

# The Dorset Agreed Syllabus for RE

September 2016

## Purpose of study

Religious Education (RE) in Dorset has a long and well-regarded history of provoking challenging questions about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God and ultimate questions about what it means to be human. Pupils learn to weigh up the value and wisdom of different religions and worldviews to develop and express their own insights in response, and to agree or disagree respectfully. RE develops in pupils the aptitude for dialogue so they can participate positively in our society with its diverse religions and worldviews. RE enables pupils to articulate clearly and coherently their personal beliefs, ideas, and values while respecting the right of others to differ. This syllabus builds on this tradition.

To achieve this, high quality Religious Education teaching needs to provide pupils with a systematic knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews thus enabling pupils to become religiously literate so they can engage meaningfully in life in modern Britain.

## Aims

The Dorset Agreed Syllabus for RE aims to ensure that all pupils

- A. Know and understand a range of religions and worldviews, so they can:
  - Describe, explain and analyse beliefs and practices, recognising the diversity which exists within and between religious traditions
  - Identify, investigate and respond through enquiry into the questions posed and responses offered by religions and worldviews to ultimate questions about what it means to be human
  - Appreciate and appraise the nature, significance and impact of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.
  
- B. Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and world-views, so that they can:
  - Explain reasonably their ideas about how beliefs, practice and forms of expression influence individuals and communities;
  - Express with increasing discernment their personal reflections and critical responses to questions about identity, diversity, and ethical issues.

## RE in the school curriculum

RE is a statutory subject of the school curriculum of all maintained schools. Academies and Free schools are contractually required through the terms of their funding agreement to make provision for the teaching of RE to all pupils on the school roll. RE offers distinctive opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development as such RE also contributes to the development of British Values. RE lessons offer a structured and safe space during curriculum time for reflection, discussion, dialogue and debate as RE also contributes to the schools Prevent duty to combat extremism. RE lessons should also allow for timely and sensitive responses to be made to unforeseen events of a religious, moral or philosophical nature, whether local, national or global.

## Subject Content

The law requires that a local authority RE agreed syllabus 'must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'.

- This means that from the ages of 5-19 pupils in Dorset Schools must follow a coherent and systematic study of Christianity.
- To reflect the needs of pupils in Dorset Schools pupils must follow a coherent and systematic study of Islam from ages 5-14
- Pupils must be introduced to Judaism and other principal religions represented in the UK, including at least one tradition of Hinduism, Buddhism or Sikhism, but decisions about the balance and which key stages these religions are introduced are left to individual schools, Clusters of schools and Multi Academy Trusts that adopt this syllabus.
- It expected that Humanism and other worldviews will be introduced into RE enquiries as appropriate.

**It is recommended that schools consult within their clusters / pyramids or MATs to ensure continuity and coverage across the Key Stages and amongst schools.**

The curriculum of the Dorset Agreed Syllabus for RE incorporates a balanced and coherent suite of enquiries/content, built around the key areas of knowledge and understanding that lie at the heart of the subject. As pupils move through the RE curriculum they should gain greater understanding and command of this core subject matter of religious education.

Three different areas of enquiry/content are used as a basis for a well-designed curriculum:

- Investigating the nature of religion and belief.
- Investigating Christianity
- Investigating other religions and worldviews

## Early years/ Foundation stage

The RE curriculum for the Early Years should ensure that children have opportunities to find out about aspects of the following from Christianity, Islam, Judaism and a range of different religions and worldviews:

- Stories, poems, prayers and songs
- Festivals and celebrations
- Artefacts and places of worship, visitors and videos
- Their own ideas and questions about religion, belief, truth and right and wrong.

As all of the strands of the EYFS are interwoven, children may share their thoughts, ideas and feelings “through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role play and design and technology.” Effective RE will contribute to young children’s understanding of the world in which they live and help them to develop a positive sense of self.

## Key Stage 1

Pupils should explore through enquiry so that they know and understand:

**The place of religion and belief in their local community** – recognising diversity and the influence of those religions and worldviews, and exploring questions about the meaning, purpose and value of life reflective of the beliefs and world-views (in all Key Stages) of the local community.

