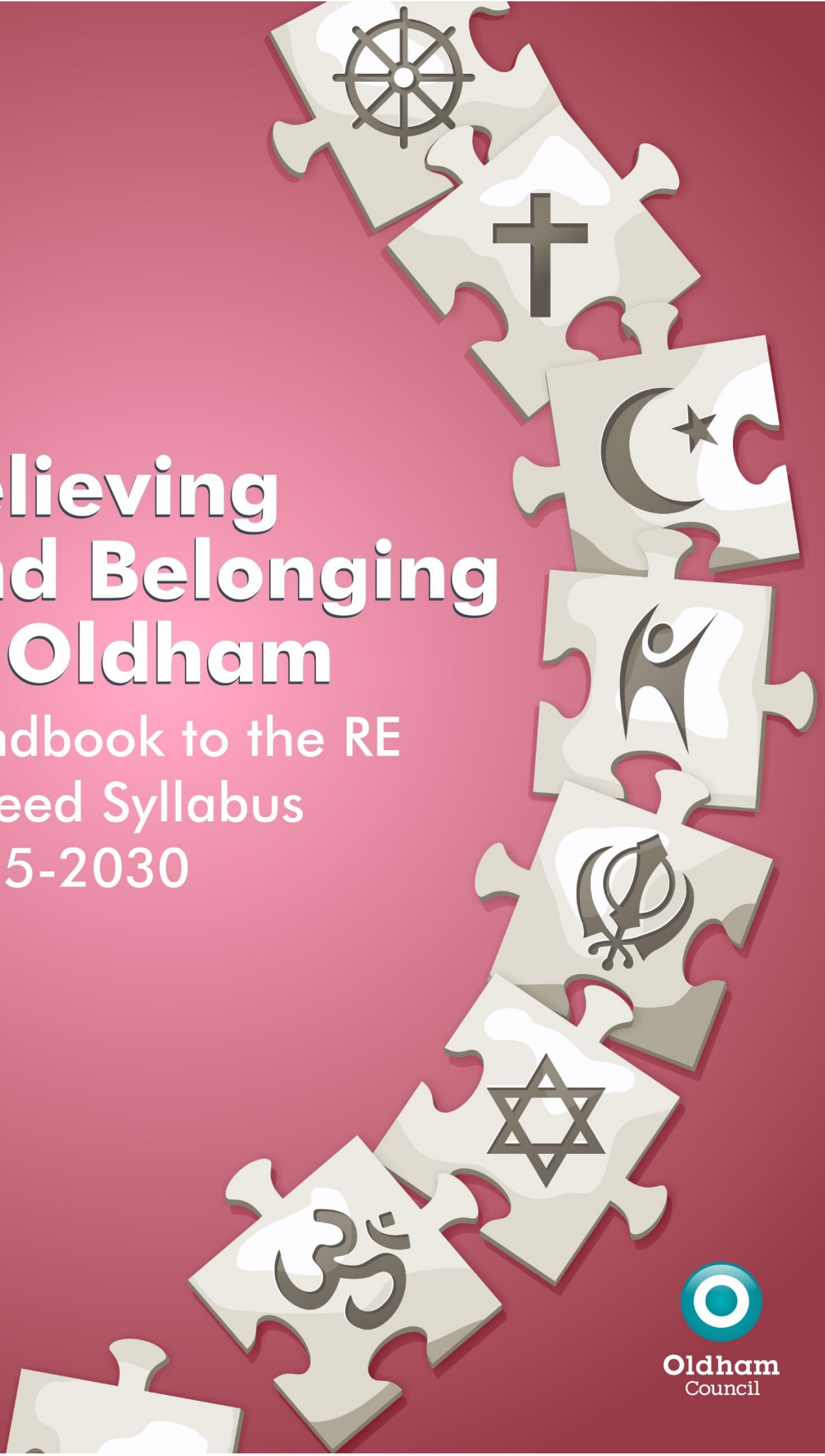


# Believing and Belonging in Oldham

Handbook to the RE  
Agreed Syllabus  
2025-2030



Oldham  
Council

Produced by Pennine Learning Associates Ltd for use with the Oldham  
Agreed Syllabus for RE 2025.

