

DfE EYFS Requirements and Guidance applied to RE

RE in the Early Years Foundation Stage: A legal requirement in the Foundation Year

This guidance has been written by RE Today for schools using our RE services.

Pupils should encounter religions and worldviews through exploring special people, books, times, places and objects and by visiting places of worship. They should listen to and talk about religious stories. Pupils can be introduced to new vocabulary including subject specific words and use all their senses to explore beliefs, practices and forms of expression. They can ask questions and reflect on their own feelings and experiences. They use their imagination and curiosity to develop their appreciation of and wonder at the natural world in which they live.

Religious Education is, unlike the subjects of the National Curriculum, a legal requirement for all pupils on the school roll: this includes all those in the reception year.

In line with the DfE's new 2021 Early Years Foundation Stage framework schools are to plan RE opportunities through purposeful play and a mix of adult guided and child-initiated activity through the 7 areas of learning. Schools are required to plan their curriculum, including RE, through the Educational Programmes in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Your learning intentions for RE planning will be developed from the 7 areas of learning in the Early Years DfE Development Matters document (2021). Teachers and schools will find our more detailed examples (in an appendix to the syllabus) useful, but these map the territory. RE Today Agreed Syllabuses give support and suggested examples of planning in this important area.

RE can be taught through all areas of the curriculum, developing children's key skills and knowledge through the following possible opportunities.

Prime area: Communication and Language. RE enables children to:

- Develop their spoken language through quality conversation in a language-rich environment, gaining new vocabulary about religion and worldviews
- Engage actively with stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems from the RE field, taking opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts
- Share their ideas via conversation, story-telling and role play, responding to support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate their thoughts in the RE field
- Become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures in relation to RE content.
- Offer explanations and answers to 'why' questions about religious stories, non-fiction, rhymes, songs and poems.

Prime area: Personal, Social and Emotional Development. RE enables children to:

- Observe and join in warm and supportive relationships with adults and learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others
- Manage emotions and develop a positive sense of self, understanding their own feelings and those of others e.g. through religious story
- Talk and think about simple values as they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably
- Notice and respond to ideas about caring, sharing and kindness from RE content including stories, sayings and songs.

Prime area: Physical Development. RE enables children to:

- Use and develop their motor skills through RE based arts and craft activities and, for example, small world play, visual representations of their ideas and thoughts, role play

Specific area: Literacy. RE enables children to:

- Build their abilities in language comprehension through talking with adults about the world around them, including the world of religion and belief
- Engage with stories and non-fiction in RE settings and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together.
- Build their skills in RE-related word reading, recognizing religious words and discovering new vocabulary in relation to religions and worldviews
- Articulate ideas and use RE examples to write simple phrases or sentences that can be read by others.

Specific area: Mathematics. RE enables children to:


- Develop their spatial reasoning skills, noticing shape, space and measures in relation to RE content
- Look for patterns and relationships and spot connections, sorting and ordering objects simply.


Specific area: Understanding the World. RE enables children to:


- Make sense of their physical world and their community, e.g. on visits to places of worship, or by meeting members of religious communities
- Listen to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems to foster understanding of our culturally, socially and ecologically diverse world.
- Extend their knowledge and familiarity with words that support understanding of religion and belief
- Talk about the lives of people around them, understanding characters and events from stories.
- Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read and experienced in class.
- Explore the natural world around them making observations of animals and plants, environments and seasons, making space for responses of joy, wonder, awe and questioning.


Specific area: Expressive Arts and Design. RE enables children to:


- Develop artistic and cultural awareness in relation to RE materials in relation to art, music, dance, imaginative play, and role-play and stories to represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings.
- Build their imagination and creativity by exploring and playing with a wide range of media and materials using RE content, responding in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and taste.
- See, hear and participate in a wide range of examples of religious and spiritual expression, developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts.
- Create work drawing from religions and beliefs with a variety of materials and tools, sharing their creations and explaining the meaning of their work.
- Adapt and recount religious stories inventively, imaginatively and expressively, and sing, perform and learn from well-known songs in RE imaginatively and expressively.

Prime areas of learning and their associated developmental steps taken from the suggested reception guidance in Development Matters.	Advise and suggestions: EYFS and the RE Curriculum This advice provides examples of what teachers might plan and do to support children's learning in RE.
Communication and Language	
<p>Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive.</p> <p>Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.</p> <p>Children will have opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary; • Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate; • Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher. 	<p>In RE teachers might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give children opportunities to listen with enjoyment to stories, songs and poems from different religious communities and traditions; • Expect children to respond to religious stories, songs and poems with relevant comments, questions or actions; • In both whole class and small group settings, children have chances to use talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events in religious stories and other materials; • Enable children to attend to their own play in which their experience and learning in RE is used to grow their understanding, e.g in home corner activities, singing, craft or role playing. • Give children opportunities to answer 'who', 'how', 'when', and 'what' questions about their experiences in response to religious stories, celebrations and ideas from different traditions and communities; • Enable children to use the new words they learn about religion and belief to talk about 'why' questions • Give children opportunities to use the words they are learning about spirituality and values to talk about how they and others show feelings; • Encourage children to develop their own narratives in relation to stories they hear from different communities, including through play. • Set up the classroom so that children can share stories and play activities arising from them which make them think about the words they use. • Across a range of topics, encourage children to learn and begin to use new vocabulary associated with RE, including places of worship, ceremonies, celebrations and festivals, holy books, buildings, objects and times and people's words to describe their ideas about God. 

