



The purpose of religious education

The Northumberland Agreed Syllabus 2022 asserts the importance and value of religious education (RE) for all pupils, with on-going benefits for an open, articulate and understanding society.

The following purpose statements underpin the syllabus,¹ which is constructed to support pupils and teachers in fulfilling them:

- Religious education contributes dynamically to children and young people's education in schools by provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose in life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human.
- In RE pupils learn about religions and beliefs in local, national and global contexts, to discover, explore and consider different answers to these questions.
- Pupils learn to weigh up the value of wisdom from different sources, to develop and express their insights in response and to agree or disagree respectfully.
- Teaching therefore should equip pupils with systematic knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and beliefs, enabling them to develop their ideas, values and identities.
- RE should develop in pupils an aptitude for dialogue so that they can participate positively in our society, with its diverse religions and beliefs.
- Pupils should gain and deploy the skills needed to understand, interpret and evaluate texts, sources of wisdom and authority and other evidence. They should learn to articulate clearly and coherently their personal beliefs, ideas, values and experiences while respecting the right of others to differ.

The purpose of RE is captured in the principal aim, which is intended to be a shorthand version for day-to-day use. It should be considered as a doorway into the wider purpose articulated above.

Principal aim

The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.

Schools should make use of this principal aim throughout their planning to ensure that all teaching and learning contributes to enabling pupils to achieve this aim. Schools and RE departments will find that discussing how the principal aim relates to the purpose of RE, and talking about how classroom RE can contribute to the aim, will be helpful for teachers in clarifying what RE is for in their school and classroom.



The aims of RE

The threefold aim of RE elaborates the principal aim.

The curriculum for RE aims to ensure that all pupils:

1. make sense of a range of religious and non-religious beliefs, so that they can:

- identify, describe, explain and analyse beliefs and concepts in the context of living religions, using appropriate vocabulary
- explain how and why these beliefs are understood in different ways, by individuals and within communities
- recognise how and why sources of authority (e.g. texts, teachings, traditions, leaders) are used, expressed and interpreted in different ways, developing skills of interpretation

2. understand the impact and significance of religious and non-religious beliefs, so that they can:

- examine and explain how and why people express their beliefs in diverse ways
- recognise and account for ways in which people put their beliefs into action in diverse ways, in their everyday lives, within their communities and in the wider world
- appreciate and appraise the significance of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning

3. make connections between religious and non-religious beliefs, concepts, practices and ideas studied, so that they can:

- evaluate, reflect on and enquire into key concepts and questions studied, responding thoughtfully and creatively, giving good reasons for their responses
- challenge the ideas studied, and allow the ideas studied to challenge their own thinking, articulating beliefs, values and commitments clearly in response
- discern possible connections between the ideas studied and their own ways of understanding the world, expressing their critical responses and personal reflections with increasing clarity and understanding