



# NATIONAL CONTENT STANDARD FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL OF  
ENGLAND AND WALES

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First Edition

# National Content Standard for Religious Education

This document sets out a National Content Standard for the subject within the context of National Plan for Religious Education (RE) which would embed the standard into the planning and delivery of the subject in England.

This document draws on The Religious Education Council of England and Wales Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom project, as well as other relevant national publications from the last 5 years. The Draft Resource, published by the RE Council's project, proposes a standard (called a National Entitlement Statement). This document is set out in the style of the National Curriculum and outlines how a National Content Standard for the subject might apply in different types of school. The appendices summarise relevant sources and evidence that have been considered when developing this National Content Standard.

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## What is a National Plan for Religious Education?

The proposed National Plan for RE builds on the principles set out in the Commission on RE (2018) and reflects changes that have impacted the education sector since that time, including to initial teacher training and early career development, the expansion of the academy schools programme and a further decline in the level and quality of provision for RE, evidenced for example, in DfE school workforce data and the Ofsted Research Review (2021).

**This proposal calls on the government to take action to secure:**

1. A refreshed vision for the subject, based on a religion and worldviews approach. So through careful selection of knowledge for the curriculum (see page 6), the subject will explore the nature of religion and worldviews, and the important role that religious<sup>3</sup> and non-religious<sup>4</sup> worldviews play in all human life. This means enabling all pupils to become knowledgeable, open-minded, critical participants in public discourse, who make academically informed judgements about important matters of religion or belief which shape the global landscape. It is a subject for all pupils, whatever their own family background or personal beliefs and practices.
2. high quality teaching for all pupils, in whatever school they attend, planned and delivered by those with a secure knowledge of their curriculum area.

**For this reason, it is proposed that:**

3. a **National Content Standard** for RE/an education in religion and worldviews be established to set a benchmark for what constitutes high quality in this subject (see page 4)
  - a. Where Academies are free to determine their own curriculum, the Funding Agreement should be amended to specify the nature of the provision required to secure the expected quality of RE/education in religion and worldviews, with the effect that the published syllabus for the subject in these contexts must demonstrate due regard to the National Content Standard.
  - b. systems are established, including through the inspection process, **to hold more effectively to account**, those schools that are failing to have due regard to a National Content Standard.

**To support the above two recommendations, a sustained programme of investment in teacher education, linked to the early career framework and ongoing professional development is required. For this reason, is it proposed:**

- a. that the proportion of lessons of secondary RE/education in religion and worldviews taught by people who are trained to teach the subject is increased by **reintroducing bursaries and other measures** to recruit trainees
- b. that those training as primary teachers have **sufficient RE/education in religion and worldviews specific training** to feel confident in the classroom
- c. that financial investment is made in **regional RE/education in religion and worldviews hubs** to extend opportunities for schools and teachers to draw upon relevant expertise in their region including through local communities of religion or belief.

## Towards a National Content Standard

At the heart of the National Plan for Religious Education is the need to establish a benchmark for what constitutes high quality in the subject – a National Content Standard. Such a benchmark could be used in clarification of regulations about the nature of provision required in Academy schools and may helpfully provide non-statutory guidance for the arms-length curriculum body, Oak National Academy, and its partners, in the upcoming development of a fully resourced curriculum in RE next academic year. Likewise, the National Plan and National Content Standard may support Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education and others with responsibility for RE to play their part in raising standards for all children.

In the first instance, we set out National Content Standard (page 5) drawing upon a range of sources and presented in the style of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. This approach recognises that, whilst the sources set out in the appendices establish that all state funded schools must teach RE, neither primary legislation nor supplementary documents such as academy funding agreements, provide a benchmark for the breadth, depth and level of ambition of the curriculum. Without a National Content Standard therefore, Religious Education lacks parity with the subjects of the National Curriculum despite its statutory place at the core of the basic curriculum (see Education Act 2002 S80 on page 16). This is followed by a reference section setting out the source selection which provides essential material for the creation of this National Content Standard.

# Religious Education programmes of study

## In the style of the National curriculum in England

NOTE: Whenever the term ‘worldviews’ is used in this document, it means religious and non-religious worldviews.

### Purpose of study<sup>1</sup>

An education in religion and worldviews should:

- introduce pupils to the rich diversity of religion and non-religion, locally and globally, as a key part of understanding how the world works and what it means to be human
- stimulate pupils’ curiosity about, and interest in, this diversity of worldviews, both religious and non-religious
- expand upon how worldviews work, and how different worldviews, religious and non-religious, influence individuals, communities and society
- develop pupils’ awareness that learning about worldviews involves interpreting the significance and meaning of information they study
- develop pupils’ appreciation of the complexity of worldviews, and sensitivity to the problems of religious language and experience
- induct pupils into the processes and scholarly methods by which we can study religion, religious and non-religious worldviews
- enable pupils, by the end of their studies, to identify positions and presuppositions of different academic disciplines and their implications for understanding
- give pupils opportunities to explore the relationship between religious worldviews and literature, culture and the arts
- include pupils in the enterprise of interrogating the sources of their own developing worldviews and how they may benefit from exploring the rich and complex heritage of humanity
- provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on the relationship between their personal worldviews and the content studied, equipping them to develop their own informed responses in the light of their learning.

### Attainment targets

By the end of each key stage, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study.

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<sup>1</sup> RE Council Worldviews Project: Draft Resource 2022, page 17

## Selecting content

It is vital that syllabus writers and curriculum developers make wise decisions on the selection of knowledge for a curriculum. Time for RE is limited, and the religion and worldviews approach is intended to avoid a proliferation of content, not least because of the impossibility of comprehensive coverage of the diversity of religious and non-religious traditions. The criteria for deciding content include the following:

**1. Legal Framework:** The relevant legal requirement operates (see page 11), which for most schools and academies without a religious character is that RE ‘shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain’ (Education Act 1996 Section 375). For most schools and academies with a religious character RE is determined by the governors and in their trust deed or equivalent. This primary legislation along with case law, set an expectation that pupils will develop knowledge and understanding of the matters of central importance for the religious and non-religious worldviews studied.

**2. Intention:** The National Content Standard must frame the intent behind the content selection. The treatment of that content then contributes to the progression of understanding of the elements in the National Content Standard, and the links between them.

