



RE REVIEW DISSEMINATION EVENT: Oxford

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The framework

Gold-plated RE

It is a real step forward to see an RE framework, produced at the same time as National Curriculum documents, **using the best parts of curriculum documentation, to support the RE community to teach RE that is dynamic, thought provoking, grapples with challenging questions and encourages pupils to agree and disagree respectfully.**

Although the framework is non-statutory it is a very helpful document that can be used by academies and SACREs to plan RE provision and can show teachers of RE in all schools a vision of **gold-plated RE that ALL schools will want to teach.** What is exciting is that this is a framework for the RE community by the RE community.

Why RE? (Review report p 14)

The purpose of study describes RE at its very best. RE that is already delivered by a great many teachers in RE classrooms up and down the land. This new framework aims to support others to arrive at this level of teaching. It challenges us to ensure that **RE that is dynamic, thought-provoking, grapples with challenging questions and encourages pupils to agree and disagree respectfully.** The coherence of the framework begins with this purpose of study. The vision set out here challenges us to determine our direction of travel in RE and 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.

- This framework can set a standard across the country.
- It can help to correct misunderstandings.
- Other recommendations in the document can facilitate future collaboration and work on this.
- Greater links between researchers and teachers can help to unpack the terms and ideas here

Knowledge vs skills? Learning about and learning from? (p14-15)

The Aims of the curriculum for RE set out in this document are clear and helpfully avoid a knowledge vs skills argument. As many teachers recognise, this is a false dichotomy. Any successful RE curriculum has to involve both. Here we find both.

There is familiarity in these aims. Many of us will recognise the language of the 'six concepts' 'six strands' of RE from previous documents. (expressing meaning, ways of life, identity diversity and meaning, belonging meaning purpose and truth)

However this document pulls **Learning about and learning from back together**. Clearly we all might learn *from* our studies, all learning has this potential. However in the way earlier documents were used in some classrooms the learning from became completely separated from any knowledge. Hopefully this document will help in developing a clearer understanding.

These Aims are for the pupils' journey throughout their time in school and indicate the outcomes at the end of their learning in RE.

Aim A clearly identifies the essential nature of the knowledge and understanding of religion and worldview, RE has a body of knowledge and as teachers we support children to know, understand, describe, analyse, investigate, appreciate and appraise this. As you look at this aim notice that knowledge, understanding and skills weave together in this Aim.

Aim B is a clear and nuanced vision of how pupils might engage in critical reflection and how RE might be transformative. An opportunity for impersonal and personal evaluation. Pupils need to be able to reasonably explain, use discernment to give impersonal or critical responses and personal responses to the material studied. This aim also asks pupils to look at religion as a whole appreciating and appraising religion in all its dimensions.

Aim C points to the skills that pupils need for serious engagement with religion.

What we see in this document is a continuity of what is good in our classrooms and a setting of the direction of travel, encouraging us always to strive for what is better. It encourages us, as an RE community, as teachers and schools to drive RE forward ourselves.

This document challenges us to think carefully about the relationship between these aims. To reimagine learning about and from. Encourage critical reflection that is clearly connected to knowledge and understanding. RE at its best takes each of these seriously.

RE at its best is Engaging, Creative, Reflective and Critical. This document challenges us to ensure RE in our schools and classrooms is these things. It should support teachers of our youngest to our oldest children to make RE meaningful, relevant, engaging and thought provoking. The best RE already does this.

Developing and exploring the aims of RE across a school

The Framework Content grids are helpful at showing a progression of the Aims of RE and providing the building blocks for teachers and schools to explore what this should look like in relation to pupil progress.

EYFS (p16-17)

For EYFS the 2013 Foundation Stage profile guidance has been used to show how through planned, purposeful play a series of opportunities can be provided in the foundation stage. These clearly link to the different EYFS areas, unsurprisingly finding more links in PSED than Mathematics. Through exploration of books, times, places and objects our youngest children encounter the world in which they live hopefully sparking their curiosity to the world outside their family structures.

