

Religious Education: Extract from Ofsted Annual Report 2023 Page 46

RE in schools is generally of poor quality. Although it is a statutory subject, schools often consider RE as an afterthought. As a subject on the curriculum, it is under-valued. RE is a complex subject, and the lack of clarity and support from government makes schools' job harder. Some schools steer through these challenges well, but most do not. We found that:

- many schools do not meet the statutory requirement to teach RE at all stages
- pupils are rarely taught enough substance to prepare them to engage in a complex, multi-religious and multi-secular society (where religion and non-religion play different parts in different people's lives)
- too often, schools do not teach topics in the RE curriculum deeply enough for pupils to develop a substantial understanding of the subject matter
- non-examined RE is typically not high quality.

All pupils should develop a broad and secure knowledge of the complexity of religious and non-religious traditions. It will take coordinated effort by stakeholders to improve the quality of RE in schools:

- schools need high-quality professional development to teach RE well
- curriculum publishers need to identify clearly what pupils will learn and when, building on knowledge over time, so that pupils develop a deep knowledge of the chosen religious and non-religious traditions
- the government should provide clear expectations about RE provision in schools. Schools should follow these. Current non-statutory guidance for RE should be updated and include clear information for schools about the breadth and depth of the syllabus they are expected to teach.

Questions on Curriculum

- Do you have a distinct curriculum in place for teaching RE at all key stages? Is this rigorous and challenging and demonstrably building on what pupils already know?
- What knowledge is selected so that pupils can make sense of a complex and diverse world. Are content and concepts clearly identified and sequenced? How do you know that curriculums do not contain oversimplifications of traditions, including, where appropriate, non-religious traditions?
- Is the breadth and depth of study of religious and non-religious traditions ensuring that these are collectively enough for pupils to make sense of a complex world?
- How does your RE curriculum ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in RE over time?
- How does your RE curriculum clearly identify how pupils will develop disciplinary and personal knowledge through the chosen substantive content?

Questions on Teaching and Assessment

- Are you ambitious for pupils to develop all aspects of knowledge: substantive, ways of knowing and personal knowledge? How would you prove a 'yes' answer? How do you make sure that teachers have high expectations of what pupils will know and remember?
- How do you provide opportunities for pupils to review and build on important knowledge over time? How do you ensure that pupils use the knowledge that they gained in previous years as the curriculum becomes increasingly more complex and demanding?
- Can you give an example from your RE curriculum that shows how a topic is developed over time?
- How is assessment managed in RE? Does it move beyond the simple recall of factual information? Do you check that pupils recall and understand the intended curriculum over time and that the domain of their knowledge is expanding?

Questions on Systems at subject and school level

- How do you ensure that all teachers have the subject and pedagogical knowledge that they need to teach RE well?
- How do you check that the time allocated for teaching RE at all key stages is used effectively so that pupils learn a curriculum that is both broad and deep?
- How does your school organise the timetable for RE so that gaps between teaching are minimised?
- How often do you speak to pupils to check their recall of their RE learning?