**3. Inclusive Principle:** Best practice in RE, as well as European and domestic legislation, has established the principle that RE in schools without a religious character should be inclusive of both religious and non-religious worldviews. Schools should ensure that the content and delivery of the RE curriculum are inclusive in this respect (noting that this does not imply equal time between religious and non-religious worldviews). All religious and non-religious worldviews studied must have fair and accurate representation.

**4. Contextual Factors:** Local context is important, including school character, local community character, pupil knowledge and experience, teacher knowledge and experience. Local context also includes the history of local areas, allowing opportunities for local studies that connect teaching and learning with the geographical and historical background.

**5. Collectively Enough Principle:** Pupils need to gain ‘collectively enough’ or ‘cumulatively sufficient’ knowledge (OFSTED 2021), not total coverage. In this context, ‘collectively enough’ needs to relate to the National Content Standard, with its three broad strands of content, engagement and position.

**6. Coherency:** Schools should be able to give a clear account of their curriculum choices and carefully consider how they will enable the construction of a coherent curriculum for pupils.

## Subject Content

This exemplar content should be read within the context of the legal framework including the primary legislation cited above for different types of school, and case law which together set an expectation that pupils will develop knowledge and understanding of the matters of central importance for the religious and non-religious worldviews studied.

The material below is indicative of the breadth, depth and ambition of the curriculum content about religious and non-religious worldviews, that is required in a curriculum that would meet this National Content Standard. However, schools are not required by law to teach this exemplar content. The standard builds on the legal framework in its assumption that the content of a curriculum in this subject will be age appropriate and focus on religious and non-religious worldviews rather than on content which is the focus of a different curriculum subject. Likewise, for all pupils to have equal access to high quality education in religion and worldviews, the subject must be given adequate time and resources commensurate with its place as a core component of the basic curriculum.

In relation to religion and belief, pupils must be taught:

### **Content**<sup>2</sup>

- **Nature/formation/expression:** What is meant by worldview and how people's worldviews are formed and expressed through a complex mix of influences and experiences
- **Organised/individual:** How people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or institutional worldviews
- **Contexts:** How worldviews have contexts, reflecting time and place, are highly diverse, and feature continuity and change.
- **Meaning and purpose:** How worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience
- **Values, commitments and morality:** How worldviews may provide guidance on how to live a good life
- **Influence and power:** How worldviews influence, and are influenced by, people and societies

### **Engagement**

- **Ways of knowing:** The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing.
- **Lived experience:** The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people.

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<sup>2</sup> RE Council Worldviews Project: Draft Resource 2022. Expanded statements in the table on page 19f of this document.

- **Dialogue/interpretation:** The field of study of worldviews is to be shown as a dynamic area of debate

### **Position**

- **Personal worldviews reflexivity:** Pupils will reflect on and potentially develop their personal worldviews and make scholarly judgements in the light of their study in the light of their study of religious and non-religious worldviews.
- **Personal worldviews impact:** Pupils will reflect on how their worldviews affect their learning



## Making good progress

NOTE: As was stated on page 5, whenever the term ‘worldviews’ is used in this document, it refers to religious and non-religious worldviews.

The National Content Standard is intended to set a standard and a benchmark for an education in religion and worldviews, although there is no single correct way to deliver it. Religious education is part of the statutory basic curriculum and not the National Curriculum. This means that, unlike the core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum, there is no single descriptor of the subject content which must be followed for schools to which the National Curriculum applies. Furthermore, the legal framework for RE in different types of school, means that responsibility for setting the curriculum content, rests with different authorities.

For all these reasons, the national content standard does not recommend one model for making good progress. Instead, one possible example is offered here which demonstrates the breadth, depth and ambition of subject content around which progression needs to build. Two further examples may be found in the Draft Resource pages 42-45.

### Standards for EYFS

**4-5 year olds** might use photographs to observe home lives of some people from a religious tradition, from at least two different contexts. They notice some things that are the same in the homes and some that are different. They notice that some things in their own homes are the same and some are different, and that not everyone is the same. (a, c, g, h, j)\*

### Standards for Key stage 1

**5-7 year olds** might look at some religious artwork from a diverse range of contexts (such as pictures of Jesus from around the world) and connect them with some stories or texts that help to interpret the artwork (e.g. gospel accounts pictured). They notice how the different ways of expressing the stories in art are more or less familiar and think about why (e.g. according to their own contexts). They are introduced to a selection of voices to help them find out that such stories may be important in some people’s lives as part of organised worldviews, and find out why (e.g. they may include important people, and ideas about how to live). They find out that all kinds of different people may see the stories as important, but not everyone, and that sometimes this is to do with belief in God. (a, b, c, g, j)

### Standards for Lower Key stage 2

**7-9 year olds** might ask questions about meaning and purpose in life, expressing their own ideas and saying where these ideas come from. They might explore how religious worldviews help some people make sense of life and affect how they live day to day. For example, they might talk to adherents about what it means to believe there is a God, or to believe in salvation, or submission, or karma and samsara – how these ideas can transform

a person's life. They might examine some texts and stories that illustrate these big concepts and find out ways in which they are interpreted. They may reflect on the difference it makes to these interpretations if someone is an adherent or not, including pupils' own perspectives. (a, c, d, g, h, j)

## Standards for Upper Key stage 2

**9-11 year olds** might ask a question about the difference that context makes to one's worldview. For example, after thinking about their own context, they might use and interrogate data, interviews and visual images to examine the differences it makes to be a Muslim in a Muslim majority country (e.g. Indonesia) and a Muslim minority country (e.g. UK), including opportunities and challenges, and how these shape their lived experience – not just intellectual ideas. They might reflect on whether it is similar if someone is non-religious (e.g. Humanist) in a secular society or a religious society. They might reflect on their own context again and consider how it influences their own worldviews. (a, c, e, g, h, j, k)

## Standards for Lower Key stage 3

**11-12 year olds** might ask a question such as 'what is religion?' They might examine a range of common features of religion and carry out some research into their importance in the lives of members of the school and local community, and reflect on the role any of these features play in their own lives. By analysing these, they get an insight into the flexible role of religion in people's lives and worldviews, including their own responses. Having looked at the diversity of expression of religion in people's lives, they can then analyse and evaluate a range of contested academic definitions of religion, reflecting on the impact of a person's worldview on their understanding of 'religion'. (a, b, c, g, h, i, j, k)

