

Non-Statutory Guidance on Religious Education (January 2010)

The Non-Statutory Guidance on Religious Education (RE) is a clear statement of the importance of RE as a subject in its own right as well as a statutory requirement in the school curriculum for all pupils.

Jan Ainsworth – Church of England’s Chief Education Officer said:

“While the document identifies some minority religions that could be included in the curriculum where locally appropriate, the legal requirement remains that Christianity is the principal religion to be studied. Nothing in the guidance has changed the rules for voluntary aided schools; so the governing bodies retain the right to devise their own curriculum to reflect the school’s foundation and circumstances”

- Much of the Guidance does not apply to Voluntary Aided (VA) schools. We recognise that there are many children and young people in Community and other schools beyond the VA sector. We need these and all pupils to have a good experience of RE and to enjoy the personal development and other benefits afforded by high quality work in this subject.
- RE is vital with much knowledge and intrinsic value to offer young people. Through RE they learn not only about religion and belief and to probe the bigger questions of life, but also about the importance of faith in the lives of others. It helps to promote community cohesion and fosters the development of many skills as pupils both learn about and from religion, applying what they have learnt.
- This new Non-Statutory Guidance alerts us to legal requirements as well as to rights and responsibilities. It depicts the role of SACREs, reminding local authorities of their resourcing obligation. It also offers advice on good practice.
- Whilst rightly Non-Statutory, the Guidance should be helpful to Head Teachers, teachers, governors, local authorities, SACREs and others who have a role in planning and teaching Religious Education or with overarching curriculum responsibilities.
- The programme of learning covers the study of Christianity and the five principal religions – Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Hinduism. It also recommends that pupils should be given the chance to learn about other religious traditions such as the Baha’i faith, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism, along with secular world views, like humanism, where appropriate.
- A total of three national documents concerned with Religious Education were published at the end of January 2010. Diana Johnson MP’s letter to the chair of the Religious Education Council helps contextualise these. She states that these guidelines are an expression of the Government of the day on matters responsible bodies (SACREs dioceses, governing bodies) should consider when drawing up RE syllabuses; that the primary programme of learning is illustrative; and that the RE curriculum in faith schools 'is a matter for them, though we continue to encourage those responsible to take account of the educational development and outcomes set out in the primary and secondary programmes'.

1. **New Guidance for Religious Education**
The final version of government guidance on RE in schools and academies can be downloaded from the link below. It has been developed in partnership between the DCSF and member organisations of the RE Council. This document replaces Circular 1/94 for Religious Education but not Collective Worship.
<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/subjects/re/guidance>
2. **New Religious Education Primary Programme of Learning**
These documents from QCDA offer curriculum aims, essential knowledge, key skills, cross-curricular studies, breadth of learning and curriculum progression for Religious Education. RE is expressly identified as a distinct area of learning with the new primary curriculum programme. <http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/new-primary-curriculum/areas-of-learning/religious-education/index.aspx>
3. **Research Report on Resources for Teaching RE**
This research by the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit was commissioned by the DCSF as a key component of the RE Council's RE Action Plan. It is 220 pages long so you may not want to print it out. A helpful summary 'Research Brief' is available via
<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RR197&>

Letter from Schools Minister

Diana Johnson has set out her public appreciation of the importance of Religious Education as a fundamental component in the primary and secondary curriculum and her encouragement that the partnership between the DCSF and the RE Council should continue to pursue its strategic efforts to strengthen the quality of RE

<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/images/stories/pdf/letterschoolsminister.pdf>