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Personal, Social and Emotional Development	
<p>Through adult modelling and guidance, children will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.</p> <p>Children will have opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly; • Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate; • Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. • Be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge; • Explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly; • Manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet and understanding the importance of healthy food choices. • Work and play cooperatively and take turns with others; • Form positive attachments to adults and friendships with peers; • Show sensitivity to their own and to others' needs. 	<p>In RE teachers might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give opportunities for children to use a range of emotional language to express their feelings; • Enable pupils to recognise that their behaviour has an impact on others, for example by noticing empathic behaviour in religious story • Encourage children to talk about their own and others' behaviour and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable; • Enable children to think and talk about taking turns, waiting for others and listening – aspects of dialogue and behaviour encouraged in many religious codes of living • Encourage children to follow simple instructions e.g when taking part in a role play: how does the Vicar baptise the baby? What does Mum do to celebrate Shabbat? • Enable children to think about values such as patience, perseverance and to notice what difference these values make, using religious story, song or prayer as 'raw material' for thinking. • Think about our rules and why we need them, using examples of rules from religions to consider issues of right and wrong and why these questions matter; • Give children opportunities to learn about how and why we choose what we eat, including for example vegetarian practice in Hindu tradition or religious stories about Creation and the importance of the Earth. • Give children chances to develop their awareness of their own needs, views and feelings and to be sensitive to those of others so that they find the value of co-operation. • Encourage play in teams and in co-operative games and ways of enjoying each other's company. • Enable children to recognise difference simply, and to have a developing respect for their own cultures and beliefs, and those of other people. • Encourage children to show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, as – in play and other means - they form positive relationships. 

Prime areas of learning and their associated developmental steps taken from the suggested reception guidance in Development Matters.	Advise and suggestions: EYFS and the RE Curriculum This advice provides examples of what teachers might plan and do to support children's learning in RE.
Physical Development	
<p>Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Sensory explorations, games and opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors develop social and emotional well-being. Varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, music making, arts and crafts each allow children to develop confidence.</p> <p>Children will have opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use and develop their motor skills through RE based arts and craft activities and, for example, small world play, visual representations of their ideas and thoughts, role play and games • Use and be more aware of all their senses in their learning • Show sensitivity to others in their team work and play • Think, talk and act in relation to social and emotional topics in ways that enable their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. 	<p>In RE teachers might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage play in teams and in co-operative games and ways of enjoying each other's company, and talk about the values related to this kind of team work. • Use and talk about the senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing as they explore examples of religious worship, practice and behaviour. • Encourage children to show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, as – in play and other means - they form positive relationships. • Enable children to think, talk and act in ways that build up their understanding the values and ways of life that make for our wellbeing – religious teachings speak often about these topics. 

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Literacy	
<p>Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).</p> <p>Children will have opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary; • Anticipate – where appropriate – key events in stories; • Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role-play. • Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words. • Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others. 	<p>In RE teachers might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give children access to a wide range of books, poems and other written materials from many religious sources to ignite their interest. • Enable them to listen to religious stories carefully so that they can use new vocabulary to retell the stories • Encourage children to notice, talk about and understand some of meanings, feelings and pleasures of the stories they engage with. • Tell stories in parts, inviting children to anticipate: what might Jesus do next? What happens to Rama and Sita in the next chapter do you think? Will Moses ever escape? • Discuss religious stories, songs and poems with pupils so that they can think about meanings, words and people in their own ways, including developing their learning through play. • Introduce pupils to a small number of carefully chosen key words about each religion, so that they can recognise and sound these words in their RE <p>Examples of these words might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion / holy book / festival / sacred place • Christian / Jesus / Bible / God / Church • Jewish / Torah / Moses / King David / G-d / Shabbat (NB: many Jewish people write 'G-d' to avoid using the full holy divine name) • Muslim / Islam / Prophet / Qur'an / Mosque <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use some RE examples to enable pupils to practice their letters and spellings • Encourage pupils to write simple phrases or sentences which can be read by others from the work they do with religious stories, artefacts, songs • Build on children's play by giving the opportunities for simple writing of new words, names, or labels for religious material they are discovering. 

