

ED&I Curriculum Principles – Religious Education (RE)

1) Our curriculum is designed with an EDI lens

In RE we ensure fair access and representation via:

- Balanced coverage of religions and worldviews so no single perspective is privileged.
- Inclusion of major world religions alongside non-religious worldviews (e.g., Humanism), ensuring all pupils see their beliefs reflected.
- Adapted teaching strategies (scaffolding, differentiated tasks) so all learners—regardless of ability, background, or SEND—can access the curriculum.
- Avoidance of stereotypes by presenting diverse interpretations within religions (e.g., different practices within Islam, Christianity, Hinduism).

2) Our curriculum reflects our society

Our Religious Education (RE) curriculum often acts like a mirror of the society it's taught in. It reflects social values, diversity, debates, and even tensions. Modern RE curricula include multiple religions and worldviews—like Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, Buddhism, and non-religious perspectives. This reflects increasingly diverse societies where people from different cultural and religious backgrounds live together. In places like the UK, where secularism is growing, RE doesn't just focus on religion. It also includes atheism, agnosticism, and humanism. That reflects a society where belief is more of a personal choice than a universal norm. RE often explores issues like human rights, equality, environmental responsibility, and social justice. These topics reflect current societal concerns and debates about how we should live together. There's a strong aim to promote respect, understanding, and dialogue between different groups. This reflects the need for social cohesion in diverse societies. In the UK, Christianity still has a prominent place in RE. That reflects historical roots and cultural heritage, even if society is now more religiously mixed. Topics like gender equality, sexuality, racism, and global conflict often appear in RE discussions. These show how the curriculum responds to ongoing social conversations and challenges. Governments shape RE to reflect national priorities—like promoting "British values" (democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect). The curriculum reflects not just society as it is, but how leaders think it should be.

3) Our curriculum broadens horizons and incorporates multiple perspectives

Children learn about a wide range of religions and worldviews—such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, as well as non-religious perspectives like Humanism. This helps children understand how different people interpret life, morality, and purpose. By exploring beliefs, practices, and lived experiences, children develop empathy for people from different backgrounds. They learn to appreciate diversity and challenge stereotypes or misconceptions. RE often connects religion to culture, history, and geography—showing how beliefs shape societies around the world. This global awareness helps children see beyond their immediate environment. Children are encouraged to ask questions, compare viewpoints, and reflect on big ideas (e.g., ethics, justice, meaning of life). This develops the ability to engage respectfully with differing opinions rather than accepting a single narrative. Modern RE goes beyond textbooks by including real voices—through case studies, guest speakers, or media—highlighting how individuals practise and interpret their beliefs differently within the same tradition. Topics like human rights, environmental responsibility, and social justice are explored through multiple religious and non-religious lenses. This shows how different perspectives can contribute to shared global challenges. Children are given space to reflect on their own beliefs and values, helping them form their own informed perspectives while respecting others.

4) Our curriculum prioritises emotional safety and is intentional in preventing emotional harm

A well-designed RE curriculum prioritises emotional safety and actively prevents harm by being intentional in both what is taught and how it is taught. Here are the key ways this is achieved:

Creating a Safe Classroom Environment - Emotional safety starts with clear expectations:

- Establishing respectful discussion norms (e.g. listening without judgment, no mocking beliefs)
- Making it clear that pupils can "pass" on sharing personal views
- Encouraging curiosity rather than debate that feels like confrontation

Sensitive Handling of Personal and Lived Experiences - RE often touches on topics like death, suffering, identity, and morality.

- Avoids putting children in the position of "representing" a religion or worldview
- Recognises that some pupils may have trauma or strong personal connections to topics
- Uses distancing techniques (e.g. case studies, stories, fictional scenarios) instead of direct personal questioning

Inclusive and Accurate Representation - Preventing harm also means avoiding misrepresentation:

- Presenting religions and worldviews in balanced, non-stereotypical ways
- Including diverse voices within traditions (not a single "story")
- Avoiding language that could marginalise or "other" children
- This reduces the risk of children feeling invalidated or singled out

Age-Appropriate Content

- Complex or potentially distressing themes (e.g. suffering, injustice, extremism) are introduced gradually
- Materials are chosen to inform without overwhelming
- Teachers are mindful of cognitive and emotional readiness

Trauma-Informed Teaching Approaches - An emotionally safe RE curriculum often reflects trauma-aware practice:

- Predictable lesson structures to reduce anxiety
- Advance warnings before sensitive content (“content notices”)
- Opportunities for reflection that are private (e.g. journaling instead of public sharing)

Encouraging Empathy Without Forcing Disclosure - RE builds empathy by:

- Exploring stories, rituals, and ethical dilemmas
- Encouraging perspective-taking
- Avoiding tasks that require personal disclosure of beliefs or experiences

In practice - You might see this in lessons through:

- Ground rules co-created with children
- Neutral, carefully chosen resources
- Structured discussion formats (think-pair-share instead of open debate)
- Reflection activities that allow distance (writing “from a character’s perspective”)

5) Our curriculum actively challenges stereotypes and discrimination

A strong RE curriculum should go beyond simply teaching facts—it should actively shape how children understand and respond to diversity, fairness, and identity. Here are the key ways it can challenge stereotypes and discrimination in a meaningful, practical way:

Teaching accurate and diverse representations

Children encounter a wide range of beliefs, practices, and lived experiences within religions—not just simplified or “textbook” versions. For example, showing diversity within Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, etc., helps break the stereotype that religions are monolithic.

Challenging misconceptions directly

The curriculum should explicitly address common stereotypes (e.g., linking religion to extremism or oppression) and unpack where they come from. This builds critical thinking and helps children question biased narratives they may see in media or society.

Including multiple voices and perspectives

Using case studies, personal stories, and testimonies from believers (and non-believers) helps humanise groups that are often stereotyped.

Exploring ethical issues and discrimination

RE often examines topics like racism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, sexism, and religious persecution.

Children are encouraged to reflect on the impact of discrimination; moral and religious teachings about equality and justice, and their own attitudes and responsibilities

Linking beliefs to values of equality and justice

Children explore how different religions promote values such as compassion, human dignity and justice

This helps challenge the stereotype that religion causes division, showing instead how it can promote inclusion.

Encouraging self-reflection

Children are prompted to reflect on their own assumptions and influences. Activities might include “Where do my views come from?” or “Have I made a generalisation?”

Using inclusive language and materials

Carefully chosen resources avoid reinforcing stereotypes and instead model respectful, inclusive ways of speaking about different groups.

