

10 tips for leading RE

Here are some tips and links to get you started with leading RE:

1. Know what you're aiming for.

All of your planning, assessment and curriculum ideas and designs should be about making your vision a reality. Having purpose and vision will ensure senior leaders understand its value, and this in turn can feed into the whole school vision too. RE can enhance the whole curriculum, but this should not mean that the quality of it is watered down by allowing it to be taught through other subjects like PSHE or through assemblies. Be firm about the importance of the subject and its necessity as a stand-alone subject of a balanced curriculum.

Think about:

What is RE for? How will RE's development ensure the children in your school better understand the world? How can what the children learn in RE feed into the whole school vision for their futures as individuals in society?

You may find it useful to read the recent Commission on RE report (CORE)

<https://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/projects/core/> Some of its main findings relate to purpose, including the need for quality teaching with a rigorous and rich analysis of both religious and non-religious worldviews and their impact on communities and individuals.

2. Think through the curriculum

It's good for you as the lead to understand about developments within the subject as well as things which will affect it. The National Entitlement proposal is in line with Ofsted's expectations that RE teachers will be able to talk about the subject's purpose and quality of the curriculum.

The Agreed Syllabus

All maintained schools have a statutory duty to teach RE, including academies and free schools. Without a national curriculum, the RE curriculum is determined by the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and they are responsible for creating a Locally Agreed Syllabus which should reflect the local faiths, and will be predominantly Christian. If you are in a faith school, you can prioritise one religion, but you should still recognise the diverse faiths and non-religious worldviews too. Your Agreed Syllabus will detail the amount of time given to RE (despite how many senior leaderships will try to merge it with PSHE or do drop down days) so make sure your pupils are getting what they are entitled to.

In a C of E school, you will have a Diocesan syllabus to follow.

Here's a worthwhile session on the curriculum from Kathryn Wright

<https://www.reonline.org.uk/leadership/curriculum/>

Many schools are working on progressive curriculums, i.e. one that systematically builds up understanding over time. This can be helpful when it comes to assessment.

3. Get your curriculum Ofsted ready

With the current Ofsted framework, it will be useful for you to think about your curriculum plans with the 3 Is in mind.

Intent- what's the purpose of learning in the topics and why are they learning it? . Inspectors will consider what knowledge and skills pupils gain through the curriculum and how the curriculum develops an understanding that is increasingly rich and critical.

Implementation- how does the planning and teaching meet the curriculum aims? How do you assess this? inspectors will consider how far planning, teaching and learning, including assessment, meets curriculum aims.

Impact- how can you see that learning has taken place? A rich, systematic and coherent curriculum will have a positive impact on the children in your care. Inspectors will consider the impact of the above measures through comparable national measures such as literacy and numeracy and *the progress pupils can be seen to make*. This will be seen in their work, in talking to pupils and in the classroom.

4. Ensure assessment is written into the curriculum

A progression curriculum (one that builds over time) is not only designed to develop and grow students' understanding, it also makes assessment straightforward. It can ensure that small learning outcomes can be built into a larger question. Thus, assessment is built in rather than being separate from the curriculum.

A coherent curriculum design means pupils will revisit topics again and with increasing detail and sophistication.

Assessment should test pupils' progress along the road to this overall vision, where connections can be made and understanding can grow in richness and depth.

The new Ofsted framework cements the connection between systematic curriculum design (intent) and how pupils are enabled to explore and master the curriculum (implementation). These assessment grids may help you:

<https://thegrid.org.uk/assets/re-assessment-grid-to-support-herts-agreed-syllabus-learning-outcomes-by-year-group-7.pdf>

5. Listen to pupils

Your pupils will be able to help you, especially those who are passionate about RE. They can promote your subject by being 'part' of the RE department, through pupil voice meetings or surveys. There are various Youth SACREs where pupil voices are valued in promoting RE. They may even be able to help you with organising visitors or visits. You may want to encourage ex-pupils who have taken RS related degrees at University to come back and speak to pupils about the merits of RE.

There are some excellent pupil voice questionnaires on the REQM website:

<https://www.reqm.org/reqm-awards/how-to-apply/>

6. Apply for funding to purchase resources

You may have a limited budget for quality resources. There are lots of teachers who have trawled markets, *ebay* or *etsy* to find bargains to support the department. However, there are also many different sources of funding for resources that RE teachers are unaware of. Click this link to find charities and companies who are willing to fund RE in schools: <https://teachers-talk.natre.org.uk/how-to-develop-partnerships-and-obtain-funding/>

7. Check you have all you need

There will be plenty of time to gather all the things together in your subject leader file. Many subject leaders have been leading for years and still haven't got everything complete, so don't panic! Don't feel that you have to have everything ready immediately, but here's a great list here which you may find useful: <https://www.reonline.org.uk/leading-re/a-practical-checklist/>

8. Take the time to review your department

The RE Quality Mark is one way of completing a 360 review of your RE department. To obtain the mark, you and your pupils fill in questionnaires. This could lead to changing schemes of work, developing pupils' religious literacy skills, using more stories, encouraging deep learning and giving choice in homework/creative projects. <https://www.reqm.org/>

9. Engage with support

The best thing about leading RE is the wealth of support out there.

NATRE (National Association for Teachers of RE) is a great place to start.

<https://www.natre.org.uk/> There are a range of packages to choose from in terms of membership with books and magazines delivered termly, and there are a whole load of downloadable resources to find there. There are some great ideas about assessment there too

Culham St Gabriel's provide lots of excellent support in terms of developing your leadership and subject knowledge skills. <https://www.cstg.org.uk/> You'll also find super resources, blogs and interactive support on their RE Online site- <https://www.reonline.org.uk/>

10. Network with other teachers and advisers

You are not alone on your RE journey. There are a host of passionate people and organisations cheering you on and available for support. There are many groups, online, on social media and in person.

NATRE believes in the importance of networking and there are 300 local groups meeting across the country. Check out this page to find a local group or connect with your regional ambassador- <https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/re-in-your-region/>

On Facebook, there are various groups. Including the Primary RE group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/135437393675501/> and RE subject leaders <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1142116002505830>

On Twitter, follow the hashtag #REChatUK to find countless threads from RE discussions on a range of topics. These RE Chats take place once a month and can provide a wealth of free CPD. You might also search #TeamRE for a supportive community.

All the best with your leadership journey. There are many passionate people in the RE community who are cheering you on and want to support you.