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# Contents of Handbook

## IMPORTANT NOTE

The Handbook should be used in conjunction with the full syllabus *Believing & Belonging*

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Aims of teaching RE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Key requirements of the syllabus</b>	<b>6</b>
1. Learning pathways	6
2. Substantive subject knowledge	7
3. Breadth and depth	7
4. Disciplinary approaches and personal development	7
5. Encounter and diversity	7
6. Significant questions for study	7
7. Assessment	8
8. Curriculum time	8
<b>Teaching materials</b>	<b>9</b>
Core and focus units of work	9
List of units of work EYFS to KS4	10
Classroom teaching materials: planning and PowerPoints	14
<b>Designing your curriculum</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Further help and information</b>	<b>17</b>
Religion and beliefs: national and local picture	17
Enriching RE through engagement with faith communities	19
Contacts and opportunities	20
Support and professional development	23

# Introduction

This handbook is a concise guide to the Oldham Agreed RE syllabus for classroom teachers. We hope you find it helpful. Alongside the handbook, these materials are available:

1. **The full agreed RE syllabus *Believing and Belonging***: this is available *free* to all maintained and academy schools within Oldham. Please consult the full syllabus for details of any aspect or for the curriculum to be covered.
2. **Index of content and key words**: an appendix and reference resource also available *free* to all schools.
3. **Additional resources**: detailed, flexible planning and PowerPoints available *by subscription*. This handbook outlines these practical classroom materials that have been designed to help you bring interesting and challenging RE to your pupils.

***Believing and Belonging*** is the statutory agreed syllabus for Religious Education in Oldham schools at all key stages, available to both maintained and academy schools. The title reflects its twin aims of stimulating interesting and profound study of religion and worldviews while also fostering understanding and respect for diversity in our communities. RE is vital in a world where faith and belief continue to shape societies and is central to Oldham's commitment to inclusive, diverse communities.

The syllabus has been developed with careful consideration for teachers and leaders at every career stage, ensuring it serves as a valuable resource in delivering high-quality Religious Education across Oldham. It is here to be used from initial teacher training onwards and is here to support all practitioners!

Through this, we aim to equip the young people of Oldham with the knowledge, understanding, and skills to navigate the diverse world around them. Together, we continue to strengthen RE across our borough, fostering a sense of belonging, mutual respect, and lifelong learning.

# The Aims of Teaching RE

These are the chief aims of RE expressed in this syllabus:

## **Learning about Beliefs and Values**

The RE syllabus focuses on developing learners' understanding of religions and worldviews, exploring both their commonalities and diversity.

- a. **Broad Understanding:** RE provides a balanced understanding of core beliefs and lived experience in Christianity, other religious traditions, and non-religious beliefs. It shows how these beliefs influence human experiences and decision-making.
- b. **Critical Thinking:** RE encourages rigorous enquiry into religious and moral questions, nurturing problem-solving and critical thinking. It creates a safe space to address complex or controversial issues, promoting resilience against stereotyping and division.

## **Belonging in our communities and world**

The syllabus also emphasizes belonging, helping pupils appreciate diverse beliefs and cultures while discovering their own place and identity in the world.

- c. **Tolerance and Diversity:** RE broadens perspectives, fostering empathy and understanding of different faiths and worldviews. It equips pupils to thrive in diverse communities and a global society.
- d. **Personal Growth:** RE supports pupils in reflecting on non-material aspects of life, exploring meaning, purpose, values, and spirituality—whether or not they follow an organised belief system.
- e. **Active Citizenship:** RE prepares pupils to contribute positively to their communities and the wider world, enhancing skills for lifelong learning and employment.

## **Our aspirations for a good student of Religious Education**

A good RE student demonstrates curiosity, open-mindedness, and critical thinking. By the end of their school education, they critically engage with moral and ethical questions, exploring different theories about how humans should live a good life.

They understand that both religious and non-religious groups may agree or disagree on moral issues and can evaluate arguments for universal versus context-specific moral rules.

They understand that 'religion' means different things to different people and recognise the diversity within and between religions and worldviews. They can identify similarities and differences in beliefs, practices, and responses to global, political, and social issues.

A good RE student can distinguish religious language from everyday language and interpret non-verbal forms of religious expression like rituals, art, and symbols. They also compare religious and non-religious understandings of spirituality and identity, recognising the impact of belonging to belief-based groups.