*This could include exploring through enquiry questions such as:*

- How and why do people have special ways of welcoming babies?
- How and why do people pray?
- What are the ingredients of a festival?
- Why is light such an important symbol?

**The key features of Christianity** –

*This could include the study of key Christian concepts such as Creation, Incarnation and Salvation through enquiry questions such as:*

- What can we find out about Christianity by visiting a local church?
- Why do Christians celebrate Christmas?
- What happened when Jesus went to Jerusalem? (Palm Sunday to The Resurrection)
- What does the Creation Story tell us about the nature of God?
- Why did Jesus tell the parable of the Lost Sheep?

## **The key features of Islam and at least one other religion or non-religious worldview-**

*This would include the study of key Islamic concepts through enquiry questions such as:*

- What are the Five Pillars of Islam and why are they key to Muslim beliefs?

*It should include enquiry questions for other religions and world-views, selected as appropriate:*

- Who was the Buddha?
- Why is Shabbat important in some Jewish families?
- What can the story of Bhai Lalo (the milk and the blood) tell us about Guru Nanak?
- What can we find out about Sikhism by exploring a gurdwara? (alternatively Islam / a mosque; Judaism / a synagogue; Hinduism / a mandir; Bahá'í Faith / a house of worship, etc)
- What makes us special? (Humanist study)

## **Key Stage 2**

Pupils should explore through enquiry so that they know and understand:

**Enquiries about the nature of religion and belief**– recognising diversity and the influence of those religions and worldviews, and exploring questions about the meaning, purpose and value of life

*This should include exploring through enquiry questions such as:*

- Can religion help people find peace?
- Is happiness the purpose of life?
- Does prayer make a difference?
- Why do some people make pilgrimages?
- What different things do people believe about how the world began?

## **The key features of Christianity –**

*This could include the study of key Christian concepts through enquiry questions such as:*

- If God made the world, why isn't it perfect?
- Why did Jesus tell parables about forgiveness?
- What if God were one of us?
- What is good about Good Friday?
- Why myrrh? How are the Christmas and Easter stories connected?
- What can people learn from the story of Daniel?
- Why do Christians celebrate the same thing in different ways? (The Last Supper)
- What does the parable of the Good Samaritan mean for Christians today?
- Why do Christians call Jesus 'Saviour'?
- Why do Christians believe God can be Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

## **The key features of Islam and at least one other religion or non-religious world view -**

*This could include the study of key Islamic concepts through key enquiry questions such as:*

- Why is Muhammad called the 'Messenger of God'?

*And could include enquiry questions for other religions and worldviews, selected as appropriate:*

- Why are the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha seen as the Three jewels for some Buddhists?
- What can the stories and images of deities tell us about Hindu beliefs?
- What are some of the different ways Hindus worship?
- What does dharma (duty) mean to many Hindus?
- How and why do some Muslim / Christian / Jewish organisations help those in need?
- What is the Torah, and why is it important to some Jews?
- Why salt water? What connects Passover to freedom?
- What does sewa (service) mean to Sikhs?
- What is Khalsa and why is it so important to many Sikhs?
- How do Humanists mark rites of passage?
- How do Humanists decide what is true?

## Key Stage 3

Pupils should explore through enquiry so that they know and understand:

**Enquiries about the nature of religion and belief** – recognising diversity and the influence of those religions and worldviews, and exploring questions about the meaning, purpose and value of life

*This could include exploring through enquiry questions such as:*

- How is religion changing in the UK in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?
- What is the place of prayer in the world today?
- What is the relationship between religion and science?
- What is the relationship between belief and art?
- How does belief affect ethical decision-making?
- Is this the only life there is?
- How far is suffering caused by human action?
- What does it mean to be persecuted for your religion or non-religious world-view?
- 'Loyalty to country' or 'loyalty to religion' – which should come first?
- What is freedom of expression and should there be any limits on it in relation to religion?

