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Introduction

In religious education (RE), pupils enter into a rich discourse about the religious and non-religious traditions that have shaped Great Britain and the world. RE in primary and secondary schools enables pupils to take their place within a diverse multi-religious and multi-secular society. At its best, it is intellectually challenging and personally enriching. It affords pupils both the opportunity to see the religion and non-religion in the world, and the opportunity to make sense of their own place in that world.

This review explores literature relating to the field of RE. Its purpose is to identify factors that contribute to high-quality school RE curriculums, the teaching of the curriculum, assessment and systems.

We will use this understanding of subject quality to examine how RE is taught in England's schools where RE falls under Ofsted's inspection remit. The purpose of this research review is outlined more fully in the 'Principles behind Ofsted's research reviews and subject reports'.[footnote 1]

Since there are a variety of ways that schools can construct and teach a high-quality RE curriculum, it is important to recognise that there is no single way of achieving high-quality RE.

In this review, we have:

- outlined the national context in relation to RE
- summarised our review of research into factors that can affect the quality of education in RE
- considered curriculum progression in RE, pedagogy, assessment and the impact of school leaders' decisions on provision

The review draws on a range of sources, including our 'Education inspection framework: overview of research' and our 3 phases of curriculum research.[footnote 2]

It is also supported by research into RE, including research into practice and the theoretical work of academics and professionals.

We hope that, through this work, we will contribute to raising the quality of RE for all young people.

The education inspection framework and RE

Our education inspection framework (EIF) reflects the expectations of how RE is provided. All schools that are state-funded, including free schools and academies, are legally required to provide RE as part of their curriculum. All schools are required to teach RE to all pupils at all key stages (including sixth form), except for those withdrawn.[footnote 3]

In schools without a religious character, we look at RE as part of EIF inspections under section 5.[footnote 4] We also look at RE in voluntary controlled (VC) schools, whether or not they are designated as having a religious character.

In other schools with a religious character, RE is inspected by a body appointed by the maintained school's governing body under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 or as provided in the academy's funding agreement.

This report will be of particular interest to schools whose RE we look at under the EIF. However, it should also be of interest to the entire RE sector. For a summary of the legal context of RE and Ofsted's inspection arrangements, see Appendix A.

Developments in RE

In RE, there are different issues that can affect quality of education. Ofsted's previous report on RE in 2013, 'Religious education: realising the potential', stated that the structures that underpin the local determination of the RE curriculum have failed to keep pace with changes in the wider educational world.[footnote 5] The local determination of RE also means that a concept of quality is not straightforward to identify.

The quality of education established in this research review is based on the current legal framework, the most current non-statutory guidance available from the Department for Education (DfE) and national developments in RE which are concerned with quality of education.[footnote 6]

Since 2013, various subject and research reports have been published. A detailed commentary on them is outlined in Appendix B. These reports may supply further insights into the concept of high-quality RE. They include:

- 'A new settlement: religion and belief in schools'[footnote 7]
- 'RE for REal'[footnote 8]
- 'Living with difference'[footnote 9]
- 'The state of the nation' report on secondary RE[footnote 10]
- 'A new settlement revised: religion and belief in schools'[footnote 11]
- 'Religion and worldviews: the way forward – a national plan for RE'[footnote 12]

Much of this literature recommends some form of prescribed and detailed curriculum content (sometimes called a 'national entitlement') to support improvement in RE. Though common, not all within the RE community deem a movement from local to national determination necessary.[footnote 13]

Much of this literature also suggests that RE curriculum development in England has not kept pace with the academic and intellectual developments that might help pupils to make sense of our complex multi-religious and multi-secular society.

The evolution of society's religious and non-religious landscape highlights that it is all the more important for pupils to build up accurate knowledge of the complexity and diversity of global religion and non-religion. The 2013 Ofsted report stated that many pupils leave school with scant subject knowledge in RE.[footnote 14] The literature also references chronic and intractable problems with school-level provision for RE. These are factors that can affect quality of education in RE and will be discussed at various points of this curriculum research review.

RE at different stages of education

Reception and primary years

As at secondary level, arrangements for RE in Reception and primary years are localised.[footnote 15] Most locally agreed syllabuses recommend spending the equivalent of approximately 60 minutes a week on RE at key stage 1 and about 75 minutes a week at key stage 2. Most RE provision in Reception would be integrated within the Reception curriculum, as opposed to a stand-alone subject (see, for example, the RE Council of England and Wales's 2013 non-statutory framework).[footnote 16]

However, the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) argues that a significant number of schools give insufficient curriculum time to RE, based on responses to its regular primary school surveys. For NATRE, insufficient time is considered to be fewer than 45 minutes of teaching time a week. The surveys have suggested that:

- in 2016, this was just under 30% of schools
- in 2018, this was about 25% of schools
- in 2020, the figure remained at 25%

The latest survey did, though, note that, in almost 96% of schools, the curriculum time given to RE had either remained the same or increased.[footnote 17] Almost half of academies without a religious character and almost a third of schools required to teach a locally agreed syllabus had increased the amount of curriculum time spent on RE. These positive changes were, in part, attributed to Ofsted's focus on the curriculum.[footnote 18]

Secondary years

As at primary level, the arrangements for RE at secondary level are localised. Most locally agreed syllabuses are constructed on the assumption that the amount of curriculum time given to RE is at or above 5%.[footnote 19]

However, using unweighted school workforce census data, the 2017 'State of the nation' report (see Appendix B) estimated that this threshold of curriculum time was only met in:

- 62% of schools where the locally agreed syllabus applies (including VC schools)
- 90% of other schools with a religious character
- 44% of academies

The report also found that 34% of all academies reported no timetabled RE. Overall, it estimated that, at key stage 3, 64% of state-funded schools gave 5% or more of their curriculum time to RE.

At key stage 4, the report estimated that 5% or more curriculum time was given to RE in 50% of state-funded schools. Specifically, the 5% threshold was met in 45% of schools where the locally agreed syllabus applies (including VC schools); in 91% of other schools with a religious character; and in 27% of academies.

Further, the report found that 44% of all academies reported no timetabled RE. If schools do not teach pupils any RE, this is illegal.

As part of RE teaching in key stage 4, schools may enter pupils for a religious studies qualification. Pupils in England can take either the full course GCSE in religious studies or the short course, which is equivalent to half a GCSE.

Table 1: Religious studies GCSE qualifications in England, 2018 and 2019

	2019	2018
Number of pupils entered for either short or full course GCSE religious studies	249,443	255,418
- of which full course[footnote 20]	227,913	229,189
- of which short course[footnote 21]	21,530	26,229
Religious studies as a percentage of short course entries in all subjects[footnote 22]	96.1%	88.5%

The number of pupils taking the full course GCSE has been decreasing steadily since a high point in 2016 when 268,761 pupils took it.[footnote 23] This followed a dramatic increase in numbers between 2009 and 2016.

However, the numbers of pupils entered for either a short or full GCSE fell significantly in the decade between 2009 and 2019. Over this period, the numbers dropped by about 40%.[footnote 24] Many RE teachers attribute this pattern, as well as the provision of RE at key stage 4 generally, to the fact that the religious studies qualification is not part of the English Baccalaureate. Also, the short course was not counted in performance tables from 2013/14 onwards and so its popularity diminished.[footnote 25] This may explain, in part, the decline in overall numbers of pupils entered for a religious studies qualification.

Schools may also offer a religious studies qualification in key stage 5. Schools refer to this qualification by a range of names, including 'philosophy of religion and ethics' or

'religion, philosophy and ethics'. This is because the qualification can include aspects of philosophy and ethics that are to do with religion (see Appendix A for the subject content of the A-level specification).[footnote 26]

Table 2: Religious studies A-level qualifications in England, 2018 and 2019

	2019[footnote 27]	2018[footnote 28]
Number of pupils entered for A-level religious studies	16,154	16,907

Ambition for all

A high-quality curriculum is ambitious and designed to give all learners the knowledge they need to succeed in life. This is particularly important for the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils are entitled to be taught RE. Leaders and teachers may, of course, need to adapt the curriculum depending on the specific needs of individual pupils.

There are different ways that leaders and teachers might reduce the barriers that pupils with specific needs may face in accessing the RE curriculum. For example, this could include leaders doing highly specific curriculum planning that considers in greater detail the building blocks of knowledge that specific pupils need to access the RE curriculum. It could also include teachers carefully considering the most appropriate ways for specific pupils to learn aspects of the curriculum. Leaders and teachers should also consider appropriate accessibility for educational trips and visits related to RE. RE makes a major contribution to the knowledge that pupils need to succeed in life. That knowledge entitlement is appropriate for all pupils.

Some research findings contribute to the overall picture of RE for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. One study suggests that pupils attending schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged pupils are less likely to have the opportunity to take GCSE religious studies.[footnote 29]

Research from the DfE found that religious studies was one of the most popular subjects (alongside statistics and English literature) for early entry, such as in the summer of Year 10.[footnote 30] However, the analysis revealed that those pupils taking religious studies early performed worse than their non-early-entrant peers. In 2019, 17,309 pupils were entered early for religious studies (the second-highest subject after English literature). This accounted for over 7.5% of the 2019 entries for GCSE religious studies. Those pupils with lower prior attainment who were early entrants, which may include many disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, performed considerably worse than their peers with low prior attainment who were not early entrants. Early entry to GCSE religious studies therefore appears to be bad for pupils' attainment, especially for those who can least afford it (pupils with low prior attainment).

RE and the quality of education judgement within the EIF

Within the EIF, there are 4 key judgements that sit underneath an overall judgement of effectiveness: quality of education; personal development; behaviour and attitudes; and leadership and management.

There are a range of different ways RE operates in schools. For example, in some, RE is also used as a vehicle through which to deliver whole-school moral and social initiatives.[footnote 31] As such, RE may take various forms in school, and aspects of RE may sit in relation to 2 different judgements within the EIF: the quality of education and personal development.

The quality of education judgement is about the academic substance of what is taught. It looks at what pupils learn and know in each subject area. The personal development judgement explores how the curriculum may extend beyond the academic, technical or vocational. This may be, for instance, through the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. It considers pupils' recognition of different people's values, feelings, faith and ways of living. What is learned and remembered by pupils in RE may, of course, contribute to personal development. However, this curriculum research review series is concerned with the factors that can affect quality of education in different subjects. As such, the scope of this review is primarily concerned with the school RE curriculum considered through the lens of the quality of education judgement.

The EIF considers the extent to which leaders of the curriculum adopt or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give learners the knowledge they need to succeed in life. As outlined previously, the extent to which school subject leaders are freely able to choose the content of their RE curriculums depends on the type of school and, where appropriate, its funding agreement.

Many academies have greater degrees of freedom about what to include within their RE curriculums. Schools that follow a locally agreed syllabus will use this as a basis for what pupils are taught.[footnote 32] Typically, the content of this syllabus prescribes high-level outcomes that subject leaders go on to use as they design their school-specific RE curriculum. This contextualisation process is similar to the ways that schools may take high-level outcomes from the national curriculum in other subjects and use them to construct their school-specific subject curriculum. Non-statutory guidance might accompany an agreed syllabus to assist subject leaders in constructing their school RE curriculum.

However, to be clear: it is the enacted RE curriculum, in the context of the school, which is taught to and experienced by pupils, that is considered within the quality of education judgement. The contextualised school RE curriculum is also the focus of this research review.

Curriculum progression

Summary

> The RE curriculum should set out what it means to 'get better' at the subject as pupils move through the journey of the curriculum at primary and secondary level. Pupils build 3 different forms of knowledge in RE, which we will explain in this section. In high-quality RE at primary and secondary level, leaders and teachers think about how these 3 forms of knowledge are interconnected and sequenced within the RE curriculum. It is this RE curriculum that pupils need to know and to remember.

Curriculum progression and debates about knowledge in RE

The EIF considers the knowledge that pupils learn in the curriculum. As pupils journey through a planned and well-sequenced curriculum in primary and secondary schools, they will build these different types of knowledge as they 'know more and remember more' of the planned curriculum.[footnote 33] Our previous research mentions that these types of knowledge are not isolated; they sit within interconnected webs in long-term memory.[footnote 34] They will also differ between subjects.

The types of knowledge that pupils build within RE have not been extensively discussed or theorised. In some cases, this is because the ongoing debates about the aims and purposes of RE have led educators to claim that knowledge alone is insufficient for specific educational purposes such as fostering tolerance or mitigating xenophobia.[footnote 35] Sometimes, the very idea of 'knowledge in RE' itself has been avoided because claims made about both religion and non-religion are contested, even though many educators recognise that the contention itself is part of the knowledge content of RE.[footnote 36] Broadly speaking, teachers, practitioners and researchers in RE do not have well-established conventions to discuss the different types of knowledge that appear in RE curriculums.

Although educators make different claims about the purpose of RE, it is nonetheless vital for subject leaders, curriculum designers and teachers to be aware of different types of knowledge in RE. Without this awareness, misconceptions about the nature of religion can be taught. These misconceptions can be based on claims (for example, 'only loving religion is true religion') that are unwarranted by high standards of academic scholarship.[footnote 37] A lack of consideration of the nature of knowledge can also result in pupils' misunderstandings about the credibility of religion (for example, 'science is about facts; religion is about opinions'), as well as the difference between types of knowledge in RE and in other subjects.[footnote 38]

The importance of recognising different types of knowledge is also clear when thinking about the types of tasks pupils carry out in RE. For instance, when teachers plan for pupils to construct a response to a statement or question, there are at least 2 forms of subject-specific knowledge in operation: a knowledge of the topic that is being discussed and knowledge about the mode of enquiry that is being asked through the question.[footnote 39] This is particularly important given different expectations about what constitutes an 'argument' in RE.[footnote 40]

So, although the building of subject-specific knowledge may not be sufficient for every possible suggested aim for RE, it is necessary and beneficial for a range of purposes.

3 types of knowledge

This report refers to 3 different types of knowledge used in RE. These broad types of knowledge are 'pillars of progression' within RE. 'Getting better' at RE both at primary and secondary level comprises knowing more and remembering more of these pillars as they are set out within the RE curriculum:

- first, 'substantive' knowledge: knowledge about various religious and non-religious traditions
- second, 'ways of knowing': pupils learn 'how to know' about religion and non-religion
- third, 'personal knowledge': pupils build an awareness of their own presuppositions and values about the religious and non-religious traditions they study

We have used our own terms to define the types of knowledge due to a lack of established conventions within RE subject literature. Clearly, different professionals and researchers use a range of terms. However, following RE engagement events, our terms have already been taken up and referred to by researchers and educators in RE.[footnote 41] We will expand on our definitions in the coming sections.

In high-quality RE curriculums, these 3 types of knowledge are not artificially separated from each other. For example, when subject leaders plan a sequence of specific content and concepts for pupils to study, they also need to consider the most appropriate methods that pupils need to know to study that content.

Based on the above, high-quality RE may have the following features

- 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).

Substantive content and concepts in RE

The substantive knowledge of RE includes the 'substance' of religious and non-religious traditions that primary and secondary level pupils study in the curriculum.[footnote 42] Substantive content includes:

- different ways that people express religion and non-religion in their lives, including diverse lived experiences and the complexity of the fluid boundaries between different traditions[footnote 43]
- knowledge about artefacts and texts associated with different religious and non-religious traditions
- concepts that relate to religious and non-religious traditions, such as 'dharma', 'incarnation', 'ritual', 'authority', 'prayer', 'sacred', 'anatta' and 'moksha'
- the very concepts of 'religion' and 'non-religion' and debates around these ideas[footnote 44]

There are well-established conventions within RE to refer to ways of categorising subject-specific concepts:[footnote 45]

- concepts that are common to religious and non-religious experience (such as 'interpretation')
- concepts that are common to multiple forms of religious experience (such as 'sacrifice')
- concepts specific to a religious tradition (such as the Christian notion of 'incarnation')

Learning substantive knowledge in the RE curriculum

Pupils, of course, cannot learn all possible substantive content in RE. Subject leaders and curriculum designers select RE content for pupils to learn. This means that any curriculum content is a representation or reconstruction of religious and non-religious traditions, worldviews and concepts.[footnote 46] For example, when subject leaders plan for pupils to learn about traditional Roman Catholic Christian practices, or specific Hindu concepts, these are a representation of Roman Catholic and Hindu traditions, respectively.

Our previous research outlines the way in which the 'substance' of the curriculum relates to the architecture of memory and the brain. It explains how new knowledge that pupils learn becomes integrated within and across schema, which are complex structures in long-term memory that link knowledge and create meaning.[footnote 47] Pupils receive many of their values, opinions and ideas from their home environments and communities. However, they will base their knowledge and conceptual models about religion and non-religion to a considerable degree on the representations they learn in the curriculum.[footnote 48] There is a responsibility, therefore, on subject leaders to think carefully about the representations they select and to ensure that these are as accurate as possible.[footnote 49]

The schema that pupils build concerning RE are important in their lives beyond school. They form part of the basis on which young people go on to speak and to act in society in matters of religion and non-religion. What pupils learn needs to resemble the complex picture of religion and non-religion in society, and show them how and why that picture came to be.[footnote 50] The representations in high-quality RE curriculums will enable pupils to build up a 'mental model' that reflects the global and historical complexity of religion and non-religion (see 'Ambitious curriculum end goals').

Are the representations on the RE curriculum 'collectively enough'?

The EIF considers the extent to which leaders adopt or construct a curriculum that contains cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills.[footnote 51] In subject terms, this requires that the RE curriculum comprises 'collectively enough' of the knowledge and skills that would amount to a high standard of subject education at primary and secondary level. This has implications for the substantive content and concepts that pupils learn in RE, not least because it would be impossible to cover everything that could be covered within RE.

