

Flourishing Together through Religious Education

This guidance is inspired by [*Flourishing Together: A collective vision for the education system \(2024\)*](#). It takes each of the ten flourishing seeds and considers how these may be planted and grown through RE in all schools. This document has been developed in collaboration with the Church of England Education Office and has the support of the Catholic Education Service.

	Flourishing Seed	Through RE	Questions to ask
1	Deepening and broadening our collective thinking on flourishing in education 	High-quality religious education(RE) is an essential element of flourishing in education. It is rooted in the relational – a genuine and authentic understanding of one another. It seeks wisdom – through listening, learning and encounter as well as reflecting on and critiquing established sources of wisdom. It offers hope – through dialogue, pursuit of peace and positive community relations. It prioritises those on the margins – offering insight into under-represented groups and the most vulnerable. It makes a significant contribution to the spiritual flourishing of the whole school community - a vital element of human flourishing whether religious or non-religious. It provides knowledge – supporting pupils in their understanding of other subjects in the curriculum. Through RE pupils can begin to understand what they can offer the world, find their own voice and become confident citizens ready to navigate a complex multi religious, multi secular world.	Can you articulate a shared vision (across your school, MAT, Diocese) of what flourishing in and through RE looks like? How is your school engaged in and what has the impact been of collective conversations about RE at local, regional and national level? Does RE have a secure place in your curriculum for all pupils, including core RE at Key Stage 4 and 5?

2	Eradicating child poverty	RE has at its heart the dignity of each human being irrespective of their faith or belief. Thus, through substantive knowledge RE can provide a way for pupils to engage with stories from the most marginalised in society, as well as engaging with ways individuals and organisations work for social justice. Studying RE has been shown to have a positive impact on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils (Lundie 2019, NATRE 2022). Therefore, RE can be a lever in positive social change, increasing pupils' confidence in civic leadership and campaigning for social justice. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly those in monocultural contexts, are often less likely to access the lived reality of religion and belief in their locality impacting on both their life skills and attitudes, but also their academic outcomes. This practitioner action research sets this out and shows the importance of visits and visitors from a range of religious and non-religious worldviews.	How does the RE curriculum enable your pupils to engage with questions of social justice? Is RE a secure and high-quality part of your curriculum for all, particularly at Key Stage 4 to support positive outcomes for disadvantaged pupils? How are pupils given opportunities to engage with the lived reality of religion and belief in their local area?
3	Pursuing equity, diversity, inclusion and justice for children and adults		How is your RE pursuing equity, diversity, inclusion and justice through its curriculum? How does RE promote freedom of religion or belief as a human right in your school?

		RE makes an important contribution to the pursuit of diversity, inclusion and justice. However, it must first have equity with other subjects on the curriculum. All pupils must receive as a minimum their legal entitlement. Its place must be secured (For example, Innes, Morrel and Tidy 2025). It must be valued as a place where voices from the margins can be heard, where anti-racist education can take place, where human rights are advocated for and where all forms of prejudice and discrimination can be challenged including antisemitism, Islamophobia and other forms of religious hatred. For example, schools can encourage their whole community to support Interfaith Week and commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.  Through the subject itself there are opportunities to explore the complex diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews. This may include schools actively diversifying curricula (for example, McInnis 2021) and ensure the real lived experience of religious and non-religious individuals and communities is studied.	How does your RE mitigate discrimination between and within religious and non-religious worldviews?
4	Deepening integration into communities	The local context is vital for RE. The subject is by its nature rooted in place and engagement with local worldview communities. Understanding religious and non-religious worldviews supports positive community relations, as well as deepening connections between schools and local communities. RE provides opportunities for pupils to be in conversation with those in their communities, including parents, to experience the lived reality of religion.	How does RE in your school equip young people to hold balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and worldviews?

		Schools can become places of positive interfaith and belief dialogue, demonstrating that all are welcome. Flourishing schools who are integrating with their communities are likely to promote and protect freedom of religion or belief. RE can help to support pupils' understanding of this human right. A series of case study action research projects took place in primary schools in England to test out a series of learning outcomes in relation to this, and an e-learning course was developed as a result. In 2014, an APPG for RE enquiry gathered evidence of established and potential ways in which RE contributes to community relations. Orchard et al (2023) outlines the importance of promoting community relations in general and the significant role RE can make to it. In addition, a teacher fellowship project, Shared Space (2024) focused on the use of contact theory and inter-religious dialogue to show how RE is important for promoting positive community relations.	Are there opportunities for your pupils to engage with the real lived experience of religion and worldviews, including in their local community? What impact has this had? How does your school promote and protect freedom of religion or belief for all?
5	Giving priority to the voices of children and young people	Understanding that 'Nobody Stands Nowhere' (Theos Think Tank, 2021) is central to RE. Everyone has a position, and RE helps young people understand this and develop their personal knowledge. However a recent report from the University of Birmingham (2025) indicates that young people often do not feel safe to express their own worldview, particularly those from UK minority ethnic and global majority heritage backgrounds. If pupils are to flourish then conditions need to be in place to ensure pupils feel safe, accepted	Are there opportunities for pupils to understand their own positionality and develop personal knowledge? How do you ensure pupils feel safe and able to freely express their own worldview?

