlikely to be starting with a blank sheet. A useful organisational tool is the syllabus audit sheet which can be found as Annex A at the back of this guidance and also on the RE pages of the Learning Gateway. Depending on the outcome of this activity you can proceed in a number of ways. One way is to start with an outline key stage grid tailored to your own school such as the one shown below for a standard primary school. Infant, junior and secondary schools will have the same columns but will vary the number of years to reflect their structures.

	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 1						
Year 2						
Year 3						
Year 4						
Year 5						
Year 6						

A first task could be to enter any fixed points into the grid, for example in autumn 2 you could include Christmas and in spring 1 and 2 you could include Easter. Stopping the focus on Easter before the holidays could be in danger of missing the key message of the resurrection for Christians which happens in the following term. Other possibilities might include harvest festival, remembrance Sunday, Diwali, Hanukkah etc depending on your particular school.

Secondly, you could slot in existing work which works well and staff are happy that it meets the criteria for the syllabus and is good RE. At this point it may be helpful to return to the audit sheet and update it to reflect the revised content. A key question is to check to see if there any obvious omissions that need to be included in the developing grid. Please note that there is no specification in the syllabus as to how long you need to spend on each of the religious/worldview questions or the depth in which you have to cover them. Once you have identified the gaps then these can be filled by drawing on any materials that are appropriate including examples to be found on the Shropshire Learning Gateway, national exemplification materials such as QCA, materials drawn from other agreed syllabi, examples from other published materials such as Understanding Christianity or published schemes. Whatever materials are chosen they need to be mapped against the criteria for the Shropshire syllabus on the grid to demonstrate coverage of the requirements.

At the end of this process you will have a single side of A4 which maps out your coverage of the requirements of the agreed syllabus. This can be tweaked and amended as new ideas and materials become available. A sample completed document can be found as Annex B. The letter annotation refers to either the autumn (A), spring (Sp) or summer terms where the content is taught followed by the number of the year in which it is taught (1-6). Therefore, Sp4 indicates that this is taught in the spring term of year 4.

2. What should a good RE policy look like?

A good policy should be a brief working document that reflects whole school policies on such things as teaching and learning, assessment etc and most schools have an in-house style and structure that all subject policies follow. There is no reason why RE should be any different. Broad headings could include the following:

Purposes, Aims and Objectives – in relation to your whole school aims what is the purpose of RE as a subject. Some ideas for this could be taken from the introduction on page 1 of the agreed syllabus. This statement should clarify for all staff why you are teaching the subject and what you are hoping to achieve in terms of general outcomes for pupils.

The Structure of RE – how you have decided to organise the teaching of RE in your school. There is no statutory way in which this has to be done and so a school discussion in relation to your general teaching and learning policy should clarify your approach. Your audit sheet which shows what is taught when should be included here. Progression information should be included here, and some schools find it useful to include samples of pupils' work to exemplify the progression within aspects of the subject across the school. This section might also include guidance and information on visits and visitors, resources such as artefacts, information books and other support ideas for teachers. Many schools cross-reference from this section to general school policies on teaching and learning, assessment etc as opposed to including them again.

Action plan – the current development priorities for the year, with any monitoring and evaluation comments added throughout the year.

Right of withdrawal – whilst this is an issue that is handled by the headteacher, a simple statement and outline of the procedure should be included in the policy with reference to external guidance such as that included on pages 27-30 in the RE in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010 booklet which can be downloaded from the RE pages on the Learning Gateway.

A review date for the policy.

3. *How should I go about monitoring RE provision across the school?*

The answer to this will depend very largely on how the school sees the role of subject leaders and whether or not any time is made available for them to carry out the role. The research project into provision in Shropshire highlighted a very wide difference across schools from a few church schools where the RE leader had a very high profile with release time to monitor provision and books regularly each term to most schools where there was no additional time available for leaders to carry out any functions. If the early proposals to the new Ofsted framework are implemented in September 2019 then primary schools may need to reflect on whole curriculum provision and its monitoring in response to possible new developments.