## Standards for Upper Key stage 3

**12-14 year olds** might ask questions about how religions change over time. They might explore how significant concepts developed through the ages (e.g. using theological methods to understand Trinity as expressed in art, or theories of atonement in Christian traditions; or the miraculous nature of the Qur'an in Islamic traditions) and how practices develop in place (e.g. RS methods to explore how the Buddha's teaching was adapted as it spread to, for example, Sri Lanka, China, Tibet and the West, exploring how the importance of the story of the life of the Buddha varies across these contexts). They might use these studies to inform their understanding of how such ideas shape cultures and worldviews and enable them to examine questions of power and influence. They might reflect on which methods were most effective in getting to the heart of the matter, and examining why they think so, reflecting on the impact of their personal worldviews on their choices and responses. (a, c, f, g, j, k)

## Standards for Key stage 4

**Note:** Religious education is statutory for all pupils at key stage 4, unless withdrawn by their parents, whether or not they study a course leading to an accredited qualification in the subject, such as GCSE Religious Studies. This National Content Standard assumes that all pupils will have the opportunity to make progress in RE, just as would be expected if they continued to study any other subject in the curriculum, and that teaching time will be provided commensurate with its status as part of the basic curriculum.

**14-16 year olds**<sup>3</sup> might examine the relationship between institutional and individual religious and non-religious worldviews by exploring ethical issues (e.g. Roman Catholic doctrines on sanctity of life and data on Catholic people's attitudes to birth control), or by considering how religion/non-religion is presented in RE in comparison with lived realities (e.g. textbook presentations of religions alongside sociological data on the diverse adherence and practice of religions in India; data on the permeable boundary between religion and non-religion in the UK). They suggest different explanations for these relationships, reflecting on questions of tradition, continuity, change, power and culture. They select and apply appropriate disciplinary tools to evaluate the explanations, recognising the impact of context. Throughout the unit, they reflect on the sources of their own worldviews in the light of their learning. (b, c, e, f, g, j)

## Standards for Key Stage 5

**Note:** Religious education is statutory for all pupils at key stage 5, whether or not they study a course leading to an accredited qualification in the subject, such as A level Religious Studies. The exception to this rule is that pupils may choose to withdraw themselves from the subject once they reach 18 years of age or parents may withdraw them before this age.

**16-19 year olds**<sup>4</sup> might reflect on the legal and political dimensions of worldviews, in relation to religious, ethical and social concerns. They might examine the influence of religious and non-religious traditions on attitudes to the environment, to medical advances, to justice and equality in relation to gender, sex and race, and account for the changes across different contexts, using theological and philosophical methods and applying ethical theories (e.g. changing interpretation and application of ancient texts/ teachings to accommodate technological advances and societal changes; contrasting responses between secular and religious contexts to the growth of Pentecostalism in, for example, the USA, Britain, Africa or East Asia). Students might examine their own worldview assumptions and how they affect their responses to these issues, with a growing awareness of the impact of context on their own and others' worldviews. (b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j)

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<sup>3</sup> and <sup>5</sup> Adapted from RE Council Worldviews Project: Draft Resource 2022, page 44 Note: Three models are provided in the Draft Resource and each serve as an example of what progress might look like using the National Content Standard (NCS).

## How the National Content Standard would be applied in different types of school.

Content Standard sets a benchmark for the minimum standard of Religious education that all parents can expect following an education in a state funded school. Schools with the freedom to plan their own syllabus for Religious education would be expected to ensure that their syllabus was similar in breadth, depth and ambition to the national content standard. The following table shows how this Standard would be applied in different types of school.

| Type of school  | Curriculum Legislation as it relates to Religious Education | Standard  |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|--|
|   |   | Standards set out by their governors and in their trust deed or equivalent. | <a href="#">Church of England Statement of Entitlement on Religious Education, Religious Education Directory (CES)</a><br>Other entitlement statements for schools with a religious character | National <b>content</b> standard for RE  |
| (a) Community, foundation and VA or VC schools <b>without</b> a religious character that follow an Agreed Syllabus  | Statutory   | Not applicable  | Not applicable  | Recommended to the Agreed Syllabus Conference as a benchmark for high quality RE |
| (b) Academies and Free Schools <b>without</b> a religious character   | Statutory   | Not applicable  | Not applicable  | Comparable in breadth, depth and ambition to the NCS                             |
| (c) Academies which are former VC or Foundation schools with a religious character that followed an Agreed Syllabus | Statutory   | Not applicable  | Expected  | Comparable in breadth, depth and ambition to the NCS                             |
| (d) Academies with a religious character, current and former VA schools with a religious character                  | Statutory   | Statutory   | Expected  | Comparable in breadth, depth and ambition to the NCS                             |
| (e) Foundation and Voluntary Controlled Schools with a religious character that follow an Agreed Syllabus           | Statutory   | Statutory   | Expected  | Recommended to the Agreed Syllabus Conference as a benchmark for high quality RE |

[End of the National Content Standard]

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## Appendix A: Sources and Evidence

These sources are quoted for reference in their original form, and do not form part of the National Content Standard.

### 1. Primary Legislation and Funding Agreements on RE in different types of school

#### A. Introduction: Religious Education in English Schools (2010)

This section is an extract from the most recent government guidance on Religious education.

### The RE curriculum in different types of schools

In all maintained schools RE must be taught according to either the locally agreed syllabus or in accordance with the school's designated religion or religious denomination, or in certain cases the trust deed relating to the school.

#### Community, foundation and voluntary-aided or voluntary-controlled schools without a religious character

RE must be taught according to the locally agreed syllabus adopted by the LA by which the school is maintained.

#### Foundation and voluntary-controlled schools with a religious character

RE provision in foundation and voluntary-controlled schools with a religious character is to be provided in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. However, where the parent of any pupil at the school requests that RE is provided in accordance with provisions of the trust deed relating to the school (or, where there is no provision in the trust deed, in accordance with the religion or denomination mentioned in the order designating the school as having a religious character), then the governors must make arrangements for securing that RE is provided to the pupil in accordance with the relevant religion for up to two periods a week unless they are satisfied that there are special circumstances which would make it unreasonable to do so.<sup>26</sup>

#### Voluntary-aided schools with a religious character

In these schools RE is to be determined by the governors and in accordance with the provisions of the trust deed relating to the school or, where there is no provision in the trust deed, with the religion or denomination mentioned in the order designating the school as having a religious character.

