

Religion and Worldviews in schools

A resource pack
for Teachers and
Subject Leaders

The
Faith
& Belief
Forum



inform



The Open
University

How To Investigate Worldviews

Since the 1988 Education Reform Act 'Every maintained school is required by law to provide a basic curriculum, which is 'broad and balanced', including religious education in accordance to a locally agreed syllabus (other than voluntary aided schools of a religious character). It is the duty of the Head teacher to secure the provision of Religious Education to all registered pupils from Reception and including sixth form, except when withdrawn by their parents. Academies (including free schools) are required to adopt their local agreed syllabus unless specifically stated otherwise in their funding agreements.

From our research we know that many teachers asked to teach Religious Education may have little subject knowledge, enthusiasm or confidence in the subject.

They were not always aware of the extent of existing resource hubs for the subject, nor of the support available for further subject-area training.

Here are some resources to help you. This list is by no means exhaustive though!

There are **excellent summary resources** for each career stage (www.reonline.org.uk/professional-development/be-inspired) offered by Culham St Gabriel's.

Explaining RE's importance to School Leaders

Many heads and school leaders expressed a need for the subject to be better articulated and presented as important for students.

The **Religious Education Council** (www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk) works to promote better support for the subject in both schools and governments and has many **resources** (www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resources) which help to articulate the Religion and Worldviews approach specifically.

There are some fantastic videos which explain how people in Britain have applied what they learned in RE in their careers **here** (www.truetube.co.uk/resource/my-future-my-career-my-re).

Another way of encouraging a better understanding of what high-quality RE is and why it is important is to put your school forward for the **RE Quality Mark Award** (www.reqm.org).

Explaining Religion and Worldviews to Parents

Sometimes parents are anxious because they don't understand what a high-quality education in religious and worldviews is about - that it is a rigorous academic subject with strong links to university educators and employment skills.

Since the 1988 Education Reform Act 'Every maintained school is required by law to provide a basic curriculum, which is 'broad and balanced', including religious education in accordance to a locally agreed syllabus (other than voluntary aided schools of a religious character). An Agreed Syllabus, and Religious Education taught in schools according to it, must not be designed to promote any particular religion or worldview on pupils.

A good introduction to parents might be to encourage them to take the OpenLearn course [An Education in Religion and Worldviews](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/an-education-religion-and-worldviews) (www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/an-education-religion-and-worldviews) for a brief introduction”

It is an expectation that schools should be including the RE curriculum on their website, and some parents might appreciate knowing a bit more about the content of your classes. They may feel reassured if they knew they were welcome to join in with sharing some of their family's cultural-religious history and worldviews as part of this learning.

Some parents might have very specific concerns about more controversial subject areas, and under the School and Standards and Framework Act 1988, section 71, parents of pupils may request that their child be excused from Religious Education and / or attendance at collective worship. If possible, try to have a dialogue with these parents so you can help them feel their concerns are understood and they can have a better sense of the content of any recommended curriculum and why it is recommended.

