

# Understanding the new Ofsted framework in the RE classroom

**INTENT**

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**IMPACT**

This document has been written to support teachers of RE, subject leaders and coordinators in all school subject to the new Ofsted framework, published in May 2019 for inspections from September 2019.

In this document, we will focus on Part 2 of the [School Inspection Handbook](#), which focusses on how schools are judged, and more particularly, on the section within titled 'The quality of education' (p41) which contains information on what have become known as the 3 Is - Intent, Implementation and Impact.

The aim of this document is to help teachers understand what Ofsted means by these three terms by:

- explaining what they mean in the context of RE,
- providing example answers to questions that an Ofsted inspector might ask
- listing additional questions that you might want to think about

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# INTENT

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The term ‘intent’ refers to ‘the extent to which the school’s curriculum sets out the knowledge and skills that pupils will gain at each key stage’ (paragraph 168)

## Key questions to think about

*What is the intention of the RE curriculum in your school? How does this contribute to the whole school intent?*

Within the context of the whole school intent, you need to be clear about the intention of RE. This means being clear about the knowledge and skills your pupils will gain at each key stage in RE, but also how this contributes to the wider school intent and ethos. Beyond this, it should be clear how RE will contribute to ‘the knowledge and skills that pupils need in order to take advantage of opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life’ (paragraph 170). The contribution that RE can make to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain will be significant.

*Are there clearly defined and agreed end points for each key stage?*

Leaders should think carefully about the end points the curriculum is building towards. This means that it should be clear ‘what pupils will be able to know and do at those end points’ (paragraph 177)

*Does the sequencing of the curriculum enable pupils to build towards the defined end points?*

Leaders will be expected to ‘have sequenced the curriculum to enable pupils to build their knowledge and skills towards the agreed end points’, ensuring ‘that this content is taught in a logical progression, systematically and explicitly’ so that all pupils can acquire the reach the agreed end point. (paragraph 177)

*What is the role of RE in contributing to pupils’ SMSC development?*

There are many ways that RE can contribute to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; these include learning about different people’s faiths, reflecting on their own beliefs, investigating moral and ethical issues, working with others from different backgrounds (see the [Shared Space](#) project for more on how RE contributes to this), understanding cultural influences and showing respect for different faiths and cultural diversity (paragraphs 215-219)

## Example answers

*What are the educational aims of RE in your school?*

### The Curriculum as a whole

In Foundation Stage we focus on experiential learning, development of the whole child and whole class creative experiences that lead to deep learning and the embedding of key skills. As the children move further into Key Stage 1, we ensure the retention of the creativity found in Foundation Stage while moving pupils towards the skills needed to increase their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

### The RE Curriculum

In Foundation Stage, RE is experiential, creative and reflective. Children are given time to think, talk about and consider the world around them and the beliefs of others within their community. Through creative opportunities, independent and teacher led tasks, they are able to find out about places of worship and believers. Children are encouraged to use technical vocabulary to share their understanding with their peers and adults working within the classroom. As the children move into Key Stage One, these opportunities for experiential learning continue and RE remains creative. The children are given further opportunities to look at religions and non-religious worldviews in increasing depth, building on the knowledge acquired in the Foundation Stage.

*The school's vision and educational aims for religious education are to provide a rigorous academic curriculum that is ambitious, challenging, enriching and inclusive. This is in line with the school's aim to encourage high aspirations in order to maximise progress and to enable all pupils to experience the joy of success. Our aims and vision for RE also reflect the intent of the locally agreed syllabus which are 'to support pupils' personal search for meaning by engaging enquiry into the question 'what is it to be human?' through exploring answers offered by religion and belief.*

*Our intent is to provide an academic RE curriculum that enables pupils to hold balanced and informed conversations about religion and worldviews.*

We aim to develop young people with a high level of religious literacy particularly in terms of understanding diverse traditions of interpretation and an understanding of the social, historical, political and cultural factors which impact religious belief and expression. As a post-16 institution we aim to build on the foundations of knowledge and understanding built in EYFS and KS1-4 and prepare our students for adult life.

The course is in line with the principle aims of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. It covers elements of ethical, philosophical and religious understanding that prepares students to be religiously literate for the 21st Century.

One of the purposes of the Year 9 course is to cover the beliefs, teaching and practices of 3 religions including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism as well as other religions/worldviews (including humanism). The themes that students cover lay the foundations of the skills and knowledge they will develop further in both the AQA course for GCSE and OCR A level RS. Homework is in a booklet format that builds for the key assessments each half term in each module.

