

The duty to teach Religious Education to all pupils, in all years, in all schools

NNNN SACRE have received clarification from the Department for Education with regard to the requirement to teach RE in maintained schools and academies. We have also read the new Ofsted Inspection Handbook, and wish to offer this helpful guidance to schools on the expectation to provide high quality RE to all pupils in all years in all schools

The requirement on maintained schools within NNNN, including community schools without a religious designation and voluntary controlled schools, is to follow the NNNN Agreed Syllabus at all key stages.

Under the terms of their Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State, all academies (including free schools) must provide RE for all their registered pupils from age 5 to 18, except for those whose parents exercise the right of withdrawal.

Generally speaking, academies with a religious designation (except ex-voluntary controlled schools) must teach within the tenets of the faith specified in their designation. They may, in addition, provide RE that is in line with a locally agreed syllabus and teach about other faiths if they choose.

Academies with no religious designation must teach RE that '*reflects that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain*'. Academies are free to follow a locally agreed syllabus if they choose to.

The DfE would expect that all schools provide pupils with a curriculum that is high quality and promotes progression through the key stages, including in RE. The non-statutory guidance for RE (2010) also states that head teachers should ensure that '*the subject is well led and effectively managed, and that standards and achievement in RE, and the quality of the provision, are subject to regular and effective self-evaluation.*'¹

Agreed syllabuses and requiring schools to teach an accredited qualification

The NNN Agreed Syllabus Key Stage Four requirements are that;

Insert KS4 requirements from AS, especially if it includes an Accredited RS qualification.

The law does require relevant schools to follow the agreed syllabus. So, if such a school has pupils at Key stage 4 not following an accredited course, they may be in breach of *that* statutory duty (i.e. to follow the agreed syllabus).

It is also the case that, if a school teaches a RS qualification at key stage 4, and enters its pupils for this at the end of Year 10, it should still be teaching RE in Year

¹ <http://www.nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/1-97-item-2.pdf>

11. Otherwise, it does not meet the duty to provide RE as part of its curriculum to ‘*all registered pupils at the school*’.¹

The New Ofsted School Inspection Handbook (May 2019)

The new Inspection Handbook is quite clear about the expectations with regard to RE. Paragraph 172 states:

172. All pupils in maintained schools are expected to study the basic curriculum, which includes national curriculum⁶⁶, religious education and age-appropriate relationship and sex education⁶⁷. Academies are expected to offer all pupils a broad curriculum⁶⁸ that should be similar in breadth and ambition.²

This is further clarified by footnote 68:

⁶⁸ The Education Act 2002 for state-funded schools and section 1A of the Academies Act 2010 for academies. State-funded schools are also required to: teach basic curriculum; promote the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. Maintained schools must teach the national curriculum. Academies must include English, mathematics, science and religious education in their curriculum.²

During inspections,

Inspectors will draw evidence about leaders’ curriculum intent principally from discussion with senior and subject leaders. Inspectors will explore:

- whether leaders are following the national curriculum and basic curriculum or, in academies, a curriculum of similar breadth and ambition
- how carefully leaders have thought about what end points the curriculum is building towards, what pupils will be able to know and do at those end points, and how leaders have planned the curriculum accordingly. This includes considering how the intended curriculum will address social disadvantage by addressing gaps in pupils’ knowledge and skills
- how leaders have sequenced the curriculum to enable pupils to build their knowledge and skills towards the agreed end points
- how leaders have ensured that the subject curriculum contains content that has been identified as most useful, and ensured that this content is taught in a logical progression, systematically and explicitly enough for all pupils to acquire the intended knowledge and skills
- how the curriculum has been designed and taught so that pupils read at an age-appropriate level.²

² www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

Senior and subject leaders will need to be prepared to respond to these areas of enquiry in regard to any subject area they are expected to teach, which includes RE in all schools, to all pupils in all years. In schools of all types, RE may be the focus of a 'deep dive'³ during inspections, and we recommend that you prepare for this possibility.

School Website

School leaders will be aware that they have a duty to publish certain key information about the school on their website.

Local Authority maintained schools must publish:

- the content of your school curriculum in each academic year for every subject, including Religious Education even if it is taught as part of another subject or subjects, or is called something else
- the names of any phonics or reading schemes you're using in key stage 1
- a list of the courses available to pupils at key stage 4, including GCSEs
- how parents or other members of the public can find out more about the curriculum your school is following⁴

Academies should publish:

- the content of the curriculum your school follows in each academic year for every subject, including for mandatory subjects such as Religious Education even if it's taught as part of another subject or subjects or is called something else
- your approach to the curriculum
- how parents or other members of the public can find out more about the curriculum your school is following
- how you meet the [16 to 19 study programme requirements](#) (if you have a sixth form or offer education at 16 to 19)

Depending on what phase of education your school offers, we recommend you also publish any of the following that apply to your school:

- the names of any phonics or reading schemes you are using in key stage 1
- a list of the courses available to pupils at key stage 4, including GCSEs
- the 16 to 19 qualifications you offer⁵

³

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/806826/inspecting_the_curriculum.pdf

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online#curriculum>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online#curriculum>

Schools may be aware that inspection teams will use the information on their website to identify areas of enquiry during an inspection, and so will be keen to ensure that it reflects best practice.

SACRE Support

Taken together it is clear that there is a renewed commitment from the DfE and Ofsted to ensure that high quality RE is taught to all pupils, in all schools in all years. NNNN SACRE are confident that the NNNN Agreed Syllabus has clear intent and a coherent sequencing which, if taught well, should enable all pupils to make good progress in RE. If you would like the support of SACRE in ensuring that your RE curriculum is legally compliant and of a high quality, or if you need help in accessing the NNNN Agreed Syllabus, do contact us.

Equally we would be delighted to hear of your good practice in RE. We hope that we can be confident that all schools in the borough are providing the very best RE to all of our pupils. Do stay in touch.

Xxx

Chair of NNNN SACRE