They link religious/worldview ideas to social and political actions, evaluating the use of power for both positive change and negative outcomes like intolerance. They also compare scientific and traditional narratives, understanding how different interpretations coexist within belief systems.

# Key Requirements of the Syllabus

The syllabus is based on eight key principles. These must be the basis of a school curriculum using the syllabus.

## 1 Learning Pathways

The curriculum is developed through six key themes, or "pathways," that help students explore and understand religion and worldviews. Learning follows a clear sequence through these pathways and is supported by studying specific religions and beliefs.



### Pathway 1: Understanding Religion and Belief

Religions and beliefs are made up of connected ideas, practices, and values. They evolve over time, which can lead to debates, disagreements, or creative developments.



### Pathway 2: Expressing Belief

People often use creative ways like stories, art, music, and drama to express deep beliefs and emotions that are hard to describe with everyday language.



### Pathway 3: Living a Good Life

Religious and non-religious communities explore what it means to live a good life, sharing and debating ideas about moral behaviour and the traits of a good person.



### Pathway 4: Personal Experiences

People have powerful personal experiences, often described as spiritual or transformative. These can happen in both religious and non-religious contexts and may even lead to new beliefs or movements.



### Pathway 5: Influence on Society

Religious and non-religious groups shape societies through laws, traditions, values, and culture. Their influence can vary widely across time and place.



### Pathway 6: Big Questions

Religions and worldviews try to answer life's big questions about humanity and the universe. These answers are based on key texts, traditions, and ideas, which are interpreted differently by people.

## **2 Substantive Subject Knowledge**

The curriculum builds specific knowledge about religions and beliefs, growing progressively through all key stages. Schools should teach Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and a non-religious worldview, while also including others like Jainism or Paganism where relevant to the local context. The curriculum ensures balanced and sequenced teaching of faiths, avoiding superficial coverage. Suggested content is provided for guidance, and schools can adapt or create their own plans. Teaching should always include religious and non-religious perspectives, helping pupils explore questions of meaning and value.

## **3 Breadth and Depth**

The curriculum combines broad knowledge of religion and worldviews with deeper study of specific topics. It focuses on key elements to provide students with a solid foundation of understanding rather than overwhelming them with excessive content. Suggested units integrate pathways and religions, but schools can modify these. Resources must be high-quality and sensitive to avoid misconceptions.

## **4 Disciplinary Approaches and Personal Development**

RE draws on multiple disciplines like theology, history, and sociology. It also supports personal growth by encouraging pupils to reflect on their own beliefs and learn from others.

## **5 Encounter and Diversity**

Religion involves both official teachings and lived experiences. The curriculum should include diverse evidence, such as stories and traditions from communities, and engage with local and wider faiths through visits or online resources. Opportunities for celebrating festivals and engaging with community activities are also important. Diversity within and between faiths should be emphasised, recognising how beliefs differ within traditions and between groups.

## **6 Significant Questions**

RE combines the study of specific religions with big, meaningful questions about life. Pupils learn systematically about individual traditions and apply this knowledge to broader issues, balancing clarity with depth.



## 7 Assessment

Assessment focuses on progress toward key stage goals, with interim expectations provided. Schools report to parents and other institutions at key transitions. Assessment may also include evaluating pupils' attitudes, responses to diversity, and engagement with faith communities. Assessment in RE should be manageable and systematic, in line with school assessment practices in other foundation subjects. Assessment of pupils' skills and knowledge will be against the school's own curriculum design. It is important to note that assessment in RE should be based on clear understanding of what pupils are learning and how they are learning on a day-to-day basis.

Day-to-day formative assessment should build a picture of pupils':

- Substantive knowledge – what do they know/understand?
- Disciplinary knowledge – what skills have they learned?
- Personal knowledge – how have they reflected on ideas?

Each unit of work developed, because of careful curriculum planning, should allow pupils to make progress through these key stages of Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analysing, Evaluating and Creating.

As pupils progress through these stages in a unit of work, the teacher can then make a summative assessment at the end of the unit. In the exemplar planning that supports the syllabus, we have used a mastery model including: the expected standard: working towards the expected standard; and working more deeply within the expected standard. This can then be used as a model to report on progress and achievement for the next teacher/ key stage.

