SECTION TWO
Religious Education and The Bigger Picture

“Growing Together”
Religious Education and The Bigger Picture

This section of the syllabus enables people to see the place and importance of Religious Education within the wider context of education in general. It clarifies the purpose and main aims of RE and explores how RE makes significant contributions to the main aims of education and to important agendas such as: Every Child Matters; Community Cohesion; Inclusion; Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development; Learning Outside the Classroom and Information Communication Technology.

The Contribution of Religious Education to the Purposes of Education

RE supports the purposes of the whole curriculum. The 2002 Education Act states that all pupils should follow a balanced and broadly based curriculum which:

1. Promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of learners.

Religious Education plays a significant role in the promotion of spiritual, moral, cultural and mental development.

Religious Education gives the knowledge, skills and understanding to discern and value truth and goodness, strengthening the capacity for making moral judgements and for evaluating different types of commitment to make positive and healthy choices.

Religious Education provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human. It can develop pupils’ knowledge and understanding of Christianity, of other principal religions, other religious traditions and world views that offer answers to questions such as these.

A central concern of Religious Education is the promotion of each pupil’s self-worth, enabling them to reflect on their uniqueness as human beings, to share their feelings and emotions with others and appreciate the importance of forming and maintaining positive relationships.
The Northamptonshire Agreed Syllabus, “Growing Together”, offers pupils opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development, deepening the understanding of beliefs and faith in people’s lives – individually, communally and cross-culturally.

2. Prepares all learners for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

Religious Education plays an important role in preparing pupils for adult life, employment and lifelong learning. It helps pupils to become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. It is an exciting, thought-provoking and challenging subject relevant to pupils of all faiths and none.

Religious Education challenges pupils to reflect, analyse, interpret and evaluate. It develops independent and inter-dependent learning and makes an important contribution to pupils’ skills in literacy and information and communication technology. It promotes an enquiring approach in which pupils carefully consider issues of belief and truth in religion and other life stances. It also enhances the capacity to think coherently and consistently, enabling them to evaluate thoughtfully their own and others’ views, in a reasoned and informed manner.

Religious Education seeks to develop pupils’ awareness of themselves and others, enabling them to develop a clear understanding of the significance of religion and belief in the world today and to learn about the ways in which different faith communities relate to each other. Exploring the concepts of religion and belief and their roles in the lives of people in a diverse society helps pupils to develop moral awareness and social understanding.

At the heart of this Agreed Syllabus lies a commitment to focus on ultimate questions and ethical issues. This enables pupils to appreciate their own and others’ beliefs and cultures and how these impact on individuals, communities, societies and cultures. This Agreed Syllabus aims to promote religious understanding, discernment and respect, and to challenge prejudice and stereotyping.

“RE helps us to learn why we’re different and to know that it’s okay to be different.”

Graham
Age 10
The Importance of Religious Education

**THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

RE is centrally concerned with the links between religions and the experiences that all humans share.

**RE develops pupils’ knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other principal religions, other religious traditions and other world views that offer answers to ultimate questions.**

**RE provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human.**

**RE challenges pupils to reflect on, consider, analyse, interpret and evaluate issues of truth, belief, faith and ethics and to communicate their responses.**

**RE encourages pupils to learn from different religions, beliefs, values and traditions, while exploring their own beliefs and questions of meaning.**

**RE offers opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development.**

**RE has an important role in preparing pupils for adult life, employment and lifelong learning. It enables pupils to develop respect for and sensitivity to others, in particular those whose faiths and beliefs are different from their own. It promotes discernment and enables pupils to combat prejudice.**

**RE encourages pupils to develop their sense of identity and belonging. It enables them to flourish individually within their communities and as citizens in a diverse society and global community.**

**RE enhances pupils’ awareness and understanding of religions and beliefs, teachings, practices and forms of expression, as well as of the influence of religion on individuals, families, communities and cultures.**

**RE offers opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development.**

The Importance of Religious Education
"RE means we get to find out how other people live their lives and think about what is special to my life and my family."

Hannah
Age 7

"I love RE because it is about giving my own opinion, not just having right and wrong answers. It’s okay to disagree."

Thomas
Age 9

"I particularly enjoy going on visits to places of worship because it made the religion feel very real."

Elizabeth
Age 14

"I enjoy RE because it helps you to understand other people’s religious beliefs and it teaches you to respect others and their different cultures. It also helps you to understand the meaning and the main purpose of life."