However, where parents prefer their children to receive RE in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus, and they cannot reasonably or conveniently send their children to a school where the syllabus is in use, then the governing body must make arrangements for RE to be provided to the children within the school in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus unless they are satisfied that there are special circumstances which would make it unreasonable to do so. If the LA is satisfied that the governing body is unwilling to make such arrangements, the LA must make them instead.<sup>27</sup>

## Academies

Academies are all-ability, state-funded schools managed by independent sponsors, established under Section 482 of the Education Act 1996. Some academies have a religious character.

All academies are required, through their funding agreements (see page 17), to teach RE.

26 Schedule 19(3), School Standards and Framework Act 1998

27 Schedule 19(2), School Standards and Framework Act 1998

### **B. Primary Legislation on Religious Education**

*A Education Act 1996, Section 375*

(3) Every agreed syllabus shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

*B School Standards and Framework Act 1998 Schedule 19*

Required provision for religious education.

Introductory

1(1) In this Schedule “the required provision for religious education”, in relation to a school, means the provision for pupils at the school which is required by [F1section 80(1)(a) or 101(1)(a) of the Education Act 2002] to be included in the school’s basic curriculum.

(2) In this Schedule “agreed syllabus” has the meaning given by section 375(2) of [F2the Education Act 1996].

#### **Community schools and foundation and voluntary schools without a religious character**

2(1) This paragraph applies to—

(a) any community school; and

(b) any foundation or voluntary school which does not have a religious character.

(2) Subject to sub-paragraph (4), the required provision for religious education in the case of pupils at the school is provision for religious education in accordance with an agreed syllabus adopted for the school or for those pupils.

(3) If the school is a secondary school so situated that arrangements cannot conveniently be made for the withdrawal of pupils from it in accordance with section 71 to receive religious education elsewhere and the [F3local authority] are satisfied—

(a) that the parents of any pupils at the school desire them to receive religious education in the school in accordance with the tenets of a particular religion or religious denomination, and

(b) that satisfactory arrangements have been made for the provision of such education to those pupils in the school, and for securing that the cost of providing such education to those pupils in the school will not fall to be met from the school’s budget share or otherwise by the authority,

the authority shall (unless they are satisfied that because of any special circumstances it would be unreasonable to do so) provide facilities for the carrying out of those arrangements.

(4) If immediately before the appointed day the school was a grant-maintained school (within the meaning of the Education Act 1996), and in relation to the school or any pupils at the school the appropriate agreed syllabus as defined by section 382 of that Act was a syllabus falling within subsection (1)(c) of that section, then until—

(a) the end of such period as the Secretary of State may by order prescribe, or

(b) such earlier date as the governing body may determine,

the required provision for religious education in the case of the school or (as the case may be) those pupils is provision for religious education in accordance with that syllabus.

(5) No agreed syllabus shall provide for religious education to be given to pupils at a school to which this paragraph applies by means of any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of a particular religious denomination (but this is not to be taken as prohibiting provision in such a syllabus for the study of such catechisms or formularies).

### **Foundation and voluntary controlled schools with a religious character**

3(1) This paragraph applies to any foundation or voluntary controlled school which has a religious character.

(2) Subject to sub-paragraph (4), the required provision for religious education in the case of pupils at the school is provision for religious education—

(a) in accordance with any arrangements made under sub-paragraph (3), or

(b) subject to any such arrangements, in accordance with an agreed syllabus adopted for the school or for those pupils.

(3) Where the parents of any pupils at the school request that they may receive religious education—

(a) in accordance with any provisions of the trust deed relating to the school, or

(b) where provision for that purpose is not made by such a deed, in accordance with the tenets of the religion or religious denomination specified in relation to the school under section 69(4),

the foundation governors shall (unless they are satisfied that because of any special circumstances it would be unreasonable to do so) make arrangements for securing that such religious education is given to those pupils in the school during not more than two periods in each week.

(4) If immediately before the appointed day the school was a grant-maintained school (within the meaning of the Education Act 1996), and in relation to the school or any pupils at the school the appropriate agreed syllabus as defined by section 382 of that Act was a syllabus falling within subsection (1)(c) of that section, then until—

(a) the end of such period as the Secretary of State may by order prescribe, or

(b) such earlier date as the governing body may determine,

that syllabus shall be treated for the purposes of sub-paragraph (2)(b) as an agreed syllabus adopted for the school or (as the case may be) those pupils.



## Voluntary aided schools with a religious character

4(1) This paragraph applies to any voluntary aided school which has a religious character.

(2) The required provision for religious education in the case of pupils at the school is provision for religious education—

(a) in accordance with any provisions of the trust deed relating to the school, or

(b) where provision for that purpose is not made by such a deed, in accordance with the tenets of the religion or religious denomination specified in relation to the school under section 69(4), or

(c) in accordance with any arrangements made under sub-paragraph (3).

(3) Where the parents of any pupils at the school—

(a) desire them to receive religious education in accordance with any agreed syllabus adopted by the **[F3]local authority**, and

(b) cannot with reasonable convenience cause those pupils to attend a school at which that syllabus is in use,

the governing body shall (unless they are satisfied that because of any special circumstances it would be unreasonable to do so) make arrangements for religious education in accordance with that syllabus to be given to those pupils in the school.

(4) Religious education under any such arrangements shall be given during the times set apart for the giving of religious education in the school in accordance with the provision for that purpose included in the school's basic curriculum by virtue of **[F4]section 80(1)(a) or 101(1)(a) of the Education Act 2002**.

(5) Any arrangements under sub-paragraph (3) shall be made by the governing body, unless the **[F3]local authority** are satisfied that the governing body are unwilling to make them, in which case they shall be made by the authority.

(6) Subject to sub-paragraph (3), the religious education given to pupils at the school shall be under the control of the governing body.