**The key features of Christianity –**

*This could include the study of Christian concepts such as Creation and Fall, Incarnation, Salvation, the Kingdom of God and ideas about the Gospel message and Old Testament stories, through enquiry questions such as:*

- 'Christ has no body on earth but your body'. What do Christians today understand as incarnational living?
- How do Christian views differ about the resurrection?
- How do Christians apply scriptural teachings to the world today?
- How do different Christian denominations express their belief in the Trinity?
- How significant is Mary to the Christmas story?
- In Christian tradition, how far is suffering caused by human action?
- Standing up for the oppressed: what was the role of the prophets of the Old Testament?
- What do Christians understand about the apocalypse?

### **The key features of Islam and at least one other religion or non-religious world-view**

*This could include the study of key Islamic concepts through enquiry questions such as:*

- *What is the significance of the Night of Power?*
- *What is the significance of the Islamic greeting, "Peace, mercy and blessings."?*

*And could include enquiry questions for other religions and worldviews, selected as appropriate:*

- Is Buddhism a religion?
- What does it mean for a Buddhist to follow the Eightfold Path?
- How and why would a Hindu try to follow the teaching of ahimsa (non-violence)?
- Why is pilgrimage important in Hinduism?
- How is the belief in Tikkun Olam ('healing the world') put into practice by different Jewish groups?
- How is Sikh belief in equality expressed in practice?
- What do humanists believe about the purpose of life?
- What beliefs do humanists share with each other?
- What do (choose two traditions) say about the purpose of marriage?
- What are the challenges of being a teenage (Jew / Sikh / Muslim / Buddhist / Jain / Bahá'í etc.) in Britain today?

*School-designed units based on the following could be included:*

- Setting a locally important religion or non-religious world-view into its global context
- Exploring what it means to be an adult within a religion or non-religious world-view (e.g.: commitment, Confirmation, declaration and so on.)

**Resources and examples of enquiry-based studies to support the above enquiry questions may be found at:**

<http://www.reonline.org.uk/religious-education-in-the-new-curriculum/>

## Key Stage 4

Schools are reminded that it is a legal entitlement for all students to study Religious Education between the ages of 14 and 19. Dorset SACRE recognises that many/most students will be

following GCSE courses and so does not layout a specific programme of study for this age range. Dorset SACRE expects that all students will have the opportunity to have their learning accredited through a GCSE or other course approved under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000

Whatever course they follow all students should extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of religions and world views. Building on prior learning they should appreciate and appraise the nature of different religions and worldviews in a systematic way. All courses followed must include a coherent and systematic study of Christianity as well as other religious traditions and worldviews.

## Planning Progression and Assessment

- Planning and teaching needs to include clear 'progression objectives' so that pupils and teachers have real ownership of the goals of the learning
- To ensure this progression it is necessary to first identify the concept or big question you wish to explore with your pupils. This will on many occasions spread over several key stages.
- Progression will be achieved through exploring a series of deepening enquiry questions.
- The Dorset SACRE model is a Mastery or competency model of assessment using the language of 'Developing/Secure/Exceeding' to describe pupils' success in relation to the defined 'content' of the curriculum.
- This process is illustrated in the diagram below

**Select Your Concept/ Big question e.g.:** *How do people decide what is the purpose of life?*  
**Religion(s) / worldview(s):** *Christianity; Humanism*

**Define your concept:** *Look at rites of passage, ceremonies and traditions to investigate what people do to explore the meaning of life.*



**Identify progression linked to the Key Concept for KS1; Lower KS2; Upper KS2 and KS3 – to include both the body of knowledge related to the concept and identification of how this knowledge is related to a growing understanding of the big idea. Key enquiry questions are selected in order to explore the content**

*KS1: How and why do people have special ways of welcoming new babies into the world?*