*Does every teacher understand the intent for RE?*

As a staff we have worked together to discuss the RE curriculum and look at the opportunities for learning across the school. As a result all members of staff feel confident to talk about our RE curriculum and its intent. We have also evaluated the curriculum coverage to discuss what we could do more of and which areas we need to focus on more to ensure that our children achieve deep learning.

*What does a religiously educated pupil look like at the end of this key stage?*

We have a clear plan for what pupils should know and be able to do in RE by the end of KS3. This is explicit in planning and there is a shared understanding across all those who teach RE. Pupils are expected to be able to talk and write knowledgeably about religions and belief, using subject specific language accurately and confidently. They should be able to utilise RE specific skills such as making links between beliefs, teachings and practices; analysing and interpreting religious texts and understanding symbolism in images, actions and metaphorical language. Pupils should have the skills to engage in respectful dialogue about religious, philosophical and ethical issues.

## Additional questions to consider

What are the intentions of your school curriculum?  
What is the intention of the RE curriculum in your school?  
What does your Locally Agreed Syllabus say about the aims and purposes of RE?  
What is the vision for RE in your school?  
How does RE make a difference to your pupils?  
How does RE in your school compared with the aims and purposes of RE in the Locally Agreed Syllabus and other national documents?  
When did you last review the aims and purposes of RE?  
Are pupils involved in discussion of curriculum intent?  
Is there a difference in intent between core RE and examined RS?  
What is the curriculum intent for RE at Key Stage 5?  
Do SLT and governors understand the curriculum intent for RE?  
What wider principles inform your curriculum intent?  
On what basis have you selected the exam specifications you teach?

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## IMPLEMENTATION

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In order to evaluate the implementation of the curriculum, the focus will be on how the curriculum is taught at subject and classroom level. (paragraph 180)

### Key questions to think about

#### *How does RE form part of the wider curriculum model?*

Schools will need to make their decisions about the time, place and role that RE has in the school timetable. This should reflect the wider school intent, ensuring that pupils study ‘the basic curriculum, which includes the national curriculum, religious education and age-appropriate relationship and sex education’ (paragraph 172). While Academies are free to construct their own curriculum, they ‘are expected to offer all pupils a broad curriculum that should be similar in breadth and ambition’ (paragraph 172). This means that ‘Academies must include English, mathematics, science and religious education in their curriculum.’ (footnote 68, page 42)

#### *How does the curriculum sequence enable pupils to make progress and ensure learning?*

Learning is defined in the Ofsted handbook as ‘an alteration in long-term memory’ (paragraph 182). In order to achieve this, the curriculum needs to be in an order so that ‘new knowledge and skills build on what has been taught before’ (paragraph 181), meaning pupils can ‘connect new knowledge with existing knowledge’ and work towards clearly defined endpoints.’

#### *What expertise is there amongst the teachers of RE? What CPD is there for teachers of RE to ensure that they are experts in what they are teaching?*

It is important the teachers have expert knowledge in RE. Where teachers lack expertise, they should be ‘supported to address gaps in their knowledge’.

#### *What concepts, knowledge and skills are found at the heart of your lesson? How do these fit with the wider RE curriculum?*

Progression of pupils to the agreed end points is of crucial importance, and so teachers should know how what is happening in a lesson contributes to the sought after progress. Using their expertise, teachers ought to present information clearly to enable pupils to understand key concepts (paragraph 181)

*How is assessment used to inform teaching? How is it used to help pupils use what they know and to develop their understanding?*

Effective assessment should ‘help pupils embed knowledge and use it fluently’ to develop their understanding whilst assisting ‘teachers in producing clear next steps for pupils’ (paragraph 183). This can refer to both formative and summative assessment, which should both be used ‘to support the teaching of the curriculum’ (paragraph 183).

## Example answers

*How do you take account of pupils’ prior learning to ensure progression to expected end points?*

Teachers check existing knowledge and understanding of a topic prior to teaching through listening to pupils talk about an image linked to the topic and finding out what they already know about the topic, or through testing key terminology to check which terms are already familiar to pupils.

*How does your teaching help pupils develop long term memory and mastery?*

The curriculum is deliberately planned to enable pupils to revisit key concepts and deepen understanding. Retrieval of relevant prior learning at the start of each topic aims to embed these concepts and teach for long term memory. Frequent ‘low stakes testing’ is used; this is because the act of recalling information from memory actually helps to strengthen the memory itself. Frequent testing does not just help measure understanding, it helps develop understanding.