### C. Education Act 2002 Section 80

Basic curriculum for every maintained school in England

(1) The curriculum for every maintained school in England shall comprise a basic curriculum which includes—

(a) provision for religious education for all registered pupils at the school (in accordance with such of the provisions of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (c. 31) as apply in relation to the school),

(b) a curriculum for all registered pupils at the school **[F1]who have ceased to be young children for the purposes of Part 1 of the Childcare Act 2006** but are not over compulsory school age (known as "the National Curriculum for England")

## D. Extracts from relevant Case Law (text in bold added for clarity)

[Fox versus the Secretary of State for Education \(2015\)](#) and [Bowen versus Kent County Council \(2023\)](#)

A. The key paragraph in **the Fox case** in relation to this document is as follows:

*The Strasbourg jurisprudence shows that the duty of impartiality and neutrality owed by the state do not require equal air-time to be given to all shades of belief or conviction. An RE syllabus can quite properly reflect the relative importance of different viewpoints within the relevant society. The same would seem to follow for a region or locality. The duty might therefore be described as one of “due” impartiality. No criticism can be or is made therefore of s 375(3) of the 1996 Act. In addition, of course, a generous latitude must be allowed to the decision-maker as to how that works out in practical terms. But **the complete exclusion of any study of non-religious beliefs for the whole of Key Stage 4, for which the Subject Content would allow, would not in my judgment be compatible with A2P1.(74)***

B. The Bowen case builds on the Fox judgment and Justice Constable takes Justice Warby’s conclusions a step further. He states:

*“it is plain from Fox that a religious education curriculum must, in order to be compliant with the HRA 1998, cover more than religious faith teaching. **The content of religious education teaching must include, at least to some degree, the teaching of non-religious beliefs (such as humanism)**” [68].*

C. It is important also to note Justice Warby’s description of the application of his judgment as follows:

*“I should make clear, for the avoidance of doubt, that the above conclusions have been arrived at with reference to the position of **schools or academies which do not have a religious character**. Schedule 19 of the 1998 Act makes different provision as to RE in schools that do have a religious character (see paras 3 and 4).” (82)*

## 2. Academy Funding Agreements:

The Funding Agreement is the contract between the Secretary of State for Education and the academy that sets out the terms on which the academy is funded. The Funding Agreement specifies how the academy is run, its duties and the powers the Secretary of State has over the academy. The model funding agreements up to 2010, included the following statement in relation to RE in Academies that were previously required to follow the local agreed syllabus:

*“subject to clause 27 , the Academy Trust shall ensure that provision shall be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph 2(5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, [and having regard to the requirements of the QCDA’s national framework for religious education in schools]”*

After the closure of QCDA, the section in italics above was removed, with the consequence that the only expectation on Academy Schools was that they provide RE in each year group but with no definition of what constitutes RE or the standards that should be expected.

## Mainstream Supplemental Funding Agreement Curriculum

- 2.U The Academy Trust must provide for the teaching of religious education and a daily act of collective worship at the Academy.
- 2.V The Academy Trust must comply with section 71(1)-(6) and (8) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as if the Academy were a community, foundation or voluntary school, and as if references to “religious education” and “religious worship” in that section were references to the religious education and religious worship provided by the Academy in accordance with clause [2.W]/[2.X]/[2.Y] **[select as appropriate]**.

**[Clauses 2.W – 2.Y reflect the requirements for religious education and daily collective worship – mark the clauses that do not apply as ‘Not used’]**

- 2.W **[This clause applies where an academy is designated with a religious character but was not previously a VC school or a foundation school designated with a religious character. Please also use this clause if an academy was previously a VC school but has gone through a significant change process to adopt VA characteristics in parallel with converting to an academy]** Subject to clause 2.V, **where the Academy is designated with a religious character** (in accordance with section 124B of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 or further to section 6(8) of the Academies Act 2010):
- a) provision must be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the tenets of the Academy’s specified religion or religious denomination. This is subject to paragraph 4 of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which applies as if the Academy were a voluntary aided school with a religious character;
  - b) the Academy Trust must comply with section 70(1) of, and Schedule 20 to, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as if the Academy were a foundation school with a religious character or a voluntary school, and as if references to “the required collective worship” were references to collective worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Academy’s specified religion or religious denomination;
  - c) the Academy Trust must ensure that the quality of religious education given to pupils at the Academy and the contents of the Academy’s collective worship given in accordance with the tenets and practices of its specific religion or religious denomination are inspected. The inspection must be conducted by a person chosen by the Academy Trust, and the Academy Trust must ensure that the inspection complies with the statutory provisions and regulations which would apply if the Academy were a foundation or voluntary school designated as having a religious character.
- 2.X Subject to clause 2.V, **where the Academy has not been designated with a religious character** (in accordance with section 124B of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 or further to section 6(8) of the Academies Act 2010):
- a) provision must be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph 2(5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998;
  - b) the Academy must comply with section 70(1) of, and Schedule 20 to, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as if it were a community school or foundation school without a religious character, except that paragraph 4 of that Schedule does not apply. The Academy may apply to the Secretary of State for consent to be relieved of the requirement imposed by paragraph 3(2) of that Schedule.
- 2.Y **[This clause only applies where an academy was previously a VC school or foundation school designated with a religious character. If an academy was previously a VC school but has gone through a significant change process to adopt VA characteristics in parallel with converting to an academy then please use clause 2.W instead]** Subject to clause 2.V, the requirements for religious education and collective

worship are as follows:

- a) subject to paragraph 3 of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which will apply as if the Academy were a foundation school or voluntary controlled school with a religious character, provision must be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996;
- b) the Academy Trust must comply with section 70(1) of, and Schedule 20 to, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as if the Academy were a foundation school with a religious character or a voluntary school, and as if references to “the required collective worship” were references to collective worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Academy’s specified religion or religious denomination;
- c) ***[Additional sub-clause to be added if the academy is designated with a denominational religious character - CE etc. rather than ‘Christian’]*** the Academy Trust must ensure that the quality of the religious education given to pupils at the Academy and the contents of the Academy’s collective worship, given in accordance with the tenets and practices of its specific religion or religious denomination, is inspected. The inspection must be conducted by a person chosen by the Academy Trust and the Academy Trust must secure that the inspection complies with statutory provisions and regulations which would apply if the Academy were a foundation or voluntary school designated as having a religious character.

2.Z The Academy Trust must comply with paragraph 2A of the Schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 in relation to the provision of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education.

2.AA The Academy Trust must prevent political indoctrination, and secure the balanced treatment of political issues, in line with the requirements for maintained schools set out in the Education Act 1996, and have regard to any Guidance.