		and where their identity is nurtured. In addition, pupils are often not able to see themselves in the curriculum: there is a fundamental need to 'unlearn' how curricula are constructed and how resources are chosen to ensure educators are not complicit in systemic racism. See for example, McInnis (2021) and Brown (2021). RE can offer a hospitable approach (Wright, 2018) where all pupils are able to articulate their views within a values-bounded and trauma-informed space, encounter others and listen for wisdom in community with one another. RE offers a space where pupils are equipped to listen and respond to dissenting and divergent voices.	
6	Making our education system truly inclusive for children for whom our schools are currently working less well	Due to RE in many schools being locally determined and a lack of national standards, pupils who are transient members of a school community are particularly disadvantaged. This includes pupils who are vulnerably housed, care experienced, displaced, pupils who move in and out of alternative provision, those who are from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller heritage and those whose parents are in the armed forces. Schools can ensure that transient pupils are well supported in RE by teachers striving to make themselves aware of the curriculum pupils have previously followed and celebrating their prior learning which may be different to what other pupils have experienced. Teacher should try to avoid repetition of content, seeking to address any gaps in learning particularly in transition points such as Key Stages 2-3 and Key Stages 3-4.	How do you ensure that pupils who are transient are not disadvantaged in RE? What systems and interventions are in place? How do you ensure pupils can flourish through their RE entitlement whilst being educated in alternative provision settings? How are you striving to ensure all pupils, including those with SEND, can make progress in RE?

		School leaders should strive for a truly inclusive approach , ensuring adaptative teaching and appropriate progression pathways meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities .	
7	Planning and resourcing services around schools to support children and families 	The importance of RE for positive mental health and well-being is well established. See for example Walker (2021) who states that the RE community has a role to play in advancing a more informed understanding of the nature and importance of belief systems which have been historically marginalised within the healthcare system. Schools can also signpost to local community resources such as libraries, places of worship, festival events and so on which provide enrichment opportunities in relation to RE beyond the school gates.	How does your RE promote healthy bodies, minds and spirits? How does your school support wider engagement with religion and worldviews in the local community?
8	Reforming accountability to enable schools to flourish	Schools can ensure they serve every pupil entrusted in their care by providing quality RE for every pupil, so they receive their entitlement. They might use the National Content Standard for RE in England (2023) as both a benchmark and internal evaluation tool to ensure their curriculum is well constructed and sequenced with clear progression.	To what extent is your school or MAT meeting the National Content Standard for RE in England? Has your school or MAT considered applying for the RE

		Within the current accountability systems, schools can utilise the Ofsted Research Review (2021) and Subject Report (2024), as well as expectations relating to their religious character if appropriate, such as a Statement of Entitlement (Church of England) and the RE Directory (Catholic). The RE Quality Mark gives schools an opportunity to celebrate best practice. It can raise the profile of the subject, as well as providing a framework for measuring, planning and developing effective practice.	Quality Mark to celebrate best practice? For schools with a religious character: How are you upholding your foundation and addressing key themes highlighted in your Section 48 inspection?
9	Broadening approaches to professional development for teachers, support staff and leaders	Many primary teachers have little or no initial teacher education which relates to RE, and some do not teach RE or see RE whilst on placement (NATRE 2024). In the secondary phase over half of RE lessons are taught by teachers with another specialism (NATRE, 2025). It is vitally important that schools provide opportunities for all teachers of RE to engage in professional development. There are many professional development opportunities for teachers at all stages of their career. Some MATs, local authorities and diocese provide their own professional development through lead teachers or consultants; this is a growing group of expert professionals in the subject. External opportunities include: 	How are you ensuring that beginner teachers and/or teachers with other specialisms are well-equipped to teach RE? How are you providing personalised professional development for teachers at all stages of their career in RE? How is your MAT RE lead/consultant supported in developing their own expertise and staying up to date with the latest research?

		Culham St Gabriel's E-learning Platform Culham St Gabriel's scholarships: Leadership, Masters, Doctoral NATRE local groups, New2RE programme and annual conference RE Hubs	Where appropriate, how is your RE lead engaging with the local Diocese?
10	Re-shaping education as a career in which adults flourish.	RE, like most subjects requires teachers to think! Teachers need time to read research, reflect on their own practice and action their learning. Conferences such as RExChange and AREIAC/AULRE offer specific opportunities for teachers to be at the cutting edge of latest developments in the subject. Farmington Scholarships provide funded space and time for teachers and senior leaders to pursue an area of their work in depth supporting their flourishing. Giving teachers time to write articles for publication, whether it be a blog, magazine or journal article supports their career development through engaging with new and different audiences. Encouraging teachers and leaders of RE to become senior educationalists through for example Chartered Status, NPQs or Flourishing Leaders, means that those who take the subject seriously will be leading schools and Trusts in the future. Membership of the subject association (NATRE) is one way for teachers to engage with national conversations.	Do all teachers of RE have opportunities to undertake quality subject specific professional development? How do teachers engage with or take part in subject specific research? How are teachers supported to engage with national developments in the subject?