

Self-Evaluation/Audit Questions (Secondary)

This audit tool is intended for RE teachers and subject leaders as a means of evaluating to what extent an RE curriculum is well-balanced. It will help you get a sense of both the big picture and the detail contained within an RE curriculum. It also offers guidance on ways in which individual enquiries can be shaped to provide overarching balance in an RE curriculum.

You may like to use the overview questions below as a starting point for your audit exercise in order to have a clear understanding of the context in which your RE curriculum has been developed. This may be a form of self-evaluation, a conversation between an RE Adviser and an RE subject leader, or a discussion between staff.

Overview questions:

1. What is the context in which you are working? (*E.g. curriculum requirements, school community, pupil context.*)
2. Are you required to follow a specific syllabus? Do you know which?
3. Do you know where to find out which syllabus you (should) follow?
4. Is there a shared understanding of the purpose of RE in your whole school community?
5. How do you go about planning your RE curriculum?
6. What factors influence the planning of your RE curriculum?
7. What are the reasons for selecting and sequencing topics in your RE curriculum? Are the reasons clear? Are the topics disconnected bits or a joined-up story?
8. Is there a pattern of progression designed into your RE curriculum?

Theology – this is about believing;

1. Does your RE curriculum look at: **Where beliefs come from?**

For example, does your RE curriculum enable pupils to examine:

a) Sacred texts and sources of authority

E.g. Stories contained in sacred texts /narratives from a range of religious traditions such as those contained in the Bible, Qur'an, Torah, Bhagavad Gita; consideration of genre, author, context, target audience; other sources of authority, e.g. creeds, statements of belief, tradition, reason, experience, laws/moral guidance. For instance, examples may include the Nicene Creed, the Eightfold Path and the writings of René Descartes.

b) Teachings about and interpretations of beliefs

E.g. Engagement with the day-to-day thinking of a diversity of believers from a range of religious traditions e.g. sermons, newspaper articles, artworks, blog posts. Examples may include things such as the members of faith blogs available on RE:ONLINE, tweets or a parish/circuit magazine article.

c) Texts produced by people who have reasoned and written about beliefs

E.g. Writings (teachings and interpretations) of key theologians from a range of religious traditions. In the secondary context this might include the writings of theologians such as Aquinas, Irenaeus and Maimonides.

d) How experiences have impacted on beliefs

E.g. Examples of ways in which experiences/events have impacted on the way believers have understood and acted on their beliefs. These might include Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus, William Booth, the story of Job, the impact of scientific discoveries on belief and vice versa.

e) The reliability of sources

E.g. Issues of authenticity, historical accuracy and authorship. Links might be made with English and different types of genre.

Theology – this is about believing;

2. Does your RE curriculum look at: **How beliefs have changed over time?**

For example, does your RE curriculum enable pupils to examine:

a) How events in history and society have influenced beliefs

E.g. how prejudice or persecution has had an impact on beliefs, e.g. Liberation Theology as a response to social injustice; the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish and Christian beliefs; the influence of reform movements globally; how the theory of evolution has impacted on what people believe about the beginning of the world; how views about caste have changed over time and have impacted on Hindu beliefs

3. Does your RE curriculum look at: **How beliefs relate to each other?**

For example, does your RE curriculum enable pupils to examine:

a) The connection between different beliefs within a belief system?

E.g. the connection between Trinity and Incarnation; karma and dharma; covenant and the chosen people of Israel; Tawhid and ibadah; dukkha and samsara; sewa and the Khalsa

b) The similarities and differences between beliefs from within, between and beyond belief systems?

E.g. different ways in which people understand life after death; denominational differences within religions and the impact they have on the understanding and expression of beliefs; how the idea of God is understood in different belief systems and by those who do not believe in the idea of God; diversity of belief between Sunni, Shia and Sufi Islam

4. Does your RE curriculum look at: **How beliefs shape the way believers see the world and each other?**

For example, does your RE curriculum enable pupils to examine:

a) The ways in which believers see the world through the lens of their beliefs?

E.g. the way in which beliefs about life after death might shape how someone lives in the present; the way in which beliefs about the origins of the universe might shape the way a believer understands their place in the world; the way in which beliefs about sanctity of life shape a person's understanding of humanity

Philosophy – this is about thinking

1. Does your RE curriculum look at: **The nature of knowledge, meaning and existence?**

For example, does your RE curriculum enable pupils to investigate:

a) How we know what we know?

E.g. asking questions about the world around them; exploring rationalism and empiricism; exploring different ways of understanding knowledge; developing skills of empathy; e.g. Socrates, Confucius, Buddha, Plato, A. C. Grayling, Stephen Law, Maimonides

b) How people have tried to define and demonstrate what is real?

E.g. investigating the First Cause argument for the existence of God; examining the Hindu concept of *maya* and how it relates to physical reality; examining how people make sense of the world they live in; examining and analyzing definitions of things e.g. what we might mean by truth, identity or knowledge; e.g. Aquinas, Anselm, Wittgenstein, Avicenna, Ibn Rushd

2. Does your RE curriculum look at: **How and whether things make sense?**

For example, does your RE curriculum enable pupils to:

a) Learn how to construct a response/argument that makes sense

E.g. Use of examples to support an argument, appropriate literary structure particularly in written responses, use of technical vocabulary, evidence of a process of reasoning.

b) Critique philosophical arguments/big questions?

