

## **Why study Religion and Worldviews?**

### **Audience focus: RE Primary leads in schools.**

Hello Religious Education leads, and welcome to our school discussion about the subject of RE – Religious Education. Or, as is being debated and deliberated, Religion and Worldviews. This is a topic that will no doubt come up in our discussions further on. I am looking forward to us using these session opportunities as a way of connecting, sharing and collaborating on best practice.

As always, I am happy to answer any queries or questions as the session continues today.

As we know, the subject of RE can often be inconsistent in the classroom for a number of reasons, including the fact that different types of schools follow different syllabuses and/or curricula. With that being said, I would hope for it not to be a huge deterrent as to how we approach the subject; as we look forward to good teaching, inspiring learning and using our context of Primary school as driving force for cross collaboration and forward planning.

I want to begin by addressing the strength and, I would argue, need for the use of networks across your local area; then gradually building to a more national approach. Many RE leads, let us be honest, are not always keen or even willingly wanting to lead the subject. It has been given to you as a role of responsibility to further your teaching careers and plans. It can be hard to find a network of RE leads that share a similar passion and goal for the subject, and thus it can feel demotivating for you as a lead. This is why I believe such discussions as we are having now are crucial. One does not need to be an RE expert to lead the subject well: simply a clear plan, points of reference and collaboration with your staff will put you in good stead for the task ahead.

A network allows for us to compare positively what one school and lead is doing; and whether this idea can be borrowed for our own context, or adapted. An example could be the teaching of RE as a standalone subject: I have long advocated for the subject to not be taught as a PPA cover session, and even more so for it to be taught by teachers, rather than support staff. Why? I will elaborate further.

Firstly, the subject needs to have its own independence and respect by the teachers when planning long term and mid termly, as well ensuring it is visible consistently for your students. Blocking out half terms or special days for the subject does nothing for the credibility of the subject. Would one do this for a core subject such as Maths or English? Of course not. The argument may be proposed that RE is a foundation subject, yes. However, it is a foundation subject that interacts seamlessly with core subjects such as English, but also a subject that many children will thrive in because of the natural elements of reflection, debate, discussion and interaction with others.

Secondly, those teaching RE should also be those who are aware of pedagogical approaches for successful teaching. Not only generically, but also in your school context. Does your school curriculum follow a certain structure or routine that is visible across all teaching, regardless of subject? This framework is something that should look similar in RE, and thus the subject of RE becomes less alien or different for your students. A teacher's subject knowledge of RE could fall on either side of the spectrum: highly invested and interested, or, (with total honesty) minimal and lacking. Either way, as teachers, we have the means and hopefully the willingness to better ourselves, in order to better our subject content for our students.

A factor I wish to propose to you all about the subject of RE and how it is placed in your school contexts is how it is exposed to students. Do your RE lessons lean towards PSHE style sessions of reflection and feelings? Though there are elements of this available within the subject, it is important to note that this is not the core structure of the subject. This is where I, as an RE lead, would take the time to redirect the of the subject across the school; ensuring that objectives are clear, and that the RE curriculum is implemented consistently, perhaps by using possible models such as Contact Theory (interaction, conversation and encountering) and that staff are well-supported to deliver RE effectively'

Next, and of course, dependent on your school's development of the subject, how RE can be enhanced and used to enhance other subjects across the curriculum. An example I love to use is that, regardless of the objective a year group is exposed to at the time, moments in the religious calendar such as Holi can be acknowledged by the whole school, because RE provided the learning and knowledge schema for students to understand: what a religious celebration is, which religion and cultural backgrounds partake in this specific celebration, and why. Regardless of key stage, students will understand this at their own level.

Finally, the subject of RE often comes with implicit baggage of being the subject that enhances and solidifies opinions of religions and those different to us. Let us, as RE leads, recognise that even those of the same religion will hold differing or varying worldviews, and that this is simply a part of our teaching.

As always, it would be beneficial to share what RE looks like in our school contexts, and how we can move forward together in collaborating on one of the other suggested topics for better RE.