High-quality RE prepares pupils to engage in a complex multi-religious and multi-secular world. To reach this goal, leaders and teachers might think about the overall conception of religion and non-religion that pupils build through the RE curriculum. To consider the overall concept of religion and non-religion that pupils build through the curriculum is perhaps more useful than thinking about the quantity and weighting of traditions to include.

However, much of the debate about RE content has not focused on the idea of cumulative sufficiency. Instead, the focus has been on the quantity and weighting of traditions to include in the RE curriculum. This focus might be due to the wording of the most recent legal prescription for RE,[footnote 52] which states that locally agreed syllabuses should:

> " 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."

Although this prescription is a starting point, it is not a full statement of the substantive knowledge that pupils should learn in high-quality RE. It only explicitly identifies substantive knowledge of Christianity. It alludes to but does not specify precisely what those other traditions are. There are different ways in which the content of high-quality RE might reflect this legislation.

Unfortunately, some leaders interpret the legislation in percentage terms, for example by devoting 51% of RE to the study of Christianity and 49% to 'other religions'. Commentators have noted for some time that this approach does not guarantee a quality RE curriculum.[footnote 53] In fact, it can generate problems. For example, it can unintentionally cause tensions by devoting more time to some religious or non-religious traditions. It can also prevent pupils from exploring the connections between traditions or even imply that there are no connections.[footnote 54]

Equally, simply covering a greater number of religious and non-religious traditions (as inclusive as that sounds) is no guarantee of a high-quality RE curriculum. This overloads the curriculum and might lead to superficial caricatures of religious and non-religious traditions.[footnote 55] Generally speaking, the issue of what might be enough content to constitute a high-quality RE curriculum has been given little consideration in the RE community.[footnote 56]

When subject leaders and teachers consider whether the representations that pupils acquire through the RE curriculum are 'collectively enough', they might take into account the conceptual impression of 'religion' and 'non-religion' that pupils will develop. At the very least, subject leaders can ensure that the planned representations express the variety of religion and non-religion (for example, ways of living found in Abrahamic traditions, dharmic traditions and non-religious traditions). High-quality RE curriculums capture the diversity, fluidity and complexity of global religion/non-religion in their curriculum representations.[footnote 57] Importantly, the content is sequenced so that pupils can make sense of its complexity.

Subject leaders and teachers might select, for example, representations of religious and non-religious traditions that would, over the span of the curriculum, enable pupils to grasp 'big ideas' about religious and non-religious traditions.[footnote 58] These are theories about religion and non-religion.[footnote 59] An example of a 'big idea' is that religious and non-religious traditions are concerned with the pursuit of a good life. In terms of 'big ideas', the curriculum is 'cumulatively sufficient' when the planned representations allow pupils to learn, over time, these scholarly theories. These theories may be useful for some level of curriculum planning as organising structures or 'conceptual pegs'.[footnote 60]

Subject leaders and teachers might also plan a sufficient range of representations to illustrate or indicate complexity. For example, subject leaders may select representations of Hindu and Buddhist traditions because of the way that they share similar concepts, such as 'karma' and 'dharma'. They may plan representations of 'cultural Christians' or 'secular Muslims' as well as representations of Roman Catholic Christians or Sunni Muslims. In high-quality RE curriculums, a range of illustrative or indicative representations will enable pupils to build sophisticated conceptions that relate to the realities of the world's religious landscape.[footnote 61]

It is perfectly possible for pupils to get better at RE without knowing all of the different ways that people express religion or non-religion in their lives. High-quality RE curriculums do not require excessive content but do need cumulatively sufficient content. This means that subject leaders should ensure that their curriculums contain collectively enough substantive knowledge to enable pupils to recognise the diverse and changing religious and non-religious traditions of the world.

Are the representations in the RE curriculum accurate?

It is important for subject leaders in primary and secondary schools to plan precise and accurate representations of religious and non-religious traditions in their curriculums. When those representations are inaccurate, pupils end up having misconceptions.[footnote 62] For example, if subject leaders plan for pupils to learn about humanism only in relation to atheism, pupils will not gain wider knowledge of humanism as a way of life.

In RE that does not focus on the nurture of and/or induction into faith traditions (non-confessional RE), the accuracy of representations is particularly important.[footnote 63] The representations should allow teachers to be able to teach accurately without advocating a tradition or ignoring unpleasant manifestations of traditions. This means that subject leaders may have to plan representations that include morally displeasing aspects of that tradition, as well as more agreeable ones.[footnote 64] For instance, when subject leaders plan representations of Buddhist traditions, but ignore all anti-social aspects of the traditions, then the curriculum communicates inaccurate stereotypes to pupils.[footnote 65] Subject leaders and curriculum designers need to question whose

version of the tradition is being represented in the curriculum. Constructing representations that are informed by scholarship can prevent unintentional partisanship (see 'Systems, culture and policies' for implications for teacher development).[footnote 66]

Subject leaders also need to be alert to the ways in which the 'authenticity' of traditions can be lost.[footnote 67] Sometimes, subject leaders plan for pupils to learn generalisations (for example, 'Christians believe…' or 'Islam is…'). This becomes problematic when the planned representations give the impression that traditions are given, fixed and stable and do not attend to the fluidity, change and dynamism of 'living traditions' as traditions in transition.[footnote 68] Generalisations might capture a tradition as it once was, but no longer is now. This is especially problematic when generalisations bear no resemblance to the living traditions of pupils and their families. In turn, this raises the question of whether these representations sufficiently prepare pupils for religion and belief diversity.[footnote 69] It is crucial that subject leaders plan well-informed representations that do not present pupils with unsustainable stereotypes and poor generalisations.[footnote 70]

That said, there may be times, particularly in the primary phase, when generalisations are necessary in the RE curriculum. For example, teachers may need to use generalisations to explain simply common features of specific traditions, such as specialist vocabulary, widespread commonalities and shared subject-specific concepts. In doing so, teachers might emphasise aspects of traditions that bind some communities together, such as creeds. As part of using generalisations in this way, simple modifications to planning to make the representations as precise as possible (for example, 'some', 'many', 'majority of European' or 'traditions from South Asia') can add helpful degrees of clarity. Concerns that what pupils learn should be accurate should not be confused with making the curriculum unnecessarily complex.

It is appropriate that pupils might need to build a particular impression of a religious or non-religious tradition, as a starting point. When leaders and teachers think of the curriculum as a journey for pupils, they can then think at what later stage it is appropriate to add nuance. The initial learning of a concept is inevitably incomplete, and can be developed and corrected over time.[footnote 71] Pupils can therefore build more sophisticated knowledge about those traditions at a later stage. Also, pupils can learn why greater nuance in their knowledge is more useful.

As pupils move on from early generalisations, they need to learn the complexities of religious and non-religious traditions. To support this, leaders and teachers might plan for pupils to learn about 'organised worldviews', 'institutional traditions' or '-isms' (such as Judaism) alongside learning how real people (such as individual Jews) live out traditions in their lives.[footnote 72] They may plan for pupils to learn, for example, testimonies from faith practitioners or leaders of organised religious groups that relate to generalisations. Pupils will then learn both the generalisation and an example of the 'living' traditions. This lets them 'test' the generalisation when learning it alongside instances of the 'lived reality' of religious traditions.[footnote 73] This also prevents pupils from making incorrect inferences about how common individual experiences are because it also provides them with knowledge of how widespread they might be.

Accuracy of representations is also important in relation to how the curriculum is constructed and around teachers' questioning (including curriculum 'enquiry' questions). Imprecise questions sometimes encourage pupils to use weak generalisations or unsustainable stereotypes (for example, 'what's the difference between Islam and Christianity?'). Instead, rich and precise questions, which emphasise 'social actors' and their uses of traditions, promote the use of accurate representations (for example, 'how have different Muslims understood Islam's relationship with Christianity?').[footnote 74]

Are representations on the RE curriculum deep, as well as broad?

It is of course important that leaders and teachers try to portray the diversity of religion and non-religion in the RE curriculum. However, attending only to the breadth of knowledge that pupils build is insufficient for high-quality RE. Curriculum leaders at primary and secondary level must also consider the depth of knowledge.

Depth of knowledge in particular areas of the RE curriculum is important because it provides pupils with detailed content on which to build ideas, concepts and theories about religion. Concepts, particularly ones about abstract RE topics like 'forgiveness' and 'impermanence', that are secure in the mind rest on knowledge of a range of examples.[footnote 75] If pupils are to make sense of the 'bigger picture' of a multi-religious, multi-secular world, then they need depth of knowledge about religious and non-religious traditions.

Depth of study prepares pupils with many crucial components of the curriculum. What teachers consider to be crucial components will depend on those aspects of the RE curriculum that are useful 'hooks' or conceptual 'pegs' that enable pupils to approach current and new content on a firm foundation. These components may include specific vocabulary and concepts, pertinent facts, examples, illustrations, and aspects of disciplinary procedures necessary for later study in the curriculum. Pupils need to acquire these components through typical forms of RE content, which are not separated out from their in-depth context. These forms may include:

- narratives, stories and texts
- aspects of living religion (such as rituals and cultural artefacts)
- codified beliefs
- arguments
- thought experiments
- case studies

The RE curriculum needs to build pupils' schema with a range of detailed knowledge from specific forms of content like the above. Pupils can then consider more complex ideas about religion from a knowledgeable position.[footnote 76] Leaders and teachers therefore need to plan carefully the depth of study in the curriculum.

Often, what leaders plan for pupils to study in depth in the curriculum reflects the traditions that are found in their local area, which may be indicated by their locally agreed syllabus.[footnote 77] As well as this, leaders and teachers should be mindful of global contexts.[footnote 78] To achieve this, leaders can select depth of representations from contrasting religious and/or non-religious traditions. This may avoid pupils developing misconceptions. For example, if depth of study takes place only in Abrahamic traditions (Jewish, Christian and Islamic) and no dharmic traditions, then pupils' schema of 'religion' would be skewed.

The curriculum can relate specific traditions to historical context, cultural settings, sacred literature and ways of thinking and living in the world. Pupils will build knowledge of the rich intellectual and spiritual histories of religious and non-religious traditions, the ideas that gain prominence within them, how they relate to culture and how they have shaped – and continue to impact – the globe. This in-depth knowledge enables pupils to dig beneath the surface of contemporary political and public faces of the traditions. On this in-depth basis, pupils can then explore the historical, geographical, metaphysical and cosmological aspects of traditions.[footnote 79]

In-depth contextual knowledge is especially important when aspects of exams focus on very narrow representations of religious traditions. For example, sacred texts are sometimes used as 'proof-texts' in religious studies exams in England. This can misrepresent centuries of practices about how sacred texts inform religious traditions.[footnote 80] In-depth contextual knowledge ensures that pupils are better informed and can see the limitations of such uses.

Some curriculums do not cover religious and non-religious traditions in detail. Instead, they focus on generic themes in RE, such as 'festivals' or 'rites of passage'. This approach can be problematic. Many of the curriculum themes are superficial and, in some instances, lead to pupils' misconceptions. For example, themes such as 'founders of religion' or 'holy books' end up perpetuating misconceptions that some religious traditions are not 'real religions' because they do not fit neatly into the theme.[footnote 81] Detailed study allows pupils to learn sufficient content to avoid superficial misconceptions.

Leaders should, however, take care that the knowledge that pupils build does not become overly 'siloed' by how the curriculum is planned. It can be problematic, for instance, when the entirety of the curriculum is composed of units of discrete religious or non-religious traditions (for example, 'Christianity'/'Judaism'/'Humanism'/'Hinduism'/'Sikhism'), without any opportunities for pupils to build towards seeing blurred boundaries and areas of overlap between them. This approach, intentionally or otherwise, ends up following a 'world religions' paradigm.[footnote 82]

Recent literature claims that the paradigm is 'creaking' because it does not sufficiently account for religious and cultural plurality (for example, 'cultural Christians' or 'secular Muslims').[footnote 83] Leaders and teachers might respond to this by planning in-depth study of traditions, but also by including opportunities for pupils to learn that the idea of a discrete tradition sometimes breaks down. In this way, pupils can see the 'model' of an institutional worldview, as well as the reality of how different people actually live out religion or non-religion in their lives.

In summary, depth of study provides the foundation for pupils to go on to explore other themes and complexity in RE. For pupils to deal with this material ably, they need detailed and in-depth knowledge of specific traditions. Without this, pupils are unlikely to see patterns, relationships or discrepancies in activities that are the hallmarks of more sophisticated and proficient thinking.[footnote 84] Depth of study also allows pupils to make sense of the fluid reality of a multi-religious, multi-secular world.

Sequencing substantive knowledge in RE

High-quality curriculums are coherently planned and well sequenced.[footnote 85] To achieve this, leaders need to consider what prior content pupils need ahead of future content. At both primary and secondary level, the curriculum needs to prepare pupils for forthcoming topics based on content that has preceded them. This is part of recognising that the curriculum maps out the journey of what it means to 'get better' at the subject. This aspect of curriculum in RE has been underdeveloped, although some recent projects have considered how curriculum content maps out developing expertise.[footnote 86]

Our previous research outlined that well-sequenced curriculums are also structured to help pupils integrate new knowledge into their existing knowledge and make enduring connections between content, ideas and concepts.[footnote 87] When pupils encounter new content in RE, their prior knowledge has an impact on what they learn.[footnote 88] Prior knowledge that pupils need in order to learn new content may include, for example, vocabulary, concepts, narratives and/or factual knowledge.[footnote 89]

Sequencing of the curriculum involves identifying links that exist even between very different areas of substantive content. For example, vocabulary and concepts such as 'creation story', 'creation myth' and 'foundation myth' can connect Christian origin narratives with shruti in Hindu traditions, concepts of the patriarchs in Jewish traditions and how all these concepts play out in different people's lives. Subject leaders and teachers might use links like these as part of sequencing the curriculum effectively. For example, leaders can make links between stories about and experiences of different religious and cultural communities in the early years foundation stage with RE concepts in key stage 1.

Another part of effective curriculum sequencing is considering how to enable pupils to move towards ambitious end goals. This means going beyond making connections between substantive content alone. Effective curriculum sequencing might include moving towards global contexts (how religion is patterned around the world), considering models with exceptions (for example, individuals who identify as Roman Catholic but do not believe in God), and adding further complexity and detail. All of this requires rich content knowledge and strong knowledge of connections between content.[footnote 90] Pupils may also develop broad expertise in 'ways of knowing' the substantive content (see 'Ways of knowing in RE'). For a discussion of ambitious curriculum end goals, see 'Interplay, end goals and competencies'.

There is some disagreement within RE literature about the relationship between concepts and building complexity through the curriculum, and how to sequence based on this.

Some approaches introduce increasingly more complicated or intricate RE concepts as pupils get older.[footnote 91] This is based on the idea that some concepts require prior knowledge of connections, especially between other concepts, in order to grasp them. However, this approach can be problematic when applied as a rigid hierarchy that precludes younger pupils from beginning to build knowledge of some specialist concepts. Some very specific religious concepts do not need to be, in principle, reserved for later on in the curriculum. What matters is that earlier stages of the RE curriculum have prepared pupils with the necessary components, so they are ready for the next content.

Other approaches introduce highly specific concepts early on in the curriculum.[footnote 92] In doing this, leaders and teachers might plan for pupils to learn similar concepts a number of times in the curriculum at different stages in increasingly detailed, subject contexts. Examples of this at primary and secondary level could be:

- pupils studying the concept of incarnation as part of the Christian nativity story at key stage 1, as part of Christian beliefs about the Trinity at key stage 2, and as part of Christian social action at key stage 3
- pupils studying the concept of rebirth as part of Sikhi traditions about cycles of birth, death and rebirth at key stage 2; as part of Buddhist mandala traditions (the Bhavachakra) at key stage 3; and as connected to sanatan dharma, moksha and yoga at key stage 4

It is clear that sequencing towards ambitious subject-specific goals requires pupils to build knowledge of significant links and connections between concepts. It is important for pupils to have knowledge not simply of isolated concepts, but of the relationships between them.[footnote 93] Leaders and teachers might identify, for example, pertinent concepts that pupils could learn in a range of contexts and pattern them within the curriculum to enable pupils to make rich connections with them.

The importance of sequencing when introducing sensitive and controversial issues

RE is considered a place within the curriculum where particularly controversial and sensitive issues can be discussed.[footnote 94] How and when to introduce these issues illustrates just how vital curriculum sequencing can be.

At secondary level, some RE curriculums may include topics that relate to perceptions of religion and terror or the way in which the Holocaust (or Shoah) has shaped Jewish traditions. In weaker RE curriculums, these topics may be introduced without supplying sufficient background knowledge, sensitivity and expertise.[footnote 95] Controversial or sensitive issues often have political, environmental, social, emotional and intellectual dimensions. This means that there may be many components that pupils require before studying controversial topics.

Though the topics discussed in RE will differ between primary and secondary schools, the importance of sequencing applies equally at both levels. At primary level, leaders can consider the appropriate point within the sequence of the curriculum to introduce social and religious concepts, such as 'death'. They may do this through considering what pupils will have learned previously in other subjects, such as science, about the way that death is a natural process and part of life. Also, leaders can consider how death has been explained in the early years foundation stage, such as through the death of a school pet.

High-quality RE curriculums will prepare pupils with the prior knowledge they need in order to think about and respond to controversial issues in an informed way. For example, for topics such as Christian responses to suffering, pupils may need prior knowledge of distinctive Christian concepts such as 'resurrection' and knowledge of the social and spiritual dimensions of concepts such as 'evil'. Pupils need to possess prior knowledge of concepts such as 'death' and related vocabulary such as 'choice', 'freedom', 'plan' and 'trust'. Some topics in the RE curriculum may also require knowledge from other subjects, such as English literature, history, geography and science. Subject leaders and teachers might order the curriculum so that pupils have developed knowledge of the content, concepts and related vocabulary needed to approach a controversial topic. Without this, pupils' engagement will be superficial.