### 3. Summary of a National Statement of Entitlement

The following summary was developed by the Religion Education Council of England and Wales Education Committee and the RE Policy Unit in 2020. It aimed to provide a summary of the Commission on RE (2018) National Statement of Entitlement. It was included in public documentation in what was commonly known as ‘[CoRE on a Page](#)’. It has been used between 2020 and 2022 by teachers, advisers and other stakeholders to explain the basis of a religion and worldviews approach. It has largely been superseded by the Draft Resource (see p.14)

A summary of the proposed National Entitlement to Religion and Worldviews

Pupils are entitled to be taught, by well qualified and resourced teachers, knowledge and understanding about:

- a. what religion is and worldviews are, and how they are studied;
- b. the impact of religion and worldviews on individuals, communities and societies;
- c. the diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews in society;
- d. the concepts, language and ways of knowing that help us organise and make sense of our knowledge and understanding of religion and worldviews;
- e. the human quest for meaning, so that they are prepared for life in a diverse world and have space to recognise, reflect on and take responsibility for the development of their own personal worldview

## 4. Ofsted Research Review Series: Religious Education

The purpose of this review [published in 2021](#), was to identify factors that contribute to high-quality school RE curriculums, the teaching of the curriculum, assessment and systems. Ofsted stated that it would then use this understanding of subject quality to examine how RE is taught in England's schools where RE falls under Ofsted's inspection remit. Both in terms of evidence-led policy making and the inspection process, this would suggest that, a National Content Standard would need to be informed by the findings set out below.

### Summary of features that may be found in high-quality RE according to recent research:

#### 1. Curriculum progression and debates about knowledge in RE

- A consideration of the knowledge that pupils build through the RE curriculum, because accurate knowledge about religion and non-religion can be beneficial for achieving different purposes and aims for RE.
- High expectations about scholarship in the curriculum to guard against pupils' misconceptions. What is taught and learned in RE is grounded in what is known about religion/non-religion from academic study (scholarship).
- Carefully selected and well-sequenced substantive content and concepts.
- 'Ways of knowing' are appropriately taught alongside the substantive content and are not isolated from the content and concepts that pupils learn.
- A consideration of when pupils should relate the content to their own personal knowledge (for example, prior assumptions).

#### 2. Substantive content and concepts in RE

- 'Collectively enough' substantive content and concepts in the RE curriculum to enable pupils to grasp the complexity of a multi-religious, multi-secular world. This substantive knowledge is a representation and reconstruction of religious and non-religious traditions and concepts.
- Representations of religious and non-religious traditions that are as accurate as possible. Leaders and teachers might use scholarship to construct representations so that pupils do not learn misconceptions.
- Depth of study in certain areas of the RE curriculum to provide pupils with detailed content that is connected with the concepts and ideas that they learn. Without this, more complex discussions about religion and non-religion will be superficial. Leaders and teachers can make intelligent selections for depth of study to indicate a range of religious and non-religious ways of living.
- Detailed knowledge of specific religious and non-religious traditions (such as their stories, narratives, texts and testimonies) in the RE curriculum to enable pupils to make useful connections between content.
- A well-sequenced RE curriculum that prepares pupils with the prior knowledge (including content, concepts and vocabulary) they need for subsequent topics. The importance of this is very clear in the case of controversial and sensitive topics. Leaders and teachers might identify the necessary background knowledge that pupils need to learn for a topic and make sure that the curriculum is ordered to accommodate this.

#### 3. 'Ways of knowing' in RE

- A curriculum design that includes 'ways of knowing' as a form of knowledge that pupils build through the RE curriculum. This helps pupils learn about the construction of substantive knowledge, its accuracy, its reliability and how provisional that knowledge is. Pupils are therefore prepared to think in critical and scholarly ways about the representations of religion and non-religion that they learn through the curriculum and encounter in the world beyond.
- A sequenced RE curriculum that includes scholarly methods and tools that pupils learn.

- Subject leaders and teachers who make good decisions about which ‘ways of knowing’ pupils need to learn and who match the ‘ways of knowing’ to the substantive content.
- Curriculum impact that includes pupils recognising the type of specialist discourse they are engaging in when asking questions, using methods and making claims about different content in the RE curriculum. This might have been achieved, for example, because pupils have learned how disciplinary discourses construct knowledge about religion/non-religion or how groups or families of methods explore religious and non-religious traditions.

#### **4. ‘Personal knowledge’ in RE**

- An RE curriculum that does not induct pupils into any religious tradition (in settings where the EIF applies to RE).
- A curriculum that builds pupils’ awareness of their own assumptions and values about the content that they study (‘personal knowledge’).
- Precise, detailed and fruitful content (substantive content and concepts) that subject leaders and curriculum designers have selected to build pupils’ ‘personal knowledge’. Not all substantive content is equally appropriate to select as the basis for developing pupils’ ‘personal knowledge’.
- Subject leaders and teachers who adeptly identify specific content for the development of ‘personal knowledge’ because they recognise that some pupils may not otherwise see the immediate value of that content.

#### **5. Interplay, end goals and competencies**

- A curriculum that focuses pupils’ learning on ambitious subject-specific end goals, rather than covers excessive amounts of content superficially.
- Curriculum impact that is achieved by pupils building up accurate knowledge about the complexity and diversity of global religion and non-religion. This provides pupils with many of the ingredients for cultural and civic competencies that are important to many RE teachers.
- Clear curriculum content that subject leaders and curriculum designers have planned to illustrate ‘ways of knowing’ and to develop pupils’ ‘personal knowledge’.
- A clear connection between the ‘ways of knowing’ that pupils learn, the ‘personal knowledge’ that pupils develop through the curriculum and the substantive content and concepts on which both depend.
- Subject leaders of RE who are aware of the ways that the RE curriculum can be susceptible to distortion and have ensured that it does not become distorted.

#### **6. Teaching the curriculum**

- Leaders and teachers who consider, when they select classroom activities, how the activities will enable pupils to remember the RE curriculum in the long term.
- Teachers whose judgement about classroom activities is informed by insights from cognitive science about learning, as well as subject-specific insights about the nature of the RE content to be learned. These 2 insights are more important than generic concerns about whether activities are superficially ‘engaging’.
- Leaders and teachers of RE who ensure that, in choosing an appropriate classroom activity, they are clear about what pupils are supposed to learn from it (the curriculum object).
- Teachers who recognise that the success of classroom strategies, methods and procedures depends, to an extent, on whether pupils have sufficient prior RE knowledge (from the curriculum) to succeed at the activity.
- Teaching activities that will continue to draw on, and to remind pupils of, parts of the RE curriculum that pupils have already covered. This enables pupils to learn the RE curriculum in the long term.

