

Ofsted Research Review Report

SACRE overview

The report reiterates the legal position for different types of Schools:

The education inspection framework and RE

Our education inspection framework (EIF) reflects the expectations of how RE is provided. All schools that are state-funded, including free schools and academies, are legally required to provide RE as part of their curriculum. All schools are required to teach RE to all pupils at all key stages (including sixth form), except for those withdrawn.^[footnote 3]

In schools without a religious character, we look at RE as part of EIF inspections under section 5.^[footnote 4] We also look at RE in voluntary controlled (VC) schools, whether or not they are designated as having a religious character.

In other schools with a religious character, RE is inspected by a body appointed by the maintained school's governing body under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 or as provided in the academy's funding agreement.

This report will be of particular interest to schools whose RE we look at under the EIF. However, it should also be of interest to the entire RE sector. For a summary of the legal context of RE and Ofsted's inspection arrangements see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education/research-review-series-religious-education#appendix-a>

Note: RE will be considered as part of the assessment of personal development in *all* schools

The RE Curriculum

Types of Knowledge

The review recognises that there is no single way of constructing and teaching a high quality RE curriculum. It identifies three areas of subject-specific knowledge in RE:

1. **Substantive knowledge** about various religious and non-religious traditions;
2. **Disciplinary knowledge** (different 'ways of knowing') that enables pupils to understand and use some of the methods and techniques associated with studying religious and nonreligious traditions;
3. **Personal knowledge** that enables pupils to better understand and interrogate their own position, presuppositions and values.

The report identifies some common features of a high-quality RE curriculum, based on the research reviewed. The table below gives a summary of these features.

<p>Ofsted Research Review Report</p> <p>The curriculum should carefully select and cover substantive content and concepts (“collectively enough”) in order to build a schema of knowledge about religious and non-religious traditions, rather than covering excessive amounts of content superficially. The content covered must be sufficient for pupils to grasp a bigger picture about the place of religion and non-religion in the world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RE curriculum must ensure that what is taught and learned in RE is grounded in what is known about religion or non-religion from academic study. This helps prevent pupils from developing misconceptions about religion and non-religion, particular through generalising, stereotyping or essentialising ways of believing, living and thinking. • Pupils should study certain areas of the RE curriculum in depth and acquire a range of detailed knowledge of different concepts and ideas, which they remember long term. Drawing on this prior knowledge should enable them to consider more complex ideas about religion. Leaders and teachers should select this ‘depth of study’ from contrasting religious and/or non-religious traditions so that pupils avoid developing misrepresentations.
<p>The curriculum must be well sequenced to ensure that pupils learn the knowledge they need for later topics.</p>
<p>Teachers and leaders should carefully consider when pupils should relate the content to their own personal knowledge (for example, their own prior assumptions).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and leaders must ensure that the way in which the curriculum is taught and assessed focuses pupils’ attention squarely on the knowledge they need to learn. • Leaders must ensure that adequate curriculum time is given to RE, so that leaders can deliver an ambitious curriculum
<p><i>Note: the Dearing Report sets the expectation at 5% of curriculum time dedicated specifically to RE, not to an amalgamation of RE and other curriculum subjects, such as Humanities, PSHE, Citizenship, etc</i></p>
<p>Leaders must ensure that there is sufficient training and professional development so that teachers have appropriate subject professional knowledge.</p>

Ofsted will publish a review of the quality of RE curriculums in spring term 2022. This will be based on ‘deep dives’ carried out during inspections under the EIF.

You can access the full report here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education/research-review-series-religious-education#the-education-inspection-framework-and-re>

Summaries of the report:

<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/speed-read-ofsteds-guide-to-a-high-quality-re-curriculum/>

<https://www.tes.com/news/ofsted-six-ways-improve-re-teaching>