Ben
Age 11

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The Aims of Education and the Aims of Religious Education

This Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, “Growing Together,” has three main aims.

RE in the whole curriculum: Learning and teaching activities in RE contribute to the achievement of curriculum aims for all children and young people to become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.

1. SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS
who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve

In RE this includes:

- Building increasing knowledge and understanding of religions, beliefs and of the fundamental questions of life;
- Developing skills and attitudes that enable broad minded and open hearted engagement in a diverse world;
- Finding interest and satisfaction in studying their own views and the views of others on ultimate questions;
- Being increasingly skilled at making links between beliefs, values, ways of life and religious practice and with their own experiences, ideas and viewpoints.

2. CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALS
who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives

In RE this includes:

- Developing, through good learning, their own sense of identity in terms of beliefs and values: “If I know who I am, then I can accept who others are without fear or threat.”
- Reflecting on ultimate questions and on the ideas and practices of belief systems. They are then helped to understand more about themselves and others, and how to communicate. They are encouraged to develop their ideas and express them appropriately;
- Exploring and enquiring into the idea of human well being, as expressed variously in different faiths and beliefs, and being able to learn confidently from the experiences and ideas of others;
- Making sense of the idea that a fulfilling life can be lived from many different perspectives, including religious and spiritual perspectives, and an unfulfilling life may be narrow or restricted: “The open mind never stops learning.”
In RE this includes:

- Asking and exploring a range of answers to questions about life, individuals and society;
- Raising issues of local, national and global concern and placing them in spiritual and moral contexts;
- Understanding the beliefs and practices of religions and world views, enabling pupils to make connections between belief and action;
- Considering and clarifying the values and commitments by which we live, developing an understanding of positive contributions to society;
- Considering the beliefs behind environmental action, the needs of refugees or the work of aid agencies, to become aware of the connections between beliefs, lifestyles and ultimate questions;
- Considering the idea of responsibility, e.g. for self, others, the world, and ultimate truth (for some, God);
- Evaluating ethical issues and expressing views using reasoned arguments. Pupils can then enhance their capacity and desire to make a positive contribution to debates and decisions in society.

RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS who make a positive contribution to society

“I enjoy RE because I like learning about my religion. I like to hear about what other people believe and why they believe it. I like hearing stories and doing all the different activities. I find RE an interesting subject and I think learning about people’s beliefs is fascinating.”

Benjamin
Age 12

Dramatising religious story.

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Learning about Religion and Belief and Learning from Religion and Belief

Religious Education can be seen as a journey during which pupils should have the opportunity to explore questions of human existence and behaviour and questions of meaning and value.

The Two Attainment Targets for Religious Education

There are two attainment targets in Religious Education. They reflect the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to enable the aims of the subject to be achieved and to promote personal development and awareness.

AT 1 – Learning About Religion and Belief
AT 2 – Learning From Religion and Belief

AT1 - LEARNING ABOUT RELIGION AND BELIEF

Enquiring into, investigating and understanding religions and beliefs. This includes thinking about and interpreting religious beliefs, teachings, sources, practices, ways of life and ways of expressing meaning with reference to the specific beliefs and religions studied.

AT2 - LEARNING FROM RELIGION AND BELIEF

Questioning, exploring, reflecting upon and interpreting human experience in the light of religions and beliefs studied. This includes communicating reflections, responses and evaluations about questions of identity, belonging, diversity, meaning, purpose, truth, values and commitments, making increasingly insightful links to the specific religions studied.

RE is at its most effective when these two attainment targets are closely related in the learning experience.
Every Child Matters in Religious Education


It regards Religious Education as a stimulating, interesting, relevant and enjoyable subject. It enables the exploration of powerful questions of meaning and value and consideration of significant ethical issues.

It promotes Religious Education as a challenging subject which enables reflection on, interpretation and evaluation of, important issues of truth and belief.

“Growing Together” encourages pupils to respond and communicate their responses to these issues in creative and varied ways.

The planning and delivery model allows exploration of the human condition, supporting the philosophy that every person matters.

This Agreed Syllabus makes a significant contribution to the implementation of the view that ‘Every Child Matters’ through its explorations of religious and ethical teachings and ideas and the development of key attitudes of sensitivity, respect, open-mindedness, self esteem and an appreciation of the natural world.

“RE is great because you learn about yourself and others. We do drama, art, music and lots of other things. They help me learn all about other people.”