E.g. asking if this is a good question to ask; asking if an argument is a good one; analysing the reasoning of philosophical arguments, for example David Hume's position on miracles and religious experience

c) Assess whether a given position is coherent

E.g. using evaluation skills to decide if an argument is coherent or not; asking questions such as: Does this make sense? Can I understand this argument? Is that a valid conclusion?; exploring the interaction between religious and scientific accounts of the origin of the universe and assessing the coherence of each; assessing the extent to which cultural assumptions

Philosophy – this is about thinking

impact on our understanding of the validity of an argument (e.g. the assumption that more recent arguments are *de facto* better arguments)

3. Does your RE curriculum look at: **Issues of right and wrong, good and bad?**

For example, does your RE curriculum enable pupils to investigate:

a) what influences people when they make moral decisions?

E.g laws/moral guidance, making connections with theological understandings of right and wrong, impact of family, history, culture, community, identity on decision making; ethical theory such as utilitarianism and situation ethics; examining what people understand by 'good' or 'right'

b) ethical and moral issues including religious/worldview responses to a range of these issues

E.g. approaches to Just War theory and pacifism; the problem of evil, suffering and free will; moral issues relating to poverty; sexual ethics; life and death ethics; e.g. Hannah Arendt, Mary Warnock, Philippa Foot, Peter Singer, Aristotle, John Stuart Mill

Human/Social Sciences – this about living

1. Does your RE curriculum look at: **The diverse nature of religion?**

E.g. exploring the idea that 'religion' itself is a category or 'term' that people use to define a formal set of beliefs and practices, exploring whether the term 'religion' is appropriate to describe some beliefs systems

2. Does your RE curriculum look at: **Diverse ways in which people practise and express beliefs?**

E.g. a variety of Christian denominations particularly in the local area; New Religious Movements; the impact of secularism and postmodernism on religions and belief systems; different expressions of faith and belief e.g. through music or art; diversity in terms of rural and urban faith/beliefs communities; diversity within non-religious worldviews e.g. humanism and atheism; exploring a range of different groups within particular faith and belief traditions e.g. diversity within and between Sunni and Shia, diversity within and between Protestants and Catholics, awareness of diversity within religious groups in the local area including individual examples through meeting with members of faith and belief communities

3. Does your RE curriculum look at: **The ways in which beliefs shape individual identity and vice versa?**

For example, does your RE curriculum enable pupils to enquire into:

a) **The individual?**

E.g. the conflict between personal conviction and the laws of a country especially through the lives of key figures such as Malala, Aung San SU Kyi, Martin Luther King; potential issues around freedom of expression and censorship; choice of career

b) **Self-identity?**

E.g. exploring what it means to be a believer in a particular faith/belief tradition e.g. the idea of being a 'child of God' in Christianity; the importance of personal responsibility at particular ages in some religions e.g. at Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Amish Rumspringa; the idea of commitment/conversion to a particular belief system; sexual/gender identity

Human/Social Sciences – this about living

4. Does your RE curriculum look at: **The ways in which beliefs contribute to and impact on communities and vice versa?**

For example, does your RE curriculum enable pupils to enquire into:

a) Family life?

e.g. the role of family as a concept within Jewish thought and practice; how family life shapes believers' understanding of festivals such as Eid-ul-Fitr

b) Faith communities?

E.g. the particular expression of worship within a faith community and the way this shapes belief about belonging; the importance of passing on stories to the next generation in many religions e.g. how Hindu dance is used to pass on the story of The Ramayana

c) Wider local communities (e.g. school community)?

E.g. the possible conflicts between the expectations of a faith community and peer pressure; the availability of facilities to accommodate religious practices, e.g. prayer space in school; impact of beliefs in social justice and expressions of this in caring for the homeless and refugees and/or through foodbanks

Human/Social Sciences – this about living

5. Does your RE curriculum look at: **The ways in which beliefs contribute to and impact on society and vice versa?**

For example, does your RE curriculum enable pupils to enquire into:

a) The influence of culture on beliefs and vice versa?

E.g. the impact of popular culture, music, film, theatre and art on religious expression and vice versa; the impact of fashion on religious expression and vice versa; impact of social media on expressions of and access to beliefs

b) The influence of politics on beliefs and vice versa?

E.g. Exploring the lives and teachings of human rights activists who hold particular beliefs e.g. Baroness Warsi, George Fox, William Wilberforce, Leonardo Boff, Malala; the impact of migration on local faith and belief communities e.g. increasing Roman Catholic populations, increasing numbers of some Muslims groups within the UK; the targeting of particular religious groups during election campaigns

c) The influence of social norms (e.g. laws, traditions) on beliefs and vice versa?

E.g. how some laws in the UK are based on the country's Christian heritage, the role of food banks organised by religious groups; the role of charities run by religious groups in a local, national and global context; the impact of changes in law, e.g. the definition of marriage, on religious communities.

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