#### **7. Assessment**

- Different types of assessments are used appropriately:

- Formative assessments can help teachers identify which pupils have misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge, and what those specific misconceptions or gaps are. This can inform teachers about common issues, so they can review or adapt the curriculum as necessary. Formative assessments are less useful in making judgements about how much of the whole curriculum has been learned and remembered.
- Where summative assessments are used for accountability purposes, leaders can ensure that they are sufficiently spaced apart to enable pupils to learn the expanding domain of the curriculum.
- The purpose of the test should guide the type of assessment, the format of the task and when the assessment is needed.
- RE assessment needs to relate to the curriculum, which sets out what it means to 'get better' at RE.
- Leaders and teachers can consider whether existing assessment models in RE do in practice treat the curriculum as the progression model.
- Leaders and teachers can design RE assessments that are fit for purpose, in that they are precisely attuned to the knowledge in the RE curriculum that they intend for pupils to learn.
- Leaders who ensure that assessments are not excessively onerous for teachers.
- Professional development opportunities for leaders and teachers to reflect on how different assessment questions and tasks in RE can frame teachers' and pupils' expectations about engaging with religious and non-religious traditions.

#### **8. Systems, culture and policies**

- Sufficient curriculum time allocated to RE in order for leaders to deliver an ambitious RE curriculum.
- Subject-specialist staffing, so that pupils are taught RE by teachers with appropriate subject professional knowledge.
- Access to high-quality in-service training for leaders and teachers of RE to develop their professional subject knowledge.
- Subject leadership that can identify high-quality sources of training (for example, through subject associations and organisations) to further their RE knowledge in policy, subject content, subject pedagogy and RE research.



## 5. Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom: developing a worldviews approach. A Draft Resource for curriculum developers

The Draft Resource sets out a rationale for a religion and worldviews approach, building on the developments since the 2018 Commission report. It was primarily written to inform three Framework Development Teams, working over 18 months to apply the Handbook guidance to their own contexts. During this process, the Draft Resource is being tested and revised as necessary, before the publication, scheduled for 2024, of a final Handbook, three example frameworks, sample units of work and pupil responses.

At the heart of the Commission on RE final report, was a National Statement of Entitlement indicating that all children in schools are entitled to an education in religion and worldviews. This national statement of entitlement provides a shared vision for the subject that will be interpreted for, and applied in, a variety of different contexts by syllabus writers and curriculum designers.

- reflects the changing religious and secular non-religious diversity of the UK and the world
- is inclusive of, and relevant to, children and young people, whose worldviews may range across the secular religious and non-religious
- approaches the subject from the perspective of worldviews (incorporating religious and non-religious worldviews, personal and communal, individual and organised, plural and diverse) to help pupils navigate the diverse, complex world around them, in relation to religion and belief. The place for this education in religion and worldviews is the subject currently called Religious Education in legislation in England.





To meet this entitlement, pupils must be taught to understand the nature of worldviews, in relation to religion and belief, including:

| CONTENT   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Core statements</i>  | <i>Expanded statements</i>  |
| a. Nature/formation/expression<br>What is meant by worldview and how people's worldviews are formed and expressed through a complex mix of influences and experiences | The nature and variety of worldviews, and how people's worldviews are formed through a complex mix of influences and experiences, including (for example) rituals, practices, texts, teachings, stories, inspiring individuals, the creative arts, family, tradition, culture, and everyday experiences and actions. How these may also act as ways of expressing and communicating worldviews. |
| b. Organised/individual<br>How people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or institutional worldviews  | How people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or institutional worldviews (e.g. how individual worldviews may be consciously held or tacit; how individual and organised worldviews are dynamic; how individual worldviews may overlap to a greater or lesser extent with organised worldviews)   |
| c. Contexts<br>How worldviews have contexts, reflecting time and place, are highly diverse, and feature continuity and change.  | How worldviews have contexts, reflecting their time and place, shaping and being shaped by these, maintaining continuity and also changing; how they are highly diverse and often develop in interaction with each other. (This applies to organised worldviews as well as to individual worldviews.)   |
| d. Meaning and purpose<br>How worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience  | How worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience, such as questions of existence, meaning, purpose, knowledge, truth, identity and diversity. How worldviews may play different roles in providing people with ways of making sense of existence and/or their lives, including space for mystery, ambiguity and paradox.                                  |
| e. Values, commitments and morality<br>How worldviews may provide guidance on how to live a good life   | How worldviews may provide a vision of, and guidance on, how to be a good person and live a good life, and may offer ideas of justice, right and wrong, value, beauty, truth and goodness. How individuals and communities may express their values through their commitments.  |
| f. Influence and power<br>How worldviews influence, and are influenced by, people and societies   | How worldviews influence people (e.g. providing a 'grand narrative' or story for understanding the world) and influence the exercise of power in societies (e.g. on social norms for communities, or in relation to conflict or peace-making). How society and people can also influence and shape worldviews.  |

| ENGAGEMENT   |  |
|--|--|
| <i>Core statements</i>   | <i>Expanded statements</i>   |
| g. Ways of knowing<br>The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing.                                      | The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing. Questions and methods should be carefully chosen, recognising that there are different understandings of what knowledge is deemed reliable, valid, credible, truthful etc.   |
| h. Lived experience<br>The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people.                             | The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people (e.g. religious, non-religious, embodied, diverse, fluid, material, experiential) in relation to local and global contexts, recognising the complex reality of worldviews as they are held, shared and expressed by people in real life.                              |
| i. Dialogue/interpretation<br>The field of study of worldviews is to be shown as a dynamic area of debate.                                   | The field of study of worldviews is to be encountered as a dynamic area of dialogue and debate, and one which engages with practices of interpretation and judgement within and between religious and non-religious communities.   |
| POSITION   |  |
| <i>Core statements</i>   | <i>Expanded statements</i>   |
| j. Personal worldviews: reflexivity<br>Pupils will reflect on and potentially develop their personal worldviews in the light of their study. | Pupils will come to understand their own worldview in greater depth, and how it relates to the worldviews of others, becoming more reflective and reflexive. As they develop this awareness of their positionality in relation to that of others, they will make informed judgements on how (far) this understanding prepares them for life in a diverse world |
| k. Personal worldviews: impact<br>Pupils will reflect on how their worldviews affect their learning  | Pupils will develop their understanding of how their encounters with the subject content of RE are affected and shaped by their worldviews, whether conscious or not, and that this is also true for everyone else. They will reflect on how (far) their learning may have an impact on their worldview.   |

## 6. Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Toledo Guiding Principles

The following is taken from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office website:

Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) is a human right which has been guaranteed under international law within the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#) since 1966. Article 18 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, states that ‘everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion’.