There is space for good EYFS practice where teachers use things like persona dolls to share experiences, stories and celebrations that are meaningful to pupils. Shahida, the doll, can come and share the story of the birth ceremonies of a younger brother bringing pictures and artefacts in her bag.

As schools, academies and teachers are you offering your youngest children these opportunities? How do children encounter religion and belief through their experience in your foundation stage?

KS1/2 (p18-23)

For KS1-3 the subject content follows the pattern of the Science curriculum in offering requirements in the left hand column and non- statutory ideas and notes to illustrate the requirements in the right hand. This second column is not a syllabus but instead helps to clarify what is meant in the requirements column.

Important that the significance of these grids are understood in order to surmount the challenges to implement this document identified on p30-32. These grids, used well, support schools to form a rationale for the sequencing and selection of RE learning.

These grids show a clear progression of Knowledge, understanding and skills offering requirements for achieving each of the Aims A, B and C at the end of a Key Stage. The examples and notes hinting at good RE practice that we all know go on in many classrooms.

In Key Stage 1 this framework allows pupils to investigate the Shabbat festival exploring links between artefacts, practices and beliefs in an engaged manner- making a Shabbat box of artefacts and instructions and presenting them to a parallel class. Learning like this supports progress towards part of Aim A, B and C.

In Key stage 2 pupils would be able to take part in an investigation about whether Muslim athletes should fast when a major sporting event coincides with Ramadan. As part of this enquiry encountering sources of wisdom and comment from the community of religious believers.

My challenge, as a parent, for the primary school requirements were; will they ensure that my youngest child, who loves RE, will continue to love a subject that allows her to learn, be engaged, enabled to question, enquire and challenge religion and worldviews, will it support her non specialist but passionate RE teacher to design learning that will provide a coherent programme of learning allowing the pupils to learn systematically and thematically in RE. I think the answer could well be yes- but of course time will tell.

Challenges?

Systematic

The Systematic study of religions is an ambitious aim (p 14, Purpose of RE). This will have implications for depth and breadth of religions and traditions studied. There needs to be long enough to develop systematic study. There also needs to a balance between the systematic and the thematic in our classrooms. We have extremely limited time in RE and must be clear about how broad we can go while still maintaining systematic academic study. Whilst the framework encourages a systematic understanding it will be for schools and syllabus makers to make this a reality.

Progression & Assessment

The progression grid is a useful development, and helps teachers to clearly see what children should know and be able to do by the end of each Key Stage. (p64-68 And now there are questions we will need to ask ourselves as an RE community. In primary schools the principal question is do our teachers and pupils understand what it means to progress in RE in order to achieve these requirements. Further work is needed.

As the Expert Panel 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 is that school assessment regimes have at times led to a misuse of levels.

What are the next steps to ensure we have something manageable and meaningful that challenges us and encourages us to support pupil progress?

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.

What has this got to do with me?

As you sit here as a teacher from a school or academy what does this document have to do with you. If, as I suggested, this is Gold plated RE, compare this to what is happening in your school.

Schools will be following their agreed syllabus but take this document alongside the Recent OFSTED report: RE Realising the potential as a support to reviewing the quality of RE in your school.

- Is RE allowing your children to encounter RE that is dynamic, provoking, grapples with challenging questions and encourages pupils to agree and disagree respectfully?
- Do all your stakeholders have a clear view of the purpose of RE in your school?
- Is RE in your school planned so that pupils learn systematically and thematically building on knowledge, understanding and skills?
- Is the RE you are teaching allowing pupils to learn creatively and be imaginative?
- When was the last time RE was discussed in a staff meeting, INSET day, SLT meeting, Governors meeting? Maybe the time is now.

If you teach in an academy whilst all these points are true for you, your extra freedoms and therefore responsibilities mean that for this statutory subject you should consider the guidelines or syllabus you are following. Do they offer this gold plated view of RE?