Also, the representations of religious and non-religious traditions that leaders and teachers choose are particularly critical when it comes to sensitive and/or controversial issues. If subject leaders and teachers only plan for pupils to learn about some traditions in relation to controversial topics, then pupils will build up substantive knowledge about that tradition only in relation to the controversial. They will miss out on the wider context of that tradition's history and different forms of expression. For example, if pupils only learn about Jewish traditions within a topic of the Shoah or about Islamic traditions only within a sequence of lessons on 'religion and terror', then their knowledge of those traditions will be eclipsed by those topics. Subject leaders and teachers might plan broader representations of those religious traditions before teaching about controversial topics.

Based on the above, high-quality RE may have the following features

- '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.

‘Ways of knowing’ in RE

‘Ways of knowing’ is about being scholarly in the way that substantive content and concepts are approached. It refers to the different ways that pupils learn how it is possible to explore that substantive knowledge. With only substantive (‘what to know’) knowledge, the RE curriculum would be incomplete because pupils also need to learn ‘how to know’ in RE.[footnote 96] At primary and secondary level, leaders and teachers might teach ‘ways of knowing’ by ensuring that pupils learn not only selected content, but also tools to explore that content.

‘Ways of knowing’ is an area of development that is currently emerging within RE. There seem to be 2 main forms of ‘ways of knowing’ that pupils can learn in the curriculum:

- knowledge of well-established methods and processes and other tools of scholarship that are used to study and make sense of global and historical religion/non-religion
- knowledge of the types of conversation (or ‘modes of enquiry’ or ‘scholarly discourses’) that academic communities have about religion/non-religion

Knowledge of the first form develops pupils’ awareness that different methods and processes are useful in different ways, depending on the subject matter being studied. Knowledge of the second form develops pupils’ awareness that conversations about religion and non-religion generally carry within them certain assumptions, link to methods and processes and contain certain criteria about what is considered valuable. These 2 forms have sometimes been referred to as ‘disciplinary knowledge’ in RE,[footnote 97] which has been described as:[footnote 98]

- knowledge that acts on substantive knowledge, as well as the products generated by that action[footnote 99]
- the collective total of the tools, norms, conventions and methods of particular fields of human knowledge[footnote 100]

One part of ‘ways of knowing’ is pupils learning about scholarship. To meet the professional standards of teachers, teachers must promote the value of scholarship.[footnote 101] Leaders and teachers of RE can consider this when asking questions of the RE curriculums that they construct:

- How is scholarship valued in the teaching of substantive content?
- What do we plan for pupils to learn about how the knowledge in the RE curriculum was constructed?
- What do we expect pupils to learn about how accurate, tentative or reliable representations of religious and non-religious traditions are?
- What do we expect pupils to learn about how to construct new knowledge, and evaluate existing knowledge, in trustworthy ways?

The 2018 Commission on RE considered scholarly and academic practices, together with teachers who promote scholarly accuracy and critical enquiry, to be part of high-quality RE.[footnote 102] Beyond substantive content, leaders and teachers may plan for pupils to learn:

- how knowledge came about (for example, who constructed the knowledge or how it might have been formed from academic disciplines)
- the status of claims (for example, how accurate a generalisation about religion might be)
- the difference between conceptions and misconceptions (for example, whether the term ‘believer’ is an appropriate term for all adherents and practitioners of different traditions)
- the type of method that may have been used to derive that knowledge and the suitability of methods (for example, the strengths and limitations of interview methods for portions of curriculum content)

Considerations such as these lead to a conception of quality beyond learning substantive content. Substantive knowledge may include different claims about reality that cannot easily be dismissed or relativised.[footnote 103] High-quality RE curriculums build forms of knowledge that give pupils the capacity to think about the status of the content.

If the curriculum is not explicit about ‘ways of knowing’, implicit assumptions (as well as a general lack of clarity) are passed on to pupils about how they ought to approach future RE content. This links to the important question of 'what kind of neutrality' is required in non-confessional RE.[footnote 104] The idea of a position of absolute neutrality when studying religion/non-religion is considered untenable (for further discussion, see 'Teacher education and professional development in RE').[footnote 105] Teachers should be concerned about the accuracy of their portrayals of religious and non-religious traditions as well as concerned about expecting pupils to adopt teachers' own beliefs.[footnote 106] Yet, pupils need to be educated to respond to content in informed, intelligent and reflective ways.[footnote 107] In plural, non-confessional and multi-faith RE, a range of 'ways of knowing' about religion/non-religion would broaden, rather than limit, pupils' educational experience.[footnote 108]

'Ways of knowing' as scholarly tools, methods and processes

In high-quality RE, it is important for pupils to learn about the tools of scholarship and other well-established methods. If pupils are to build up representations of religious traditions that reflect the complexity and diversity of religion, then they require sufficient knowledge of the tools so that, when appropriate, they themselves are able to work towards that complexity and diversity.[footnote 109]

In RE, pupils can learn a range of tools and methods.[footnote 110] For example, pupils could explore a curriculum question such as 'how have different Hindus expressed dharma practice?' through an analysis of Vedic texts. However, they would get a different answer through, for example, a survey of the perspectives of Hindu residents of a geographical area. Within a curriculum, this example would require that pupils develop both knowledge of different tools and methods and knowledge of what these tools and methods reveal (or conceal) about aspects of dharma practice.

Leaders and teachers might plan, throughout the journey of the curriculum, for pupils to develop their expertise by learning how these different methods might be applied to varied and different substantive content. Of course, a school RE curriculum could never fully capture every method, tool or process that could be used concerning religion. Possible tools and methods that pupils could learn about include:

- tools for interpreting texts[footnote 111]
- tools for exploring customs, habits and ways of living (ethnography)
- archaeological procedures
- methods in historical reconstruction
- participant observation
- in-depth interviews
- analysis of relevant data

The sheer amount of choices could be overwhelming for subject leaders and teachers. Yet high-quality RE helps pupils learn to choose the right tool for the job: it specifies what is/are the appropriate method(s) and tool(s) for a specific aspect of tradition that is in focus in the curriculum.[footnote 112] To a large extent, the tools that pupils learn about depend on the selection and sequencing of the substantive content of the curriculum, as well as the type of question being asked of the content.[footnote 113]

A specific example of a set of tools in RE would be interpretative (hermeneutical) tools for texts. These would be useful in curriculums that refer to and use sacred texts such as the Bible. In learning the tools of interpretation that are specific to the substantive content (parts of the sacred text), pupils can see layers of meaning in texts that interpreters find significant. Also, they are less reliant on teachers giving them an established meaning to the text.[footnote 114]

When pupils learn about these tools through lots of different substantive content in a sequenced curriculum, they learn:

- about the usefulness of the methods and tools and knowledge of meanings that previous interpreters have considered important (a receptive expertise)
- how to use the tools and methods for themselves (a productive expertise)

When pupils learn a specific selection of tools, methods and practices, RE draws on well-established scholarly processes. Knowledge of the procedures for picking the 'right tool for the job' enables pupils to learn the procedures for acquiring new knowledge in reliable and warranted ways.[footnote 115] Leaders and teachers might select, in age-appropriate ways, specific scholarly methods for pupils to learn in conjunction with substantive content.[footnote 116]

'Ways of knowing' as types of academic conversations

'Ways of knowing' includes knowledge about how academics discuss religion. Pupils and teachers will also discuss religion and non-religion in the RE classroom. Teachers might therefore reflect on how they intend to frame their classroom discussions about religion.[footnote 117]

Without this form of knowledge in RE, teachers may spread (rather than counteract) illiteracy about the content learned in RE. For example, ideas about 'proof' and 'truth' play very different roles in scientific conversations compared with religious ones. High-quality RE can play a clear role in developing pupils' literacy about types of knowledge in the world; poor-quality RE can cause confusion and misconceptions.[footnote 118] High-quality RE also helps pupils to distinguish knowledge in the RE curriculum from 'everyday' knowledge, opinions and ideas.

As with specific methods and tools, pupils can learn both:

- about scholarly discourses (a receptive expertise)
- through the way that leaders and teachers sequence the curriculum, how to participate in and lead the discourses themselves (a productive expertise)

Some curriculum approaches formalise 'ways of knowing' into simplified disciplines, such as 'theology', 'philosophy' and 'human/social sciences'.[footnote 119] In these cases, the curriculum content is framed as if it were considered by, for example, theologians, philosophers or human/social scientists. These can be taught in simplified ways in primary schools.

This recognises that there are different ways of approaching similar topics and different types of questions that can be asked about similar topics. For example, the Islamic concept of the 'oneness' of God (Tawhid) could be approached in different ways at secondary level:

- How have different Muslims understood sacred texts about Tawhid? (A 'theology' question)
- Is the idea of God's self-existence a coherent one? (A 'philosophy' question)
- What is the significance of Tawhid for the way that different Muslims live today? (A 'human/social sciences' question)

At primary, the symbol of light in Hindu traditions could be approached in contrasting ways:

- Why do different Hindu stories talk about light?
- How does a festival of lights bring different Hindus together?

Pupils can learn different types of conversation (and the assumptions that are implicit within them) about religion and non-religion.[footnote 120] The contrasting types of conversation on the curriculum are key because some preclude the possibility of 'ultimate reality' (or 'realities'), while others do not.[footnote 121] This is certainly important in pluralistic RE, which recognises that there is no absolutely neutral vantage point from which to explore religion.[footnote 122]

The importance of 'ways of knowing' in the RE curriculum

'Ways of knowing' within the RE curriculum is currently an area of development and theorisation for teachers. Focusing on this type of knowledge might improve some aspects of RE.

For example, RE practitioners commonly use language of interpretation, analysis, explanation and/or the construction of arguments as part-and-parcel of learning.[footnote 123] However, what exactly is meant by these procedures is unclear: the terms are very broad and can vary in their meaning.[footnote 124] Using terms like 'analysis' or 'argumentation' imprecisely can generate problems because, when they are applied generically, they are not adjusted to the subject content. It is unclear what similarity there is between:

- 'analysis of a belief'
- 'analysis of a religious text'
- 'analysis of a philosophical argument'

The over-simplified generic application of terms such as these may suggest a lack of precision in expectations about what pupils learn beyond substantive content.[footnote 125] It may also suggest that teachers are unclear about how pupils should (or even could) respond to the substantive content.

It would be more useful and constructive for leaders and teachers to plan for pupils to learn 'ways of knowing' that are specific to the content. For example, they can learn how to know the extent to which particular beliefs are widespread, or suitable tools for interpreting religious texts, or the criteria for valid arguments in analytic philosophy.

High-quality curriculums in which pupils learn a range of 'ways of knowing' can help prevent over-simplifying or stereotyping religion. Recognising that there can be different 'ways of knowing' brings to light a variety of perspectives, positions and voices. This may also help overcome misconceptions that later ideas, practices and perspectives in some religious traditions are necessarily deviations from an original pure tradition.[footnote 126]

Given that what is presented to pupils in the curriculum is a representation of religion and non-religion, there are scholarly questions to ask about 'who says' the representation is accurate, appropriate or suitable.[footnote 127] Representatives and/or faith leaders of organised traditions (sometimes called institutional worldviews) offer unique perspectives. But the voices of other individual adherents and practitioners (sometimes called personal worldviews) also offer unique perspectives on that tradition.[footnote 128] Both types of voices can broaden the representation. Beyond the substantive content, learning about 'ways of knowing' enables pupils to think about, to question and to discern whose perspective is being heard through the representations of traditions, and why.

Based on the above, high-quality RE may have the following features

- 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.

'Personal knowledge' in RE

'Personal knowledge' has been described by various educators as 'knower-knowledge', 'personal worldview', 'reflexivity' and 'positionality'.[footnote 129] When pupils study RE content, they do so 'from a position'. This position is their 'viewpoint' or perspective on the world, which is influenced by, for example, their values, prior experiences and own sense of identity. Through the curriculum at primary and secondary level, pupils build 'personal knowledge', which includes an awareness of the assumptions that they bring to discussions concerning religious and non-religious traditions. The focus on both knowledge of religious traditions and also what that knowledge contributes to the pupils' self-understanding is well established in RE.[footnote 130] This form of knowledge is similar to academic reflections in higher education.[footnote 131]

This section on 'personal knowledge' reflects curriculum developments in plural (non-confessional) RE, as outlined in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996. It assumes that pupils bring to the RE classroom a 'position', as mentioned above. It also assumes that pupils are free to express their own religious or non-religious identities, and these may or may not change because of their RE subject education (and indeed there is no obligation for them to change). This section does not discuss approaches to RE that may induct pupils into specific religious faith traditions through the curriculum.

RE is sometimes seen as a key place in the curriculum where there are opportunities for pupils to consider their own personal backgrounds and influences.[footnote 132] Similarly, in some approaches to RE, the development of this kind of 'personal knowledge' occurs through tensions between their own perspectives and the perspectives of others.[footnote 133] The way in which RE considers this background knowledge valuable, and the way that RE uses it as a basis for personal reflection, is sometimes considered a strength of the subject.[footnote 134]

Subject leaders and teachers need to consider carefully what content within the RE curriculum is most useful for pupils to develop 'personal knowledge'. In high-quality RE curriculums, subject leaders are precise in how they select content because some content contains richer potential for this. Ideally, pupils will build 'personal knowledge' through rich substantive content that links the 'life world' of religious and non-religious traditions to the developing 'life world' of pupils.[footnote 135] This is important for subject leaders and curriculum designers to identify because some pupils may not see the immediate value of that content. As 'personal knowledge' requires content for pupils to reflect on, the sequencing of 'personal knowledge' depends on the sequencing of substantive knowledge in the curriculum.

At primary and secondary level, the most suitable substantive content for pupils to develop personal knowledge will have the capacity to illuminate and to inform pupils' own self-knowledge. For example, content relating to meaning and purpose, human nature, justice in society, values, community and self-fulfilment would have potential.[footnote 136] Therefore, subject leaders need to be highly selective in identifying substantive content for reflection that relates to pupils' developing identities. What they select from the sequence of substantive knowledge should contain plenty of detail about the function of the content and concepts within specific religious traditions.

Learning about concepts such as 'forgiveness' in Christian traditions or 'sewa' ('selfless service') in Sikh traditions, together with rich detail about how they form parts of Christian and Sikh ways of life, provides opportunities for pupils to see how these concepts may relate to their own position.[footnote 137] There is plenty of content that will help build pupils' 'personal knowledge' through looking at particular religious traditions.[footnote 138]

However, not all content is as useful or appropriate to serve as the basis for developing pupils' 'personal knowledge'. Some literature suggests that content like 'static features' of religious traditions, such as the features of religious buildings, provides more limited opportunities for developing 'personal knowledge'.[footnote 139] Perhaps more significant problems occur when leaders and teachers are imprecise in their selections of content. For example, selecting 'the parable of the lost sheep' instead of, for example, Christian concepts of 'searching', 'salvation' or 'rejoicing' (taken from the parable) would not be helpful. In cases such as these, what can be developed is more like personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) knowledge (for example, 'knowing the importance of caring for others') rather than 'personal knowledge' developed through substantive RE content.[footnote 140]

Based on the above, high-quality RE may have the following features

- 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.

Interplay, end goals and competencies

This section considers:

- how the different types of knowledge that pupils build in the RE curriculum interact with each other (interplay)

- what the knowledge in the RE curriculum is building towards (end goals)
- how pupils' developing knowledge relates to educational aims that extend beyond the subject matter of RE (competencies)

Interplay of knowledge in the RE curriculum

As the types of knowledge within RE have not been well established, the connection or relationship between them have only recently begun to be explored.

In non-statutory models for school RE curriculums, the anticipated strands of progression are often presented as discrete and the connections between them unclear.[footnote 141] Ofsted's definition of progression is that pupils 'know more and remember more' of the planned curriculum.[footnote 142] For RE, this involves thinking through, in subject-specific terms, not only the nature of the knowledge that pupils study, but also the connections between the different forms of knowledge.[footnote 143]

The substantive content and concepts of the RE curriculum provide the 'substance' that enables pupils to learn 'ways of knowing' such as theories, methods, modes of enquiry and the status of theories and generalisations. For example, statements such as 'religious leaders are often important people in communities' depend on specific content, such as the status of individual priests, ministers, rabbis and other leaders of religion in different faith communities. Similarly, asking a question like 'how have religious groups contributed to culture in the local area?' requires content about the contributions (or lack of them) that religious traditions have made to a specific place. Substantive knowledge is what pupils use to build links and connections.

High-quality curriculums might also develop pupils' personal knowledge through the content that they study. For example, pupils might consider how the insights of religious people relate to the way that pupils themselves see the world.[footnote 144] Again, this is dependent on substantive content. To reflect on others' personal religious insights requires first that pupils know how a religious person might perceive the world. For example, pupils must first know how a concept like 'goodness' functions within specific religious and non-religious traditions before they can see how it may differ from their own assumptions and values of goodness.