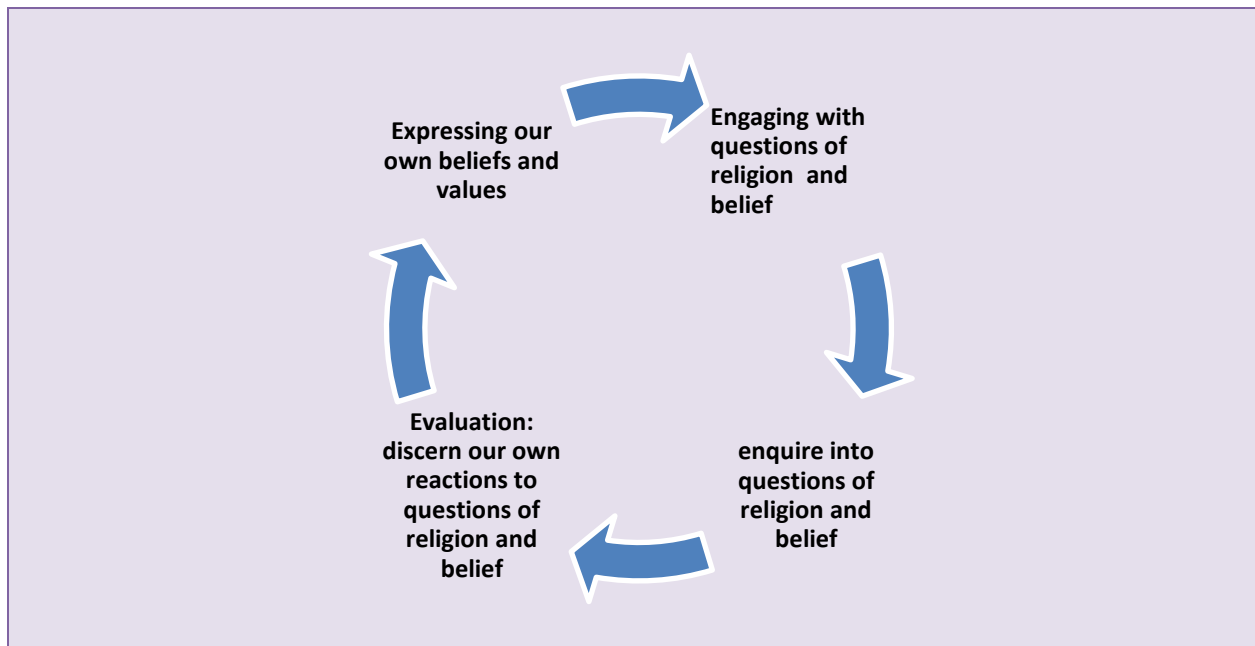
*Lower KS2: Is happiness the purpose of life?*

*Upper KS2: What does the parable of the Good Samaritan mean for Christians today?*

*KS 3: What do Humanists believe is the purpose of life?*



**Plan your unit of work using the four- stage enquiry model or other suitable enquiry-based approach, for example P4C or a theological enquiry model**



**Devise a framework to assess attainment and progression**

Teachers define secure learning in terms of knowledge and understanding - i.e. the expectation for most children

Teachers build upon this to define expectations for developing and excelling

Children demonstrate their learning and are identified as having developing, secure, excelling learning

Planning and teaching is adapted in order to present the material in a way that will encourage the expected attainment or better - thus ensuring progression in understanding key concept for all children

Examples of programmes of study may be found in the 2011 Dorset Agreed Syllabus and subsequent resources provided at Dorset SACRE Annual Conferences. Please note that Dorset's 2010 Agreed Syllabus has a great deal of useful information and can still be regarded as a supplementary document to this one.

## **The Right of Withdrawal from RE and Collective Worship**



Dorset SACRE would expect that RE in Dorset schools is taught in such a manner that no parent would wish to withdraw their child from RE lessons (and / or collective worship.) However, it remains the right of parents / carers to withdraw from RE if they wish. This right does not extend to other curricular areas where issues of religion or belief may arise as part of a separate subject, such as history, geography of citizenship.

When a child has been withdrawn from RE, the school has a duty to provide supervision but not to provide additional, alternative teaching or to incur extra cost. If parents / carers wish to provide alternative RE materials or instruction, they may do so in consultation with the school, and if necessary with guidance from the LA.

**For further information on rights and withdrawal, see:**

*Religious Education in English Schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010:*

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/190260/DC\\_SF-00114-2010.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190260/DC_SF-00114-2010.pdf)

<https://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects>

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