

Oldham Agreed Syllabus for RE Guidance and Support Materials

- **Management and Monitoring of RE**
- **Self Evaluation**
- **Readiness for Inspection**
- **The Role of the Subject Leader**

RE is taught by many teachers with other specialisms: the appointment of a subject leader is basic to good practice. The Agreed Syllabus Conference takes this view: in primary and secondary schools alike, quality in RE is dependent upon the quality of subject leadership. This is an issue for governors and school managers.

This brief section does not give complete guidance to the subject leader about their role. Teachers should also consult the OFSTED Framework for Inspection, the Teacher Training Agency's 'Standards for Subject Leaders' and the joint publication by NATRE, AREAIC and AULRE 'Standards for Subject Leaders in Religious Education'.

Policy

It is basic good practice for schools to appoint an RE subject leader, and to agree a policy for RE. Many schools have a link governor for RE. Many schools may wish to review their policy as they implement this Agreed Syllabus during 2013-14, and so we have included a sample policy (for RE in a primary school) in the guidance and support materials for the Agreed Syllabus. The syllabus is broad and flexible, so school policy should state clearly how the staff and governors wish to implement their RE curriculum in their own context.

Monitoring and Self Evaluation

In the primary school, the RE subject leader can support and guide colleagues through an active monitoring role. It is appropriate for RE subject leaders to ask:

- ❑ Is there a **planned programme** of RE for each class or year group, in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus?
- ❑ Is the **curriculum time** for RE at or above the minimum time endorsed by the Agreed Syllabus (this can be taken over a term, year and key stage)?
- ❑ Are **resources** for RE of good quality and used appropriately? Are resources varied, challenging, accurate and authentic?
- ❑ Does the taught programme of RE address the **programmes of study and key questions** from the Agreed Syllabus appropriately?
- ❑ Is there a suitable, even **balance between the skills of RE?** (gathering facts and information, understanding and analysis, personal evaluation, reflection and response, self expression, enquiry and exploration)
- ❑ Do teachers have **clear objectives** and **set high expectations** in RE (this will be informed by the eight level scale and assessment guidance in the Agreed Syllabus)?
- ❑ Are high standards of attainment in RE promoted through high expectations of pupil progress and a **challenging RE curriculum** for all pupils?
- ❑ Are RE **lessons well structured?**
- ❑ Are teaching and learning in RE **suitably paced?**
- ❑ Is there a suitable proportion of **direct teaching** in RE, with resources used effectively to model methods?
- ❑ Does **whole class work, discussion and questioning** enable all pupils to make progress and take part?
- ❑ In what ways does the teaching provide **opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** of pupils?
- ❑ Are **opportunities for spiritual and moral development identified** and developed for all the pupils?
- ❑ Is **group work** well organised for learning in RE?
- ❑ Does the taught programme of RE provide balanced **opportunities for varied learning preferences?** Are there good opportunities for visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning?
- ❑ Is RE teaching providing **varied opportunities for pupils to develop** ideas, arguments, thoughtful reflections and questions of their own? This will include increasing use of pupils' developing writing skills.
- ❑ Are **support staff** deployed effectively to support learning in RE?
- ❑ Do pupils with a variety of **special needs**, including the more able pupils, make appropriate progress in RE?
- ❑ Are opportunities for pupils to use and enhance their **ICT skills** embedded in the teaching and learning in RE?
- ❑ Is the RE Curriculum enriched by **visits and visitors?**

Observation

Teachers find observation of RE teaching both challenging and reassuring. Subject leaders may wish to take a lead in being observed: this is good practice. Professional approaches to RE will make space for all teachers to be observed, and to benefit from team working.

A programme of observation is often most effective if it runs alongside opportunities for in service professional development, and if the focus is clear, on for example a particular religion, or on learning from religion, or on skills of reflection.

In observing RE teaching, subject leaders may find the observation sheet on the next page gives focus to their monitoring and to staff development issues.

