



Guidance for Religious Education (RE) in Church of England Schools in the Diocese of Chelmsford

Author: Ruth Everett, Diocesan RE Lead

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Please note: *This guidance is not intended to provide exhaustive information regarding RE in Church of England Schools. Governing Boards and School Leaders are also required to consult the RE Statement for Entitlement 2019.*

1. **Introduction**

This guidance on the teaching of Religious Education (RE) in Church of England schools in the Diocese of Chelmsford is committed to enabling high quality, meaningful and transformative religious education reflecting each school's distinctive Christian vision.

In Church of England schools, where pupils and staff come from all faiths and none, RE should enable all pupils to flourish and live life in all its fullness, educating for dignity and respect, and encouraging all to live well together. There should be a '*commitment to generous hospitality, being true to our underpinning of faith, but with a deep respect for the integrity of other religious traditions (and worldviews) and for the religious freedom of each person*' (Church of England Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good, 2016)

RE in a church school should be a high priority for leadership teams and governing boards. They should aim to ensure that RE is intrinsic to the outworking of the school's Christian vision. The Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Education (CDBE) believes that RE has an important role in reflecting and conveying the distinctively Christian vision and character of the school, as well as recognizing RE as a distinctive academic subject and its importance within the curriculum offered to all pupils.



2. RE in a Church of England School

The Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Education (CDBE) supports the following aims and objectives of Religious Education taken from Religious Education in Church of England Schools 'A Statement of Entitlement' (February 2019) (2)

- To know about and understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith through the exploration of core beliefs using an approach that critically engages with biblical text.
- To gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews appreciating diversity, continuity and change within the religions and worldviews being studied.
- To engage with challenging questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence and experience.
- To recognise the concept of religion and its continuing influence on Britain's cultural heritage and in the lives of individuals and societies in different times, cultures and places.
- To explore their own religious, spiritual and philosophical ways of living, believing and thinking.

3. Legal Requirements

The 1988 Education Act states that 'Religious Education has equal standing in relation to core subjects of the National Curriculum and that it is compulsory for all registered pupils.' Religious Education encompasses non-religious worldviews.

All registered pupils on the school roll (including those in Reception and Sixth form) should have provision that ensures RE is a key part of the 'broad and balanced curriculum'. The Headteacher and governing body must ensure that sufficient time and resources are given to RE in school to meet statutory requirements.

Statutory requirements for Religious Education state that RE 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'. [1996 Act, Ch 56 Sect 375 (3)].

4. Requirements for Schools with a designated religious character

Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools and Foundation schools

RE must be taught in accordance with the Local Agreed Syllabus unless parents request RE in accordance with the trust deed. Within the Diocese of Chelmsford, the following syllabuses are used:

- Barking and Dagenham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2020

<https://bdsip.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/REAgreedSyllabus2020.pdf>

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- Essex Agreed Syllabus 2022 A Religious Education for the Future
https://schools.essex.gov.uk/other/Essex_SACRE/Documents/Essex%20Agreed%20Syllabus%20September%202023.pdf
- Havering Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2022-2027
<https://www.hes.org.uk/Search?search=Religious+Education>
- Newham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2022 Exploring Beliefs, Celebrating Diversity
<https://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/4761/newham-religious-education-syllabus-2022>
- Redbridge Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2021-2026
<https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/schools/religious-education-in-redbridge-schools>
- Southend The Local Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2018-2023
<https://southendlearningnetwork.co.uk/Article/71611>
- Thurrock Syllabus for Religious Education 2022-2027
<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/religious-education/syllabus-for-religious-education>
- Waltham Forest Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2021-2026
https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-07/WF%20syllabus%20extract_public.pdf

Each Locally Agreed Syllabus is reviewed and updated by the LA SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) every five years.

Voluntary Aided (VA) schools

Religious Education is the responsibility of the governing body and must be in accordance with the Trust Deed of the school. The Diocesan Board of Education recommends that governors, in consultation with the Headteacher, adopt the Locally Agreed Syllabus ensuring that the adoption of the syllabus meets their context and pupils. Governors must ensure that the requirements of the syllabus selected are at least rigorous and that it is in accordance with the school's Trust Deed and 'Religious Education in Church of England Schools A Statement of Education 2019'.