At both primary and secondary level, problems within the curriculum can emerge when teachers attempt to build 'personal knowledge' separately from content knowledge. Curriculum-related activities that seek to develop pupils' 'personal knowledge' but that are disconnected from content knowledge (for example, classroom discussions that prompt opinions about general topics without proper reflection) can distort and detract from high-quality RE.[footnote 145]

Leaders and teachers need to think carefully about how the interplay of the forms of knowledge builds through the curriculum. A well-sequenced curriculum builds on pupils' prior knowledge: leaders anticipate that certain content will be accessible based on pupils' knowledge of previous content. Research in RE has highlighted the importance of this.[footnote 146] However, within the literature, there are 2 dimensions of 'pupils' prior knowledge' that RE teachers need to be aware of as distinct, for different reasons:

- Sometimes, 'what pupils already know' refers more broadly to pupils' own background concepts and ideas about religion. This might include pupils' own personal experiences.[footnote 147] The composition of pupils in RE classrooms may differ vastly according to, for example, the local demographic of schools. RE teachers will need to respond to the particularities of the classroom.[footnote 148]
- In terms of the curriculum, 'what pupils already know' refers to the prior knowledge that pupils acquire and build through the journey of the RE curriculum. In high-quality RE, just as teachers will be aware of pupils' experiences and assumptions, they will also be aware of the knowledge that pupils have or have not built up through the curriculum. This is particularly important to inform teachers' planning of learning activities (see 'Teaching the curriculum').

Ambitious curriculum end goals

Previously, we introduced the idea of a cumulatively sufficient subject education in RE. One feature of a cumulatively sufficient RE curriculum is the end goal. When constructing RE curriculums, subject leaders need some concept of an endpoint, of what they are building 'towards'.[footnote 149] In high-quality RE curriculums at primary and secondary level, these are subject-specific end goals that are ambitious in scope.

There are curriculum end goals that are useful for a range of aims of RE. For example, one curriculum end goal is that pupils build accurate knowledge about the complexity and diversity of global religious and non-religious traditions.[footnote 150] Another might be that pupils' knowledge builds towards theories about religion/non-religion developed by communities of experts.[footnote 151] Well-considered curriculum end goals also help subject leaders and curriculum designers to select RE curriculum content. For example, they can choose illustrative content that leads to an end goal, which reduces the pressure of having to cover vast amounts of religious and non-religious traditions in their curriculums. Content that is selected to be in the curriculum needs to be precise and purposeful – and ambitious curriculum end goals provide a basis for what is purposeful.

Pupils' education in RE would generally be considered incomplete or impoverished if it did not build towards the global and the complex (that traditions are internally plural and interact with individuals in different ways around the world).[footnote 152] Often, pupils bring simplified views about religion, religious traditions and global issues into the RE classroom.[footnote 153] A cumulatively sufficient education in RE must include the global and the complex features of religion and non-religion because these reflect the lived nature of traditions, identity, belief and practice, as evidenced in contemporary research.[footnote 154] Curriculum end goals that enable pupils to become knowledgeable about global religion and non-religion prepare them to engage in a multi-religious and multi-secular world.

The RE curriculum and competencies

To develop competency in a subject, pupils require a deep foundation of knowledge, structured and organised within a conceptual framework.[footnote 155] This is very important for RE subject leaders and curriculum designers who see RE as directly contributing to wider educational aims beyond the subject. These aims often relate to broader aspects of pupils' personal development, for example how to work alongside people from different cultural backgrounds ('intercultural competencies').[footnote 156] However, if teachers focus on these at the expense of building pupils' subject knowledge, then pupils will be attempting to develop competencies on insecure grounds.

High-quality RE curriculums equip pupils with subject components (for example, language, vocabulary and concepts). Subject composites are built over time (for example, awareness of their own assumptions and values, recognition of difference or acknowledgement of different modes of enquiry). Having command of components and composites such as these allows pupils to see patterns and relationships in new areas of learning,[footnote 157] including beyond RE itself.

High-quality RE curriculums will already provide many of the components that enable pupils to develop interpersonal competencies. This is important for 2 reasons.

First, some educators have grave concerns that RE has been eroded because it is used as the sole place to focus on whole-school moral and social priorities.[footnote 158] Senior leaders should recognise that if they invest in a high-quality RE curriculum, well taught by subject specialists, then they will not have to make reactive changes to it in order to incorporate (what should otherwise be) the latest whole-school initiatives.

Second, subject leaders should prioritise the quality of knowledge that pupils learn in RE. They need to be aware that teachers may unintentionally distort the knowledge that they teach when intending to promote social acceptance in the classroom. This can happen to such an extent that pupils consider RE to be a form of citizenship or PSHE education.[footnote 159] Teachers can sometimes present overly positive portrayals of religion, which may be linked to the desire for pupils to interact positively with members of religious traditions.[footnote 160] Though these claims about religion may be taught for well-meaning reasons, they are unwarranted and unscholarly.[footnote 161] Subject leaders should ensure that pupils are not hindered from acting and engaging meaningfully in the world as a global citizen because of misconceptions they learned through a poor-quality RE curriculum.

Based on the above, high-quality RE may have the following features

- 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.

Teaching the curriculum

Summary

High-quality teaching in RE at primary and secondary level enables pupils to remember the intended curriculum in the long term. Pedagogies chosen in the RE classroom (curriculum implementation) need to enable pupils to build the forms of knowledge distinctive to RE. Teachers need to make subject-sensitive, 'fit-for-purpose' decisions about what is suitable depending on the subject matter. In particular, teaching focuses on crucial content that helps pupils to learn the specific topic they are studying and also builds a firm foundation that subsequent teaching builds on. High-quality curriculum implementation in RE comprises classroom methods that are well suited to the full scope of the RE curriculum.

Pedagogical models in RE

This section on teaching the curriculum focuses on procedures, methods and strategies as aspects of teaching. Within the literature on RE, however, 'pedagogy' can have a range of meanings, some of which are all-encompassing:

- some RE literature considers pedagogy to be a 'model' of teaching and learning, which includes subject aims, curriculum content and teaching methodology that draws on generic educational principles[footnote 162]
- others consider pedagogy to mean the specific classroom procedures, methods and strategies that link to how pupils learn the content taught

Pedagogy in the former ('models') sense, while educationally important, is much broader than the use of 'pedagogy' to mean implementing the curriculum, which is how it is used in the EIF.[footnote 163] RE literature that explores pedagogy as 'aims, curriculum and methodology' is outlined in Appendix C.

Suitable procedures, methods and strategies in RE

At primary and secondary level, leaders and teachers decide how to teach specific content and topics in RE. These decisions about procedures, methods and strategies are part of curriculum implementation. Implementing the curriculum effectively involves considering the teaching methods that will enable pupils to know and remember the curriculum in the long term. If teachers do not consider this, the impact of the curriculum will be weak.

Pertinent research into the cognitive science of learning and memory provides insights into the kinds of procedures, methods and strategies that would support pupils to remember the RE curriculum.[footnote 164] Although this is a useful starting point, teachers must still judge how to apply them to RE in order to ensure that the classroom approaches are suitable.

Teaching activities that are clear about the RE curriculum object

When primary and secondary teachers select appropriate teaching methods and activities in RE, they need to be clear about the object of what they want pupils to learn (the curriculum object). When they are clear on this and use it as a basis for decisions about how to teach, they can support pupils to build up rich and diverse stores of knowledge.

As mentioned earlier, schema in long-term memory are interconnected 'webs of knowledge'. Their extensiveness can vary depending on the range of knowledge that is encoded in pupils' memory. Memory of concepts and ideas is often developed through experiencing repeated similar episodes.[footnote 165] This repetition builds up the meanings of complex ideas and abstractions. In RE, for instance, pupils may build up a subject-specific concept of 'afterlife' through encountering it in different contexts, for example by learning about related rituals and beliefs in religious and non-religious traditions. This means that teaching should be clear on what pupils need to learn and should focus on providing pupils with periodic and recurrent opportunities to encounter these concepts.

Once teachers are clear about the object of what they want pupils to learn in RE, they can choose appropriate classroom methods and activities. Methods and activities are appropriate when they reinforce pupils' learning of the object. If teachers choose classroom methods based on other criteria (for example, on whether the activity is perceived to be engaging), then they are less likely to support pupils' learning of the curriculum in the long term. So, the suitability of a classroom activity depends on whether it will introduce and then reinforce pupils' memory of the curriculum object effectively.

For example, leaders and teachers of RE often provide opportunities for pupils to encounter faith practitioners, to meet them and to listen to their experiences. These can be valuable experiences for pupils because they are genuine and organic and enable the pupils to learn about differences in the ways that religious and non-religious people live.[footnote 166] However, sometimes teachers can be unclear about the curriculum object when pupils meet faith practitioners. The curriculum object may be any number of things, such as:

- to learn about the experiences of faith practitioners (that is, testimonies that could be used as case studies)
- to learn how knowledge about religion might be gained through interviews (that is, aspects of disciplinary 'ways of knowing')[footnote 167]
- for pupils to recognise their own assumptions as they listen to an individual from a faith community (that is, 'personal knowledge')
- to apply previously learned generalisations about religion that can be 'tested' through an encounter with 'lived' faith practitioners (that is, using the internal dynamics and internal plurality of religious traditions to illustrate that religious traditions are not simply one thing)[footnote 168]

Given this range of possibilities, it is important for leaders and teachers to be clear about what precisely they expect pupils to learn from the encounter and, importantly, how that links to curriculum goals. Otherwise, meeting faith practitioners may be enjoyable for pupils but is unlikely to lead to curriculum impact.

When RE teachers are clear on the curriculum object, they are able to focus their subject expertise on the classroom processes of, for example:

- presenting content
- responding to pupils' questions
- structuring discussions
- using examples and analogies for elaboration and emphasis

Teachers can provide lots of 'in the moment' reinforcement of subject content. They can judge when a repeated encounter with concepts would be beneficial for pupils as classroom discussion develops. They may also provide variations through juxtaposing contrasting interpretations of similar subject matter.[footnote 169] These variations may reveal disputes and tensions.[footnote 170] Here, the teacher makes a pedagogical decision to highlight the form of knowledge being discussed. For example, teachers might highlight the nature of disputes and their extent, exploring why they have happened and relating this to other contested aspects of religion, such as symbols, narratives, questions and praxis.[footnote 171] This supports pupils to make strong connections between recursive subject content.

Teaching activities that are well matched to pupils' prior knowledge

Pupils' rich and diverse schemata lay the groundwork for their future learning. Pupils will draw on these webs of knowledge when they learn subsequent knowledge or carry out complex operations.[footnote 172]

In terms of classroom practice in primary and secondary schools, this suggests that pupils' readiness for certain tasks will depend on whether they have the requisite knowledge to be able to succeed at the task.[footnote 173] When teachers use textual sources and longer reading extracts (such as sacred literature, religious narratives or scholarship), they need to consider whether these are accessible to pupils. Pupils will require sufficient vocabulary knowledge to make sense of the text. Teachers may act on this, for instance, by teaching pupils subject-specific vocabulary before they encounter it in content.[footnote 174]

When teachers plan activities for pupils to make links between content, they need to consider whether all pupils in the class have enough prior knowledge to make the links they intend. An activity around making links may be, for example, a key stage 2 classroom investigation about why a particular individual lives the way that they do. Without sufficient prior knowledge about the topic, it is unlikely that all pupils would be able to make the links between content that more proficient or expert thinkers might.[footnote 175]

Leaders and teachers may take into account pupils' prior knowledge when planning trips and educational visits. Educating pupils about sacred spaces is one way for them to learn about historical and cultural aspects of religion, as well as 'real life' religion through meeting members of traditions. The value of visits to sacred places is enhanced when pupils have the necessary prior knowledge to make sense of the experience.

Teaching activities that support the recall of knowledge of the RE curriculum

Research from cognitive science highlights that the practice of retrieving knowledge at intervals over time helps pupils to remember knowledge in the curriculum in the long term.[footnote 176] Within a coherent and well-sequenced curriculum, there is an emphasis on crucial knowledge, such as particular concepts, vocabulary and other components of knowledge, and on teaching activities that focus on retrieving that knowledge. This enables pupils to retain crucial knowledge over time.

There are many ways in which RE teaching at primary and secondary level may draw on these insights. Again, it requires subject sensitivity to consider what type of knowledge needs to be recalled within classroom activities, as well as the form that the recall takes. Teachers can make fit-for-purpose decisions about what needs to be retrieved from earlier RE content when they think about the journey of the curriculum. The way in which it needs to be retrieved will depend on subject-specific considerations. For example, low-stakes multiple-choice quizzing may be appropriate for getting pupils to recall certain types of content such as vocabulary or concepts. However, this would be a rather blunt tool for recalling stories, where it is important to hold various elements of the story together. In these instances, forms of narration would be much more appropriate ways to recall.

In other instances, activities themselves enable recall. Some examples of these could be:

- pupils drawing on earlier substantive content to design questions for an interview with faith practitioners
- pupils having to recall earlier content in order to draw comparisons and to see the status of one piece of knowledge in relation to another
- intentionally using relevant examples and case studies from earlier in the curriculum when constructing philosophical arguments
- when teaching tools of sacred text scholarship, teachers drawing on earlier categories of 'author', 'original context' and 'initial audience' to help pupils analyse subsequent texts

In ways such as these, teachers construct classroom activities that draw on, and reinforce, earlier parts of the RE curriculum. Classroom activities are optimal when they are specific to the subject knowledge that pupils are learning.

Research from cognitive science also highlights the importance of ensuring that some knowledge is learned to the point of 'automaticity'. Automaticity concerns how easily, quickly and automatically pupils can recall knowledge. This is especially crucial when pupils are learning new content and/or carrying out more complex tasks.[footnote 177] These insights draw on theories of cognitive load, which consider the limitations of mental efforts in operations and tasks.[footnote 178] Theories of cognitive load were outlined in our previous research. In particular, retention of knowledge and development of schemata will be poor if working memory is overloaded.[footnote 179]

Considering which aspects of the RE curriculum are particularly useful for pupils to learn to automaticity is a key part of removing unnecessary barriers for pupils to learn in RE (see section on 'Curriculum progression'). But this is also important to consider when teaching the curriculum. Just as leaders and teachers might consider whether elaborate or complex tasks can actually distract pupils from learning the curriculum object, so too might they consider whether classroom activities actually generate barriers for some pupils. For instance, some pupils with particular, cognitive-related SEND may struggle if left to determine on their own which knowledge is pertinent and which is not. With some well-intentioned but elaborate classroom activities, these pupils may be left unsure which knowledge to focus on. In high-quality RE, the classroom activities remove unnecessary barriers for pupils.

Based on the above, high-quality RE may have the following features

- 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.

Assessment

Summary

High-quality assessment in RE uses assessment sufficiently, but not excessively. At primary and secondary level, leaders and teachers make fit-for-purpose decisions about applying different types of assessment, which makes it manageable. This requires them to be crystal clear about what is being assessed and why in RE. When assessment is used to determine the pupils' progress in RE, it is important for the assessment to consider whether pupils have learned the curriculum, since the curriculum sets out the journey of what it means 'to get better' at RE.

Types of assessment in RE

There is no clear picture from literature about the nature and function of assessment in RE, let alone a straightforward conception of what constitutes high-quality assessment. This is partly due to uncertainty about what exactly is being assessed in RE.[footnote 180] It has been claimed that this sort of confusion about the subject's identity has been 'at the start of a long chain', culminating in, among many things, 'unreliable assessment'.[footnote 181]

As a starting point, it is useful to draw on literature that categorises RE assessment into 2 kinds: the 'knowing kind' and the 'personal qualities, beliefs and values kind'.[footnote 182] In this report, we focus on the first kind of assessment because this is appropriate for checking the forms of knowledge that pupils build through the RE curriculum (see 'RE and the quality of education judgement within the EIF'). This may be useful for RE leaders and teachers because, previously, very little thought was given to assessment when planning the RE curriculum.[footnote 183]

Assessment can be used for different purposes in the curriculum. It can be used formatively (assessment for learning) as part of adaptive teaching which, for example, responds to pupils' misconceptions in RE.[footnote 184] Formative assessment is granular. For the pupil, it provides feedback, 'in the moment', to improve. For example, teachers' questioning can reveal pupils' misconceptions about particular aspects of dharma practice. Formative assessment provides a very clear feedback loop for teachers, such that they can adapt their teaching responsively as they implement the curriculum.[footnote 185] However, problems occur when formative assessment (for example, a low-stakes quiz) is used for other kinds of purposes (for example, accountability). The misuse of this kind of formative assessment to generate data for accountability purposes does not provide valid or reliable information about progress. Worse, it also adds unnecessarily to teachers' workload.[footnote 186]

Assessment can also be used for summative purposes (assessment of learning), such as when teachers use an end-of-topic assessment to sample pupils' knowledge from a domain of RE content. Often in RE, summative assessment uses composite tasks to assess learning.[footnote 187] These require pupils to draw on a range of subject knowledge (including different types of knowledge) to construct a more complex output, like extended writing in RE. Summative assessment in RE often ties into whole-school monitoring of pupils' progress and accountability procedures.

When the curriculum is treated as the progression model, summative assessments attempt to determine how much of the curriculum pupils know and remember. This can be done by sampling from the knowledge that teachers expect pupils to retain through the curriculum journey. As part of this, it is important that instances of summative assessment take place at sufficiently long intervals, to allow time for the RE curriculum to be taught and learned.[footnote 188] Given the limited curriculum time allocated to RE, standardised intervals for summative assessments may mean that the curriculum domain being assessed may be far smaller in RE than in other subjects. Leaders can consider whether there is enough time allocated to RE to teach and assess the curriculum.

Assessing types of knowledge in RE

For assessments to be fit for purpose, leaders and teachers in primary and secondary schools need to be clear about what they are testing and why. They can then make decisions about the most appropriate format of assessment (type of task) and when best to do it.