Issue or question being addressed:	Observer's Commentary
What were the aims of the RE lesson?	
How effectively were the aims shared with the pupils?	
What was expected of the pupils? Were expectations challenging? Were they appropriately focused on RE objectives?	
What was the structure of the lesson and the learning tasks set by the teacher? Did the tasks enable learning about and from religions, understanding and reflection?	
What resources were available? Did teaching make good use of resources for religious learning?	
In what ways did the teaching provide opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and/or cultural development of pupils?	
What was the balance of time between direct teaching and the tasks pupils worked on?	
What religious concepts and vocabulary were being taught and / or reinforced?	
In what ways did questioning develop pupils' religious understanding? How did pupils respond, especially to open questioning?	
What strategies were used to match work to pupils' needs (group work, differentiated resources or progressively graded tasks, individual work)?	
Did pupils have opportunities to respond for themselves, reflect on ideas and questions, relate religion to their own experience, learn from religion? Was this effective?	
How did the lesson conclude? Was learning made explicit by pupils themselves? Could they say what they had learned?	
Was the deployment of any support staff effective?	

Oldham Agreed Syllabus Guidance materials. A Sample RE Policy for a Primary School

This policy has been adopted by the Governors in consultation with the RE subject leader and teaching staff. It was approved by governors on... [-----] and will be reviewed on... [-----]

The Aims of RE at Ourschool Primary.

RE at Ourschool will be provided in line with the legal requirements. These are that:

- the basic curriculum will include provision for religious education for all pupils on the school roll;
- the content of RE shall reflect the fact that religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religious traditions represented in Great Britain;
- the RE which is provided shall be in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus for Oldham LEA (published in 2013).

Within the framework of the law and the Agreed Syllabus, our aims in RE are:

- to enable each child to explore our shared human experience and the questions of meaning and purpose which arise from our experiences;
- to enable pupils to know about and understand the beliefs and practices of some of the great religions of the world, particularly those represented in Oldham and the UK. Among these religions, Christianity has a particular place, and is taught in each year of the primary phase. Islam is also taught at each key stage.
- to promote respect, sensitivity and cultural awareness by teaching about the religions represented in the region and the country;
- to affirm each child in his / her own family tradition, religious or secular;

- to provide children with opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- to develop the ability of pupils to think about, and develop for themselves, beliefs and values by which they can live through studying concepts like celebration, the sacred, authority, religious belief and lifestyle, and through exploring the fundamental questions of life.

Context

- The context of RE at Ourschool is that of a small / large / rural / urban primary school, serving children in the age range...
- We work to the Oldham Agreed Syllabus.
- We recognise the variety of religious and non religious backgrounds from which our pupils come. We welcome the diversity, and we intend to be sensitive to the home background of each child.
- We are glad to have the active support of members of local faith communities in RE and in general.
- We recognise the inter-relationship between pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the leading role which the RE curriculum plays in some of these areas.

Time Allocation.

The National Framework for RE (DFES 2004) recognises RE as a 'core' subject, required for all pupils. The time allocated at Ourschool will be ___ hours per year at Key Stage One and ___ hours per year at Key Stage Two. RE curriculum time does not include assembly or collective worship, even where the assembly provides a starting point for curricular work.

Scheme of Work

A detailed exemplar scheme of work is available for teachers and other interested people alongside this policy. It has been written in the light of the Agreed Syllabus. RE will be based around termly themes in Reception and Key Stage One, where Christianity and either Islam or Hinduism will be the major religions studied. At Key Stage Two pupils will learn about Christianity and two other religions throughout the key stage, and will also have major learning opportunities with regard to two other religions, _____ in years 3 and 4, and _____ in years 5 and 6.

No teacher can be an instant expert in six religions. Staff who feel the need to build up their own subject knowledge can take up some training opportunities. CPD funds are available this year and next, and the RE co-ordinator can supply some introductory reading material for staff. (See the Co-ordinator's file)

Teaching and Learning Styles

OFSTED reports suggest that the range of teaching and learning strategies in use in RE is often too narrow, in over using stories and a limited range of drawing and written tasks. Our policy is to aim to increase the use in RE of art, drama, thinking skills, speaking and listening activities, visits, posters, photos, DVDs, ICT use, display work and other active learning strategies. Cross curricular work is encouraged, in line with whole school policy on teaching and learning. We recognise the importance of teaching to the attainment targets of the Agreed Syllabus in a balanced way.

Cross Curricular Themes and RE

RE can benefit from teaching approaches which bring the subject together with literacy, creative arts, History, PSHE or many other subject areas. We will plan to implement the Agreed Syllabus through cross curricular teaching and learning where appropriate, recognising the need for such integrated teaching to have regard to the quality of RE and other subjects in a partnership that is mutual.

Resources

Resources are stored in each key stage base, and should be returned after use in tidy order! The school has invested in new

books, religious artefacts, video, picture packs and posters, and staff may need to familiarise themselves with the new materials. We maintain an RE story file in the library, which offers many stories from different traditions which teachers have used in RE. There are a range of RE 'big books' which can be used across the age range as well. Staff are invited to suggest gaps in the resources for future spending.

