



## **RE REVIEW DISSEMINATION EVENT:**

### **York**

**Olivia Seymour**

**RE Review: what does it mean for teachers, schools and academies**

**The framework**

**Gold-plated RE**

Although the document is non-statutory it is a very helpful document that can be applied **whatever the school context**, and it allows for inclusive RE. It should be seen as presenting **gold-plated RE that ALL schools will want to teach**. What is exciting is that this is a document for the RE community by the RE community.

**Why RE? pg 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 document aims to support others to arrive at this level of teaching. It challenges us to ensure that **RE that is dynamic, provoking, grapples with challenging questions and encourages pupils to agree and disagree respectfully**. The coherence of the document 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:

a document such as this can help, and sets a standard across the country.

It can help to correct misunderstandings.

Other recommendations can facilitate future collaboration and work on this.

Greater links between researchers and teachers (and dual roles) can help to unpack the terms and ideas here.

**Knowledge vs skills? Learning about and learning from?**

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 recognize, 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 recognize 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 seems to **pull Learning about and learning from back together**. Clearly we all might learn *from* our studies, all learning has this potential. However in earlier documents (and perhaps more so in the way they were used) the learning from often became completely separated from any knowledge. Hopefully this document will help in developing a clearer understanding. Aim C in many ways acts as a bridge between A and B. What is set out under Aim B (page 14) is a clear and nuanced vision of how students might engage in critical reflection and how RE might be transformative. An opportunity for impersonal and personal evaluation. What we see in this document is a continuity of what is good in our classrooms and a setting 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 from. Encourage critical reflection that is clearly connected to knowledge and understanding. RE at its best takes both 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.

RE at its best 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. Aim C encourages us to build a meaningful model of enquiry into our classrooms.

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.

### **Developing and exploring the aims of RE across a school**

The Framework Content grids are helpful at unpacking 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.

In materials offered alongside this document it will be imperative to underline the statement under the notes – the second column is not a syllabus – but instead helps to clarify what is meant in the requirements column. This is important to help teachers and

schools interpret the significance of the grids for their context and address the concern in bullet point 1 page 30

## **Challenges?**

### **Systematic study**

The Systematic study of religions is an ambitious aim. (page 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 be a balance between the systematic and the thematic in our classrooms. We have 'one hour a week' and must be clear about how broad we can go while still maintaining systematic academic study. We need an RE that is academically challenging and personally inspiring. This is a powerful tension that enables good learning.

### **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. And now there are questions we will need to ask ourselves as an RE community:

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 at times lead 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.

**KS4 and KS5.** The RE described here is clearly distinct from much current GCSE RE. The lack of religion in many current examined RE is covered in the Expert Report (page 30) (Appendices), and recently in the Ofsted report (Realising the Potential - 2013 &

Transforming RE – 2010). There is a good deal of work still to be done here. How do we as teachers and schools build on much of the work developed at KS3 and work with exam boards to continue this through as outlined on page 28?

Demand from RE teachers for something better.

Lobbying school leaders and DfE for support for something better.

Encourage greater participation in Ofqual consultations.