Lucy
Age 7
Every Child Matters in Religious Education

Exploring what it means to respect the body, while reflecting on religious beliefs;
Investigating healthy living through religious teachings about food and drink; caring for the environment;
Exploring attitudes to sexual relationships that promote the well being of all;
Encouraging a healthy mind and spirit through reflective activities such as circle time that enable pupils to understand prayer, stilling and meditation, and taking part in reasoned debate;
Encouraging a positive self-image by enabling personal reflection and exploration of ideas about the self from different religious traditions;
Enabling the consideration of teachings and examples from the faiths about self-respect, drug taking and intoxicants;
Appreciating the rich diversity of humanity.

Talking about emotions and choices and how they are reflected in religious stories and celebrations;
Finding out about how a baby is welcomed into the community;
Recognising and exploring the ways religions honour the earth, and some issues about the human impact on the planet;
Learning about practice and belief to do with weddings and marriage in religious ways of life;
Exploring varied attitudes to sexuality and loving relationships from religions and beliefs;
Thinking about what Hindus mean by the law of Karma and how our own actions can have good or bad consequences;
Considering questions about the value or sanctity of human life;
Describing the importance, for some people, of prayer, meditation, calmness or stillness in life's rhythms;
Asking what is meant by ‘spiritual health and well being’, and thinking about different answers.

Examples of the meaning of this outcome connected to RE:

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Practical classroom connections and examples for the RE teacher:
Every Child Matters in Religious Education

Giving opportunities to explore prejudice and discrimination, including teachings from the faiths;
Offering opportunities to consider rules and principles that guide individuals within communities and support the vulnerable;
Encouraging pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong;
Helping them to consider who should be their role models;
Reflecting on the value of security gained from family life, from religious community and ritual, from faith in the transcendent and from other sources;
Encouraging them to be increasingly able to take responsibility for who they are and what they do.

Talking about how religions believe that people have a responsibility to respect and care for the world and all living things;
Exploring issues of conflict and violence through stories, such as those of Gandhi and Dr Martin Luther King;
Using the Jewish Ten Commandments or the Buddhist Five Precepts to think about pupils’ own ways of life;
Looking at dilemmas from religious stories and considering how we decide what is good;
Thinking about why some people (such as Guru Nanak or Moses, for example) are seen as role models in their religions;
Considering how religious family life can be supported by shared faith;
Using ideas about religious identity to think about their own identity.

Examples of the meaning of this outcome connected to RE:

Practical classroom connections and examples for the RE teacher:

Visitors from the Jewish Faith Community bringing religion alive for KS1 pupils.
SECTION TWO

Every Child Matters in Religious Education

Examples of the meaning of this outcome connected to RE:

- Providing a rigorous, challenging, good quality RE curriculum that enables pupils to learn about themselves and others through exploring religion and the big questions of life;
- Encountering living faith (e.g. through visits and visitors) and being given opportunities to ask and develop answers to their own questions of meaning and purpose;
- Setting clear and challenging standards, including using assessment criteria, to enable all pupils to take pride in their achievements in RE;
- Raising standards by promoting national accreditation of RE achievements for 14-19s;
- Creating an inclusive RE curriculum that inspires all pupils, including those with additional educational needs.

Practical classroom connections and examples for the RE teacher:

- Recognising and developing pupils’ own values and commitments and those of others;
- Enjoying opportunities that RE provides to experience awe and wonder and express their own ideas creatively;
- Using religious concepts and beliefs to provoke thinking about pupils’ own beliefs and ideas;
- Visiting places of worship to develop understanding of community life and faith;
- Using adults other than teachers to contribute to pupils’ learning about religions through welcoming visitors to school in RE;
- Giving pupils time and space to produce RE work of which they can be proud;
- Using the widest possible range of learning styles to explore religious and spiritual questions;
- Giving pupils musical, artistic and creative models of learning and tasks that use their creative skills;
- Using all available opportunities to credit the achievements of pupils in RE;
- Understanding that there are not final, specific right or wrong answers;
- Taking opportunities for pupils to express their own beliefs, values and ideas.

Modelling Ganesha. Linking RE with Art.
Every Child Matters in Religious Education

Enabling pupils to explore concepts of identity, community and belonging in religions, and develop positive views of their own and respect for others;

Encouraging pupils to evaluate the impact of religious rules and codes for living and the meaning of being ‘law abiding’;

Giving opportunities to consider the nature of ‘being human’ and the positive common bonds found in shared human experiences and a shared global environment;

Enabling pupils to express their own views and ideas on all the questions RE addresses;

Encouraging open-mindedness in handling disputed questions, developing the ability to disagree respectfully.