Visits to places of worship

We are able to visit two different Christian churches and a Mosque in the immediate vicinity of the school, where religious leaders and members of the community are willing to meet with children and be involved in RE. We shall aim to use this valuable resource for all classes. We also intend to enable children at key stage two to visit a place of worship from one of the other major religious traditions while studying the unit on 'religion in the neighbourhood'. The RE co-ordinator will organise this educational visit.

Matching Work to Pupils' Needs

Whole school policy with regard to special needs and differentiation applies to RE: teachers should be alert to the fact that some children have special and deep experience of a religion through family practice. This of course may not relate to their general educational 'ability'.

Assessment

Assessment for learning is continuous in RE as in other subjects. We **report on pupils' progress and attainment in RE to parents**, as required by law. The Agreed Syllabus provides descriptions of 8 levels of attainment, which the school has agreed to use as a basis for reporting at the end of each key stage. We will intend to make specific, individual, accurate comments on each child's progress in RE in end of year reports, based on regular monitoring of work with regard to the attainment targets of the Agreed Syllabus. We will transfer this information to new schools when pupils leave us.

A **folder of examples of pupils' work**, which is designed to help teachers make judgments about attainment and progress is available. Staff are asked to add to it copies of pupils' work that provide clear evidence of achievement at particular levels.

This approach to exemplifying standards aims to clarify our understanding of what makes for quality in learning about religions and learning from religions.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

We intend that this policy should operate for the next five years, and then be fully reviewed by all staff and governors. To ensure that the policy is in practice, and to help teachers keep track of their own work and needs for support or training, all staff are asked to return a summary sheet of RE work done to the co-ordinator each term. The co-ordinator's role includes monitoring and evaluation of this policy in practice. We maintain a 'self evaluation' of our RE work in readiness for inspection.

Self Evaluation, RE and Inspection

The subject leader will maintain an active awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject, in line with OFSTED guidance about self evaluation and review. The notes below provide the tools for self evaluation of RE.

Transition to Secondary Education

We use the transition ideas provided by the Agreed Syllabus, and provide the schools our pupils move on to with a simple statement of the religions and topics they have been studying as part of their transition information.

Withdrawal

We note the rights of parents to withdraw their children from RE and of teachers to withdraw from teaching the subject. We aim to provide an open curriculum which can be taught to all pupils, by all staff. Please refer to the co-ordinator or head teacher any questions from parents about withdrawals. There are no pupils withdrawn from RE at present.

Link Governor:

Named Co –ordinator:

Date:

(This sample policy is offered to help schools in developing their own policy for RE. It is copyright, RE Today, but may be freely used by Oldham schools)

Self Evaluation for the RE Subject leader.

Under the inspection framework from 2006, OFSTED inspection will use school self evaluation to assess the quality of provision in subjects of the curriculum, including RE.

How will Ofsted continue to inspect subjects, aspects of the curriculum, and policy issues?’

Ofsted replies: “*The focus of the new inspections will be firmly on those topics that provide key information, along with other published data and performance indicators about how an institution is getting on. Such inspections by their very nature cannot provide all the evidence that is needed to inform and advise all interested parties and stakeholders. We intend to examine in more detail the quality of subjects/curriculum areas and policy issues through other forms of inspection, with HMI working in partnership with independent inspectors. We propose that subjects be inspected on a rolling programme, with a full report on each subject every two to three years. A sample of schools and other institutions teaching a subject or vocational area will be selected to reflect phase, sector, size, geographical patterns, urban and rural. We intend also to inspect school pyramids and groups of schools where there are established patterns of admission to see how progression and continuity within a subject are managed between years, key stages and institutions at transfer.*”¹

Schools will be required, as they are now, to self-assess the extent to which they meet all statutory requirements, including the provision of RE and collective worship. The quality of RE provision, as in other subjects of the

curriculum, will be assessed through subject-focused surveys.’

The following list contains key documents and evidence you might have ready for senior managers or inspectors to demonstrate current provision for RE.