The full syllabus contains tables that outline the skills and key outcomes required to achieve the end of key stage expectations. This may be helpful in assessing progress and to support teachers in developing learning objectives. Each sentence stem needs to be applied to a particular task or knowledge content.

The optional units of work provide details of expectations and also some suggested assessment activities.

## 8 Curriculum Time and Provision

RE is a legal requirement for all pupils aged 5-18. Schools should allocate at least one hour per week for teaching, which can be structured flexibly, such as through cross-curricular links or block days. GCSE courses may require more time to ensure effective learning.

# Teaching Materials

## Core and focus units of work

The syllabus provides optional core and focus units of work based on key questions. These are listed below.

They include **core** units of work based on the pathways. Within these pathways, the programme of study must enable pupils to accumulate sufficient knowledge of the religions and worldviews studied. This will enable them to have a broad general understanding of these, enriched and extended by deeper exploration of selected aspects.

There are also **focus** units which deepen knowledge and enrich the experiences of pupils in each key stage. These are essential to maintain depth as well as breadth in learning.

There are three units focusing on beliefs and community in our **local area** and more widely in **Oldham**, one each in KS1, 2 and 3. These are linked to give pupils an in depth focus on the diversity of faith and interfaith activity within Oldham and to strengthen understanding of community cohesion.

Outlines of core units from KS1-3 are contained in the full syllabus and these, or the school's own iteration of the themes, must be included in a curriculum. A selection of focus units must also be studied.

Taken together these units would fulfil the requirements of the syllabus and offer a broad and balanced entitlement to RE. Schools are not required to use these; they are free to adapt them or to develop their own units of work as an alternative.

Many of the units can be studied through a variety of religions/worldviews. In the interests of progression of knowledge and skills for all pupils, schools should note the guidance given about the balance of religions/worldviews and pathway concepts at each key stage. Curriculum planning should ensure depth and breadth over time rather than covering too many religions/worldviews in a single unit, especially in the earlier key stages.

It is recommended that schools designing their curriculum choose three core units of work and one or two focus units per year group. However, schools are encouraged to develop their own curriculum based on the statutory requirements and other guidance in this syllabus. The exemplar units of work may be used, adapted or supplemented as appropriate.

## List of units

### Early Years and Foundation Stage

*There are no specific core and focus units in EYFS as the units will be taught across the year and through provision.*

- E.1 Which places are special to members of our community? (Pathway 1)
- E.2 Why are some objects special? (Pathway 2)
- E.3 Who cares for me and how do I help others? (Pathway 3)
- E.4 Who belongs in my family and community? (Pathway 4)
- E.5 How do people celebrate special times? (Pathway 5)
- E.6 How do we understand and care for the world? (Pathway 6)

### Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2)

*It is recommended that pupils study all core units (three in Y1 and three in Y2) and additionally choose one focus unit in each year. This makes a total of four units a year. This can be expanded or supplemented as a school wishes but be careful not to saturate the curriculum and risk superficial coverage.*

#### Core Units

- C1.1 What does it mean to belong a community of belief? (Pathway 1)
- C1.2 How are symbols used to welcome new life? (Pathway 2)
- C1.3 How can we make good choices? (Pathway 3)
- C1.4 How and why do some people pray? (Pathway 4)
- C1.5 Why are festivals important in a community? (Pathway 5)
- C1.6 Which books and stories are important? (Pathway 6)

#### Focus Units

- F1.10 What does it mean to believe and belong in my school (KS1)? (Pathways 2 & 3)
- F1.11 How do stories help Hindus to live their lives? (Pathways 3 and 6)
- F1.12 How and why do we care for others? (Pathway 3)
- F1.13 What do religions/worldviews say about our wonderful world? (Pathways 4 and 6)
- F1.14 What stories from the Bible have been retold over many years? (Pathway 6)
- F1.15 What did Jesus teach and how did he live? (Pathways 3 and 6)

## **Lower Key Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4)**

*It is recommended that pupils study all core units (three in Y3 and three in Y4) and additionally choose one focus unit in each year. This makes a total of four units a year. This can be expanded if a school wishes but be careful not to saturate the curriculum and risk superficial coverage.*