A good start would be for any new subject leader to carry out the audit as indicated above which will require an understanding of the syllabus requirements in each key stage. This will produce evidence that the school's provision meets the requirements of the agreed syllabus.

Beyond this it is important to ensure that the planning behind the coverage leads to teaching and learning that is accessible to all pupils; is appropriately demanding so that expectations are realistic but challenging in all year groups; is underpinned by a model of progression across all year groups; is well resourced both in terms of materials but also developmental resource for the subject leader and all staff who teach the subject; and that assessment is used to determine children's learning but is not onerous for staff.

Other useful activities following on from the audit could include carrying out a book trawl to get a feel for what the children are experiencing in relation to the planning. This will give you a good feel for progression and the expectations that are driving the curriculum. A pupil survey may also be useful to gauge the attitudes of the pupils – what do they find interesting, challenging, helpful in getting better at RE. A staff survey may also be helpful in determining how well supported staff feel, what are their concerns, what do they need help with. These activities should give you a good sense of where things stand in your school. Having done these activities, it is important to then take some action as a result.

One activity would be to devise an action plan for the coming year picking up on two or three key things that have arisen out of the audits. A common failure is to try and change too many things too quickly which can be disheartening if they do not work out. Plan for some easy wins and build on success. This may be related to performance management, in which case make sure that you are supported to carry out these planned actions with some release time and, if possible, opportunities for support through CPD or opportunities to visit other schools with good practice already in place. As with all action plans, check throughout the year that planned actions are actually taking place and, if you have the confidence, try and ensure you provide a good role model for what you want your colleagues to do.

4. How should I use the religious/worldview questions to develop planning?

These fourteen questions are the key structure for the Shropshire syllabus both in terms of content but also process as they underline the need for an enquiry based approach to the teaching of RE. A number of misunderstandings exist about their use.

- The fourteen questions are not the questions that teachers should use to set up their investigations – they need to be adapted to fit the age and abilities of the children.
- The questions can be combined so that topics can cover multiple questions at the same time.
- There is no requirement beyond covering the questions once in key stage 1, twice in key stage 2 and once again in key stage 3. There is no time requirement or assessment requirement. So, for example, some teachers have been concerned that in key stage 1 there are twelve half terms and fourteen questions and so have become worried about fitting them in. By combining them they should fit easily.

There are examples of all of the above in the planning section of the Learning Gateway.

5. How should I use the religious/worldview concepts to develop my planning?

The incorporation of the religious/worldview concepts has been more of a challenge for schools than the religious/worldview questions but to ensure high quality RE, notice should be taken of including them in the overall planning and mapping of the subject through the syllabus audit sheet. Unlike the religious/worldview questions the concepts are derived from national guidance materials and are a common feature in most agreed syllabuses across the country. Their use is the same as for the religious/worldview questions above in that they can be combined in topics and there is no time or assessment requirement surrounding them.

Schools that have mapped the coverage of both the questions and the concepts using the audit sheet are likely to have a strong basis for high quality religious education.

6. How should I be assessing RE?

The principles of high quality assessment are consistent across all subjects. By adopting an enquiry-based approach to the teaching of the subject, teachers are in a strong place to identify opportunities for assessing what children know, understand and can do. If learning is directed by an initial question, whether that is for a medium-term plan or an individual lesson then an assessment becomes a natural point in the learning where the children are invited to respond to that initial question. One key requirement to aid teachers is to understand how children get better at RE. There are a number of illustrations of this including:

- Progression through the religious/worldview questions – as children get better at the subject they can be exposed to more challenging variations of the questions. Examples of this progression can be found on the Learning Gateway.
- Progression through the religious/worldview concepts – as children get better at the subject they develop deeper understanding and knowledge through these concepts. Sample progression grids developed nationally can be found as Annex B at the back of this guidance.