Examples of the meaning of this outcome connected to RE:

Learning about festivals and special times when people are reminded to think about the needs of others;

Studying the ways faith and belief communities work together;

Thinking about the value of keeping the law, and the occasional circumstances where it might be appropriate to break the law;

Considering the experiences of human life that we all share and how this can make for cohesive communities;

Using circle time or Philosophy for Children methods to explore ‘big questions’;

Developing pupils’ skills in handling controversy by considering religious disagreements reasonably, e.g. between theists and atheists.

Practical classroom connections and examples for the RE teacher:

Getting ready to celebrate Diwali.
Every Child Matters in Religious Education

- Experiencing a curriculum that will allow them to grow and develop into individuals prepared for working life and able to flourish in the workplace;
- Giving opportunities to consider, and sometimes challenge, the meaning of ‘economic wellbeing’ through studying the responses of faith to money, wealth, poverty, generosity, community and responsibility;
- Exploring in a balanced way religious critiques of materialism and consumerism;
- Providing all learners at KS4 or 14 - 19 with the opportunity to achieve a nationally accredited RE / RS qualification;
- Encouraging an interest in religious and spiritual issues that enables lifelong learning.

Examples of the meaning of this outcome connected to RE:

- Talking about behaving responsibly and the consequences of actions;
- Exploring the impact of beliefs on different kinds of work;
- Learning about how different religions encourage generosity, e.g. through Zakah in Islam, langar and Sewa in the Sikh religion, or via many charities;
- Considering how things can be valued, apart from financial values;
- Exploring the ways in which religions and belief systems exalt learning or hold education to be valuable, and the values pupils find in learning;
- In studying fair trade, writing letters to the staff, local shops etc explaining the importance of stocking fair trade products;
- Using teaching and learning strategies which will support children to work in groups, e.g. Philosophy for Children, fair listening and speaking, hot-seating, conscience alley etc;
- Studying the link between faith, beliefs and environmental issues; consider how religious beliefs link to environmental issues.

Practical classroom connections and examples for the RE teacher:

The ‘Cross of Hands’ - made by the congregation of Emmanuel Church, Northampton.
Religious Education makes a significant contribution to educational inclusion. Effective RE will ensure that **ALL pupils** (as mentioned below) will have access to appropriate experiences which enable them to learn about and learn from religion and belief.

**INCLUSION: RE FOR ALL**

- Pupils who have Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)
- Pupils from minority religions
- Pupils who are atheist or agnostic
- Disaffected pupils
- Pupils of both genders
- Pupils who are looked after
- Mobile or transient pupils
- Pupils with preferred learning styles
- Pupils who are victims of prejudice
- Gifted and Talented pupils (G&T)
Religious Education is particularly significant in its focus on promoting respect for all and on Community Cohesion.

This Agreed Syllabus provides many opportunities for RE teaching and learning to challenge stereotypical views and to appreciate difference positively. The syllabus enables all pupils to consider the impact of people’s beliefs on their own actions and ways of life. The syllabus also highlights the importance of religions and beliefs and how Religious Education can develop pupils’ self-esteem.

To overcome any potential barriers to learning in Religious Education, some pupils may require:

- support to access text, such as through prepared tapes, particularly when working with significant quantities of written materials or at speed;
- help to communicate their ideas through methods other than extended writing, where this is a requirement. For example, pupils may demonstrate their understanding through speech or the use of ICT.
- a non-visual way of accessing sources of information when undertaking research in aspects of Religious Education, for example using audio materials.

Providing effective learning opportunities for all pupils in Religious Education

Religious Education should be accessible to all pupils. The National Curriculum sets out three principles that are essential to developing a more inclusive curriculum, which also apply to RE:

1. Setting suitable learning challenges;
2. Responding to pupils’ diverse needs;
3. Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

Effective inclusion involves teaching a lively, stimulating Religious Education curriculum that:

- builds on, and is enriched by, the differing experiences pupils bring to Religious Education;
- meets all pupils’ learning needs, including those with learning difficulties or those who are gifted and talented, boys and girls, pupils for whom English is an additional language, pupils from all religious communities, atheist, agnostic and other spiritual heritages and pupils from a wide range of ethnic groups and diverse family backgrounds.
1 Setting suitable learning challenges

This Agreed Syllabus sets out what pupils should learn at each key stage. Teachers should teach the knowledge, understanding and skills in ways which suit their pupils’ abilities and needs.