FoRB is not just the freedom to hold personal thoughts and convictions, but also being able to express them individually or with others, publicly or in private. It includes the freedom to:

- subscribe to different schools of thought within a religion
- change one’s religion or beliefs, including to leave or abandon religions
- hold non-religious beliefs

No-one should experience discrimination for exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief. This right prohibits the use of coercion to make someone hold or change their religion or belief. It also protects a person from being required to state an affiliation with any particular religion or belief.

As with all human rights, FoRB belongs to people, whether alone or as members of a group, and not to the religion or belief itself. This means that it does not protect religions, or religious figures, from criticism.

In July 2022, the FCDO hosted an International Ministerial on FoRB. At this conference a Statement on FoRB and Education was made, of which the UK Government was a signatory. The full statement is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-education-statement-at-the-international-ministerial-conference-2022/statement-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-education>

This statement says that signatories will commit to:

- prioritising inclusive curricula and teaching, matched to all students' needs, regardless of their background, that provides foundational skills for all. In addition, curricula should provide positive and accurate information about different faith and belief communities and combat negative stereotypes
- support teaching that promotes the equality of all individuals, regardless of their religion
- protecting education establishments and ensuring all students have access to education regardless of their faith or any other characteristic. This includes ensuring access to safe alternative spaces for education in emergencies and protracted crises
- promoting international efforts to support education reform, emphasising the benefits of pluralism and the importance of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief. Regular evaluation of education materials and practices should be carried out to ensure that these standards are always maintained

In addition, the Toledo Guiding Principles (2007) published by the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) and ODOHR (Organisation for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) are relevant in this context. The introduction to the principles states that:

*The Guiding Principles are designed to assist not only educators but also legislators, teachers and officials in education ministries, as well as administrators and educators in private or religious schools to ensure that teaching about different religions and beliefs is carried out in a fair and balanced manner.*

The Key Guiding Principles set out in the document are:

Whenever teaching about religions and beliefs in public schools is provided in OSCE participating States, the following guiding principles should be considered:

1. Teaching about religions and beliefs must be provided in ways that are fair, accurate and based on sound scholarship. Students should learn about religions and beliefs in an environment respectful of human rights, fundamental freedoms and civic values.
2. Those who teach about religions and beliefs should have a commitment to religious freedom that contributes to a school environment and practices that foster protection of the rights of others in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding among members of the school community.
3. Teaching about religions and beliefs is a major responsibility of schools, but the manner in which this teaching takes place should not undermine or ignore the role of families and religious or belief organizations in transmitting values to successive generations.
4. Efforts should be made to establish advisory bodies at different levels that take an inclusive approach to involving different stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of curricula and in the training of teachers.

5. Where a compulsory programme involving teaching about religions and beliefs is not sufficiently objective, efforts should be made to revise it to make it more balanced and impartial, but where this is not possible, or cannot be accomplished immediately, recognizing opt-out rights may be a satisfactory solution for parents and pupils, provided that the opt-out arrangements are structured in a sensitive and non-discriminatory way.

6. Those who teach about religions and beliefs should be adequately educated to do so. Such teachers need to have the knowledge, attitude and skills to teach about religions and beliefs in a fair and balanced way. Teachers need not only subject-matter competence but pedagogical skills so that they can interact with students and help students interact with each other in sensitive and respectful ways.

7. Preparation of curricula, textbooks and educational materials for teaching about religions and beliefs should take into account religious and non-religious views in a way that is inclusive, fair, and respectful. Care should be taken to avoid inaccurate or prejudicial material, particularly when this reinforces negative stereotypes.

8. Curricula should be developed in accordance with recognised professional standards in order to ensure a balanced approach to study about religions and beliefs. Development and implementation of curricula should also include open and fair procedures that give all interested parties appropriate opportunities to offer comments and advice.

9. Quality curricula in the area of teaching about religions and beliefs can only contribute effectively to the educational aims of the Toledo Guiding Principles if teachers are professionally trained to use the curricula and receive ongoing training to further develop their knowledge and competences regarding this subject matter. Any basic teacher preparation should be framed and developed according to democratic and human rights principles and include insight into cultural and religious diversity in society.

10. Curricula focusing on teaching about religions and beliefs should give attention to key historical and contemporary developments pertaining to religion and belief, and reflect global and local issues. They should be sensitive to different local manifestations of religious and secular plurality found in schools and the communities they serve. Such sensitivities will help address the concerns of students, parents and other stakeholders in education.

## **7. Statutory requirements for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development and Fundamental British Values.**

All maintained schools must meet the requirements set out in section 78 of the Education Act 2002 and promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of their pupils. Through ensuring pupils' SMSC development, schools can also demonstrate they are actively promoting fundamental British values.

### **Accountability**

As part of a section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors must consider pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development when forming a judgement of a school. However this advice should not be read as guidance for inspection purposes. Ofsted publish their inspection framework and handbook, which set out how schools are assessed in relation to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Schools should refer to Ofsted's documents to understand what inspectors look for in assessing this."

[Ofsted School inspection handbook EIF 2022](#) - Updated 11 July 2022

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

299. Inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This is a broad concept that can be seen across the

school's activities, but draws together many of the areas covered by the personal development judgement.

300. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils includes developing their:

- ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life
- knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths, feelings and values
- sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them
- use of imagination and creativity in their learning
- willingness to reflect on their experiences

## **8. Statutory Guidance: What schools must publish online**

This guidance places a responsibility on schools to ensure that parents and carers have access to information about what their children are learning in each subject of the curriculum. The publication of the curriculum can also be accessed by Ofsted inspection teams as an aspect of making judgements about the breadth, balance and ambition of the curriculum or, if concerns are raised, lead to a decision to carry out a section 8 inspection (See extract from the Ofsted Handbook for inspection below.)

The guidance is copied below:

### **Curriculum**

You must publish:

- the content of your school curriculum in each academic year for every subject - this includes mandatory subjects such as religious education, even if it is taught as part of another subject or subjects, or is called something else

### **[Ofsted Handbook for inspection extract](#)**

37. As is the case for all schools, a good or outstanding school may still receive an urgent inspection (carried out under section 8) at any time in certain circumstances (see part 4). For example, we may decide that we should inspect a school earlier than its next scheduled inspection if:

- concerns are identified about the breadth and balance of the curriculum (including whether the statutory requirement to publish information to parents is not met).