

An RE Syllabus for Derbyshire and Derby City 2020-2025

Foreword

Young people face many challenges in the modern world. Amongst these is learning to navigate the world of religion and belief. Controversy abounds and in the midst of this, young people are seeking to understand the complex issues that are debated and to make their own decisions on these controversial matters, acknowledging there is a growing diversity of religions and beliefs that pupils today encounter.

Therefore, Religious Education (RE) needs to explore the important role that religious and non-religious world views play in all human life. This is an essential area if pupils are to be well prepared for life in a world where controversy over such matters is pervasive and where many people lack the knowledge to make their own informed decisions. It is a subject for all pupils, whatever their own family background and personal beliefs and practices.

The study of religious and non-religious world views is a core component of a rounded academic education. This has long been recognised as essential in Britain. Indeed, one could argue that it is more important now than ever. Young people today are growing up in a world where there is increasing awareness of the diversity of religious and non-religious world views and they will need to live and work well with people with very different outlooks from themselves.

RE, taught well, provides a safe space to discuss, experience and respond well to difference – a space where students can engage with controversial issues and learn to disagree respectfully with each other. This can play a key role in fostering good relationships between different groups within the school and in later adult life.

RE can contribute a great deal to mutual understanding in a multi-ethnic state. While it can be quite straightforward to cover the factual information about the rituals and observances and meeting places of different faiths, there is far more that it can do. RE also has the potential to develop pupils' understanding of the diversity that often exists within, as well as between faiths: after all, most faiths encompass a spectrum of views, from liberal to conservative.

'We cannot assume, for example, that being 'Muslim' means the same thing to all. Even with those for whom a Muslim identity is in many contexts not just a background, it does not follow that it is the religious dimension that is most prominent... For some, being Muslim is a matter of community membership and heritage; for others it is a few simple precepts about self; compassion, justice and the

afterlife; for others it is a worldwide movement armed with a counter ideology to modernity, and so on...' Tariq Modood, 2010

RE helps pupils understand where values overlap and where they diverge and hence the basis for the tensions that can arise between and sometimes within faiths. It can help them understand the tensions that can arise between faith and other legally established rights, such as the rights of women and rights relating to sexuality. Done well, it allows pupils to understand how their own faith or beliefs relate to the wider world, both in terms of attitudes and the prevailing law. This is not about indoctrination, rather about making sure that young people have the knowledge to make their own informed choices.

The explicit, academic study of religious and non-religious world views provides an opportunity to develop a range of specific and transferable skills. These skills include analysing a range of primary and secondary sources, understanding symbolic language, using technical terminology effectively, interpreting meaning and significance, empathy, respectful critique of beliefs and positions, recognizing bias and stereotypes and representing views other than one's own with accuracy.

In preparing for adult life, pupils need to learn to respond well to a local, national and global landscape of religion and belief diversity. This need is more urgent now than ever.

The existential questions that non-religious world views grapple with are often the same as those that religious world views seek to respond to. These questions include the nature of reality, the meaning and purpose of human life and what constitutes a good life. Likewise, questions of identity, belonging, commitment, behaviour and practice cut across both religious and other world views. These, too are questions for every pupil, and good RE has a strong personal dimension.

The curriculum for RE needs to be more than learning 'facts' about a series of institutional world views. It is about understanding the human quest for meaning, being prepared for life in a diverse world and having space to reflect on one's own religious or non-religious world view.

All pupils need to acquire core knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the religions and other world views, which not only shape their history and culture, but which guide their own development. The modern world needs young people who are sufficiently confident in their own beliefs and values that they can respect the religious and cultural differences of others and contribute to a cohesive and compassionate society.

Every child and young person who goes to school, therefore, is entitled to an experience of RE that is both academically challenging and personally inspiring.

RE contributes dynamically to pupils' education in schools, while provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose in life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human.

In RE pupils learn from religions and world views about different ways of life. They discover, explore and consider many different answers to questions about human identity, meaning and value. They learn to weigh up for themselves the value of wisdom from different communities, to disagree respectfully, to be reasonable in their responses to religions and world views and to respond by expressing insights about their own and others' lives. They think rigorously, creatively, imaginatively and respectfully about their ideas in relation to religion and world views.