This means:

- setting differentiated tasks to take account of the needs of those pupils whose attainments fall below or significantly exceed the expectations for the age group;
- using a variety of teaching and learning strategies, taking account, wherever possible, of pupils’ preferred learning styles;
- using appropriate assessment approaches which allow for different learning styles;
- setting targets for learning;
- providing opportunities for pupil responses in ways which they initiate for themselves.

2 Responding to the diverse needs pupils bring to their learning

When planning, teachers need to provide opportunities for all pupils to achieve, including:

- boys and girls;
- pupils with special educational needs, including the gifted and talented;
- those with disabilities;
- looked after children;
- pupils from different social, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The background of pupils in religion and belief

The different experiences, interests and strengths that pupils bring are particularly relevant in Religious Education. Some are active and committed within faith communities, some have occasional contact and others have no links at all. Non-religious pupils are all different as well. Teachers will need to take account of these differing religious backgrounds, plan to meet the needs of individuals and acknowledge and respect the beliefs and practices found in each home and family.

A sensory approach to RE overcomes barriers to learning for some pupils.

3 Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils

RE and Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

RE is a statutory part of the core curriculum for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties. Pupils with SEN are found in all contexts and all teachers are teachers of SEN. Good quality teaching in RE will tailor the planning of the syllabus carefully to the special needs of all pupils.

Pupils with special educational needs will not always reach Level 1 of the expectations in RE. Where appropriate the Performance Descriptions (“P Scales”) may be used as an indicator for progress within RE. Work relating to the Programme of Study that is planned for
pupils with special educational needs should take account of the targets and recommendations in their Individual Educational Programmes.

For the small number of pupils who may need the provision, material may be selected from earlier or later key stages, to enable individual pupils to progress and demonstrate achievement. Such material should be presented in contexts suitable to the pupil’s age. In making decisions about adjusting the content of the key stage, teachers should take into account the previous experience of the pupil as well as the necessity to communicate to subsequent teachers a specific differentiated approach to entitlement.

The Performance Descriptions (“P Scales”) for use in Special Schools and Designated Special Provision Units (DSPs) can be found in APPENDIX 1 (Pages 103-104). Further information and guidance on SEN, including “I Can” statements for the “P Scales” can be found in the Support Materials on the accompanying CD Rom.

Further guidance is also available in “Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties - Religious Education” (QCDA 2009) which is included in the Support Materials on the CD ROM.

Gifted and Talented Pupils

Gifted and talented pupils are entitled to have their learning needs met in RE along with all other pupils. Giftedness and special talents in RE may take many forms. Some pupils bring to their RE insight into their own beliefs or those of others, creativity in learning from religion and spiritual development, a particular skill in argument or empathy, and many other specific gifts or talents. Personalised learning in RE for these pupils demands that their needs are understood and met through a variety of measures: age-related expectations may be revised for these pupils, particular tasks set for them, appropriate study skills and opportunities may be given. Further details of how to make this provision are given in additional support materials on the CD Rom which accompanies this syllabus.

The entitlement of every pupil to have their particular learning needs understood and met is established by this Agreed Syllabus.

“If we become bosses we need to know and understand different religions because we may employ someone of a different faith.”

Adam
Age 10

“Happy New Year.”
Religious Education and Community Cohesion

Schools have a duty to promote Community Cohesion (Education and Inspections Act 2006: Sections 38 and 154) and from September 2008 OFSTED has been required to inspect and report on the contributions made in this area. Embedding community cohesion in the curriculum is vital in addressing the aims to develop successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.

- The UK community – a major focus of RE is the study of diversity of religion and belief in the UK and how this influences national life;
- The global community – RE involves the study of matters of global significance, recognising the diversity of religion and belief and its impact on world issues.

RE subject matter gives particular opportunities to promote an ethos of respect for others, challenge stereotypes and build understanding of other cultures and beliefs. This contributes to promoting a positive and inclusive school ethos that champions democratic values and human rights.

Our vision in Northamptonshire is of a community where people of different religions and no religion live harmoniously side by side, displaying mutual respect, understanding and friendship. It is essential that our children and young people are supported in developing these qualities and, whilst growing in confidence, achieve a level of critical awareness that helps them to become builders and shapers of a better Northamptonshire. Under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, schools have a duty to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different groups. The Northamptonshire SACRE seeks to support schools in this work.

Visiting places of worship is one way to help develop community cohesion.