### *How does RE form part of the wider curriculum model?*

RE is taught to all students at KS3 and KS4. The school's ethos emphasizes 'Achievement for All', so we think it important that ALL pupils are given the same opportunities to study. There is one lesson a week at KS3 and two lessons a week from Y9 onwards. This ensures we have plenty of time to teach the full GCSE course to all pupils. The pupils are set by the English department as there is not enough flexibility in the timetable for RS to be set on its own. At the end of Y11, all pupils are entered for the GCSE exam.

At KS5, RS is given the same number of lessons as all other A level subjects.

Although RE is taught within distinct RE lessons, as school we feel that it contributes strongly to other areas of the curriculum. Through planning we ensure that opportunities to study religions and non-religious worldviews through art, music and drama are regularly given. We feel that this enables pupils to look at RE through a different lens and share their knowledge through these mediums. We have also noticed that RE strongly contributes to writing in English; it gives pupils the skills to debate, enquire and form their own opinions which has developed children's writing styles. For this reason, we ensure that each term there is an extended writing opportunity in each year group that is based upon an RE concept or topic that we have been studying.

*What concepts, knowledge and skills are at the heart of your lesson?  
How does this fit with the wider RE curriculum?*

In the lesson observed, the pupils were using what they know about the concept of atonement and linking it to Christian practices at Easter. This meant the lesson not only reinforced prior learning about both Christian beliefs and Christian practices, but it enabled the pupils to deepen their understanding and further see how one belief might lead to diverse practices.

‘Learning is of high quality because teachers use well-chosen activities, often based on enquiry methods, which are inspiring and transformational. Learning is differentiated exceptionally well, with all children supported and challenged in a variety of ways to achieve their best. Pupils describe the way that RE enables them to raise questions, reflect and ‘dig deeply’ in their thinking. They have an exceptionally good knowledge and understanding of Christianity. This was evident when older pupils were exploring and identifying moments of challenge and trust in the life of Moses.’ (SIAMS June 2018) In this lesson, children were able to use their knowledge of the life of Moses to make connections between key concepts and other leaders from the Old Testament. This is because the spiral curriculum that we use enables children to dig deeply into concepts and develop a firmer understanding of key beliefs.

*How do you know pupils are making progress towards defined end points?*

Our curriculum is designed to develop a suite of skills, and these skills are found as a thread through the different topics. By clearly identifying when we are using these skills in the work we do and in the assessments the pupils take, we can keep an eye on how they progress, not only by making quantitative judgments in assessment e.g. a percentage score, but in qualitative judgements from reading answers

*How have you constructed a curriculum that meets the aims and purposes of your chosen exam specification?*

The order of our units have been carefully considered. This is because in our A level you cannot gain the top marks unless you realise the synopticity between the units. We interleave our A level themes between papers and sub-themes. This allows opportunities to review and revise content as the course progresses, and also opportunities to build rich and meaningful connections between different parts of the course (essential for A\* and for any good understanding of how the different elements of religion interplay) Teaching the text and practices alongside each other has been particularly beneficial in this endeavour as it has enabled pupils to see the interplay between beliefs and behaviour.

At GCSE, we begin with the beliefs and teachings units as they form the basis of all the work to follow. There is an argument that this ought to be followed by the practices sections, but in order to provide students with a varied diet over time, we do 2 themes before returning to the practices. In Y11 we do the most philosophical unit as this requires more developed thinking, and the medical ethics section, as this requires the most maturity from students. At A level we have carefully considered how to structure the course so that each unit builds on previous work, for example, studying St. Augustine's views on human nature provides important fuel for work on problem of evil, knowledge of God, death and afterlife.

*How is new research relevant to RE included in your teaching?*

***Research on how students learn has been increasingly influential in our approach, particularly in terms of the homework we set. Now, our homework is focussed on repetition of learning to consolidate and build long-term memory. In addition, we are now moving to see assessment in a similar way, with KS3 assessments containing questions from all of their past study at KS3, not just the previous unit.***

### *How do you allow for thinking and discussion time in RE?*

In our school, we allow time for thinking and discussion in RE by making use of strategies such as 'think, pair and share'. This enables small group and whole class discussion which aid children in forming their own opinions on a topic whilst also considering the views of a believer. This is facilitated by the teacher taking time at the start of year to map out guidelines for these discussion times so that they are valuable whilst also being respectful of others.