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Mathematics	
<p>It is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes.</p> <p>Children will have opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare quantities up to 10 in different contexts, recognising when one quantity is greater than, less than or the same as the other quantity; • Explore and represent patterns within numbers up to 10, including evens and odds, double facts and how quantities can be distributed equally. 	<p>This is not a major area of contribution for RE to children's development, but there are lots of connections between these areas and good learning in RE. Some brief examples are given.</p> <div data-bbox="1098 389 1398 584">  </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give children chances to recognise, create and describe some patterns found in religion, for example in repeated patterns in Islamic design or in counting games used by Jewish children at festivals • Ask children to describe spaces which are holy for different communities, e.g. a Church, Mosque or synagogue from a photo, using their vocabulary of space and number • Enable children to practice simple sorting and ordering activities using some religious materials and key numbers, for example sorting artefacts or counting items used in religious festivals.

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Understanding the World	
<p>Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support later reading comprehension.</p> <p>Children will have opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past and present: Talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society; • Know some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class; • Understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling. • Learn about people culture and communities: Describe their immediate environment using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps; • Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class; • Explain some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries, drawing on knowledge from stories, 	<p>Past and present in RE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable children to talk about similarities and differences between themselves and others, among families, communities and religions; • Give children opportunities to know about the past, e.g. through the stories told about religious festivals about Gurus, Prophets, gods and goddesses or key religious leaders • Encourage children to join in experiences like re-enactments, role play, dressing up and other playful learning about religion and cultures; • Provide a rich story telling and play environment for children to think about religions and their 'long time ago' aspects; • Encourage children to talk about characters, values and feelings in stories.  <p>People, cultures and communities in RE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use and develop the potential for local study of places of worship or aspects of cultural diversity; • Enable visits to observe interiors and exteriors of buildings used for worship; • Give children opportunities to hear stories from different religious communities in the local area • Enable pupils to identify different features of holy places, comparing old and modern and talking about preferences; • Enrich children's knowledge of different religions, for example Christians, Muslims, Jewish people, and their presence in communities in your local area or wider region • Tell children stories about religions and beliefs in other countries, for example about how Christmas or Eid or Divali are celebrated in different parts of the world; • Use simple maps, religious artefacts, stories told in varied ways (e.g. with puppets, songs, video or drama) to deepen children's knowledge of religions. <p>The Natural World in RE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable children to explore what is beautiful, fascinating, wonderful or mysterious about the natural world, selecting and talking about plants, animals and 'wonders of the world' in ways that are open to awe and wonder • Enable learning by reading and talking about creation stories from different religions that celebrate the beauty and gifts of the natural worlds and humanity's place within it. • Provide for children to play out of doors and to carry their learning into play using modelling clay, mud and water,

<p>non-fiction texts and – when appropriate – maps.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about the Natural World: Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants; • Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class; • Understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter. 	<p>sand and natural materials to enjoy the natural world and to think and talk about what nature means to us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give children opportunities to recognise that many religious people give thanks (to God) for the natural world and its beauty, fruitfulness and the pleasure it gives us, for example through Harvest Festivals, prayers, and caring for the earth. • Show children how to express personal responses to the natural world, talking, choosing a word to write or reflecting quietly on their favourite fruits, flowers, birds, animals, places, kinds of weather and so on. What makes these natural things precious and special? • Encourage children are encouraged to notice and talk about the feelings of wonder and awe that come from the natural world – a tree, a chick, a bird, a pet. They experience the Earth and its fruitfulness in simple ways, and ask questions about these experiences.
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Expressive Arts and Design	
<p>The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.</p> <p>Children will have opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function; • Share their creations, explaining the process they have used; • Make use of props and materials when role playing characters in narratives and stories. • Be Imaginative and Expressive: Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher; • Sing a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs; • Perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and – when appropriate – try to move in time with music. 	<div data-bbox="1125 376 1401 577" data-label="Image"> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give children the chance to bring their learning from RE into their creative and craft activities using any materials – card and tissue, paint and colour, natural found objects, toys and prints – to explore religious story, practice, objects and artefacts. • Enable children to talk about and share what they make, simply connecting it to the festivals, celebrations and ceremonies they learn about from Jews, Christians or Muslims • In role play, give children chances to use props and materials to be David and Goliath, Rama and Sita, Moses and Pharaoh, Mary and Joseph. Enliven religious character, narrative, values and stories through the children's own creativity and play <p>Being imaginative and expressive in RE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable children to use their imagination in art, music, dance, imaginative play, and role-play and stories to represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings; • Provide possibilities for children to respond in a variety of imaginative and expressive ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and taste; • Show children how expressing feelings of joy, happiness, love, togetherness – and also of sadness, disappointment or sorrow can groups etc, when responding to themes from stories; • Make it possible for children to respond in dance, movement and music to religious music, celebrations and festivities, including examples which are joyful, exciting and lively but also reflective and prayerful; • Give children chances to listen to a range of religious / cultural music or observing dance, for example Hindu dance and hand gestures, Jewish music for joyful or sad occasions, Christian movement and action songs.

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Special thanks for advice and support from Sara Baber, Sandwell Education