### **Core Units**

- CL2.1 How do Jews remember God's covenant? (Pathway 1)
- CL2.2 How do different people express their spirituality? (Pathway 2)
- CL2.3 How do the five pillars help Muslims to lead a good life? (Pathway 3)
- CL2.4 Why do the lives of the Gurus inspire Sikh believers? (Pathway 4)
- CL2.5 What faiths and beliefs can be found in our country and community? (Pathway 5)
- CL2.6 How do ancient stories influence modern celebrations? (Pathway 6)

### **Focus Units**

- FL2.11 How do creation stories help people understand the world? (Pathway 6)
- FL2.12 How does the Bible help Christians to live a good life? (Pathway 3)
- FL2.13 Why do people follow inspirational leaders? (Pathways 3 and 5)
- FL2.14 How are the stories of Holy Week important to Christians? (Pathway 6)

## **Upper Key Stage 2 (Years 5 and 6)**

*It is recommended that pupils study all core units (three in Y5 and three in Y6) and additionally choose one focus unit in each year. This makes a total of four units a year. This can be expanded if a school wishes but be careful not to saturate the curriculum and risk superficial coverage.*

### **Core Units**

- CU2.1 What do Hindu people believe? (Pathway 1)
- CU2.2 How do Sikhs express their beliefs? (Pathway 2)
- CU2.3 What values do people live by? (Pathway 3)
- CU2.4 How might pilgrimage transform people's lives? (Pathway 4)
- CU2.5 How and why do Jewish communities celebrate their festivals? (Pathway 5)
- CU2.6 What do Bible narratives say about covenant? (Pathway 6)

### **Focus Units**

- FU2.10 What does believing and belonging mean in Oldham (KS2)? (Pathways 2 & 3)
- FU2.11 What is the significance of Easter, Ascension and Pentecost? (Pathway 6)
- FU2.12 Should we forgive others? (Pathway 3)
- FU2.13 Why are rites of passage important? (Pathways 2 and 4)
- FU2.14 How do Buddhists live a meaningful life? (Pathways 1 and 4)
- FU2.15 What is Humanism? (Pathways 3 and 5)

### **Key Stage 3 (Years 7, 8 and 9)**

*It is recommended that pupils study all core units across the three years of KS3 and additionally select some focus units.*

#### **Core Units**

As KS3 covers three years, there are eight units and some pathways are covered more than once.

C3.1 What is religion? (Pathway 1)

C3.2 How do Hindus see life? (Pathway 1)

C3.3 How do Christians worship in diverse ways? (Pathway 2)

C3.4 What does it mean to live in multi faith Britain? (Pathway 3)

C3.5 What do Muslims believe about a good life? (Pathway 3)

C3.6 Can spiritual experience be transformative? (Pathway 4)

C3.7 How does Humanism answer questions of meaning, purpose and value? (Pathway 5)

C3.8 How do beliefs grapple with evil and suffering? (Pathway 6)

#### **Focus Units**

F3.10 What does believing and belonging mean in Oldham (KS3)? (Pathways 2 & 3)

F3.11 How do Buddhists see life? (Pathways 1 and 2)

F3.12 What is marriage and how is it celebrated? (Pathway 4)

F3.13 Do humans have a soul? (Pathways 4 and 3)

F3.14 How do Christians see the Kingdom of God? (Pathway 5)

F3.15 Should human beings use animals? (Pathway 3)

F3.16 What do Jews and Sikhs believe about charity and service? (Pathway 6)

F3.17 How is diversity shown in Judaism and Sikhi? (Pathway 1)

#### **Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11 non-examined)**

*These units of work can be used to devise an appropriate curriculum for non-examined RE at Key Stage 4.*

- 4.1 What is meant by truth and spirituality? (Pathway 6)
- 4.2 What does it mean to say that life has value? (Pathways 3 and 4)
- 4.3 How do people work for peace around the world? (Pathway 3)
- 4.4 What can make our world a fairer place? (Pathway 3)
- 4.5 Does God exist? (Pathway 6)
- 4.6 What are Human Rights and what do religious groups say about them? (Pathway 5)
- 4.7 How do beliefs challenge extremism? (Pathway 2)
- 4.8 What are the ethical questions of the future? (Pathway 3)
- 4.9 Is there a connection between religion, citizenship and the state? (Pathway 5)
- 4.10 What can we learn from the diversity of faith and belief? (Pathway 1)
- 4.11 What is the significance of Ramadan? (Pathway 2)
- 4.12 What is the search for Enlightenment? (Pathway 4)
- 4.13 How is diversity evident in Christianity and Islam? (Pathway 1)

#### **Key Stage 5 (Sixth Form)**

Outline units of works are provided in the full syllabus.

