



Guidance for RE in Church of England Schools in the Diocese of Chelmsford

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1. Purpose and Vision for Religious Education

This guidance summarises the statutory requirements and the Church of England and Diocesan expectations for RE. It is written for governors, headteachers and RE subject leaders. This guidance should be used alongside the RE Statement of Entitlement 2026.

RE is a high-profile academic subject and a core part of the curriculum in a Church school, enabling every pupil — of all faiths and none — to flourish and live life in all its fullness.

There should be a 'commitment to generous hospitality, being true to our underpinning of faith, but with a deep respect for the integrity of other religious traditions (and worldviews) and for the religious freedom of each person' (Church of England Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good, 2016)

2. Aims of RE

The Diocese supports the following aims of RE, taken from the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education (September 2026). In a Church school, RE should enable pupils to:

- Engage meaningfully and critically with learning which helps them to make sense of the multi-religious and multi-secular world in which they live.
- Know about and understand Christianity as a diverse global living faith through the exploration of beliefs and practices, using approaches which engage with biblical text and key sources of authority.



- Gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religious and non-religious worldviews, appreciating the complexity, diversity, continuity and change that exists within those worldviews being studied.
- Grapple with questions of meaning and purpose raised by human existence and experience.
- Understand the concept of religion and recognise its continuing influence on Britain's cultural heritage and in the lives of individuals, communities and societies in different times, cultures and places.
- Develop disciplinary knowledge which equips pupils to be religiously literate.
- Explore their personal worldviews; their own religious or non-religious, spiritual and philosophical ways of living, believing and thinking.

3. Legal Requirements

- RE is a compulsory part of the basic curriculum for all registered pupils of compulsory school age. RE has equal standing with the National Curriculum and encompasses non-religious worldviews. (Education Act 2002, s.80)
- Statutory RE must reflect that religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. (Education Act 1996, s.375(3))
- Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RE; pupils aged 18 or over may withdraw themselves. (School Standards and Framework Act 1998, Sch. 19, para. 5) As RE is central to a Church school's identity, the DBE encourages school leaders to [contact the Education Team](#) ASAP for advice on managing the specifics of any withdrawal requests.

4. Curriculum Compliance

- Schools should aim to be close to 10% of curriculum time on RE, and must allocate no less than 5% (key stages 1–4).
- RE and Collective Worship are separate requirements: Collective Worship time must not be counted towards RE curriculum time (Statement of Entitlement, September 2026).
- Christianity should be the main religious worldview studied, equating to at least 50% of RE curriculum time (Statement of Entitlement, September 2026).
- An RE curriculum must be offered to all pupils in all statutory year groups, Reception to Year 13 (Statement of Entitlement, September 2026).



5. School Designation and Locally Agreed Syllabuses

- Voluntary Controlled (VC) and Foundation schools: teach RE in line with the Locally Agreed Syllabus, unless parents request RE in accordance with the trust deed.
- Voluntary Aided (VA) schools: teach RE in accordance with the Trust Deed and the Church of England Statement of Entitlement. Governors, in consultation with the Headteacher, adopt the Locally Agreed Syllabus, ensuring it meets their context and is at least as rigorous.
- Academies and Multi-Academy Trusts: RE requirements are set out in the academy's funding agreement. An academy with a religious designation provides RE in accordance with the tenets of that faith; a Foundation or VC school converting to academy status follows the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

Within the Diocese of Chelmsford, the following syllabuses are used:

- [Barking and Dagenham](#) – Agreed Syllabus for RE, September 2025.
- [Essex](#) – Agreed Syllabus for RE, in use from September 2023.
- [Havering & Redbridge](#) – Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2022-2027, now a shared, joint syllabus.
- [Newham](#) – Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2022, Exploring Beliefs, Celebrating Diversity.
- [Southend](#) – The Local Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2024-2029 (RE Today Syllabus for Religious Education A+).
- [Thurrock](#) – Syllabus for Religious Education 2022-2027.
- [Waltham Forest](#) – Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2021-2026.

