

A short summary of Ofsted Published Research Review on Religious Education – May 2021
Ruthless Greatest Hits version

- Not enough time is given to RE – primary or secondary.
- RE is under-resourced, eroding teachers' professional identity.
- Subject-specialist staffing- pupils should be taught RE by teachers with appropriate subject professional knowledge.
- The report focuses on the Quality of Education judgment
- Dividing up RE to 51% Christianity is problematic, studying too many faiths is also problematic.
- Progression is vital – we should know what it means to 'get better' at RE
- 3 types of knowledge identified – substantive content, learning how to know and personal knowledge.
- Substantive K includes lived experience, artefacts and texts and religious concepts.
- RE concepts include those that are common to all (interpretation), to most (sacrifice) and to specifics (incarnation)
- Care must be taken to avoid harmful misconceptions and generalisations – use some, many etc in referring.
- Studying 'Big Ideas' like the 'pursuit of a good life' is one direction that could be taken (Big Ideas curriculum)
- Excessive content is not required – cumulatively sufficient content is required.
- Need to be aware of global contexts – do not just study Abrahamic religions.
- Avoid the 'isms'. Religions are not silos – there are fuzzy edges and blurred boundaries – fluidity.
- Sequencing the content is crucial – k needs to enable pupils to have the ability to examine controversial issues.
- Content needs to help pupils develop personal k – taking into account and linking to their own worldview.
- Some static knowledge gives little room for pupils to develop personal knowledge or connections.
- RE should not induct pupils into any religious tradition
- Good RE will identify specific content to develop personal k - pupils may not otherwise see the value of it.
- Teaching focuses on crucial content that helps pupils to learn the specific topic they are studying and also builds a firm foundation that subsequent teaching builds on.
- When selecting methods and activities in RE be clear about the object of what pupils are to learn and use it to support pupils in building up rich and diverse stores of knowledge.
- Listening to faith practitioners can be valuable because pupils learn about differences in the ways that religious and non-religious people live. It is important to be clear about what they expect pupils to learn from the encounter and, importantly, how that links to curriculum goals.

Assessment

- High-quality RE assessment is used sufficiently, not excessively, be clear about what is being assessed and why in RE
- There is no clear picture about the nature and function of assessment in RE, let alone a straightforward conception of what constitutes high-quality assessment. This is partly due to uncertainty about what exactly is being assessed in RE
- Some assessment models in RE continue to use 'scales', 'ladders' or 'levels' of generic skills to determine progress. Many of these are variations of obsolete assessment models, such as the 8-level scale. In these models, the object of assessment is considered separately from the RE curriculum. They are not valid assessment models.

- The assumption of a vertical model of skills progression in RE is not valid. It is also 'obviously nonsense' to assume that pupils would need to pass through each step of the assessment ladder only once.
- Applying age-related expectations may appear to be a clear way to compare pupils, but often these expectations do not closely reflect the RE curriculum that pupils are learning.
- Different types of assessments should be used appropriately: Formative assessments help teachers identify which pupils have misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge, so they can adapt the curriculum as necessary. Where summative assessments are used for accountability purposes, leaders can ensure that they are sufficiently spaced apart to enable pupils to learn the expanding domain of the curriculum.
- RE assessment needs to relate to the curriculum, which sets out what it means to 'get better' at RE.
- Assessments should not be excessively onerous for teachers.
- CPD is needed for leaders and teachers to reflect on how different assessment questions and tasks in RE can frame teachers' and pupils' expectations about engaging with religious and non-religious traditions.

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