Composite assessment tasks are sometimes used in RE to establish whether pupils have learned the curriculum. These tasks do not separate out different types of RE knowledge and may assess more than one type of RE knowledge within the same task. For example, RE teachers might assess 'ways of knowing' through the ways that pupils use substantive content and concepts to respond to a question. Responses may be in different forms, such as written tasks, presentations, spoken accounts and visual accounts.[footnote 189] These sorts of composite assessment tasks can be used to check:

- pupils' substantive knowledge
- whether pupils have learned modes of discourse ('ways of knowing')
- accounts of pupils' own positionality ('personal knowledge')

More simple assessment tasks in RE can be used to isolate portions of pupils' knowledge, such as vocabulary and basic concepts. For example, multiple-choice questions are one way that leaders and teachers might do this. These questions could be useful as part of formative assessment practice, or as part of summative assessment to determine how much of the domain of the RE curriculum pupils have learned. However, they become a blunter instrument when used to attempt to assess 'ways of knowing' or 'personal knowledge'.

Of the 3 forms of knowledge that pupils build through the RE curriculum, personal knowledge is the least straightforward to assess in isolation. There are cognitive aspects of this knowledge that can be assessed. For example, pupils may express the assumptions that they brought to the study of a particular topic or how their own vantage point changed as a result of new content that they learned. But other aspects of personal knowledge, such as the development of personal qualities, beliefs and values, are far less straightforward to assess. There are, of course, pioneering research methods and instruments that attempt to assess pupils' attitudes.[footnote 190] However, these are not of the same order as models of assessment for pupils' progress in schools. As with other aspects of pupils' development, schools are not the sole factor in how well they develop their personal qualities and values.[footnote 191] It may well be that personal knowledge, due to its highly individualised personal, intimate or abstruse nature, might be an aspect of RE that ought to be 'unencumbered' by assessment.

[footnote 192]

Relating assessment expectations to the RE curriculum

At primary and secondary level, the RE curriculum maps out the journey of what it means to 'get better at RE'. This is what is meant by the phrase 'the curriculum is the progression model'.[footnote 193]

When leaders and teachers want to know whether pupils have made progress in RE, they are asking a summative question: have pupils learned and remembered the RE curriculum? But it is often the case, both in assessment design and in school practice, that curriculum and assessment are considered as separate entities.[footnote 194] Often, this happens when there is a lack of clarity about the object of assessment in RE.

Effective assessment treats the curriculum as the progression model, so leaders and teachers need to ensure that assessment expectations are related to the RE curriculum. When expectations are not related to the curriculum, assessment can be hollow and can meaninglessly add to teachers' workload.

Problems with using generic progression models in RE

Some assessment models in RE continue to use 'scales', 'ladders' or 'levels' of generic skills to determine progress. Many of these are variations of obsolete assessment models, such as the 8-level scale of attainment that arose from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the early 2000s.[footnote 195] In these sorts of assessment models, the object of assessment is considered separately from the RE curriculum that pupils journey through and learn. They are not valid assessment models to assess specific RE curriculums. Some educators in RE have highlighted key flaws in them.[footnote 196]

First, the assumption of a vertical model of skills progression in RE is not valid. For example, a group of children in Reception who have learned some aspects of the nativity story would be able to 'analyse' a pile of Christmas cards into 2 piles: one pile with representations of the nativity and another pile that relates to non-religious customs. This is not necessarily of the same order as a key stage 4 pupils 'analysing' a philosophical argument. Even if there were a more obvious equivalence between 'analysing' (or 'evaluating' or 'explaining' and so on) at different stages of the curriculum, it is also 'obviously nonsense' to assume that pupils would need to pass through each step of the assessment ladder only once.[footnote 197]

Second, a hierarchy of command words linked to steps of progress (such as 'describe', 'explain' and 'evaluate') creates a second unnecessary and unreliable progression model, removed from the journey of the RE curriculum. These additional progression models are unhelpful because they do not consider progression through the forms of knowledge that pupils build within the RE curriculum. Similarly, applying age-related expectations may appear to be a clear way to compare pupils, but often these expectations do not closely reflect the RE curriculum that pupils are learning.

Problems when the curriculum as the progression model is used inconsistently

Sometimes, summative assessment practices in RE consider the curriculum as the progression model in 'structural' terms but fail to do so in 'substantial' terms. These are some examples to illustrate this:

- if leaders and teachers recognise that pupils in Year 4 need to learn and remember RE from the start of key stage 2, then they consider the curriculum as the progression model in structural terms. However, if they do not check in Year 4 whether pupils have learned and remembered that knowledge, and subsequently report to parents solely based on their perceived impression of pupils' learning, then this assessment practice fails to treat the curriculum as the progression model in 'substantial terms'
- if a summative assessment in Year 6, such as an extended piece of writing, is expected to draw on previous learning, then the assessment practice considers the curriculum as the progression model in 'structural' terms. However, if the assessment task is poorly designed and does not enable pupils to demonstrate what they have learned from earlier in the curriculum, then it fails to consider the curriculum as the progression model in 'substantial terms'

Situations like these represent common examples where little consideration is given to how pupils' progress in RE would be assessed.[footnote 198]

Relating composite assessment tasks to the RE curriculum

Composite assessment tasks are fit for their purpose when they are based on curriculum-related expectations. A common composite assessment task in RE (especially at key stages 3, 4 and 5) is the construction of an argument. Research into a sample of 35 locally agreed syllabuses showed a reference to argumentation approximately once in every 4 pages.[footnote 199] An analysis of this sample indicated that there were aspects of RE argumentation that were well established:

- 'social practice etiquette' of RE argumentation (general expectations around pupils' expression and attentiveness)
- generic aspects of argumentation (expectations that an argument should contain claims, rebuttal and qualifiers)

However, the analysis also indicated a lack of clarity over the substance of what is appropriate evidence, warrant and backing within an argument.

Without clearly framing a summative assessment task by explaining what precisely constitutes evidence, warrant or backing for a particular type of question, the argument that pupils go on to construct will not reveal effectively what they have learned. It may reveal something of the substantive content pupils have learned but would fail to assess what pupils have learned about 'ways of knowing' (how 'epistemically informed' pupils are).

Leaders and teachers can construct suitable composite tasks as effective summative assessments when they are clear about:

- the domain of RE knowledge that pupils are drawing on
- the type of subject-specific question that is being asked
- what is appropriate evidence and warrant for the question posed

Limitations and problems when using exam-style questions

Leaders and teachers of RE also need to be aware of the limitations of, and problems with, applying exam-style questions (such as GCSE religious studies exam questions) in non-qualification assessment settings. This also applies to misusing GCSE assessments to identify curriculum progression at key stage 3.

There are of course general problems when the assessment of pupils in non-qualification RE contexts (for example key stages 2 and 3 or non-examined key stage 4) draws on GCSE exam-style questions. This is inappropriate, not only because pupils will not have had the opportunity to learn the domain of the GCSE programme of study, but also because it (incorrectly) implies that generic exam skills are sufficient to assess the impact of the RE curriculum.

Fundamentally, the types of questions asked in GCSE exams may not be useful in assessing the full range of knowledge taught in non-exam RE contexts. Some research highlights the implicit knowledge structures that are preferred by questions in English religious studies exams.[footnote 200] Here, longer questions often assume the portrayal of religion as a viewpoint from which other positions are to be opposed.

Also, GCSE-style questions can promote the use of textual sources as 'proof texts' to justify particular expressions of living or beliefs.[footnote 201] This would be an insufficient assessment tool within a curriculum that intends for pupils to learn how sacred texts, religious literature and other sources of wisdom can be interpreted within diverse traditions.

The way GCSE assessment tasks are used in non-exam contexts raises questions about teacher education and also about pupils' learning:

- Do teachers recognise problems with binary thinking about religion? (See 'Teacher education and professional development in RE')
- Do pupils recognise that there are non-oppositional ways of thinking about and relating to religion?

Based on the above, high-quality RE may have the following features

- 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.

Systems, culture and policies

Summary

There are particular challenges concerning RE that school leaders and subject leaders need to consider carefully at both primary and secondary level. There are many different ways that schools attempt to fulfil their statutory duty to provide RE. However, primary and secondary school leaders need to consider whether the RE provision is of sufficient scope (is there 'enough' RE?) to be able to deliver an ambitious RE curriculum.

Although there are clearly strong practitioners within the RE subject community, it is likely that school leaders will have staff members who lack qualifications in RE. School leaders and subject leaders need to consider carefully the appropriate type of professional development to ensure that RE teachers have improved subject knowledge and are well placed to teach a high-quality RE curriculum.

Prioritising RE in the school curriculum

All schools that are state-funded, including free schools and academies, are legally required to provide RE as part of their curriculum (see Appendix A). All schools are required to teach RE to all pupils at all key stages (including sixth form), except for those withdrawn.[footnote 202] The way in which school leaders structure and plan ways to fulfil these obligations in school is one indication of the quality of education in RE.

How the RE curriculum is classified may be another indication of the extent to which a school prioritises RE. Fancourt, drawing on educational work by Bernstein, considers where RE is strongly classified (typically treated as a discrete subject) or weakly classified (where RE might be part of a more thematic curriculum).[footnote 203] Although it is possible for pupils to know more and to remember more of the RE curriculum in both classifications of RE, problems can emerge when RE is too weakly classified. Sometimes, this can lead to its erosion in the curriculum. Some examples of RE being too weakly classified might be:

- at primary, a key stage 2 topic approach that provides pupils with a rich historical and geographical knowledge, but has relatively little RE content
- at secondary, delivering RE through tutor times, assemblies or in conjunction with PSHE education, or in rotation with other subjects, where the format of delivering RE limits the curriculum that pupils can learn

In these instances, what limits the quality of RE is its lack of scope: there simply is not enough time allocated by school leaders for teachers to deliver a curriculum of ambitious scope. Subject organisations and associations have found that in several schools the subject is so weakly framed that RE is undetectable or completely absent from the curriculum. For example, subject associations reported that 28% of secondary schools gave no dedicated curriculum time to RE.[footnote 204]

Having subject-specialist RE teachers can also contribute to high-quality RE. School and subject leaders have to make decisions about how specialist staff are distributed across a timetabled curriculum. Following this decision process, pupils in RE classes are often the ones deprived of a main or specialist teacher. A report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on RE in 2013 found that, of 300 primary schools responding to a call for evidence, 44% allocated the main class teacher to teaching RE.[footnote 205] The remainder were taught by either a planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) cover teacher or by a teaching assistant. At secondary, a subject organisation report in 2017 found that whether RE lessons were taught by subject specialists varied considerably depending on the type of state-funded school:[footnote 206]

- in schools of a religious character, 77% of RE lessons were taught by a qualified subject specialist
- in schools where the locally agreed syllabus applied, this figure was lower, at 58%
- in academies, this figure was the lowest, at 47%

If these proportions provide an accurate indication of the current level of specialist teaching in RE, school leaders should consider reviewing how they allocate teachers to RE lessons. If higher-level teaching assistants (for example, at primary) or teachers of other specialisms (for example, at secondary) are teaching RE, this raises questions about whether they have sufficient training or subject expertise to deliver high-quality RE.[footnote 207] Leaders can consider appointing suitably qualified RE teachers as part of strategic planning. Notably, in 2018, the vacancy rate of RE teachers in state-funded secondary schools was 0.6% (below the national average of 1%).[footnote 208]

Teacher education and professional development in RE

At primary and secondary level, pupils should be taught by teachers who have secure subject and curriculum knowledge, who foster pupils' interest in the subject and who are equipped to address pupils' misunderstandings.[footnote 209] Findings over the past few years suggest that RE is not fulfilling this ambition. Although schools cannot always control factors relating to the standards of RE teachers recruited to teach RE, school leaders' actions can impact on the development and retention of RE teachers.

The 2013 APPG report found that about half of primary school teachers lacked confidence in teaching RE and more than half of secondary school RE teachers had no qualification or appropriate expertise in the subject.[footnote 210] The 2019 commons briefing paper on RE suggested that the contemporary picture had not changed significantly.[footnote 211] Its analysis of the DfE's 2018 statistics on RE teachers' qualifications found that of around 14,600 state-funded secondary school RE and/or philosophy teachers, about 7,900 did not have a relevant post-A-level qualification. This means that 54% of RE teachers did not have a relevant post-A-level qualification compared with 26% of secondary school teachers across all subjects where data was published.[footnote 212]

This dearth of post-A-level subject qualifications among RE teachers could be addressed through school leaders' actions and make a difference for current RE teaching staff. In-service subject-specific professional development is important for primary and secondary schools.

There are also other important reasons why schools should prioritise RE-specific professional development for subject teachers. As some literature notes, this specificity is important because teachers' professional identity and teacher professionalism have mainly been discussed in generic terms.[footnote 213] Generic approaches to professional development can be unhelpful for RE teachers because of the complexities involved in the subject. Many aspects of RE can create 'role-identity conflict' for RE teachers.[footnote 214] These aspects might include:

- state obligations
- local arrangements that affect curriculum content
- perceived demands from religious and non-religious communities

RE is under-resourced, which can also erode teachers' professional identity.[footnote 215] At primary, many teachers view RE as one aspect of their professional identity, and this is significantly shaped by the variability of RE they observe in schools during their training.[footnote 216]

Subject-specific professional development in RE

There is no straightforward consensus on what constitutes high-quality subject-specific professional knowledge for teachers.[footnote 217] Literature suggests that, broadly, it would be beneficial to develop RE teachers at both primary and secondary in 4 key subject-specific areas. These are useful for both RE teachers and leaders, given that it is not unusual that RE teachers are the only specialist teaching the subject.[footnote 218] The areas are:

- RE policy
- RE content knowledge
- RE pedagogical content knowledge
- research in RE

First, RE teachers require essential knowledge of policy about the subject. They need to be clear about the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, where it applies. Given the legal requirements behind the RE curriculum, further development of this kind of knowledge would enable RE teachers to adapt their professional activity appropriately in different schools.[footnote 219] Recent literature on subjects in the primary curriculum suggests that part of professional development for primary teachers should involve some knowledge of the history of RE, its current position and recent developments in RE.[footnote 220]

Second, RE teachers require content knowledge: knowledge of the subject that they are teaching.[footnote 221] Broadly speaking, this knowledge is drawn from the academic study of religion(s). Some educators claim that teachers with degree-level religious studies qualifications are the most secure in their knowledge base for teaching RE.[footnote 222] However, given that pupils also build knowledge of 'ways of knowing' in RE, subject content knowledge will inevitably include knowledge derived from theology, religious studies and cognate disciplines. It is obviously key that the knowledge that teachers possess is relevant and sufficient to teach the school RE curriculum, however vast this content knowledge could be. But it is important for teachers to continue developing:

- depth and breadth of knowledge about religion/non-religion
- 'orientative' knowledge about the status of the knowledge taught and the perspective from which that knowledge is taught[footnote 223]

Third, RE teachers benefit from the ongoing development of pedagogical content knowledge: knowledge of how to teach a particular subject or topic.[footnote 224] This requires them to draw on the most pertinent and up-to-date insights on how humans learn, alongside subject-specific principles and procedures of teaching, learning and assessing in RE.[footnote 225] One aspect of this professional knowledge is learning about the impartiality of RE teachers.[footnote 226]

Fourth, the ongoing lack of consensus about the aims and purposes of RE, together with the implications for subject educational practice, means that RE teachers need to be supported to engage with educational theory and research findings.[footnote 227]

Based on the above, high-quality RE may have the following features

- 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.

Conclusion

This RE research review outlines the factors that can contribute to the quality of education in RE. This document has drawn on a range of research, evidence and other literature to identify features of high-quality RE at primary and secondary level. As such, it explains the research basis for how we look at RE in schools (where RE falls within our inspection remit). This review is not a simple checklist of activities that we expect to see in school RE, since there are various ways that schools can construct and teach high-quality RE. Rather, it outlines a conception of quality of education in RE viewed through the lens of the EIF.

RE is vital in preparing pupils to engage in a diverse and complex multi-religious and multi-secular society. However, this review has also identified that there are significant challenges that limit high quality in RE, including:

- insufficient time to teach an ambitious RE curriculum
- school decisions that are not taken in the best interests of all pupils, such as decisions concerning the statutory teaching of RE, the opportunity to take a qualification in religious studies, or early examination entry
- a lack of consideration about what it means to 'be scholarly' in objective, critical and pluralistic RE
- a lack of clarity on what constitutes reliable knowledge about religion/non-religion, leading to teachers embedding unhelpful misconceptions
- teaching approaches that do not support pupils to remember the RE curriculum in the long term
- approaches to assessment that are poorly calibrated to the RE curriculum
- insufficient development of RE practitioners to address gaps in professional subject knowledge

That said, this review shows that there are well-warranted and constructive ways forward that could support improvements in RE. The literature suggests that many of these are already taking place in the sector in subject communities and in some schools. The significant interest that RE attracts from a range of organisations and associations may also indicate that there is sufficient capacity to support improvements in RE in primary and secondary schools for the benefit of pupils.

We hope that this research review will be useful for all those involved in the design, support and inspection of high-quality RE in schools in England, including agreed syllabus conferences, advisers, curriculum designers, ITE providers, local authorities, local standing advisory councils on RE (SACREs), other inspectorates of RE, researchers in RE, school leaders, subject organisations and teacher subject associations.

Appendix A: The legal context of RE and inspection arrangements

The legal requirements governing RE were set out in the Education Reform Act of 1988 and confirmed by the Education Acts of 1996 and 1998. Although RE is a statutory subject, it is not part of the national curriculum.