Statutory Basis of the Agreed Syllabus

The national curriculum states that every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based, which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society and which prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. All state schools must teach RE to pupils at every key stage.

This new RE Syllabus for Derbyshire and Derby City establishes what shall be taught in RE, providing teachers with practical support and guidance about how to teach RE effectively.

The new Derbyshire and Derby City Syllabus for RE aims:

- To encourage all pupils and teachers to experience RE as an exciting subject that feeds into an understanding of what it means to live in Derbyshire and Derby City and to promote harmony and good community relations.
- To enable pupils to develop religious literacy and conceptual understanding of what it means to be a person of faith or no faith.
- To encourage pupils to articulate their own ideas and experience of religion, belief and spirituality.
- To encourage teachers to produce RE lessons that are challenging, inspiring and engaging to everyone.
- To assist pupils to engage critically with ideas and understanding of religion and belief systems, given the nature of our society, its speed of change and growing social media influences. RE studies how religions and world views shape and are shaped by the societies in which pupils live, promoting deepening understanding of those belief systems.
- To promote interactive, creative and experiential learning that promotes social and ethnic accord alongside the endorsement of fundamental British Values, so that schools will be supported in visiting places of worship, community meeting places and communicating with different social groups across the local community.
- To ensure that every pupil's statutory entitlement to RE is met, irrespective of their faith or belief and within this to encourage pupils to explore questions of spirituality, identity, ethics, discrimination and prejudice.

Resources compatible with the new Syllabus.

Understanding Christianity: Many Derbyshire and Derby City schools, including our Anglican schools, use the resource 'Understanding Christianity' (<http://www.understandingchristianity.org.uk/>) for their teaching and learning 4-14 and report that this resource has raised standards, set high expectations and improve learning and motivation significantly. This new Syllabus is compatible with the resource, and SACRE is able to recommend it to schools. The Diocese of Derby provides guidance about how the new SACRE Syllabus and Understanding Christianity can be taught together in both schools with a religious character and in community schools. Local training in the use of this resource is also available.

Understanding Humanism is a free online resource provided by Humanists UK, which is packed with resources and guidance to enable teachers to develop subject understanding and to effectively include the study of non-religious world views into a thematic approach to RE. There are teaching resources for each key stage including lesson plans, classroom activities and humanist perspectives on a range of themes. You can also request a school speaker and find information about online courses and teacher training conferences. The website can be found at:
<https://understandinghumanism.org.uk/>

Additional resources supporting the syllabus are available to schools, some free and others for school purchase. See (add web address?) for further details.

Religions and worldviews in the Census

Schools should take into account pupils' beliefs, viewpoints and ideas. Many pupils will come from backgrounds with no particular religious belief or affiliation. The 2011 census information will be updated by a new census after 2021, but these figures are still valuable.

We do not intend to educate pupils only for their current life, perhaps in a village, town or city. The purpose of RE includes enabling pupils to be ready to live in a wider world: the region, the nation, the global community. Diversity is not always evident in Derby City and Derbyshire, but pupils might learn much from seeing the regional picture and understanding it.

CENSUS 2011: Derby City's religious context	Religion: All categories	Christian	Budd- hist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Other religion	No religion	Religion not stated
City of Derby	248,752	131,129	822	2,198	110	19,006	8,891	985	68,668	16,943
Derbyshire	769,686	489,668	1,530	1,377	363	2,210	2,316	2,905	215,158	54,159
Leicestershire	650,489	392,363	1,546	18,508	528	9,096	7,978	2,381	176,123	41,966
Leicester City	329,839	106,872	1,224	50,087	295	61,440	14,457	1,839	75,280	18,345
Nottingham UA	305,680	135,216	2,051	4,498	1,069	26,919	4,312	1,483	106,954	23,178
Greater Manchester	2,682,528	1,657,594	9,555	23,478	25,013	232,787	5,322	7,429	557,129	164,221

Select figures for religious affiliation from the 2011 Census, providing a context for RE in the city, and the region.

Commentary:

- We need an RE that prepares young people for life in the village, county, region, nation and world.
- Diversity is not always evident in every part of the city or the region, but pupils might learn much from seeing this regional picture and understanding it.