



RE REVIEW DISSEMINATION EVENT: Bristol

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Most of my comments will be addressed to Part 1

Framework content (Part 1)

I applaud this document which is calling for a study of RE that is **“academically challenging and personally inspiring”**.

Thanks to the REC and generous donors

“intellectually challenging and personally enriching” (Ofsted)

Welcome: Michael Gove (foreword);

“a national bench mark”

“The modern world needs young people who are sufficiently confident in their own beliefs and values that they can respect the religious and cultural differences of others, and contribute to a cohesive and compassionate society.”

Although the document is non-statutory it is a very helpful document that can be applied whatever the school context, and **it sets out a clear pattern for inclusive RE**. It should be seen as presenting gold-plated RE that ALL schools will want to teach.

Purpose of study – describes RE at its very best.

The vision set out here goes a long way to helping us to solve the various misunderstandings of our subject that are clear within society and in the media. We should be constantly referring individuals and the media to this statement.

- Religious education ... provokes “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.”
- “they learn about and from religions and worldviews”
- “learn to weigh up the value of wisdom from different sources, to develop and express their insights”

Learning about and learning from – this document seems to pull these two back together. There is clearly a more significant “learning from” element within RE than in other subjects. In Geography, say, if I learn about landforms (eg glaciation), I learn about it, but I’m not sure what I learn from it. In RE, if I learn about wisdom writings then, as well as engaging with challenging textual concepts, I may also draw significant moral and spiritual personal understanding from these ideas.

"Engaging with religions and worldviews"

A. Pupils need to know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews

B. Pupils need to express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews

Example of Critical Realism in Y7

I want an RE that **exposes students to knowledge from outside their own experience**, an RE that can then help them to look back at themselves differently. I think we want to help them to make the **'all-too-familiar strange again'** (Bruner). Not simply re-present students with what they already know. That is not education.

Systematic study of religions is an ambitious aim. This will have implications for depth and breadth of religions and traditions studied. There needs to be long enough to develop systematic study. We have one hour a week and must be clear about how broad we can go while still maintaining systematic academic study.

"express ... their personal reflections and critical responses to questions and teachings"

Critical. Throughout the document there is an invitation to make RE truly critical and to face up to the big issues and debates about faith and commitment that occur in the public sphere. The best RE already does this. Hopefully this document will encourage more teachers to engage critically with the material studied in RE. We should not be taking a position of deference to religious traditions and belief. When they need challenging we should not avoid this.

Progression & Assessment (Appendices)

Is the 8 level scale dead?

The progression grid is useful, and helps teachers to clearly see what children should know and be able to do by the end of each Key Stage. Will it be possible to create these grids for particular religious traditions? Does this **'core knowledge'** approach lend itself to RE teaching, or not? Is this going to be a Pass/Fail judgment? You can or cannot do these things. Or will we be making judgments such as partially achieved, mostly achieved, achieved in full?

What is the relation between the **Aims** that are outlined in the report and the **six areas of enquiry to be included** (p.65) The progression grid does not make this clear. We need to be clearer about this in future work on assessment.

As the Expert Report identified, the use of levels in RE has helped in some schools, and Ofsted identified that levels can help to ensure progression and challenge. However, their use in schools has not always been good or helpful. The reality of school assessment regimes has led to a misuse of levels, and has made them operate in a perverse way. The DfE is going to release work done by the NAHT later in the year on alternative assessment models – and we will all need to watch this space.

Part 2: Religious Education the wider context

Very supportive of the questions and issues raised in this part of the report.

In particular:

Facing up to the challenges of implementing this curriculum document and thus raising standards in RE

Better monitoring of RE (Ofsted now requires inspectors to report on RE provision in section 5 inspections)

SACREs

Exams (especially GCSEs)

Regional hubs and collaborative working,

CPD - need for more training

A key factor preventing RE from realising its potential was the tension between the academic goal of extending and deepening pupils' ability to make sense of religion and belief, and the wider goal of contributing towards their overall personal development. Ofsted report para 23