Religious Education makes an important contribution to this duty. It provides a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism and discrimination. Effective RE will promote community cohesion at each of these four levels:

- The school community – RE provides a positive context within which the diversity of cultures, beliefs and values can be celebrated and explored;
- The community within which the school is located – RE provides opportunities to investigate patterns of diversity of religion and belief and forge links with different groups in the local area;
The guidance advises that “every school is responsible for educating children and young people who will live and work in a country which is diverse in terms of cultures, religions or beliefs.” A recurring theme of government guidance on Religious Education is to “develop a positive attitude towards other people, respecting their right to hold different beliefs from their own, and towards living in a world of diverse religions.” RE guidance also requires schools to enable pupils to examine the consequences of anti-social behaviour such as racism and to develop strategies for dealing with it. Equally, Ofsted also points to the major contribution that RE makes to “valuing diversity, promoting multicultural understanding and respect.” The Community Cohesion agenda “is about how to avoid the corrosive effects of intolerance and harassment... as race and faith are often seen as the most frequent friction points between communities, and the most visible sources of tension.”

It is too simplistic to assume that merely by teaching about the major world religions, RE as a curriculum area will automatically contribute to community cohesion; there is a risk of reinforcing stereotypes in this subject area, e.g. ‘Muslims are from Pakistan’ or ‘Christians are white.’ It is important to emphasise that these are ‘world’ religions and to seek opportunities and resources that will break down inaccurate, even racist, assumptions about people of other faiths. Each religion, in fact, contains diverse traditions and beliefs and each one is multicultural itself; its forms and followers vary in ethnicity, language, customs and practices.

“RE teaches us about other beliefs so that we can choose for ourselves later in life.”

Hardip
Age 8
It is important to identify links and similarities between the different religions and their practices, encouraging mutual respect, understanding and sensitivity.

For example, Christians, Jews and Muslims all give great significance to Jesus within their religious tradition, holding some aspects in common and diverging on other fundamental points. As well as learning about the historical and current relationship between cultures, pupils should study the way in which one religion has influenced the development of another.

RE is an ideal vehicle for building links with faith communities in the local area of the school. Pupils need opportunities to meet people of different faiths and cultures to develop a respect for those who believe, think and practise differently, without feeling that their own identity or views are threatened. In fact, pupils can deepen and clarify their own sense of identity through their encounter with others. The community cohesion guidance states that “through their ethos and curriculum schools can promote discussion of a common sense of identity and support diversity, showing pupils how different communities can be united by shared values and common experiences.” It is important to set ground rules for discussion when religious differences are explored, in order to create a safe and positive environment. This is particularly relevant where there may be media misrepresentations and commonly held negative stereotypes, e.g. Islamophobia.

In terms of community cohesion in Northamptonshire, it is more meaningful to pupils if the religions taught include those of their own families and communities, including smaller faith groups, in order to accord equal value and respect. Similarly, children should learn that non-religious perspectives on life are also valid and widespread. Large numbers of our pupils come from families where no religion is practised and they must not be made to feel that their lives or families are less worthy as a result.

“RE is fun because we don’t always have to write everything down. We can learn through art, music, drama and dance.”

Poppy
Age 7
The following diagram shows visually some of the ways in which RE might contribute to a more cohesive society – “Growing Together”.

Learning about religions in increasing depth:
- What do the religions say about living together?

Thinking about diversity and difference:
- What problems and opportunities come from a religiously plural society?

Evaluating and applying ideas about living for the wellbeing of all:
- Can we make our school more respectful?
- What is the contribution of faith and belief?

Exploring a range of attitudes to difference:
- What is tolerance?
- What is respect?
- What is celebration of diversity?

Considering values, challenges and opportunities:
- What makes a fairer society?
- How do religions and beliefs contribute?

The contribution of the RE curriculum to developing the attitudes that enable a cohesive community is subtle and complex, but includes providing accurate information, opportunities for pupils to think about diversity, exploration of many examples of difference, considering their own values (spiritual and moral development) and evaluating the impact of ideas that might build respect.

Further guidance and ideas about this area can be found in:

“Religious Education and Community Cohesion” - Religious Education Council (REC 2009)
www.recouncil.org.uk

“Community Cohesion in Action - A curriculum planning guide for schools” (QCDA 2010)
www.qcda.gov.uk/orderline

“Learning Together to be Safe: a toolkit to help schools contribute to the prevention of violent extremism” (DCSF 2009)
www.dcsf.gov.uk/violentextremism
www.subjectassociations.org.uk
Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

A distinctive contribution from Religious Education

The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Northamptonshire, “Growing Together”, enables the teaching of RE to make a distinctive and significant contribution to these four aspects of pupils’ development.