Armed with the general expectations for years 2, 4, 6 and 9 teachers can use these expectations in a number of ways. In the first instance they can be used to determine the initial pitch of the planning required. This will ensure that children are engaging with work that will allow them to demonstrate whether they have reached these expectations. There is a potential problem which now arises and that is that many schools plan half termly topics for RE and this could yield six or more assessments over a year. This is too many for a realistic assessment load, particularly in primary schools. Also, teachers should be looking to vary the type of assessment that children produce. The nature of the subject should allow for assessment to be in the form of a written outcome, but it should also include oral work, possibly art work, diagrams or even 3D outcomes.

7. Where do I get the ideas and content to develop schemes of work in my school?

The Shropshire Agreed Syllabus is a flexible framework and has been designed as such to give schools the freedom to develop their teaching materials within it. As long as schools can demonstrate that they have met the requirements of covering the religious/worldview questions and the concepts then they are free to make use of materials from anywhere including other agreed syllabus exemplification, national guidance and exemplification, diocesan syllabus exemplification, exemplification from religious sites (many of which can be found through the Learning Gateway) and other published schemes.

8. How do I ensure progression in RE throughout the school?

It is most likely that the proposed changes to the Ofsted framework from September 2019 onwards will require schools to ensure that all curriculum subjects are taught and assessed but that they are also underpinned by clear lines of progression. All staff need to be able to clearly articulate how pupils get better at RE – what do they need to know understand and do that demonstrate they are becoming more competent in this subject. There are broad principles that relate to the subject and it is for staff to determine which best fit their needs and those of their pupils. Information currently available includes:

1. Progression Through the 14 Religious/Worldview Questions – this can be found on the RE pages of the Learning Gateway and offers examples of how the 14 religious/worldview questions that underpin the syllabus can be interpreted to reflect increasing levels of challenge for each key stage. Please note that these are only illustrative examples and schools should feel free to add other questions using this principle.

2. RE Concept Development – this document can also be found on the RE pages of the Learning Gateway. It focuses on each of the concepts that along with the religious/worldview questions form the structure of the agreed syllabus and offers descriptors that map out the development from the beginning of key stage 1 through to the end of key stage 3. They can be useful in helping teachers determine the starting pitch of the work they are developing for pupils. They also give an indication of how work can be differentiated by moving to the right to make the work more demanding or to the left by making it more accessible.
3. National Expectation Guidance – A New Framework for Assessment in RE was used at a number of network meetings and dedicated CPD on assessment in RE and provides very useful guidance on the assessment of knowledge and understanding of religious and non-religious worldviews, and the analysis and evaluation of important questions and experiences of life in relation to religious and non-religious worldviews. Page 6 of part 2 of the guidance sets out two grids of expectations for the above by ages 7, 9, 11, 14 and 16. These expectations are good in offering guidance as to what teachers should be planning to teach but also gives ideas of what to expect from pupils in response. These materials can be accessed by copying A New Framework for Assessment in RE into a Google search and downloading the word version of Part 2.
4. RE Level Descriptors - Some staff might still find the old level descriptors from previous agreed syllabus support material of use in illustrating progression in smaller steps than any of the above three examples. At the very least these should give teachers an idea of how RE becomes more challenging. It is important to note that the structure of each level broadly follows the concepts in two above.

Staff can explore all of the above and there are likely to be other examples produced from around the country as time moves on. It is advisable to use these to help develop an understanding of how children get better at RE and then to decide on one use in your school. Schools that have opted to use 3 have used the descriptors to identify pieces of pupils' work to illustrate progression across the school.

9. What does progression look like in the study of religions/worldviews other than Christianity?

At the present time there is no specific work that looks specifically at individual religions/worldviews in the way that Understanding Christianity and Understanding Humanism do. The most practical way to approach this at the moment would be to take the expectations as set out on page 6 of the New Framework for Assessment in RE part 2 and to apply whichever religion/worldview you are exploring to the commentary.