These are the raw materials of self evaluation for the RE subject leader:

- The school’s policy statement for RE;
- Specific approaches in RE to general school policies and practice, e.g. on RE for pupils with special or additional educational needs or for ‘gifted’ pupils in RE;
- Descriptions of staff roles and responsibilities for RE;
- Your outline programme of study;
- Your Schemes of work, highlighted to show opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- A range of sample lesson plans;
- Samples of pupils’ work at different levels;
- Samples of pupils’ work demonstrating key skills, e.g., in literacy or ICT;
- Samples of marked work, demonstrating diagnostic comments and target setting;
- A record of visits and visitors, with letters to parents and risk-assessment, photographic records etc;
- Notes on monitoring and support of colleagues’ RE work;
- Results of assessments and examinations, with analysis and evaluation;
- Your RE development plan;
- Your RE budget statement and record of recent spending;
- List of RE resources;
- Notes on RE meetings and staff development, with resulting agreements and targets;
- A record of your own training undertaken in relation to RE;
- Correspondence with governors, parents, visitors, community groups.

¹ See Ofsted’s website pages at:
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/howwework/index.cfm?fuseaction=howwework.future#frequent>.

A school's continuing self evaluation should include Religious Education, alongside other subjects and aspects of the school's provision. RE should be evaluated by schools in line with the following questions and areas:

Documentation from the whole school	RE information to be provided
The Performance and Assessment (ePANDA) report	Examination results and statistical comparisons, e.g.: relative performance of pupils taking RS at GCSE compared with their performance in other subjects.
Consultation about the inspection and basic information about the school and its provision	Reply to question about type of inspection required, ie whether a denominational inspection is required for RE and/or collective worship.
Information about the school	Reply to the question about how many pupils are withdrawn by parents from RE and/or collective worship and details of the alternative provision made for these children.
Governors' audit of statutory requirements	Reply to the question about compliance with the requirement to teach RE to all registered pupils and provide a daily act of collective worship.
The self-evaluation report	This may feature RE if there are particular strengths or weaknesses identified by the school. Note any staff specialism in RE. Role of subject leader in managing RE, particularly any separate budget.
The previous inspection report(s)	Including the report on RE.
The current development or management plan	May feature RE if there are particular development issues to be addressed, e.g. provision of sufficient curriculum time to meet the recommendations of the agreed syllabus, or extensive use of teachers with other specialisms.
The prospectus or school brochure	Including statement about the right of parents to withdraw their child from all or part of RE and/or collective worship.
The most recent LEA monitoring report	May feature RE if there are particular development issues to be addressed, e.g.: provision of adequate accommodation, development in relation to national strategies – literacy, ICT, Key Stage 3 etc.
The school's timetable	Including information about setting/streaming/mixed ability classes.

The RE Policy/Department Handbook

It is good practice to maintain a folder of basic information about religious education in the school to set out the working ethos of the department or school and as a point of reference for colleagues. Information kept in this folder should be as brief and pertinent as possible. Key policies will largely result from consultations with colleagues, senior managers and governors. In RE, they will take full account of the Oldham Agreed Syllabus. Much of the folder's contents could be included in the RE section of the school's website.

Oldham Schools are required by SACRE to return a monitoring form about their provision to the SACRE when they are inspected.