The content of RE in maintained schools is determined at local-authority level. Each local authority must review its agreed syllabus every 5 years. An agreed syllabus should 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian while taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'.[footnote 228]

Each local authority must set up a SACRE to advise the authority on matters connected with RE. Each council comprises 4 representative groups: Christian and other religious denominations, the Church of England, teachers' associations and the local authority. There are currently 153 SACREs in England.[footnote 229]

RE must be provided for all registered pupils in maintained schools and academies, including those in Reception classes and sixth forms.[footnote 230]

In community, foundation and VC schools, RE must be provided in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RE and this right should be identified in the school prospectus.[footnote 231] RE in voluntary aided (VA) schools must be provided in accordance with the trust deed of the school and the wishes of the governing body.

Academies must provide RE in accordance with their funding agreements. The type of RE specified in the funding agreement depends on whether the academy has a religious designation. For converter academies, it depends on whether the predecessor school was a VC, VA or foundation school. Free schools are academies in law and have the same requirement to provide RE.

The model funding agreements for academies broadly reflect the provisions that apply to local authorities and schools in the maintained sector. Academies that do not have a religious designation must arrange for RE to be taught to all pupils in accordance with the general requirements for agreed syllabuses. In other words, they should also 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian while taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'.

Academies are not, however, required to follow any specific locally agreed syllabus. They are accountable for the quality of their curricular provision, including RE. Other than for academies where the predecessor school was a VC or foundation school, the model funding agreement specifies that an academy with a religious designation must provide RE in accordance with the tenets of the particular faith specified in the designation. It may also provide RE in line with a locally agreed syllabus and teach about other faiths if it chooses.

In special schools, the legal requirement to provide RE is varied by section 71(7) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Special schools should provide RE 'so far as is practicable', with all children taking part unless withdrawn by parents.

Appendix B: Developments in RE since 2013

There have been a significant number of developments in RE since 2013. These are important to note because leaders and teachers of RE have drawn on them when constructing their RE curriculums. They also make a contribution to a conception of subject quality within the current legal framework for RE.

2013

At around the same time as Ofsted's 2013 subject report, the RE Council of England and Wales published 'A review of religious education in England'. This was carried out in response to the DfE's review of the national curriculum for schools in England, which did not include RE. Notable was the review's use of the language of 'religions and worldviews'. The phrase was 'meant to be inclusive, and its precise meaning depends on the context in which it occurs, for example in terms of belief, practice or identity'. [footnote 232] This review also included a non-statutory national curriculum framework for RE, which proposed 3 curriculum aims for RE:

- that pupils know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews
- that pupils express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews
- that pupils gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews

2015

As part of the reforms of subject content at GCSE and A level under the coalition government, the content of religious studies qualifications was revised. Some schools offer a qualification in religious studies as part of their RE curriculums, and so the content of these qualifications is significant. The subject content, aims and learning objectives for GCSE religious studies were published in February 2015, for teaching from September 2016. The GCSE subject content was outlined to enable progression from key stage 3 and to enable the possibility for progression to GCE A level.[footnote 233] In both GCSE and A-level reforms, the emphasis on the in-depth study of specific religious traditions was noticeable.

The GCSE specifications required:

- the study of 2 religions
- 'sources of wisdom and authority' (such as sacred texts)
- the influence of religion on people
- common and divergent views
- the application of knowledge to analyse questions and to construct well-informed and balanced arguments

The A-level specifications required the study of 3 out of 4 possible areas of study:

- the systematic study of one religion

- textual studies
- the philosophy of religion
- religion and ethics

In June 2015, a pamphlet by the former Secretary of State for Education, The Rt Hon Charles Clarke, and Professor Linda Woodhead MBE, entitled 'A new settlement: religion and belief in schools' was published.[footnote 234] The pamphlet arose from research by the Westminster Faith Debates and the Religion and Society Research programme. It suggested:

- that the whole area of RE had 'suffered' from being treated very differently from other subjects on the curriculum
- a list of recommendations, making a case for reform in each area (for example, collective worship, the legal status of RE, schools of a religious character and the RE curriculum)
- creating a national RE curriculum in which pupils develop knowledge about a range of beliefs and values, an ability to articulate their own values and commitments and the capacities to debate and engage with others
- that RE would contribute to community cohesion and to the countering of radicalisation and extremism within the school system

In November 2015, a report entitled 'RE for REal' was published by Adam Dinham and Martha Shaw, based at Goldsmiths College, University of London.[footnote 235] It focused mainly on secondary RE. The report:

- proposed a number of recommendations, including the idea of a change from locally determined RE to national determination, as it is for national curriculum subjects
- suggested that the content of the RE curriculum should reflect the 'real' religious scene, as highlighted through the researchers' findings
- argued that the study of the changing religious landscape, including a range of religions, beliefs and non-religion (including what makes up the categories of 'religion', 'belief' and 'non-religion') would make RE more fit for purpose[footnote 236]

In December 2015, the Woolf Institute, based at the University of Cambridge, published the 'Living with difference' report.[footnote 237] This report was the product of the independent Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life, chaired by The Rt Hon Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss GBE. This report:

- highlighted that, over the past half century, the religious and belief aspects of the British landscape had been transformed beyond recognition
- recommended a statutory entitlement for all schools within the state system, and that consideration should be given to making it a humanities subject within the English Baccalaureate
- considered that the subject content would comprise both religious worldviews and non-religious worldviews, to reflect the diversity of religion and belief in the UK

2015 and 2016

In December 2015, the DfE published guidance concerning the awarding of the religious studies GCSE.[footnote 238] Following the Fox vs Secretary of State case, and concerning the decision not to include non-religious worldviews (such as humanism) as discrete options within the GCSE subject content, the DfE published further guidance in July 2016.[footnote 239]

The guidance clarified that schools and agreed syllabus conferences are free to determine their approach to teaching RE and the selection of the GCSE, where appropriate. It stated that there is no requirement for a school's RE curriculum to mirror the make-up of a local or national population. It also stated that there is no obligation to give 'equal air time' to the teaching of religious and non-religious views, or to 'balance out' the detailed teaching of a religion by teaching, in equal depth, a non-religious

worldview.

Importantly, the guidance made a distinction between the GCSE religious studies subject content and the RE curriculum across the key stages. The guidance recognised that curriculum balance, in terms of the content of religions and non-religious worldviews, can be achieved across the key stages.

2017

The RE Council of England and Wales, together with NATRE and RE Today Services, published a 'State of the nation' report in 2017.[footnote 240] The report:

- combined school survey data, data on entries for GCSE religious studies for 2014 to 2016 and school workforce census data for 2010 to 2015 to build up a picture of provision on RE within secondary schools in England
- considered a relatively basic factor affecting quality of education in RE: whether or not secondary schools were meeting their statutory requirements to teach RE on the curriculum
- found that the level of provision of RE is highly variable and largely dependent on the type of school (see 'Secondary years')

2018

In July 2018, Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead launched a follow-up report to their 2015 pamphlet, entitled 'A new settlement revised: religion and belief in schools'. [footnote 241] Many of the recommendations made around the RE curriculum were structural, and concerned the setting of a national RE curriculum. Specifically, in terms of the RE curriculum, they recommended that any framework for curriculum be simple and clear and that academic excellence be at the centre of teaching in RE. The pamphlet highlighted that the way that religion is taught and learned in school has changed along with wider culture. Accordingly, pupils need to be taught about the inner diversity of religious traditions, as well as the beliefs and values of those who do not identify with religious traditions.

In September 2018, following 2 years of work of reviewing the legal, education and policy frameworks for RE, Commission on Religious Education published its final report. The report was entitled 'Religion and worldviews: the way forward – a national plan for RE'.[footnote 242] The commissioners made 11 recommendations, including a national entitlement for all pupils in publicly funded schools. The report:

- used the language of 'religion and worldviews', not only as a suggested way to reframe the name of the subject, but also as a way to reframe the content of the subject
- proposed that content of the subject reflects the way in which patterns of belief, expression and belonging may change across different worldviews, for different groups of people and throughout history
- suggested that existing RE provision often focused on superficial stereotypes of religious traditions, rather than their complex and diverse manifestations
- emphasised that it was important for pupils to learn different ways in which religion and worldviews can be understood, interpreted and studied

Appendix C: Pedagogical models in RE

Most of the introductory literature in RE used in ITE outlines 7 pedagogical 'models', which consider together aims, content and methodology. They do not conceptualise curriculum and pedagogy in the same way as each other, or in the way that we do. However, they have been, in one form or another, the main way of talking about non-confessional RE pedagogy for the last 2 decades. [footnote 243]

The models can be broadly summarised as:

- a phenomenological model, linked to the work of Ninian Smart
- a human development model, linked to the work of Michael Grimmitt
- a spiritual development model, linked to the work of David Hay and others
- a critical realist model, linked to the work of Andrew Wright
- a concept-cracking model, linked to the work of Trevor Cooling

- an ethnographic interpretive model, linked to the work of Robert Jackson
- a deconstruction model, linked to the work of Clive Erricker

Some models have pedagogical procedures, methods and strategies linked to them. Others are more theoretical and offer few practical teaching methods that teachers can use throughout the whole curriculum.[footnote 244]

Some pedagogical models in RE are designed with particular types of RE content in mind. This means that by only using one of these models, teachers may exclude certain content. For instance, the concept-cracking model is mainly designed to help pupils understand Christianity.

Other pedagogical models exclude certain 'ways of knowing'. This means that pupils would develop only a partial perspective on religion. For example, the 'critical realist' model focuses more on truth claims and less on the lived realities of global religion.

Other pedagogical models prefer certain explanations of religion over others. This means that pupils are unaware of alternative explanations. For example, the 'phenomenological' model only considers naturalistic explanations of religion.

As a result, some RE educators consider that, although aspects of each of these pedagogical models could be useful, any one model alone would be insufficient.[footnote 245] Any one model would also be insufficient because it may be incompatible with some pupils' own sincerely held and reasonable beliefs.[footnote 246]

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1. 'Principles behind Ofsted's research reviews and subject reports', Ofsted, March 2021. ↩
2. 'Education inspection framework: overview of research', Ofsted, January 2019; see Ofsted schools research: curriculum. ↩
3. National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4, Department for Education, December 2014. ↩
4. School Standards and Framework Act 1998, section 69. ↩
5. 'Religious education: realising the potential', Ofsted, October 2013. ↩
6. The two main documents are the 'Religious education in English schools: non-statutory guidance', Department for Education, February 2010 and 'Religious education (RE) and collective worship in academies and free schools', Department for Education, December 2012. ↩
7. C Clarke and L Woodhead, 'A new settlement: religion and belief in schools', Westminster Faith Debates, June 2015. ↩
8. A Dinham and M Shaw, 'RE for REal: the future of teaching and learning about religion and belief', Goldsmiths, University of London, November 2015. ↩
9. 'Living with difference: community, diversity and the common good', The Woolf Institute, University of Cambridge, December 2015. ↩
10. 'The state of the nation: a report on religious education provision within secondary schools in England', Religious Education Council of England and Wales, National Association of Teachers of Religious Education and RE Today, 2017. ↩
11. C Clarke and L Woodhead, 'A new settlement revised: religion and belief in schools', Westminster Faith Debates, July 2018. ↩
12. 'Religion and worldviews: the way forward. A national plan for RE', Commission on Religious Education, September 2018. See also follow-up literature reviews and discussion papers, such as C Benoit, T Hutchings and R Shillitoe, 'Worldview: a multidisciplinary report', October 2020 and A Tharani, 'The worldview project: discussion papers', June 2020. ↩
13. P Smalley, 'A critical policy analysis of local religious education in England', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 42, Issue 3, 2020, pages 263 to 274. ↩
14. 'Religious education: realising the potential', Ofsted, October 2013. ↩
15. In statute, RE needs to be taught from age 5. Also, the new early years foundation stage from September 2021 does refer to teaching children about religious and cultural communities in this country. 'Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework', Department for Education, April 2021. ↩
16. 'A curriculum framework for religious education in England', The Religious Education Council of England and Wales, October 2013. ↩
17. 'An analysis of the provision for RE in primary schools – autumn term 2020', National Association of Teachers of Religious Education, 2020. ↩
18. 'Over 95% of primary teachers report time spent on teaching re has increased or stayed the same', National Association of Teachers of Religious Education, 2020. ↩

19. 'The state of the nation: a report on religious education provision within secondary schools in England', Religious Education Council of England and Wales, National Association of Teachers of Religious Education and RE Today, 2017. Note also that the accredited GCSE short course required 60 to 70 guided learning hours over 2 years. This reinforced the expectation that 5% of curriculum time would be provided for RE. ↩

20. 'GCSE (full course): results summer 2019', Joint Council for Qualifications, August 2019. ↩

21. 'GCSE short course, GCSE double award, entry level and project results summer 2019', Joint Council for Qualifications, August 2019. ↩

22. 'GCSE short course, GCSE double award, entry level and project results summer 2019', Joint Council for Qualifications, August 2019. ↩

23. 'Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2015 to 2016', Department for Education, January 2017. ↩

24. 'Religious studies GCSE entries fall despite popularity among pupils', National Association of Teachers of Religious Education, August 2019. ↩

25. 'The curious rise and rise of the religious studies GCSE', FFT Education Datalab, August 2016. ↩

26. Some schools offer A levels in subjects that are related to the subject content of RE. For example, A-level philosophy may include 'the metaphysics of God' as a topic area. A-level sociology may include sociological explanations of beliefs in society. ↩

27. 'A level and other 16 to 18 results: 2018 to 2019 (provisional)', National Statistics, October 2019, Table 2a. ↩

28. 'A level and other 16 to 18 results: 2017 to 2018 (revised)', National Statistics, April 2019, Table 2a. ↩

29. D Lundie and M Young Ahn, 'GCSE religious studies: at a crossroads', 2018. ↩

30. 'Early entry into GCSE exams in England', Department for Education, November 2020. ↩

31. J Orchard, 'Does RE still matter?', in 'Journal of Religious Education', Volume 68, 2020, pages 271 to 287; K Walshe and G Teece, 'Understanding "religious understanding" in religious education', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 35, Issue 3, 2013, pages 313 to 325; G Teece, 'Too many competing imperatives? Does RE need to rediscover its identity?', in 'Journal of Beliefs and Values', Volume 32, Issue 2, 2011, pages 161 to 172. ↩

32. 'Religious education in English schools: non-statutory guidance', Department for Education, February 2010. ↩

33. 'School inspection update', Ofsted, January 2019. ↩

34. 'Education inspection framework: overview of research', Ofsted, January 2019. ↩

35. P Hannam and F Panjwani, 'Religious education and the potential for mitigating xenophobia', in 'Journal of Religious Education', Volume 68, 2020, pages 385 to 396. Some also propose the aim of religious literacy for RE. For a critical discussion of the idea of religious literacy, see P Hannam, G Biesta, S Whittle and D Aldridge, 'Religious literacy: a way forward for religious education?', in 'Journal of Beliefs and Values', Volume 41, Issue 2, 2020, pages 214 to 226. ↩

36. J Conroy and others, 'Does religious education work? A three-year investigation into the practices and outcomes of religious education', March 2011; D Cush, 'Barbara Wintersgill's big ideas for religious education and the national entitlement to the study of religions and worldviews in England. Some reflections on a big ideas approach to curriculum planning in an English context from a participant in both projects', in 'Nordidactica: Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education', Issue 4, 2019, pages 95 to 108; L Franken, 'Religious studies and nonconfessional RE: countering the debates', in 'Religion and Education', Volume 45, Issue 2, 2018, pages 155 to 172. ↩

37. D Smith, G Nixon and J Pearce, 'Bad religion as false religion: an empirical study of UK religious education teachers' essentialist religious discourse', in 'Religions', Volume 9, Issue 11, 2018. ↩

38. J Pearce, A Stones, M Reiss and T Mujtaba, '"Science is purely about the truth so I don't think you could compare it to non-truth versus the truth." Students' perceptions of religion and science, and the relationship(s) between them: religious education and the need for epistemic literacy', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', 2019, pages 1 to 16. ↩

39. R Kueh, 'Disciplinary hearing: making the case for the disciplinary in Religion and Worldviews', in 'Reforming RE: power and knowledge in a worldviews curriculum', edited by M Chater, John Catt, 2020, pages 131 to 147. ↩

40. J Chan, N Fancourt and L Guilfoyle, 'Argumentation in religious education in England:

an analysis of locally agreed syllabuses', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', 2020, pages 1 to 14. ↩

41. T Cooling, 'Worldview in religious education: autobiographical reflections on the commission on religious education in England final report', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 42, Issue 4, 2020, pages 403 to 414; A Tharani, 'The worldview project: discussion papers', June 2020. ↩

42. This report recognises the complexity of language within RE. The conventions for speaking about religious and non-religious traditions are themselves contested. Although many exam board specifications still refer to religious and non-religious traditions as discrete entities ('Christianity', 'Hinduism', 'Sikhism', for example), recent scholarship identifies several problems with talking about religious and non-religious traditions in this way. Subject literature points to the way that talking about 'religions' in singular terms falls short of expressing the diversity within traditions (for example, 'Hinduisms' may be preferable to 'Hinduism'). Subject literature also points to many terms as colonial constructs and not authentic to the way that traditions reflect on themselves (for example, 'Sikhi' may be preferable to 'Sikhism'). The main convention of this report is that of 'religious and non-religious traditions', which acknowledges the complexity of the language and therefore uses the most flexible terminology ('religious traditions') available from within existing legislature (section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996). ↩

43. 'Religion and worldviews: the way forward. A national plan for RE', Commission on Religious Education, September 2018; R Flanagan, 'Teachers' personal worldviews and RE in England: a way forward?', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', 2020, pages 1 to 17; P Smalley, 'Reflections on the progress of developing religiously literate citizens in England', in 'RE Today: The Magazine for the Religious Education Community', Volume 36, Issue 1, 2018, pages 58 to 63; G Teece, 'Beyond the big six religions: expanding the boundaries in the teaching of religions and worldviews', in 'Journal of Beliefs and Values', Volume 41, Issue 2, 2020, pages 245 to 247. Both Smalley and Teece attribute a shift in thinking about religions as belief systems to inwardly diverse traditions to the work of Robert Jackson. ↩

