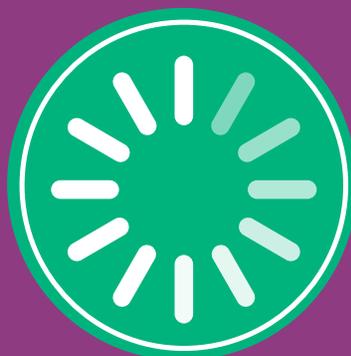
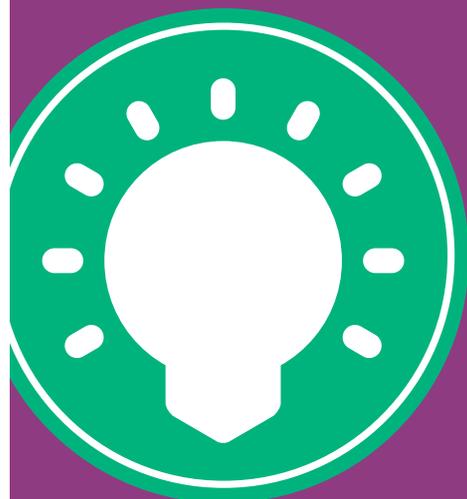

A Religious Education Subject Leader's Toolkit

SECONDARY

 **NATRE**





CONTENTS

A vision of RE	1
Supporting pupils' learning	3
Progression	3
Planning	5
Monitoring	5
Raising the status of RE in your school	6
Appendix	8
References	9

Note

This document has, with full permission, used and adapted some ideas and text from 'At Least 200 Tips for RE Subject Leaders' (Gloucestershire SACRE 2001) and 'Effective Subject Leadership' (York Diocese/RE Today Services 2013).



A vision of RE

THE RE CURRICULUM: WHAT ARE YOU TEACHING?

The first thing all subject leaders for RE need is a curriculum. RE curricula are different all over the country as there is no national curriculum for RE. If you are a maintained school your RE curriculum is the locally agreed syllabus written by your local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). If you are a faith school, you will receive guidelines from your denomination or sponsoring bodies. Many Church of England dioceses recommend the local agreed syllabus, although some require schools to follow diocesan guidelines too. Academies may still use their local agreed syllabus, an agreed syllabus from another part of the country, or commission an RE curriculum to be written by an organisation such as RE Today. If you are an Academy and have no RE curriculum, your priority is to get one! (Further details about the legal requirements for RE in different school types can be found in the Notes section below.)

Maintained schools, church and other faith schools and academies should be guided by national standards for RE, although not bound by a national curriculum for RE. The most recent of these documents is the *Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England* (Religious Education Council 2013)* which will be referred to here as 'the Framework'. It is written to support SACREs in the development of a locally agreed syllabus, and is non-statutory. It offers some helpful ideas of the way RE is developing. As a leader of RE your job is to balance the demands of the local curriculum, the national guidance and your own vision of excellent RE – a complex but rewarding task!

WHAT IS RE FOR?

Think about the fundamental purpose of RE: what do you think it is for? This will guide you in choosing *what* to teach as well as *how* to teach RE.

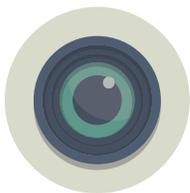
In this extract from the 2013 Framework, the purpose of the subject is defined. How far do you agree?

Religious education contributes dynamically to children and young people's education in schools by provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose in life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human. In RE they learn about and from religions and worldviews in local, national and global contexts, to discover, explore and consider different answers to these questions. They learn to weigh up the value of wisdom from different sources, to develop and express their insights in response, and to agree or disagree respectfully. (p. 11)

If you only read one book on this topic, Michael Grimmitt's *Pedagogies of Religious Education* is a clear, concise and inspiring description of ways to approach RE in your classroom, and is highly recommended!

SHARING THIS VISION

Spend time discussing your ideas with colleagues who deliver RE and any interested parties, such as the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Does everyone share your vision? Multiple forms of RE can be a strength in a school, and it can be fascinating to find out how many visions of RE there are. Describe your shared vision of the purpose of RE when creating policy documents. If you are clear about the aim and purpose of RE in your school, it will help when doing long- and short-term planning: ask yourself 'Do these lessons/activities support our principal aim/purpose?' If not, don't do them!



* Page references cited in this document are to the REC's Summary Report, *A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England*, not the longer *A Review of Religious Education in England and Wales* (REC 2013) of which it formed a part and where the page numbering is slightly different.

- Now we have science, do we still need religion?
- Can killing ever be justified?
- Is it always a good thing to believe in God?

Once you have established a demanding and interesting question, identify what source material your pupils need to answer it. Source material should include some religious content, but also contemporary first-person accounts, newspaper articles, BBC Class Clips or YouTube clips, speakers, textbooks and information sheets you have produced. Choose the sources carefully to provide diverse answers to the question. Feed pupils enough information to formulate a balanced answer (but not too much to swamp them), using your teaching skills to help them understand the information. They will also need time to reflect on how the source materials answer the question, to discuss their own developing opinions, and to express and justify their views. You are in control of ensuring the source material is relevant to the question, facilitating understanding of the sources and techniques to allow reflection and debate. You are not in control of pupils' answers to the question. As long as they have used the source material and justified their own view, the answer is up to them.

Assessment should be planned into the process but it is very simple. By assessing how pupils use the source material to answer the investigation question, you can test their knowledge, understanding and critical thinking skills.

An investigation is a very exciting process. Your planned outcomes are to stretch and challenge pupils, but not to nudge them into answering in a particular way. Investigations take a lot of initial planning and thought, but once they are up and running they are sustained by pupils' engagement and curiosity and you should simply be able to facilitate the process.



Planning

Long term planning reflects both *what* you have to teach within a key stage as well as *how* you will lead the pupils to understand the key concepts and develop their skills. Your long-term planning is essential in providing you with an overview of what is being taught when, and by whom, but it should also, in total, say something about your vision of RE.

Medium-term planning starts with the learning outcomes, takes assessment into account, and affords a quick overview of the building blocks of a topic – the skills, content and ongoing assessment – to fit into the time available. As pupils progress from one topic to another, opportunities to increase critical thinking should be provided, as well as links between topics where appropriate.

Short-term planning consists of individual lesson plans. As with medium-term planning, they should start with learning outcomes so you can lead pupils to meet your learning aims in creative, challenging and engaging ways.



Monitoring

As a subject leader you have a responsibility to monitor the provision of RE across your team. If you have come to a common view of high-quality RE, your colleagues should share your high expectations. Below are some ways to provide support and celebrate excellent practice.

- Ask colleagues to bring two books from the same year group to a department meeting: one from a pupil who is making good progress and one who is a cause for concern. Discuss how and why these pupils are progressing so differently, ensuring that you articulate exactly *what* good progress looks like in RE. Share strategies with each other. Over a year of department meetings cover all the year groups you teach.
- Give two weeks' warning and then take a class set of books for your team to peruse, ideally with a particular focus, such as assessment, literacy or progression. Note areas of strength and areas of concern and discuss ways to support your colleague in addressing these concerns. Complete at least once per year for each member of the team. These book trawls need not take long. They give a clear message that you are serious about the quality of work the whole team produces. Always include your own books when employing strategies like this.