Focus of inspection	Possible sources of evidence
<p>The quality of provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the school's approach to RE described in the school's prospectus? • Does the prospectus contain information about arrangements for parents wishing to withdraw their children from RE? • Do senior managers make adequate arrangements to supervise any pupils withdrawn from RE? • Are teachers aware of their rights to withdraw from teaching RE? • Are all pupils receiving their statutory entitlement to RE? • Is there a long-term plan consistent with the Oldham Agreed Syllabus? • Is there additional planning ensuring continuity and progression in pupils' learning? • Is there a clear plan to provide sufficient curriculum time for RE? • How does RE contribute to pupils' literacy and ICT skills? 	<p><i>A folder of brief policy statements, plans and exemplars could include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pages from the school prospectus relating to RE, including a statement on how RE contributes to anti-racist and inter-cultural development; • A note of approximate numbers of pupils withdrawn from RE; • A note on arrangements for pupils withdrawn from RE by the parents on grounds of conscience, including any additional or alternative RE being undertaken; • A note of arrangements for the teaching of RE to pupils whose teacher has withdrawn from teaching RE on grounds of conscience; • Evidence of arrangements for the teaching of any pupils in special circumstances, e.g. those who are still on the school's register but are being taught otherwise than at school; • A brief (one page per key stage) overview of the programmes of study, with main content, religions studied and links to the Agreed Syllabus;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does RE contribute to other areas of the curriculum, e.g., PSHE & Citizenship? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium term schemes of work, giving details of attainment targets, resources to be used, objectives for learning, assessment activities and expected outcomes; • A note of any particular support given to pupils with learning difficulties or to pupils from different ethnic groups; • A policy statement with brief notes on: your rationale for the subject; curriculum time for the subject; aims and objectives (as indicated by the Oldham Agreed Syllabus); principles for teaching and learning; relevance to pupils; cross-curricular skills and themes (including literacy, ICT and personal, social and health education and citizenship); continuity and progression; assessment, recording and reporting arrangements; resources and planning; the role of the head of department / subject leader and arrangements for reviewing the policy.
<p>The standards achieved by pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are examples of moderated exemplars of pupils' work at different levels available? • Are the results of any tests or examinations (performance data) analysed and used in planning? 	<p><i>A folder of brief policy statements, plans and exemplars could include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment 'levels' as required by the agreed syllabus; • 'I can...' 'simplified' or 'pupil-speak' levels used in the classroom; • examples of pupils' work at different levels; • recent assessment results, with an analysis of the achievement of different groups within the school: girls and boys, ethnic and religious minority groups; pupils with special educational needs; • a note of any action to be taken in response to the assessment analysis.
<p>The quality of teaching and learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an indication of sufficient expertise within staffing to ensure high quality? • What monitoring of teaching and learning has taken place recently? • Are there sufficient, relevant and up-to-date resources available? 	<p><i>A folder of brief policy statements, plans and exemplars could include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a list of colleagues teaching RE in each key stage, with an indication of RE expertise, experience and relevant INSET undertaken; • notes on monitoring procedures (see the agreed Syllabus Section above), e.g. trawl of pupils' books or interviews with a selection of pupils, measured against a checklist of agreed criteria, such as: Is pupils' learning following the scheme of work? Is pupils' work being marked regularly and is marking consistent with the department or school assessment policy? Are pupils being set constructive targets for improvement? • an audit of resources: books, videos, artefacts, CD-ROMs, audio-tapes, recommended websites, list of speakers used.

<p>The quality of <i>leadership and management</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an indication of consultation with other members of staff on RE matters? • Is there a development plan for RE with clear, costed objectives / targets? • Is there a budget statement for RE? • Does the subject contribute actively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development? • Does the subject contribute actively to the school's inclusion agenda? • Is there an indication of how Learning Support Assistants are used in RE? • Are arrangements in place for supply teachers covering RE lessons? 	<p><i>A folder of brief policy statements, plans and exemplars could include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • notes on any meetings with colleagues discussing RE development; • a development plan for RE which focuses on raising standards; • a budget statement showing a record of spending for the RE department and plans for the coming year; • highlighted sections of the scheme of work where specific activities are designed to provide opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; • a policy statement on RE, inclusion and support for pupils with additional and special educational needs, including for very able pupils (see also prospectus statement above); • a list of strategies for pupils with different needs and a sample of advice provided for learning support assistants and work produced by supported pupils; • a policy statement on arrangements for supply teachers, indicating procedures for leaving lesson plans, and the location of resources and support.
<p>Other factors which impact upon pupils' achievement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there RE trips and visits which contribute to the aims of the Agreed Syllabus? • Are there visits from members of different faith communities which contribute to the aims of the Agreed Syllabus? • And are these accessible to all pupils? 	<p><i>A folder of brief policy statements, plans and exemplars could include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organisational notes on visits, with links to the scheme of work, risk-analysis and insurance arrangements; • any special support given to 'gifted' pupils in RE; • a list of contact details for a range of speakers; • guidance for visits and visitors, e.g. as published by the Professional Council for Religious Education (PCfRE).
<p>How quality and standards have <i>changed since the previous inspection</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has the impact of any action taken since the last inspection been monitored and evaluated? 	<p><i>A folder of brief policy statements, plans and exemplars could include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a 'before and after' summary of the impact of action taken since the last inspection, e.g., planned responses to the new Agreed Syllabus; the introduction of a new assessment scheme, the introduction of a new exam specification, the use of a new text book, the use of new ICT facilities such as an interactive whiteboard, new marking procedures, new staffing arrangements, etc.

Summary of RE Provision (useful for inspection and for SACRE reporting)

Area:	School Commentary:
What is the quality of our RE provision?	
What standards are pupils achieving in RE?	
What is the impact of the quality of teaching and learning in RE?	
What is the impact of the quality of leadership and management on RE?	
What other factors are having an impact on pupils' achievements in RE?	
How have the quality and standards in RE changed since the last inspection?	