The school uses a range of strategies to allow children to think and consider the big questions that the RE curriculum brings. We aim to ensure that all thinking and reflection time is purposeful and leads to deeper learning. To ensure that this happens, we are mindful of thinking and reflection when planning units of work that consider big questions. Approaches such as Godly Play, Reflective Storytelling and Philosophy for Children enable teachers to carefully form questions that will encourage deep thinking and active response.

### *How do teachers ensure that pupils learn and can use new vocabulary effectively?*

Subject vocabulary is explicitly taught and modelled by teachers. Pupils are expected to use technical language in both oral and written answers. Knowledge organisers contain vocabulary lists and the learning and testing of vocabulary is a routine part of RE lessons both in KS3 and GCSE.

### *How do you know your resources support learning?*

Most of our resources are written by specialist teachers in the RE department, and these are then shared across the department. This means that the resources are easy to adapt and improve when necessary, as well as ensuring that all of us are teaching using a good quality source of information.

We do our research to ensure that our resources are accurate, making use of our local university library and some reliable textbooks, some of which have been used for many years. In this way we can be confident in the quality of information contained, but also ensure that the resources closely match the aims and objectives of lessons and learning programmes.

We also careful to ensure that our revision resources closely match the resources we use in lesson, particularly paying attention to forms of vocabulary to help students become more expert in their use of subject specific terminology.

### *How does your curriculum sequence ensure progression in pupils' learning?*

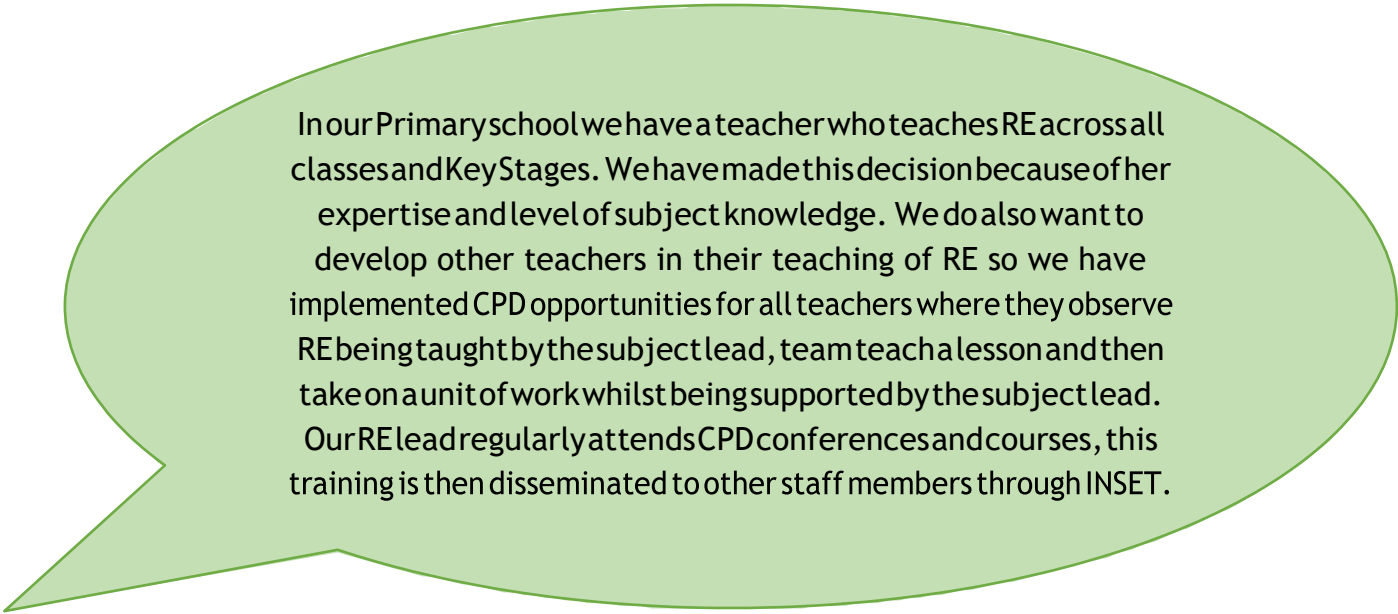
Judaism' is intentionally taught before, but at some distance from, the 'Holocaust, Problem of Evil, and Theodicies' this is to ensure that misconceptions about Judaism are not reinforced and that Judaism is not only viewed through the lense of suffering or the Holocaust. Judaism is also taught before Old Testament studies so that students can understand the development, use, and understanding of the Tanakh by Jews and not see it purely as a Christian source. The teaching of Judaism also teaches some key concepts that are further developed in later units e.g. the development of / origins of sources of authority, and Creation. As the first unit in RE Judaism also addresses diversity which will appear in all other religious tradition studied.