44. D Cush, 'Barbara Wintersgill's big ideas for religious education and the national entitlement to the study of religions and worldviews in England. Some reflections on a big ideas approach to curriculum planning in an English context from a participant in both projects', in 'Nordidactica: Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education', Issue 4, 2019, pages 95 to 108. ↩

45. C Erricker, J Lowndes and E Bellchambers, 'Primary religious education – a new approach: conceptual enquiry in RE', Routledge, 2010. This useful categorisation has earlier roots in projects from Westhill College, Birmingham, in the 1980s. ↩

46. F Panjwani and L Revell, 'Religious education and hermeneutics: the case of teaching about Islam', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 40, Issue 3, 2018, pages 268 to 276; E Salter, 'Welcome to my church: faith-practitioners and the representation of religious traditions in secular RE', in 'Journal of Religious Education', Volume 68, Issue 3, 2020, pages 289 to 303; M Shaw, 'New representations of religion and belief in schools', in 'Religions', Volume 9, Issue 11, 2018. ↩

47. 'Education inspection framework: overview of research', Ofsted, January 2019. ↩

48. Pupils from communities in different parts of the country may have very different (non-)religious and cultural traditions surrounding them: these too all contribute to the 'mental model' of religion/non-religion that pupils are building up through their time at school. Certainly it would be appropriate for RE to value these experiences through the curriculum (see section 'Personal knowledge'), but the substantive content of the curriculum can look beyond these towards a global and historical complexity (see section 'Interplay, end goals and competencies'). ↩

49. M Shaw, 'New representations of religion and belief in schools', in 'Religions', Volume 9, Issue 11, 2018. ↩

50. 'Religion and worldviews: the way forward. A national plan for RE', Commission on Religious Education, September 2018. ↩

51. 'Education inspection framework', Ofsted, May 2019. ↩

52. Section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996. This legal prescription underpins RE in schools for which RE falls within the inspection remit of Ofsted (see 'school inspection handbook', Ofsted, May 2019). See also schedule 19 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. ↩

53. M Grimmitt, 'Pedagogies of religious education: case studies in the research and development of good pedagogic practice in RE', McCrimmons, 2000. ↩

54. B Bowie, 'The implicit knowledge structure preferred by questions in English religious studies public exams', in 'Religion and education: the forgotten dimensions of religious education', edited by G Biesta and P Hannam, Leiden Brill, 2019, pages 112 to 123. ↩

55. T Cooling, 'Worldview in religious education: autobiographical reflections on the commission on religious education in England final report', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 42, Issue 4, 2020, pages 403 to 414. ↩
56. B Wintersgill, 'Big ideas for religious education', University of Exeter, November 2017. ↩
57. Recent studies propose that the language of 'worldviews' is one helpful way to make sense of this complicated patterning of religious and non-religious traditions. See, for example: C Benoit, T Hutchings and R Shillitoe, 'Worldview: a multidisciplinary report', October 2020; 'Religion and worldviews: the way forward. A national plan for RE', Commission on Religious Education, September 2018; A Tharani, 'The worldview project: discussion papers', June 2020. ↩
58. See, for example, B Wintersgill, 'Big ideas for religious education', University of Exeter, November 2017. ↩
59. R Freathy and H John, 'Religious education, big ideas and the study of religion(s) and worldview(s)', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 41, Issue 1, 2019, pages 27 to 40. ↩
60. See, for example, B Wintersgill, 'Big ideas for religious education', University of Exeter, November 2017. ↩
61. A Dinham and M Shaw, 'Religious literacy through religious education: the future of teaching and learning about religion and belief', in 'Religions', Volume 8, Issue 7, 2017. ↩
62. D Smith, G Nixon and J Pearce, 'Bad religion as false religion: an empirical study of UK religious education teachers' essentialist religious discourse', in 'Religions', Volume 9, Issue 11, 2018. ↩
63. Holt also states that, in non-confessional RE, the self-identification of groups and individuals is important. See JD Holt, 'Beyond the big six religions: expanding the boundaries in the teaching of religion and worldviews', University of Chester, 2019. ↩
64. R Kueh, 'Religious education and the "knowledge problem"', in 'We need to talk about religious education: manifestos for the future of RE', edited by M Castelli and M Chater, Jessica Kingsley, 2018, pages 53 to 69. ↩
65. S Fujiwara, 'Buddhism in RE textbooks in England: before shap and after the call for community cohesion', in 'Religion and Education', Volume 46, Issue 2, 2019, pages 234 to 251. ↩
66. F Panjwani and L Revell, 'Religious education and hermeneutics: the case of teaching about Islam', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 40, Issue 3, 2018, pages 268 to 276. ↩
67. E Salter, 'Welcome to my church: faith-practitioners and the representation of religious traditions in secular RE', in 'Journal of Religious Education', Volume 68, Issue 3, 2020, pages 289 to 303. ↩
68. WAJ Meijer, 'Plural selves and living traditions: a hermeneutical view on identity and diversity, tradition and historicity', in 'International handbook of the religious, moral and spiritual dimensions in education', edited by M de Souza, G Durka, K Engebretson, R Jackson and A McGrady, Springer, 2009, pages 321 to 332. ↩
69. A Dinham and M Shaw, 'Religious literacy through religious education: the future of teaching and learning about religion and belief', in 'Religions', Volume 8, Issue 7, 2017. ↩
70. D Smith, G Nixon and J Pearce, 'Bad religion as false religion: an empirical study of UK religious education teachers' essentialist religious discourse', in 'Religions', Volume 9, Issue 11, 2018. ↩
71. D Willingham, 'What is developmentally appropriate practice?', American Educator, 2008. ↩
72. E Salter, 'Welcome to my church: faith-practitioners and the representation of religious traditions in secular RE', in 'Journal of Religious Education', Volume 68, Issue 3, 2020, pages 289 to 303; B Wintersgill, 'Big ideas for religious education', University of Exeter, November 2017; B Wintersgill, D Cush and D Francis, 'Putting big ideas into practice in religious education', RE:Online, 2019. ↩
73. M Shaw, 'Towards a religiously literate curriculum–religion and worldview literacy as an educational model', in 'Journal of Beliefs and Values', Volume 41, Issue 2, 2020, pages 150 to 161; E Salter, 'Welcome to my church: faith-practitioners and the representation of religious traditions in secular RE', in 'Journal of Religious Education', Volume 68, Issue 3, 2020, pages 289 to 303. ↩
74. F Panjwani and L Revell, 'Religious education and hermeneutics: the case of teaching about Islam', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 40, Issue 3, 2018, pages 268 to 276. ↩

75. J Bransford, AL Brown and RR Cocking, 'How people learn', National Academy Press, 2004. ↩

76. R Shillitoe, 'Evaluation study of Understanding Christianity', Understanding Christianity, 2020; T Van Der Zee, C Hermans and C Aarnoutse, 'Influence of students' characteristics and feelings on cognitive achievement in religious education', in 'Educational Research and Evaluation', Volume 14, Issue 2, 2008, pages 119 to 138. ↩

77. P Smalley, 'A critical policy analysis of local religious education in England', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 42, Issue 3, 2020, pages 263 to 274. ↩

78. A Tharani, 'The worldview project: discussion papers', June 2020. ↩

79. L Gearon, 'Exploring the landscape of spiritual geography: religious education, the environment and the child's sense of identity and place', in 'Journal of Beliefs and Values', Volume 18, Issue 1, 1997, pages 69 to 82; L Gearon, 'European religious education and European civil religion', in 'British Journal of Educational Studies', Volume 60, Issue 2, 2012, pages 151 to 169. ↩

80. RA Bowie and R Coles, 'We reap what we sew: perpetuating biblical illiteracy in new english religious studies exams and the proof text binary question', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 40, Issue 3, 2018, pages 277 to 287. ↩

81. M Shaw, 'Towards a religiously literate curriculum–religion and worldview literacy as an educational model', in 'Journal of Beliefs and Values', Volume 41, Issue 2, 2020, pages 150 to 161. ↩

82. 'Intentionally' refers to an intellectual commitment to a paradigm of study of discrete world religions; 'otherwise' refers to, for example, unintentional assumptions, which result in an RE curriculum where a topic on 'Christianity' is separated from a topic on 'Hinduism' by school term. ↩

83. T Cooling, 'Worldview in religious education: autobiographical reflections on the commission on religious education in England final report', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 42, Issue 4, 2020, pages 403 to 414. ↩

84. J Bransford, AL Brown and RR Cocking, 'How people learn', National Academy Press, 2004. ↩

85. 'Education inspection framework', Ofsted, May 2019. ↩

86. For example, B Wintersgill, 'Big ideas for religious education', University of Exeter, November 2017. ↩

87. 'Education inspection framework: overview of research', Ofsted, January 2019; 'Education inspection framework', Ofsted, May 2019. ↩

88. RM Rymarz, 'Direct instruction as a pedagogical tool in religious education', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 35, Issue 3, 2013, pages 326 to 341; T Van Der Zee, C Hermans and C Aarnoutse, 'Influence of students' characteristics and feelings on cognitive achievement in religious education', in 'Educational Research and Evaluation', Volume 14, Issue 2, 2008, pages 119 to 138. Rymarz notes that presenting unstructured RE material greatly increases cognitive load because links with long-term memory are not obvious. ↩

89. Recognition of the role of prior knowledge for current learning can be found in documents, such as 'Key stage 3 national strategy: literacy and learning in religious education', Department for Education and Skills, 2004. ↩

90. B Wintersgill, D Cush and D Francis, 'Putting big ideas into practice in religious education', RE:Online, 2019. ↩

91. C Erricker, J Lowndes and E Bellchambers, 'Primary religious education – a new approach: conceptual enquiry in RE', Routledge, 2010; J Lowndes, 'The complete multifaith resource for primary religious education: ages 4–7', Routledge, 2011. ↩

92. For example, materials evaluated by R Shillitoe, 'Evaluation study of Understanding Christianity', Understanding Christianity, 2020 and J Bruner, 'The process of education', Harvard University Press, 1977. ↩

93. J Muller and M Young, 'Knowledge, power and powerful knowledge re-visited', in 'Curriculum Journal', Volume 30, Issue 2, 2019, pages 196 to 214. ↩

94. 'Religion and worldviews: the way forward. A national plan for RE', Commission on Religious Education, September 2018; C Easton, A Goodman, A Wright and A Wright, 'Critical religious education in practice', Routledge, 2019; K Flensner, 'Teaching controversial issues in diverse religious education classrooms', in 'Religions', Volume 11, 2017. ↩

95. T Anker and M von der Lippe, 'Controversial issues in religious education. How teachers deal with terrorism in their teaching', in 'Researching religious education: classroom processes and outcomes', edited by F Schweitzer and R Boschki, Waxmann Verlag, 2017; B Wintersgill, D Cush and D Francis, 'Putting big ideas into practice in religious education', RE:Online, 2019; K Flensner, 'Teaching controversial

issues in diverse religious education classrooms', in 'Religions', Volume 11, Issue 465, 2020. ↩

96. B Bowie, 'Interpreting texts more wisely: a review of research and the case for change in English religious education', in 'Christian faith, formation and education', edited by E John Shortt and R Stuart-Buttle, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. ↩

97. B Bowie, 'The implicit knowledge structure preferred by questions in English religious studies public exams', in 'Religion and education: the forgotten dimensions of religious education', edited by G Biesta and P Hannam, Leiden Brill, 2019, pages 112 to 123. ↩

98. T Cooling, 'Worldview in religious education: autobiographical reflections on the commission on religious education in England final report', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 42, Issue 4, 2020, pages 403 to 414; D Cush, 'Barbara Wintersgill's big ideas for religious education and the national entitlement to the study of religions and worldviews in England. Some reflections on a big ideas approach to curriculum planning in an English context from a participant in both projects', in 'Nordidactica: Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education', Issue 4, 2019, pages 95 to 108; T Cooling, 'Worldview in religious education: autobiographical reflections on the commission on religious education in england final report', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 42, Issue 4, 2020, pages 403 to 414; A Tharani, 'The worldview project: discussion papers', June 2020. ↩

99. B Wintersgill, D Cush and D Francis, 'Putting big ideas into practice in religious education', RE:Online, 2019. ↩

100. R Kueh, 'A matter of discipline? On knowledge, curriculum and the disciplinary in RE', in 'Professional Reflection: Theory and Practice', Volume 37, Issue 1, 2019, pages 55 to 59. ↩

101. 'Teachers' standards: guidance for school leaders, school staff and governing bodies', Department for Education, 2011. ↩

102. 'Religion and worldviews: the way forward a national plan for RE', Commission on Religious Education, September 2018; A Tharani, 'The worldview project: discussion papers', June 2020. ↩

103. L Franken, 'Religious studies and nonconfessional RE: countering the debates', in 'Religion and Education', Volume 45, Issue 2, 2018, pages 155 to 172. ↩

104. L Franken and P Loobuyck, 'Neutrality and impartiality in RE: an impossible aim?', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 39, Issue 1, 2017, pages 1 to 6; JD Holt, 'Beyond the big six religions: expanding the boundaries in the teaching of religion and worldviews', University of Chester, 2019. Holt states that recognising self-identification of groups and individuals is an important aspect of neutrality. ↩

105. G Freathy, R Freathy, J Doney, K Walshe and G Teece, 'The RE-searchers: a new approach to religious education in primary schools', University of Exeter, 2015; M Shaw, 'New representations of religion and belief in schools', in 'Religions', Volume 9, Issue 11, 2018. ↩

106. E McCreery, 'Preparing primary school teachers to teach religious education', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 27, Volume 3, 2005, pages 265 to 277. ↩

107. E Hella and A Wright, 'Learning "about" and "from" religion: phenomenography, the variation theory of learning and religious education in Finland and the UK', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 31, Issue 1, 2009, pages 53 to 64. ↩

108. D Moulin, 'A too liberal religious education? A thought experiment for teachers and theorists teachers and theorists', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 31, Issue 2, 2009, pages 153 to 165. ↩

109. R Freathy and H John, 'Religious education, big ideas and the study of religion(s) and worldview(s)', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 41, Issue 1, 2019, pages 27 to 40. ↩

110. D Cush, 'Barbara Wintersgill's big ideas for religious education and the national entitlement to the study of religions and worldviews in England. Some reflections on a big ideas approach to curriculum planning in an English context from a participant in both projects', in 'Nordidactica: Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education', Issue 4, 2019, pages 95 to 108. ↩

111. The interpretation of texts is one aspect of discussions about interpretation in RE. For a discussion of the wider sense of interpretation in RE, see D Aldridge, 'Religious education's double hermeneutic', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 40, Issue 3, 2018, pages 245 to 256. ↩

112. R Freathy and H John, 'Religious education, big ideas and the study of religion(s) and worldview(s)', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 41, Issue 1, 2019, pages 27 to 40. ↩

113. Freathy and John also note that the form and accessibility of sources of evidence may be a decisive factor in curriculum content selection: R Freathy and H John, 'Religious education, big ideas and the study of religion(s) and worldview(s)', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 41, Issue 1, 2019, pages 27 to 40. ↩

114. B Bowie, F Panjwani and K Clemmey, 'Opening the doors to hermeneutical RE: the finding report', RE:Online, November 2020. ↩

115. G Freathy, R Freathy, J Doney, K Walshe and G Teece, 'The RE-searchers: a new approach to religious education in primary schools', University of Exeter, 2015; R Kueh, 'Disciplinary hearing: making the case for the disciplinary in Religion and Worldviews', in 'Reforming RE: power and knowledge in a worldviews curriculum', edited by M Chater, John Catt, 2020, pages 131 to 147; J Muller and M Young, 'Knowledge, power and powerful knowledge re-visited', in 'Curriculum Journal', Volume 30, Issue 2, 2019, pages 196 to 214. ↩

116. A Wright, 'The contours of critical religious education: knowledge, wisdom, truth', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 25, Issue 4, 2003, pages 279 to 291. Aldridge makes an interesting point that different 'ways of knowing' in RE will be concerned with different aspects of substantive content as the main focus ('the curriculum object') in RE. See D Aldridge, 'Religious education's double hermeneutic', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 40, Issue 3, 2018, pages 245 to 256. What is important is that pupils learn the appropriate tools and methods that are suitably matched to the substantive content. ↩

117. R Kueh, 'Disciplinary hearing: making the case for the disciplinary in Religion and Worldviews', in 'Reforming RE: power and knowledge in a worldviews curriculum', edited by M Chater, John Catt, 2020, pages 131 to 147. ↩

118. J Pearce, A Stones, M Reiss and T Mujtaba, '"Science is purely about the truth so I don't think you could compare it to non-truth versus the truth." Students' perceptions of religion and science, and the relationship(s) between them: religious education and the need for epistemic literacy', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 43, Issue 2, 2021, pages 174 to 189. ↩

119. G Georgiou and K Wright, 'Disciplinarity, religion and worldviews: making the case for theology, philosophy and human/social sciences', in 'Reforming RE: power and knowledge in a worldviews curriculum', edited by M Chater, John Catt, 2020, pages 149 to 164. ↩

120. R Kueh, 'Disciplinary hearing: making the case for the disciplinary in Religion and Worldviews', in 'Reforming RE: power and knowledge in a worldviews curriculum', edited by M Chater, John Catt, 2020, pages 131 to 147. Jackson comments on the relationship between what academic researchers do and classroom activity. This means that both have similar concerns about theory and methods. See R Jackson, 'The interpretive approach as a research tool: inside the REDCo project', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 33, Issue 2, 2011, pages 189 to 208. ↩

