

Religious Education in Church of England Schools

Religious Education (RE) is considered to have an essential place in the broad and balanced curriculum as part of the [Church of England's commitment to the flourishing of every person](#). Through RE, pupils should be supported “to develop a commitment to generous hospitality expressed through deep respect for the integrity of religious and belief traditions, and for the freedom of religion or belief for each individual”. RE in church schools should be delivered in an “objective, critical and pluralist manner” ([Statement of Entitlement](#), 2026).

The minimum expectations for RE in church schools are set out in the [Statement of Entitlement](#). This guidance document is rooted in those expectations.

RE should enable pupils to:

- Engage meaningfully and critically with learning that helps them make sense of a range of religious and non-religious worldviews;
- Know about and understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith;
- Appreciate the complexity and diversity of the religious and non-religious worldviews studied, including questions of continuity and change;
- Grapple with questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence and experience;
- Engage with a range of ways of knowing (e.g. theology, philosophy, the human / social sciences) to better understand the religious and non-religious worldviews studied;
- Explore their own personal religious, non-religious, spiritual and philosophical convictions and traditions, including the ways in which they influence their own ways of believing, living and thinking.

RE is **not** collective worship. We encourage pupils to engage with and explore the lived reality of religion and belief. However, **pupils must not be asked, expected or required to participate in or perform acts of religious worship or practice in the context of RE**. This includes worship practices associated with any faith, including Christianity. There may be times when pupils have the opportunity to **encounter and explore** lived religion and belief. However, these opportunities **must be invitational**. Parents **must be** informed in advance that this is how the curriculum will be delivered so that they have time to raise any concerns or exercise their legal right to withdraw their child(ren) from the learning.

Parents have the legal right to withdraw their child(ren) either partially or wholly from the RE curriculum. Schools should be proactive in sharing information about **what** is taught in RE and **how** the RE curriculum is delivered. This could be through the school website, the RE policy or through newsletters, for example. Sharing this information enables parents to decide whether they would like to exercise this legal right.

Examples

In **Early Years**, children are learning about special times for Christians, including how Christians welcome a new baby into the world.

*It **would** be appropriate for children to watch videos, look at photographs and hear from different people about Christian baptism or services of dedication / thanksgiving for a new baby.*

*It **would not** be appropriate to **require or expect** children to act out a baptism service or service of dedication / thanksgiving for a new baby without parental consent. This includes within continuous and enhanced provision.*

In **KS1**, pupils are learning about harvest festival. They have been finding out about how Sam (a fictionalised case study of a young Christian child) is preparing for harvest festival.

*It **would** be appropriate for pupils to be **invited** to imagine what prayer Sam might write to contribute to harvest festival at his church.*

*It **would not** be appropriate to **require or expect** pupils to write their own harvest festival prayer as part of this learning – it assumes that pupils are Christian and prepared to write a prayer to a God that they may or may not believe in.*

In **KS2**, pupils are learning about worship in the mosque. For reasons beyond the school's control, it has not been possible to carry out a visit to a local mosque.

*It **would** be appropriate to create an opportunity for the pupils to encounter and explore practice within a mosque, for example, by showing videos, welcoming in visitors, helping pupils to identify which direction they might find the city of Makkah and how this might impact on a mosque building, and so on.*

*It **would not** be appropriate for pupils to be **required or expected** to engage in any worship practices associated with Islam. This includes **requiring or expecting** pupils to perform certain actions or movements, or speaking certain words. The same would apply to any other religious worldview, including Christianity.*

In **KS3**, students are learning about the weekly Jewish festival of Shabbat. The teacher would like students to experience a Shabbat meal.

*It **would** be appropriate to ask students to reflect on the idea of rest and how rest is part of their own lives. Students could be introduced to at least one Jewish person and supported to ask them questions to find out more about what the Shabbat meal looks like in their household. They could then be supported to understand that it might look different in a different Jewish home, e.g. by watching a video clip and asking questions about what they see.*

*It **would not** be appropriate to **require or expect** a student to participate in or perform a Shabbat meal in the classroom without parental consent.*

Questions to Consider

1. Is the activity I am carrying out the most authentic way of representing the religious or non-religious worldview we are studying?
2. How will prior learning impact on the choices I make in this lesson?
3. Are the objects / artefacts / resources I might use in the lesson a) authentic and b) used appropriately to support learning?
4. How might someone within the worldview we are studying feel about the way I am presenting their worldview within the classroom?
5. How might someone from a different worldview than the one we are studying feel about the way I am asking pupils to engage with this worldview in the classroom?
6. How have I ensured that the way in which we are teaching about religious / non-religious worldviews is in line with [Freedom of Religion or Belief legislation](#) and the duty to promote [British Values](#), including the duty to promote respect for and tolerance of those with different religions and beliefs?
7. How have I ensured that the way in which we are teaching about religious / non-religious worldviews is in line with the Church of England RE [Statement of Entitlement](#)?

Further Support and Resources

[Guidance on exploring the sacred in the context of RE](#)

[Information for school leaders and RE leaders, including legal requirements](#)

[Sample RE policy](#)

[Church of England RE *Statement of Entitlement*](#)