*What CPD is there for staff to ensure they are experts in the subject they teach? How do you ensure that teachers have expertise?*

Most RE is taught by specialists who have the subject knowledge and commitment to professional development to ensure that RE is well taught. RE staff routinely attend RE courses, conferences and webinars to ensure that subject knowledge is up to date.

There is some non-specialist teaching (in year 7 and KS4 core RE) - these teachers are part of the Humanities faculty and are a consistent team. This means that they have taught the content for several years and attend departmental CPD/meetings to update them on subject knowledge and best up to date guidance. Collaborative planning, sharing of resources and effective communication across the team ensures that the intent of RE is met for all pupils.

We audited against the new specifications and identified any areas of weakness. Both members of the team are NATRE members so we have access to a rich range of relevant resources. We have an extensive departmental library so could identify suitable reading materials to develop our own subject knowledge. We have attended subject training from the exam board each year it has been offered and collaborate with other teachers of the same specification through Facebook groups and Twitter. Subject knowledge and co-planning of upcoming teaching is a standing item for departmental meetings.



In our Primary school we have a teacher who teaches RE across all classes and Key Stages. We have made this decision because of her expertise and level of subject knowledge. We do also want to develop other teachers in their teaching of RE so we have implemented CPD opportunities for all teachers where they observe RE being taught by the subject lead, team teach a lesson and then take on a unit of work whilst being supported by the subject lead. Our RE lead regularly attends CPD conferences and courses, this training is then disseminated to other staff members through INSET.

## *How is assessment used to inform teaching?*

At KS4, we use exam questions in our assessments. With each of these examples, we give whole class feedback. An outcome of this is that the teacher is fully aware of the questions on which pupils have struggled and can then employ opportunities to remedy these weaknesses. This might mean re-teaching a particular bit of knowledge, or it might be more of a skills issue, so time will be taken, perhaps in a future lesson, to attempt a similar style question again.

## *Does assessment help pupils embed and use knowledge and develop their understanding?*

Formal assessment at GCSE and A level is carefully planned to build students' skill across the length of the course. More is to be done at KS3 to ensure that something similarly effective is implemented.

## **Additional questions to consider**

How does the subject leader/coordinator know the quality of learning that goes on in RE lessons?  
What pedagogies are used in RE?  
How do you ensure that there is an appropriate level of challenge in RE?  
How are disadvantaged and SEND pupils supported to learn well in RE?  
How are the various disciplines in RE included in the curriculum?  
How are staffing decisions about classes made?  
How does what is learnt in RE contribute to other curriculum areas?  
Are you aware of what is learnt elsewhere in the curriculum and how it might be relevant to learning in RE?



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# IMPACT

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The term ‘impact’ primarily means what pupils have learned while they have been at school (paragraph 190).

## Key questions to think about

### *What have pupils learned from their RE lessons?*

As a result of the curriculum intent and effective implementation of that intent, pupils should know, and be able to do more than when they started. This applied to all pupils, including disadvantaged and SEND pupils, who should have acquired ‘the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.’ (paragraph 191). Expect pupils to be involved in discussions with inspectors ‘about what they have remembered about content they have studied’ (paragraph 195)

It is also important to consider how learning in RE makes a contribution to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which will always be considered before a final judgement on overall effectiveness is reached (paragraph 166)

### *What evidence is there that pupils have reached the agreed end points?*

Evidence needs to show the ‘progress that pupils are making in terms of knowing more, remembering more and being able to do more’ (paragraph 195). This evidence could include first-hand evidence of what pupils are doing, interviews, observations, work scrutiny, along with reviews of documents such as schemes of work and long term plans.

### *How have your RE lessons helped pupils to be ready to move on to their next stage?*

As learners are being prepared to move on to the next stage (this might be education, training or employment), leaders need to show that pupils are ready for this next stage when they leave their current school. At KS4 and KS5, nationally published evidence about pupil destinations will be used by inspectors.

### *What are your school’s recent examination results in RE?*

In those schools where examinations are taken, results will be seen as ‘useful indicators of pupils’ outcomes but [as these] results only represent a sample of what pupils have learned . . . [they will be balanced with] first hand assessment of pupils’ work. (paragraph 191)

## Example answers

*What do pupils say they are learning in RE?*

Our Key Stage One children are keen to tell visitors to the school about their RE lessons, they understand that they are learning about the beliefs of people from around the world and those in their community. Some children will talk about the need to understand what other people believe and the way they live their lives. Our Foundation children will talk about finding RE interesting and trying to understand what people do.