10. How do I develop my own and my colleagues' subject knowledge in RE?

There are no easy short cuts to this and we never stop learning as individuals. One of the key considerations of the agreed syllabus was to make the demands on individual teachers less onerous with regard to RE. The suggestion in the syllabus is for schools to decide for themselves which

religions/worldviews, in addition to Christianity, they wish to study in each key stage. One in key stage 1, and two in both key stages 2 and 3. The idea was that this would have the double advantage of allowing teachers to focus on fewer religions/worldviews and thereby allow pupils to develop a deeper understanding of a more limited number of religions/worldviews. As a teacher in key stage 1 you would then only have to develop an understanding of Christianity and one other religion. We accept that this does not offer much for those teachers who teach in all age key stage classes.

If the school has carried out an audit and discussion of long term planning then it marks the beginning of the process whereby, over time, deeper knowledge and understanding can be built up. This remains a challenge for primary teachers because the length of time spent in Initial Teacher Training on RE is often woefully brief and so, from the start we are playing catch up. This needs to be seen as a long-term process and not something to be done overnight. Schools need to take a strategic look at developing subject expertise over time through carefully chosen CPD and consultancy where external support is required or internal CPD where a member of staff has a level of expertise they can draw on to support other colleagues. In addition, the RE pages on the Learning Gateway were developed to provide staff with ideas for planning, and resources that could be used to develop their own knowledge and understanding and that of pupils through a wide range of websites.

School Library Services offer a wide range of book based resources and artefacts that schools can borrow. All artefact boxes come with guidance on how they can be used. For church schools then there is additional diocesan support that can be used. There are also very good links to experts that schools can draw on through visits and visitors. SACRE has members, many of whom regularly visit primary and secondary schools to talk about aspects of their particular faith or viewpoint and they have information regarding places to visit to gain additional insight into religious/worldview practices. Many Shropshire schools have made good use of the Interfaith Wolverhampton to organise and arrange school visits.

11. What resources, including visits and visitors, are available to support the teaching of the syllabus in my school?

Shropshire SACRE is very well served by representatives covering nearly all of the world's major religions/worldviews including Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity (including a wide range of different denominations), Hinduism, Humanism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. SACRE members have a very good record of visiting schools or of being able to contact other people from their faiths to do so. In addition, there are currently two very active Inter-Faith Forums meeting in Shropshire - one in Shrewsbury and one in Church Stretton who could be contacted to support staff in school. They operate regular meetings and activities and both have websites that contain useful information. The contact details are <http://www.ssif.org.uk/> for the south and <http://shrewsburyurc.co.uk/wp/interfaith-forum/> for Shrewsbury.

Many schools have made very good use of the Interfaith Wolverhampton to organise and arrange visits to places of worship in the West Midlands. They can be contacted at www.ifwton.org.uk

Shropshire's School Library Service provides topic collections, artefacts, pictures, and big books to support the teaching of the syllabus.

12. How does the syllabus tie in with Ofsted and SIAMS inspection frameworks?

In many respects this is an interesting question. In all schools which have adopted the Shropshire agreed syllabus it provides the legal requirement for the teaching of RE. This is set out in the grid on page 3 of the statutory requirements document. Ofsted are expected to inspect the school against the requirements set out in the local agreed syllabus, although there have been instances where this has not happened. With the possible new development of curriculum provision expectations in the new framework to be implemented in September 2019 then schools and subject leaders will need to be clear about the curriculum requirements as set out in the syllabus.

With regards to SIAMS, the same applies in relation to curriculum provision. In voluntary controlled schools they are required to follow the requirements of the local agreed syllabus; in voluntary aided schools it is the decision of the governing body to decide which agreed syllabus to adopt; and in academies and free schools it is again the decision of governors. Where diocesan syllabuses have been produced their status is advisory only. In the Shropshire context there is a Lichfield syllabus but its requirements are perfectly compatible with the Shropshire syllabus and integrating the two should not cause any difficulties for schools. Currently there is no Hereford diocesan syllabus and so the compatibility issues do not arise.