## Classroom teaching materials: planning and PowerPoints

**Believing and Belonging** is the local agreed syllabus for RE and is available free to maintained and academy schools within the authority. In addition, there are two comprehensive online collections of resources available to help schools teach every part of the RE curriculum. These are available by subscription.

- **Planning for units of work:** detailed planning for around 60 optional units of work from EYFS to KS4. These can be used or adapted by schools to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum.
- **Classroom PLUS resources:** PowerPoints and knowledge organisers to support every lesson from EYFS to KS3. These are dovetailed to precisely to the syllabus and the planning and can be used or adapted.

Schools can subscribe to these resources which allows them to access expert regionally produced materials that have been especially written just for this syllabus. These can be confidently used 'off-the-peg' or adapted for their own preferences. To view samples and order these please go to [www.penninelearning.com](http://www.penninelearning.com) or email [enquiries@penninelearning.com](mailto:enquiries@penninelearning.com).

Schools are also free to use other resources which support or enhance the teaching of RE with this syllabus, such as the 'Understanding Christianity' and also exemplar planning from the he [Big Ideas website](#). However, as ever, teachers are advised to be careful in their selection. It is their school's curriculum not an imposed master plan.

# Designing your curriculum

Schools should create their own RE curriculum tailored to their needs, using the syllabus as a framework and with the choice of using optional resources. No universal plan exists; schools should design their curriculum with careful sequencing to build knowledge and skills in line with the syllabus pathways. They may adapt or create units of study to ensure depth and breadth, fostering substantive, disciplinary, and personal knowledge.

A good curriculum balances detailed study with general understanding, ensuring resources are appropriate, sensitive, and aligned with professional judgment. Controversial topics require empathy and awareness, such as respecting religious sensitivities. Schools can seek advice from local RE advisers if needed.

A curriculum should focus on progression in all six syllabus pathways, building sufficient and transferable knowledge of religions and worldviews. Schools need not cover all content but must include enough to ensure robust understanding, reflecting the local context and diversity. Faiths are not uniform, and RE should include a range of religions and non-religious worldviews, like Humanism, to explore meaning and purpose.

Enquiry and investigation are central to RE learning. Units should address key questions linked to the syllabus and pathways, using models like 'Philosophy for Children' to engage students. Questions should be age-appropriate, focused, and significant, helping students build on prior learning and progress in their understanding.

One method of planning an enquiry might look like this:

- **Analyse the Question**  
Explore the key question and related human experiences. Start with concepts pupils understand, moving from practical ideas to deeper questions. For all ages, begin with meaningful, practical issues to build a foundation for exploring the unit's main content.
- **Investigate Relevant Beliefs and Practices**  
Examine beliefs, values, and practices from selected religions/worldviews, evaluating varied perspectives. Focus on one tradition per unit if needed, ensuring balance across the curriculum. Highlight variation within and between traditions. What do people believe? How do they celebrate? What difference does it make?
- **Offer Reasoned and Critical Responses**  
Evaluate and assemble conclusions, encouraging personal responses to the question. Conclude with lessons applying learned concepts, fostering personal reflection.



### **Five steps which could be used in planning your own unit of work**

1. Choose the Key Question: base the question on one or more pathways and link it to the key stage content.
2. Look at Learning Outcomes: ensure pupils can answer the question like a "good RE student" and align with key stage pathway goals.
3. Compile Component Questions: break the enquiry into three parts:
  - a. Analyse: What is the question about?
  - b. Investigate: What are relevant beliefs/practices?
  - c. Reflect: What responses can be made?
4. Write Learning Objectives: use component questions to create clear, assessable objectives, building towards a final task demonstrating understanding.
5. Devise Learning Activities: plan age-appropriate activities addressing each component question. Include tasks for understanding, applying, evaluating, and reflecting. Use stimulus materials to engage pupils at the start of the unit.

Further guidance is provided in the full syllabus.

# Further help and information

## Religion and beliefs: the national and local picture

### The National Picture

An official census is taken across the UK every ten years. It comprises many questions and for the past few has included a question on religion and beliefs. Other surveys are also carried out from time to time and also offer interpretations about the religious demography of the country.