Our RE curriculum is a huge part of what we do as a school, it runs through everything and the children love the way it opens up lines of enquiry and enables them to have deep discussions. Since putting a bigger onus on RE we have noticed that the children are able to make links to the people they know within their community and are having discussions at home about events within the news. Our children truly love RE and are always excited to find out about the lives and beliefs of others.

Feedback from the most recent pupil voice survey indicates that the curriculum intent is successful. Pupils said that they enjoyed learning 'lots of new facts' in RE and 'getting involved in debates'. They feel that they make good progress in RE and that this is evident through teacher feedback, improved test score and 'being able to take part in a discussion and know what you're talking about'. Pupils feel that they have an opportunity to speak and express an opinion without fear of ridicule or any sense of embarrassment.

*How have your pupils developed as a result of their RE lessons?* **smsc**

Children see themselves as detectives throughout a sequence of lessons, collecting evidence and understanding. This enables the children to see the steps which they have taken and how their understanding has deepened. At the end of the unit of work they can answer the Big Question using the correct terminology showing empathy and respect for all.

Pupils' learning about different faiths and beliefs, both religious and non-religious, has promoted an open atmosphere in lessons, where pupils can express their curiosity about the way people live by asking questions and exploring answers. All of this has helped pupils to reflect on what influences their own actions and beliefs, and has led them to write some personal and reflective poems on this theme.

*Does pupils' work reflect the subject's intent?*

Pupil work is regularly monitored and compared across classes to ensure consistency and standards. Written work evidences the curriculum intent. A recent focus on Humanities as part of departmental evaluation noted that focused conversation between pupils and collaborative learning was particularly good in RE lessons where the use of structures to support dialogue has enabled pupils to grow in confidence and competence because of the opportunities to share thinking and ideas with others.

*What do recent examination results tell you about the RE curriculum and how it could be improved?*

The A Level results we achieved last year demonstrated that prior higher attainers did not make as much progress as others. In order to help rectify this, we have now make more explicit connections between different parts of the course and we have also established an extension library which focus on extension and consolidation. Pupils access this in addition to their homework.

*How did your results compare to those of other subjects in your school, and those of other schools?*

We overperformed according to GCSE AQA compared to other 'similar schools'. However, it is an optional choice for mixed ability students. At A level we were above the national average with grades.

The nature of our entry makes it difficult to match results at other schools, though there is evidence to suggest our results are creditable, namely, as we enter students from across the attainment range, overall results are likely to be lower than in schools where RS is a GCSE option. At KS5, data shows that we compare favourably to results at other schools.

*What other evidence beyond exams is used to make judgements about curriculum impact?*

We include student views in evaluation of our impact. All students complete a college wide and subject specific QDP questionnaire and results are embedded in self-evaluation. In addition we run our own subject-specific questionnaires at least twice a year and run a focus group with each year group.

Regular whole school student voice feedback gives us an indication of students' views. These are used both for informal reflection as well as for more formal subject reports to line managers.

RE is a focus of the school's development plan with the intention of applying for REQM Gold during this academic year. Throughout all lessons there is the opportunity for talk and debate in order to prepare for writing, underpinned by a wide range of reading opportunities and a rich, relevant vocabulary. The development of Critical Thinking skills and the future Global Citizen is a whole school priority.

Our annual pupil and parental surveys show support for the relevance of our RE curriculum which all children have been able to access and show growth. Pupils have shared opinions on how RE has helped to prepare them for life in Modern Britain and has helped them to develop positive attitudes alongside our "No Outsiders" ethos. They enjoy the range of learning styles and find the subject challenging and exciting. They are looking forward to RE lessons at high school and beyond and will often comment and debate RE items in the media.

## Additional questions to consider

What difference does the RE curriculum make to pupils' knowledge and understanding of religion and worldviews?  
What difference does the RE curriculum make to pupils when they're outside of school?  
How does evidence about impact influence future practice?  
What evidence is there of pupils' learning?  
How does your RE lessons impact pupils' and the wider school community?  
How have RE lessons helped improve pupils' reading?  
Does pupils' understanding of why they study RE reflect the subject's intent?  
What can be learnt from other departments/schools about how to improve these results?  
How do the results from key contextual groups compare with those not in those groups?  
How many pupils went on to study RE at the next level?  
What does feedback about the impact of RE tell you about the quality of the RE curriculum?