Church schools in Multi-Academy-Trusts

Religious Education requirements in an academy with a religious foundation are specified in the funding agreement for that academy. For a VA school, which converts to academy status, 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. Foundation or Voluntary Controlled schools with a religious designation that convert to academy status must arrange for RE in accordance with the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

5. **Right of Withdrawal from RE**

The 1944 Education Act established the right of withdrawal of pupils from RE and this right remains unchanged. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RE and pupils aged over 18 have the right to withdraw themselves from RE. As RE is central to the life and identity of Church of England schools the DBE encourages the Headteacher to discuss with parents/carers any reasons they might have for exercising this right.

6. **RE Expectations of Chelmsford Diocese Board of Education**

It is the expectation of the CDBE that all church schools and academies will:

- Provide RE which enables pupils to hold balanced and informed conversations about religion and belief through a process of enquiry.
- Provide RE in line with expectations of the Church of England Statement of Entitlement and these will be reflected in their own RE provision.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/re-statement-of-entitlement-for-church-schools.pdf>

- Provide a high quality RE curriculum which gives pupils the opportunity to understand the 'big story' of Christianity, including key concepts and the diversity of Christian practice across the globe.
- Adopt the Locally Agreed Syllabus as the basis for the RE curriculum content in all church schools and in VA schools further enhance with other high-quality resources recommended by the Diocese.

Schools are encouraged to engage where appropriate with the proposed National Content Standard (Autumn 2023) as benchmark for what constitutes high quality in the subject.

<https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/rec/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/National-Content-Standard-for-Religious-Education-1st-Edition-September-2023.pdf>

Curriculum time for Religious Education

Schools are asked to ensure all pupils meet the aims and objectives stated in these guidelines at the appropriate level. The DBE strongly advises a minimum curriculum time for RE based upon the law and the RE Statement of Entitlement from the Church of England Education Office. Schools should aim to be close to **10%** of curriculum time teaching RE but must be **no less than 5%**.



Schools are expected to allocate a minimum of at least:

RE entitlement is totally separate from requirements for Collective worship. Collective worship **MUST NOT** be considered curriculum time for RE or the teaching of RE.

7. Leadership and Management of RE

Headteachers and Governors should recognise and engage with the concerns of Religious Education to ensure highly effective, consistent and appropriate development to meet expectations nationally and within the Diocese.

Governors - All members of the Governing Body

- Understand the distinctive role and purpose of RE in a Church School
- Are aware of the legal requirements including an awareness of the rights of withdrawal from RE and the procedures the school has in place
- Have strategic oversight of Religious Education with reference to the Statement of Entitlement 2019
- Are familiar with the RE syllabus and in a VA school take responsibility for the adoption of the RE syllabus
- Monitor RE standards effectively
- Are fully informed and up to date with Diocesan advice and guidance

Headteachers / Senior Leaders

- Are fully informed about the requirements and expectations for RE – National, Local and Diocesan, including the requirements of the SIAMS Schedule
- In achieving the aims of the RE curriculum ALL pupils make progress
- Leadership of RE is effectively managed including provision for continuing professional development for RE subject leaders and others with responsibility for teaching RE to improve the quality. Ideally the RE leader should not be the Headteacher. Where the Headteacher is the RE subject lead they should appoint someone to shadow the role.
- Monitor quality of provision, standards and achievement through effective and regular evaluation that leads to further improvement/ development.
- The school website and prospectus provide clear information about RE provision.
- Engage with the Diocese and access Diocesan leadership support and training.
- RE is included as an item on HT reports



RE Subject Leader

The RE Subject Leader role should have a high profile within the school, including sufficient time and budget to ensure that all the legal requirements and Diocesan expectations are met and that RE is inspiring, engaging, and challenging.

- Plan the RE curriculum in consultation with others recognising the contribution of schemes of work to meet all expectations.
- Assist governors and the Headteacher in fulfilling their legal responsibilities with respect to RE and provide an annual report and regular updates to the governing body.
- Work with staff, pupils and visitors to support the planning and delivery of RE
- Ensure curriculum time meets requirements for each year group within the school.
- Provide appropriate procedures for planning, assessment, recording and reporting in line with whole school / academy policy.
- Ensure subject knowledge and expertise are kept up to date by means of regular training including accessing Diocesan RE training and support opportunities regionally and nationally. Disseminate information to ensure that all staff receive adequate training in the teaching and expectations of RE.
- Evaluate and review provision for RE with governors and staff regularly.
- Ensure with the Headteacher that the expectations set out in the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE are implemented.

Further information to support leadership of RE is available from the Diocesan RE Lead and the Diocesan School Advisers.

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