121. Gearon notes that many disciplines emerged as a reaction to some religious claims about knowledge. L Gearon, 'On holy ground: the theory and practice of religious education', Routledge, 2014. Although non-confessional RE should not advocate for a particular tradition, it should similarly not teach pupils that ideas around 'ultimate reality' or the 'sacred' are impossible. ↩

122. G Freathy, R Freathy, J Doney, K Walshe and G Teece, 'The RE-searchers: a new approach to religious education in primary schools', University of Exeter, 2015. ↩

123. N Fancourt, 'Re-defining "learning about religion" and "learning from religion": a study of policy change', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 37, Issue 2, 2015, pages 122 to 137. ↩

124. J Chan, N Fancourt and L Guilfoyle, 'Argumentation in religious education in England: an analysis of locally agreed syllabuses', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', 2020, pages 1 to 14. ↩

125. R Kueh, 'Religious education and the "knowledge problem"', in 'We need to talk about religious education: manifestos for the future of RE', edited by M Castelli and M Chater, Jessica Kingsley, 2018, pages 53 to 69. ↩

126. F Panjwani and L Revell, 'Religious education and hermeneutics: the case of teaching

about Islam', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 40, Issue 3, 2018, pages 268 to 276. ↩

127. E Salter, 'Welcome to my church: faith-practitioners and the representation of religious traditions in secular RE', in 'Journal of Religious Education', Volume 68, Issue 3, 2020, pages 289 to 303. ↩

128. 'Religion and worldviews: the way forward a national plan for RE', Commission on Religious Education, September 2018; R Flanagan, 'Teachers' personal worldviews and RE in England: a way forward?', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', 2020, pages 1 to 17. ↩

129. I Dura and BF Chirilută, 'The philokalic experience of deification (theosis) and the advaitic experience of non-duality (brahmanubhava) a definition of spirituality in the horizon of the interreligious dialogue', in 'European Journal of Science and Theology', Volume 11, Issue 4, 2015, pages 169 to 178; R Flanagan, 'Teachers' personal worldviews and RE in England: a way forward?', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', 2020, pages 1 to 17; R Jackson, 'The interpretive approach as a research tool: inside the REDCo project', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 33, Issue 2, 2011, pages 189 to 208; K O'Grady, 'Researching religious education pedagogy through an action research community of practice', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 32, Issue 2, 2010, pages 119 to 131. ↩

130. M Grimmitt, 'Religious education and human development: the relationship between studying religions and personal, social and moral education', McCrimmons, 1987. ↩

131. J Orchard, 'Does RE still matter?', in 'Journal of Religious Education', Volume 68, Issue 3, 2020, pages 271 to 287. ↩

132. K O'Grady, 'Researching religious education pedagogy through an action research community of practice', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 32, Issue 2, 2010, pages 119 to 131. ↩

133. C Easton, A Goodman, A Wright and A Wright, 'Critical religious education in practice', Routledge, 2019. ↩

134. J Conroy and others, 'Does religious education work? A three-year investigation into the practices and outcomes of religious education', March 2011. ↩

135. G Teece, 'Is it learning about and from religions, religion or religious education? And is it any wonder some teachers don't get it?', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 32, Issue 2, 2010, pages 93 to 103. ↩

136. G Teece, 'Is it learning about and from religions, religion or religious education? And is it any wonder some teachers don't get it?', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 32, Issue 2, 2010, pages 93 to 103. ↩

137. G Teece, 'Learning about religion and learning from religion', 2017. ↩

138. R Shillitoe, 'Evaluation study of Understanding Christianity', Understanding Christianity, 2020. For other examples, see also J Lowndes, 'The complete multifaith resource for primary religious education: ages 4–7', Routledge, 2011. ↩

139. G Teece, 'Learning about religion and learning from religion', 2017. ↩

140. G Teece, 'Is it learning about and from religions, religion or religious education? And is it any wonder some teachers don't get it?', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 32, Issue 2, 2010, pages 93 to 103. ↩

141. 'Religious education: the non-statutory national framework', Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004; 'A curriculum framework for religious education in England', Religious Education Council, 2013. For example, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's framework uses headings of 'learning about' and 'learning from' and the Religious Education Council's framework uses 3-fold headings of 'A. Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews', 'B. Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews' and 'C. Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews'. ↩

142. 'School inspection update', Ofsted, January 2019. ↩

143. R Kueh, 'Disciplinary hearing: making the case for the disciplinary in Religion and Worldviews', in 'Reforming RE: power and knowledge in a worldviews curriculum', edited by M Chater, John Catt, 2020, pages 131 to 147. ↩

144. T Stolberg and G Teece, 'Teaching religion and science: effective pedagogy and practical approaches for RE teachers', Routledge, 2010. ↩

145. J Conroy and others, 'Does religious education work? A three-year investigation into the practices and outcomes of religious education', March 2011; D Lundie, 'Is RE still not working? Reflections on the "Does RE work?" project 5 years on', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 40, Issue 3, 2018, pages 348 to 356. ↩

146. T Van Der Zee, C Hermans and C Aarnoutse, 'Influence of students' characteristics and feelings on cognitive achievement in religious education', in 'Educational Research and Evaluation', Volume 14, Issue 2, 2008, pages 119 to 138. ↩

147. For example, J Lowndes, 'The complete multifaith resource for primary religious education: ages 4–7', Routledge, 2011; J Doney and R Wegerif, 'Measuring open-mindedness: an evaluation of the impact of our school dialogue programme on students' open-mindedness and attitudes to others', Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2017. ↩

148. H Leganger-Krogstad, 'From dialogue to trialogue: a sociocultural learning perspective on classroom interaction', in 'Journal for the Study of Religion', Volume 27, Issue 1, 2014, pages 104 to 128. ↩

149. 'Education inspection framework', Ofsted, May 2019. ↩

150. 'Religion and worldviews: the way forward. A national plan for RE', Commission on Religious Education, September 2018. ↩

151. For example, B Wintersgill, 'Big ideas for religious education', University of Exeter, November 2017; see also D Cush, 'Barbara Wintersgill's big ideas for religious education and the national entitlement to the study of religions and worldviews in England. Some reflections on a big ideas approach to curriculum planning in an English context from a participant in both projects', in 'Nordidactica: Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education', Issue 4, 2019, pages 95 to 108; R Freathy and H John, 'Religious education, big ideas and the study of religion(s) and worldview(s)', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 41, Issue 1, 2019, pages 27 to 40. ↩

152. R Jackson, 'Rethinking religious education and plurality: issues in diversity and pedagogy', Routledge, 2004; 'Religion and worldviews: the way forward a national plan for RE', Commission on Religious Education, September 2018. N Kienstra, M van Dijk-Groeneboer and O Boelens, 'Training for interreligious classroom teaching: an empirical study', in 'Religious Education', Volume 114, Issue 5, 2019, pages 594 to 608; J Lowndes, 'The complete multifaith resource for primary religious education: ages 4–7', Routledge, 2011; A Tharani, 'The worldview project: discussion papers', June 2020. ↩

153. H Leganger-Krogstad, 'From dialogue to trialogue: a sociocultural learning perspective on classroom interaction', in 'Journal for the Study of Religion', Volume 27, Issue 1, 2014, pages 104 to 128. ↩

154. M Shaw, 'Towards a religiously literate curriculum–religion and worldview literacy as an educational model', in 'Journal of Beliefs and Values', Volume 41, Issue 2, 2020, pages 150 to 161. ↩

155. J Bransford, AL Brown and RR Cocking, 'How people learn', National Academy Press, 2004. 'Competency' is used here in a broad and inclusive way, which may also include 'creativity'. Creativity is a term sometimes used in RE to mean many different things. When considered in subject-specific terms as the production or expression of something that is genuinely original, inventive and/or innovative, pupils require this deep foundation of knowledge, structured and organised within a conceptual framework. Sometimes what is meant by creativity is the curriculum objects that pupils learn in RE. Certainly, the substantive content of RE can include rich expressions of the creative arts, such as sacred music, literature, and art within some religious traditions (see 'Substantive content and concepts in RE'). Other times, what is meant by creativity is teachers' perceptions of their activity choices and classroom environments. In these cases, teachers might consider this as part of their decisions to support pupils to know and to remember the RE curriculum (see 'Suitable procedures, methods and strategies in RE'). ↩

156. For examples of broader aspects of pupils' personal development to which RE can contribute, see: C Erricker, 'Religious education: a conceptual and interdisciplinary approach for secondary level', Routledge, 2010; R Jackson, 'Rethinking religious education and plurality: issues in diversity and pedagogy', Routledge, 2004; N Kienstra, M van Dijk-Groeneboer and O Boelens, 'Training for interreligious classroom teaching: an empirical study', in 'Religious Education', Volume 114, Issue 5, 2019, pages 594 to 608. ↩

157. J Bransford, AL Brown and RR Cocking, 'How people learn', National Academy Press, 2004. ↩

158. J Orchard, 'Does RE still matter?', in 'Journal of Religious Education', Volume 68, 2020, pages 271 to 287; G Teece, 'Too many competing imperatives? Does RE need to rediscover its identity?', in 'Journal of Beliefs and Values', Volume 32, Issue 2, 2011, pages 161 to 172. ↩

159. D Lundie, 'Is RE still not working? Reflections on the "Does RE work?" project 5 years on', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 40, Issue 3, 2018, pages 348 to 356. ↩

160. D Smith, G Nixon and J Pearce, 'Bad religion as false religion: an empirical study of UK religious education teachers' essentialist religious discourse', in 'Religions', Volume 9, Issue 11, 2018. ↩

161. R Kueh, 'A matter of discipline? On knowledge, curriculum and the disciplinary in RE', in 'Professional Reflection: Theory and Practice', Volume 37, Issue 1, 2019, pages 55 to 59. ↩

162. M Grimmitt, 'Pedagogies of religious education: case studies in the research and development of good pedagogic practice in RE', McCrimmons, 2000. ↩

163. 'Education inspection framework', Ofsted, May 2019; 'Education inspection framework: overview of research', Ofsted, January 2019. ↩

164. A distinction needs to be made between cognitive science research, which informs RE teaching, and cognitive science research into religion. This section is concerned with the former. For a discussion of the latter, see T Brelsford, 'Lessons for religious education from cognitive science of religion', in 'Religious Education', Volume 100, Issue 2, 2005, pages 174 to 191. ↩

165. B Baars and N Gage, 'Cognition, brain and consciousness', Elsevier Academic Press, 2010; G Buzsaki, 'The brain from inside out', Oxford University Press, 2019; J McClelland, BL McNaughton and RC O'Reilly, 'Why there are complementary learning systems in the hippocampus and neocortex: insights from the successes and failures of connectionist models of learning and memory', in 'Psychological Review', Volume 102, Issue 3, pages 419 to 457; J Manns, RO Hopkins, JM Reed, EG Kitchener and LR Squire, 'Recognition, memory and the human hippocampus', in 'Neurons', Volume 37, Issue 1, 2003, pages 171 to 180; E Gibson and A Pick, 'An ecological approach to perceptual learning and development', Oxford University Press, 2000. ↩

166. E Salter, 'Welcome to my church: faith-practitioners and the representation of religious traditions in secular RE', in 'Journal of Religious Education', Volume 68, Issue 3, 2020, pages 289 to 303. ↩

167. For example, the RE:Searchers project considers different 'ways of knowing' typologies as both the pedagogical approaches (carrying out aspects of disciplinary methods) and also the curricular object (learning how different disciplinary methods construct knowledge about religion by pupils learning about their constituent parts). G Freathy, R Freathy, J Doney, K Walshe and G Teece, 'The RE-searchers: a new approach to religious education in primary schools', University of Exeter, 2015. ↩

168. R Jackson, 'Rethinking religious education and plurality: issues in diversity and pedagogy', Routledge, 2004; B Wintersgill, D Cush and D Francis, 'Putting big ideas into practice in religious education', RE:Online, 2019. ↩

169. C Easton, A Goodman, A Wright and A Wright, 'Critical religious education in practice', Routledge, 2019. ↩

170. E Hella and A Wright, 'Learning "about" and "from" religion: phenomenography, the variation theory of learning and religious education in Finland and the UK', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 31, Issue 1, 2009, pages 53 to 64. ↩

171. AD Ucan and A Wright, 'Improving the pedagogy of Islamic religious education through an application of critical religious education, variation theory and the learning study model', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 41, Issue 2, 2019, pages 202 to 217. ↩

172. KA Ericsson and W Kintsch, 'Long-term working memory', in 'Psychological Review', Volume 102, Issue 2, 1995, pages 211 to 245; S Dehaene, 'How we learn', Penguin, 2020. ↩

173. RM Rymarz, 'Direct instruction as a pedagogical tool in religious education', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 35, Issue 3, 2013, pages 326 to 341. ↩

174. Rymarz describes this as supporting future learning by providing provisional definitions: 'the intention here is not to establish rigid definitions but to introduce key concepts in a way that facilitates further learning'. See RM Rymarz, 'Direct instruction as a pedagogical tool in religious education', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 35, Issue 3, 2013, pages 326 to 341. ↩

175. J Bransford, AL Brown and RR Cocking, 'How people learn', National Academy Press, 2004. ↩

176. M Carrier and H Pashler, 'The influence of retrieval on retention', in 'Memory and Cognition', Volume 20, 1992, pages 633 to 642; N Cepeda, N Coburn, D Rohrer, JT Wixted, MC Mozer and Harold Pashler, 'Optimizing distributed practice: theoretical analysis and practical implications', in 'Experimental Psychology', Volume 56, Issue 4, 2009, pages 236 to 246; R Lindsey, JD Shroyer, H Pashler and MC Mozer, 'Improving students' long-term knowledge retention through personalized review', in 'Psychological Science', Volume 25, Issue 3, 2014, pages 639 to 647. ↩

177. S Dehaene, 'How we learn: the new science of education and the brain', Penguin, 2020. ↩

178. A Baddeley, 'Oxford psychology series, No. 11. Working memory'. Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1986; N Cowan, 'The magical number 4 in short-term

memory: a reconsideration of mental storage capacity', in 'Behavioral and Brain Sciences', Volume 24, Issue 1, 2001, pages 87 to 114; KA Ericsson and W Kintsch, 'Long-term working memory', in 'Psychological Review', Volume 102, Issue 2, 1995, pages 211 to 245. ↩

179. 'Education inspection framework: overview of research', Ofsted, January 2019. ↩
180. C Easton, A Goodman, A Wright and A Wright, 'Critical religious education in practice', Routledge, 2019. ↩
181. M Chater, 'The fire next time? A critical discussion of the national curriculum framework for RE and the policy recommendations in the review of religious education in England', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 36, Issue 3, 2014, pages 256 to 264. ↩
182. J Rudge, 'Assessment in religious education', in 'Learning to teach religious education in the secondary school', edited by P Barnes, Routledge, 2008. ↩
183. 'Religious education: realising the potential', Ofsted, October 2013. ↩
184. P Black and D Wiliam, 'Classroom assessment and pedagogy', in 'Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice', Volume 25, Issue 6, 2018, pages 551 to 575. ↩
185. 'Assessment for learning', Assessment Reform Group, 2002; D Wiliam, 'What is assessment for learning', in 'Studies in Educational Evaluation', Volume 37, Issue 1, 2011, pages 3 to 14. ↩
186. 'Education inspection framework: overview of research', Ofsted, January 2019. ↩
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188. 'A curriculum framework for religious education in England', The Religious Education Council of England and Wales, October 2013. ↩
189. L Blaylock, 'Issues in achievement and assessment in religious education in England: which way should we turn?', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 23, Issue 1, 2000, pages 45 to 58. ↩
190. S Hermisson, P Gochyyev and M Wilson, 'Assessing pupils' attitudes towards religious and worldview diversity–development and validation of a nuanced measurement instrument', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 41, Issue 4, 2019, pages 371 to 387. ↩
191. School inspection handbook, paragraph 217, Ofsted, May 2019. ↩
192. J Holt, 'Religious education in the secondary school', Routledge, 2014. ↩
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197. B Wintersgill, D Cush and D Francis, 'Putting big ideas into practice in religious education', RE:Online, 2019. ↩
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199. J Chan, N Fancourt and L Guilfoyle, 'Argumentation in religious education in England: an analysis of locally agreed syllabuses', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', 2020, pages 1 to 14. ↩
200. B Bowie, 'The implicit knowledge structure preferred by questions in English religious studies public exams', in 'Religion and education: the forgotten dimensions of religious education', edited by G Biesta and P Hannam, Leiden Brill, 2019, pages 112 to 123. ↩
201. RA Bowie and R Coles, 'We reap what we sew: perpetuating biblical illiteracy in new English religious studies exams and the proof text binary question', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 40, Issue 3, 2018, pages 277 to 287. ↩
202. National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4, Department for Education, December 2014, page 7. ↩
203. N Fancourt, 'The classification and framing of religious dialogues in two English schools', in 'British Journal of Religious Education', Volume 38, Issue 3, 2016, pages 325 to 340. ↩
204. 'The state of the nation: a report on religious education provision within secondary schools in England', Religious Education Council of England and Wales, National

Association of Teachers of Religious Education and RE Today, 2017. ↩

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226. Everington notes that RE teachers are often motivated to teach the subject because of their personal background. Flanagan suggests that getting teachers to recognise their own personal position is a useful area for teacher development. Jackson and Everington prefer the word 'impartiality' instead of 'neutrality'. For them, neutrality involves concealing teachers' personal commitments. Impartiality is a more useful word as it suggests that teachers can discuss their personal views, so long as they do this with academic integrity and without persuading pupils to adopt those views. See

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