The 2021 census included a voluntary question about religious beliefs, allowing residents to respond, decline, or indicate no religion.

Details on religious responses from the census in England and Wales can be accessed here: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021>

In England and Wales, the predominant response was Christian, but for the first time, less than half of the population (46.2%, or 27.5 million) identified as such, marking a significant drop from 59.3% (33.3 million) in 2011.

The second most common answer was 'No religion', which increased to 37.2% (22.2 million) from 25.2% (14.1 million) in 2011.

There were also rises in those identifying as Muslim (3.9 million, 6.5% in 2021, up from 2.7 million, 4.9% in 2011) and Hindu (1.0 million, 1.7% in 2021, up from 818,000, 1.5% in 2011).

The shifts in religious identification may stem from various factors, including changes in demographics, fertility rates, mortality, migration, and how individuals choose to answer the religion question.

Beyond the six most common religions cited, 0.7% of the population selected 'any other religion'. These included: Pagan (74,000), Alevi (26,000), Jain (25,000), Wicca (13,000), Ravidassia (10,000), Shamanism (8,000), Rastafarian (6,000), Zoroastrian (4,000). For non-religious responses, the most common were: Agnostic (32,000), Atheist (14,000), Humanist (10,000).

## Oldham

In Oldham, 95.3% of usual residents responded to the voluntary question about religion, compared to 94% in Greater Manchester and across England and Wales.

In Oldham, 44.9% (108,720) people identified as Christian, a notable decrease from 59.7% (134,167) in 2011, reflecting the national trend. Overall, 47.8% of Greater Manchester's population identified as Christian in 2021.

Those saying they had no religion rose by 8.9 percentage points to 25.0% (60,507) from 16.1% (36,169) in 2011. Overall, 31.8% of Greater Manchester's population identified as having no religion in 2021.

There was an increase in those identifying as Muslim: 24.4% (59,031) in 2021, up from 17.7% (39,879) in 2011. Changes in the figures for other religions were relatively small.

### Responses to Census 2021

	Oldham	Oldham %	Gtr Mcr %	Eng & Wales %
<b>Buddhist</b>	468	0.2	0.3	0.5
<b>Christian</b>	108,720	44.9	47.8	46.2
<b>Hindu</b>	1,222	0.5	1.0	1.7
<b>Jewish</b>	146	0.1	1.2	0.5
<b>Muslim</b>	59,031	24.4	12.1	6.5
<b>Sikh</b>	132	0.1	0.2	0.9
<b>No religion</b>	60,507	25.0	31.8	37.2
<b>Prefer not to say</b>	11,273	4.7	6.0	6.0

*Source: Office for National Statistics*

Further information and detailed analysis of areas within Oldham can be found from the link below. This can be useful for research about religion and belief in local areas.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/religion/religion-tb/no-religion?oa=E00181792>

## **Enriching RE through engagement with people and communities**

Diversity is multi-faceted and does not only apply to ethnicity or faith. Nevertheless, engagement with people of different faiths is a critical element of RE and of nurturing tolerance and understanding. This can take the form of a visit to a faith community or receiving a visitor in an assembly, class or special event. It may be done on-line as well as face-to-face. Many schools find it invaluable to arrange such engagement to help students to broaden their understanding and experience of our communities and world.

These occasions can:

- Contribute to our obligation to promote fundamental values of respect and tolerance.
- Broaden pupils' experience and perspectives and develop their critical thinking skills.
- Build bridges in our local communities.
- Enrich the provision for religious education and fulfil requirements of the syllabus.

Schools often use visitors as well as, or instead of, arranging an external visit. Unless such an occasion is specifically part of the RE curriculum or an act of collective worship, there is no statutory right to withdraw. It can still enable pupils to understand about different people and cultures.

There are some key things to consider in planning an encounter:

- What are the aims? Have these been discussed and shared with the visitor?
- Ensure the school is managing the event throughout. This will help the visitor as well as you.
- Follow normal safeguarding procedures, while also offering appropriate welcome and hospitality.
- Prepare the pupils, staff and parents; celebrate the occasion and links with the wider community.