For church schools there is separate training for preparation for SIAMS and this should enable schools to prepare for and meet the additional requirements for church schools. It is not the role of an agreed syllabus to produce separate guidance for church schools.

13. How should we support the teaching of new issues in areas such as marriage, LGBT developments, death and extremism?

Teaching new, or controversial, issues in RE is nothing new. All teachers have a sense of professional judgement and understanding of their own class and circumstances to determine what they feel comfortable in teaching. In relation to the above list, marriage and death have always been requirements of the syllabus and have been the focus of a number of training courses over the years. AS with all of these topics care needs to be exercised in relation to the age and ability of the pupils being taught but teachers should feel comfortable in dealing with any issues that arise in these areas. Good guidance can be found in the on-line RE CPD Handbook in an interesting section on teaching controversial issues in religious education which can be found at <http://re-handbook.org.uk/section/approaches/teaching-controversial-issues-in-religious-education>

A further good resource can be found produced by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales which can be found at <https://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resilience-teaching-controversial-topics/>

If specific advice is sought for example from a particular religious or world view, then it could be possible through SACRE to invite specialist speakers in to engage with the issue in class. If this is to be explored, then the Visitors Guide which can be found on the open pages of the Learning Gateway under the page heading RE in primary schools or RE in secondary schools may be useful to refer to.

14. Any ideas on how to incorporate art, music and poetry in particular into RE?

Some of the most impressive work produced by children in RE has been done through the medium of art, music or poetry. In many primary schools the teaching of RE is planned to incorporate other subjects and this approach should continue. One particular area to explore could be to look at participating in external events and competitions such as Spirited Arts. This has been running since 2004 and regularly attracts over 20,000 entries from schools. Each year the focus theme varies but a look on their website at Spirited Arts will give teachers inspiration and ideas to develop this aspect of RE.

Agreed Syllabus Audit Sheet

Identity, diversity and belonging														
Practices and ways of life														
Expressing meaning														
Values and commitments														
Beliefs, teaching and sources														
Meaning, purpose and truth														
	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3	RQ4	RQ5	RQ6	RQ7	RQ8	RQ9	RQ10	RQ11	RQ12	RQ13	RQ14

Religions/Worldviews Studied in Key Stage 1 – Buddhism Christianity Hinduism Islam Judaism Sikhism Other(s)

Religions/Worldviews Studied in Key Stage 2 - Buddhism Christianity Hinduism Islam Judaism Sikhism Other(s)

Sample Primary School Completed Agreed Syllabus Audit Sheet

Identity, diversity and belonging	A1		Sp5		Sp 1		A6		Su2			A4		
Practices and ways of life		A4		Sp2		Su6				A1 Sp3	Su5		Su4 Su6	
Expressing meaning	A3					Su1		Sp4		A5		Sp6		Sp2
Values and commitments		A6	Sp1				Su4		Su5	A3			Su2	
Beliefs, teaching and sources	Sp3			Sp4		Sp5	A1				A2			Su3
Meaning, purpose and truth		A2			Su3			Su1		Sp6		Sp1		A5
	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3	RQ4	RQ5	RQ6	RQ7	RQ8	RQ9	RQ10	RQ11	RQ12	RQ13	RQ14

Annex B

1. Fixed points in the year

	Autumn 1				Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 1		H						E	
Year 2		a		X				a	
Year 3		r		m				s	
Year 4		v		a				t	
Year 5		e		s				e	
Year 6		s						r	
		t							

2. Things that already work well for us

	Autumn 1				Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 1	Names	H		X		Belonging		E	Caring for pets
Year 2		a	Truth	m	Pilgrimage			a	Creation stories
Year 3	Neighbours	r		a		What we eat		s	
Year 4		v		s			Leaders	t	Weddings
Year 5		e			Mosque visit			e	
Year 6	Light	s				Holy books		r	Death and loss
		t							

3. Remaining gaps can be filled in by selecting appropriate work to meet the syllabus requirements in terms of religious/worldview questions and key concepts from any other good sources.