While schools provide for these aspects of personal development in many ways, and through many subjects of the curriculum, RE may often focus on spiritual and moral education within the curriculum, and makes a distinctive contribution to understanding cultural diversity through developing understanding of religions and beliefs. These opportunities for personal development contribute to high standards and aspirations for each pupil.

There is an extensive literature on these topics, which are always contested.

For the purposes of this Agreed Syllabus, the following descriptions provide a basis for ways in which the RE curriculum can contribute to pupils’ personal development.

Religious Education provides opportunities to promote SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT through:

- discussing and reflecting on key questions of meaning and truth such as the origins of the universe, life after death, good and evil, beliefs about God and values such as justice, honesty and truth;
- learning about and reflecting on important concepts, experiences and beliefs that are at the heart of religious and other traditions and practices;
- considering how beliefs and concepts in religion may be expressed through the creative and expressive arts and related to the human and natural sciences, thereby contributing to personal and communal identity;
- considering how religions and other world views perceive the value of human beings, and their relationships with one another, with the natural world, and with God;
- valuing relationships and developing a sense of belonging;
- developing their own views and ideas on religious and spiritual issues.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT enables people to look within themselves, at their human relationships, at the wider world and at their vision of the divine or the ultimate reality, with characteristics such as courage, hope, acceptance, strength, insight and love, so that they can better face all the sufferings, challenges and opportunities of human life.
Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Religious Education provides opportunities to promote MORAL DEVELOPMENT through:

- enhancing the values identified within the National Curriculum, particularly valuing diversity and engaging in issues of truth, justice and trust;
- exploring the influence of family, friends and media on moral choices and how society is influenced by beliefs, teachings, sacred texts and guidance from religious leaders;
- considering what is of ultimate value to pupils and believers through studying the key beliefs and teachings from religion and philosophy about values and ethical codes of practice;
- studying a range of ethical issues, including those that focus on justice, to promote racial and religious respect, community cohesion and personal integrity;
- considering the importance of rights and responsibilities and developing a sense of conscience.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT enables pupils to take an increasingly thoughtful view of what is right and wrong, to recognise the needs and interests of others as well as themselves and to develop characteristics such as truthfulness, kindness, unselfishness and commitment to virtues such as integrity, justice and the will to do what is right, so that they can live in ways which respect the well-being and rights of each person.
**SECTION TWO**

**Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development**

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT** enables pupils to relate to others successfully through an understanding of the responsibilities and rights of being a member of various families, local, national and global communities. It enables them to develop social skills, qualities, attitudes and characteristics such as respectfulness, tolerance, a willingness to get involved, so that they can play a full and fulfilling part in their community and society as, for example, family members, citizens, learners and workers.

Religious Education provides opportunities to promote **SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT** through:

- considering how religious and other beliefs lead to particular actions and concerns;
- investigating social issues from religious perspectives, recognising the diversity of viewpoints within and between religions as well as the common ground between religions;
- articulating pupils’ own and others’ ideas on a range of contemporary social issues, including environmental concerns, issues of equality and community cohesion.

**CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT** enables people to develop their sense of their own place and identity in society, to value and participate creatively in their own culture and appreciate the cultures of others by developing their appreciation of, for example, the arts, literature, sport, music, travel and other aspects of culture. Cultural development makes its contribution to human wellbeing through enabling participation in diverse varieties of cultural life for the enrichment of individuals and communities. Cultural development enables people to develop understanding, qualities and attitudes which lead to appreciation or participation in local, regional, national, European and global cultures.

Religious Education provides opportunities to promote **CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT** through:

- encountering people, literature, the creative and expressive arts and resources from differing cultures;
- considering the relationship between religion and cultures and how religions and beliefs contribute to cultural identity and practices;
- promoting racial and interfaith harmony and respect for all, combating prejudice and discrimination, contributing positively to community cohesion and promoting awareness of how interfaith cooperation can support the pursuit of the common good.
Learning Outside the Classroom in Religious Education

Sacred Space

For all pupils, visiting sacred spaces can be a powerful learning experience. Such visits are always for learning, never for participation: to visit a church and learn from it does not involve participation in Christian prayer and worship. Taking a trip to a mosque and observing the reverent communal prayer or the happy celebration of Eid does not imply acceptance of Islamic belief or submission to Islamic law but rather an open-minded willingness to explore the new and the different, to learn from religion. In this spirit, this Agreed Syllabus encourages teachers to plan for trips to places of worship.