It is good to remember that staff (not just teaching staff) and parents may be a source of diverse experience that can be celebrated in school and learnt from by pupils. Sensitivity is needed, and such contributions need to match the willingness, confidence and experience of the person concerned. At the same time this participation can affirm and enrich the participant.

Sometimes parents or carers are reluctant to allow their child to participate on a specific visit. All school visits require parental consent and as a concomitant, parents have a legal right to withhold such consent. While schools must always respect (and be seen to respect) parents' statutory rights, teachers can try to encourage full participation as part of every child's right to a broad and balanced education.

Be aware that parental reluctance may stem from a number of reasons and should not be automatically dismissed as ignorance or prejudice. There can also be genuine fears and doubts and it is always good to encourage a parent or carer to articulate their questions.

Schools have found some of the ideas below useful in dealing with doubts, or in building a culture where visits and visitors are part of the yearly routine and welcomed by all.

- It is good practice to ask to discuss such an issue face to face. There may be specific reasons why a parent is reluctant to allow consent. A meeting gives the opportunity to reassure and for the parent to think through what is best.
- Be very clear about the facts – communicate the nature, purpose and content of the visit at an early stage and continue to do so.
- Be clear about the value of the visit – how and why it will be helpful for pupils and how it links to the curriculum.
- Celebrate the event through displays and information on newsletters, website or parents' evenings. Use last year's pictures to help promote this year's event.
- Link it into a wider school context, for example as part of a sequence of visits or events that engage with diversity or as a contribution to a wider antibullying or tolerance agenda.
- Communicate the enjoyment and participation involved. It's a shame if a child misses out on the experience shared by others in the class.
- Involve parents – as helpers or through sharing what is happening.

## Contacts and opportunities

Engagement with people of faith and beliefs can enrich students' religious education and, more widely, enhance awareness, understanding and tolerance of religious diversity.

**Regional and national listings** can be found on the RE Hubs website. For places of worship go to <https://www.re-hubs.uk/hubs/north-west/> or use the QR code.



**For school speakers** go to <https://www.re-hubs.uk/hubs/north-west/speakers-presenters/> or use the QR code.



**Information on local places to visit or visitors** to schools can be found by scrolling down to RE Resources via <https://www.penninelearning.com/resources/> or use the QR code.



**Information about religious festivals** can be found here via <https://www.shapcalendar.org.uk/> or by using the QR code.



**To keep up with local RE events** in Oldham and in surrounding areas, visit <https://penninelearning.com/newsletters/>



These listings do not, of course, foreclose or replace local contacts. Schools can readily make contact directly with local places of worship. In particular, the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches operate parish systems where there is always a local church with pastoral responsibility for the local community.

It is not possible for SACRE to conduct safeguarding or quality assurance checks in a comprehensive way. Please be clear that is the responsibility of individual schools to undertake normal safeguarding and quality assurance procedures for themselves.

## Support and Professional Development

Oldham Standing Advisory Council on RE (SACRE) is a statutory body comprising local teachers, representatives of faith communities and the local authority. As well as commissioning a syllabus for RE, SACRE monitors and supports RE across the borough; its responsibility includes maintained and academy schools, though academies may opt to choose a different syllabus. To contact SACRE, or to ask about joining, in the first instance please contact [SchoollandSettingsWorktray@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:SchoollandSettingsWorktray@oldham.gov.uk).

Pennine Learning is contracted to provide this syllabus and support for RE and SACRE in Oldham. Professional development opportunities can be found at <https://www.penninelearning.com/>.

Consultancy and support are also offered to schools. This can be anything from a full review of RE to a quick telephone call or email to clarify a concern or question. The contact email is [enquiries@penninelearning.com](mailto:enquiries@penninelearning.com). Templates are policies and guidance can also be found at <https://www.penninelearning.com/>

Church schools also have access to diocesan support. Details can be found via <https://www.manchester.anglican.org/schools/>

Nationally, a number of providers offer training, support and advice. These include:  
Culham St Gabriel's Trust

<https://www.cstg.org.uk/>



National Association of Teachers of RE

<https://www.natre.org.uk/>



RE Hubs

<https://www.re-hubs.uk/>



RE Online

<https://www.reonline.org.uk/>



RE Today

<https://www.retoday.org.uk/>





# **Believing and Belonging in Oldham**

Handbook to the RE  
Agreed Syllabus  
2025-2030



**Oldham**  
Council