Each Locally Agreed Syllabus is reviewed and updated by the LA SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) approximately every five years.

6. Inclusion

- All pupils — irrespective of educational need or disadvantage — should be enabled to achieve highly in RE.
- Teaching and learning should provide for the needs of all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.
- At Key Stage 4, leaders should ensure the RE curriculum offered to all pupils — including those with SEND — leads to a recognised and appropriate qualification in RE or Religious Studies.
- Schools should also be aware of the Diocese's document, *A Theology of Inclusion*, which sets out the theological basis for inclusive practice across all areas of school life.



7. Governance and Leadership

Governors

Should:

- Understand the distinctive role and purpose of RE in a Church school.
- Be aware of the legal requirements, including the right of withdrawal from RE and the school's procedures for it.
- Have strategic oversight of RE with reference to the Statement of Entitlement (September 2026).
- Be familiar with the RE syllabus; in a VA school, take responsibility for its adoption.
- Monitor RE standards, curriculum time and statutory compliance effectively.
- Are kept regularly informed on RE standards and provision, and stay up to date with Diocesan advice and guidance.

Multi academy trusts with Church schools

Should ensure that:

- RE has a high priority as an academic subject.
- Appropriate systems are in place to monitor and evaluate standards in RE effectively in all Church schools within their trust.
- Senior leaders in Church schools are supported and enabled to prioritise RE in accordance with the statement of entitlement.
- The RE curriculum in place meets the expectations set out in the school's funding agreement.
- Subject knowledge and subject leadership are developed, to enable high-quality teaching and learning in RE.
- They look towards the expertise provided by their diocese for support and guidance with RE.

Headteachers and Senior Leaders

Should:

- Be fully informed about RE requirements and expectations — national, local and Diocesan — including the SIAMS Schedule.
- Ensure sufficient dedicated curriculum time is committed to RE, meeting the time expectations set out above.
- Ensure the RE curriculum is well-balanced, well-sequenced and reflects the school's context, and that all pupils make progress.



- Give priority to building staff expertise through professional development and resourcing, particularly where non-specialists are teaching RE.
- Ensure the school website and prospectus provide clear, current information about RE provision.
- Ensure RE is included within school improvement planning and reported on to governors.

RE Subject Leader/Head of Department

Should:

- Lead curriculum design, in consultation with others, recognising the contribution of schemes of work to meeting all expectations, and ensuring pupils develop confident religious literacy through the explicit teaching of disciplinary knowledge.
- Assist governors and the Headteacher in fulfilling their legal responsibilities, keeping them regularly updated on RE.
- Ensure curriculum time meets requirements for each year group.
- Lead assessment, monitoring and reporting for RE in line with whole-school/academy policy, ensuring assessment reflects the different forms of knowledge in RE and enables every pupil to progress.
- Keep subject knowledge and expertise up to date, and ensure staff receive adequate training.
- Engage with Diocesan guidance and training, and evaluate RE provision with governors and staff regularly.

8. SIAMS

SIAMS inspections take the Statement of Entitlement as their reference point for RE, with effect from September 2026, through two inspection questions:

- **IQ6 — Is the RE curriculum effective?** This applies to all Church schools, and asks whether the RE curriculum meets the expectations set out in the Statement of Entitlement.
 - Does RE get enough time, status and priority?
 - Is it challenging, accurate, well-sequenced, balanced, relevant and diverse?
 - Is it well resourced, and does staff training make a difference?
- **IQ7 — What is the quality of RE in schools with a denominational RE requirement?** This applies only to Voluntary Aided schools (and former VA schools now academies), and to former Voluntary Controlled schools where denominational RE is taught. It does not apply to maintained VC schools or most other former-VC academies — their RE is covered under IQ6 only.

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- How good is the teaching?
- How well do pupils make progress?
- How does assessment shape teaching?
- Leaders should ensure that RE's high priority within the curriculum, and its distinctive role and purpose in a Church school, are clearly understood and articulated by staff and governors.

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