Learning outside the classroom in RE is not only about visits to places of worship though: the experience of the natural world is celebrated in many religions and by spiritual people everywhere. The sense of place and the possibility of being uplifted, catching that ‘glad to be alive’ feeling that promotes spiritual development, is not always evident in the classroom: it can be accessed through the learning that happens beyond the classroom.

At every key stage, learning outside the classroom is encouraged in this syllabus. Some examples of the intentions and activities involved are given below but the scope of this pedagogical approach is limitless.

### AGE GROUP

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Children visit a local church and learn about the community life of the church, watching a Christening enacted by the minister and asking questions. They each contribute one drawing to a class book entitled “Thirty things we liked at Saint Andrew’s”.

In a unit on Creation, children walk the school grounds and find / choose a leaf, an acorn, a feather and a blade of grass. They take these four things back to the classroom to try and work out what a human would have to do to make these four things. They explore some mysteries of the natural world in small scale natural world enquiry.
### What makes a place sacred?

Class 4A visits the Mosque in Northampton, and Class 4B visits Saint Matthew’s Church in Northampton. Each class plans its multi-sensory enquiry into the sacred space and presents its findings to the other class. All pupils consider the general question, “What makes a place sacred?” in relation to both buildings.

### Peaceful, thoughtful and friendly places

The class decides what the most peaceful, thoughtful friendly places are in the school and grounds. They go to these places and do something as a class that is peaceful, thoughtful, and friendly. When they then visit a place of worship, they choose and photograph the most peaceful, thoughtful, friendly places.

### What is a place of national religious or spiritual significance?

Pupils consider 12 candidates for this title, including sites from many different religions, and also Stonehenge, Mount Snowdon etc. They visit two of them in half year groups (e.g. Coventry Cathedral, Neasden, Swaminarayan Hindu Mandir). They present the findings of a group enquiry into British religion to the rest of the class and vote for their choices after analysing different manifestations of religion and spirituality in the UK.

### Rejecting evil, remembering wisdom, seeking answers to confusion

Stations of reflection and the Islamic Hajj. Pupils take turns to do three reflective activities designed from the experiences of stoning the Shaytan, running from Safa to Marwah and recalling the last sermon of the Prophet. The creation of a “Labyrinth” would help focus thinking. From these experiences, pupils move to a deeper exploration of the significance of Hajj as memory, search for wisdom and rejection of evil.
How do objects speak across the decades?

Students visit the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum. Through the day of their visit, they see hundreds of objects and select four that, for them, express the anger, the sadness, the evil and the lessons of the holocaust. They justify their choices in a debate back at school.

Night sky: mysteries

For homework, pupils are asked to stand alone in the open air and look into the sky on a dark clear night for 5 minutes. In class, they compare the experience of night sky recorder from Abraham, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), Immanuel Kant and themselves. They create a list poem of questions inspired by the night sky.

See further information at: www.lotc.org.uk and www.refuel.org.uk/sacred-space/

Applique of Jesus’ life created by Mary Garbutt and on display at Emmanuel Church, Northampton.
Religious Education and ICT

Pupils should be given opportunities to apply and develop their ICT capability through the use of ICT tools to support their learning in all subjects, including Religious Education. This Agreed Syllabus encourages the use of relevant and appropriate ICT where it helps and supports learning in Religious Education. Pupils could be given opportunities such as the following to support their work in Religious Education:

- Finding things out from a variety of sources, selecting and synthesising the information to meet their needs and developing an ability to question its accuracy, bias and plausibility;
- Making appropriate use of sources to investigate, analyse and evaluate different aspects of religious life, ultimate questions and ethical issues;
- Using e-mail or video conferencing to communicate and collaborate with others in different locations, therefore allowing associations to be made between religions and individual, national and international life;
- Developing their ideas using ICT tools to amend and refine their work to enhance its quality and accuracy;
- Exchanging and sharing information through electronic media;
- Using interactive whiteboards, digital cameras and other electronic equipment to bring authentic images from faith communities into the classroom;
- Using a range of multimedia to communicate personal learning responses;
- Using writing support and concept mapping software to organise thoughts and express learning about the diversity of belief and practice within and between religions;
- Reviewing, modifying and evaluating their work, reflecting critically on its quality, as it progresses.

The Support Materials which accompany the Agreed Syllabus include a list of key websites that teachers can use with confidence.