Networking

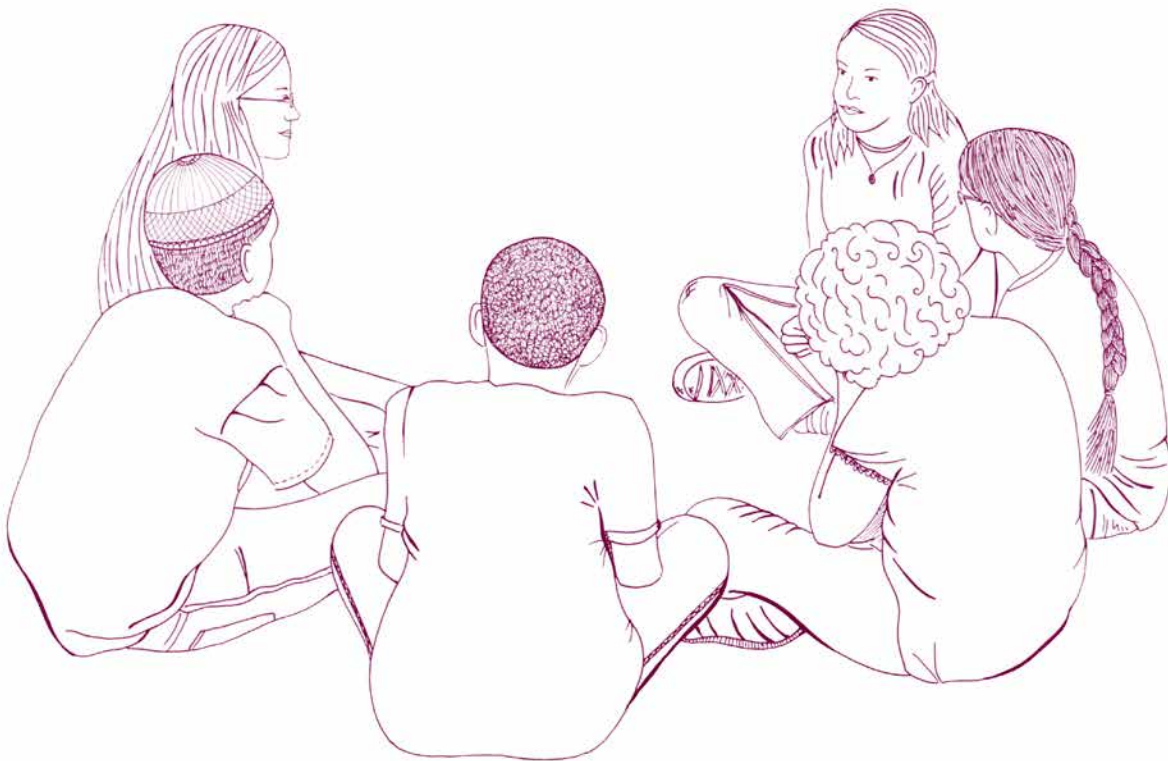
- Join your local **National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE)** (www.natre.org.uk) group on social media and through official channels.
- Check out the **NATRE events** (www.natre.org.uk/courses-events/upcoming-courses-events) page regularly.
- On Twitter follow **#REChatUK** and **@TeamRE_UK** (www.twitter.com/TeamRE_UK)
- Look for Religious Studies and Theology University departments on your preferred social media platforms. It's a great way of seeing what's of interest at university level in the field.
- Get in touch with your local **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)** to find out more about what they do and the relationship with your local school. Every local authority area has a SACRE in order to ensure that what is taught best reflects the local community and works to improve the teaching of RE and collective worship in a local area. Your SACRE consists of people from the local community, representatives of different local faith groups, as well as non-religious groups and local teachers. You can find the contact details of your local SACRE listed by local authority area [here](http://www.nasacre.org.uk/database) (www.nasacre.org.uk/database).
- **AULRE** (www.aulre.org) is an association of members interested in learning, teaching and research in religion and education; consider joining.
- **AREIAC** (www.arei.ac.org.uk) is an organisation for specialist educationalists, all qualified teachers, providing advice, challenge, leadership, training and support for multi-faith religious education in schools and colleges. It is a conduit supporting the trainers / leaders / advisers of RE and the home of expertise for anybody involved in the teaching of RE. It has an organising committee and regional groups which meet to share and develop resources, to support teachers and to discuss national issues around excellent religious education.

Get others involved

Religion and Worldviews is an approach which means you do not have to have expert knowledge in every aspect of global religious and non-religious belief and practice. This would be impossible! So draw on other's expertise where you can.

Ofsted recently emphasised the importance of linking scholarly and evidence-based perspectives into Religious Education in schools. It is important to model good research and communication skills as part of promoting high-quality subject teaching.

Fortunately there are already many great resources which have been vetted by leading experts in the field and many qualified people very happy to answer questions from teachers. We've given you a head start on some of these high-quality resources on the next few pages:



Specialist post-graduate level training in Religious Education

- There are a growing number of free resources for teaching religion and worldviews on the **RE:Online website** (www.reonline.org.uk) run by Culham St Gabriels’.
- **RE Today** (www.retoday.org.uk) offers a huge variety of resources and support for both teachers and school leaders.
- Primary teachers can look at **NATRE’s Primary RE-1000** (www.natre.org.uk/membership/primary-RE-1000) resources.
- Secondary teachers can look at **NATRE’s New to RE membership** (www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/new2re-a-great-opportunity-for-new-secondary-re-teachers).
- **TrueTube** (www.truetube.co.uk) has lots of free video resources for Religious Education teachers.
- The **Faith and Belief Forum** (www.faithbeliefforum.org/resources) also provides free online resources and speakers for schools to support an education in religion and worldviews.
- The **Pluralism Project** (www.pluralism.org) at Harvard University has lots of interesting online resources that could be adapted for classroom use.

Connect with Universities

Theology and Religious Studies (UK) (www.trs.ac.uk/teachers-of-re/overview) is the main university-level networking organisation for the university-level study of religious and non-religious beliefs and practices. Many universities would welcome more direct communications with schools, particularly with GCSE and A-level students.

Look at the **TRS (UK)** resources and perhaps approach the head of department at your nearest university for a speaker or workshop leader. They have some great videos demonstrating how valuable a subject TRS is for employers [here](http://www.trs.ac.uk/studying-trs/graduate-videos) (www.trs.ac.uk/studying-trs/graduate-videos) and a [resource library](http://www.trs.ac.uk/teachers-of-re/resource-library) (www.trs.ac.uk/teachers-of-re/resource-library).



Connect with Community Groups

There are national community groups which can help in providing appropriate speakers on a variety of perspectives to provide some living examples of how Religion and Worldviews is important to people in your local community.

One of the major national networks for mainstream faiths is the **Interfaith Network** (www.interfaith.org.uk) which works to promote understanding, cooperation and good relations between organisations and persons of different faiths in the UK. They have produced some specific **School Resources** (www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/school_resources) and their regular newsletter carries information about inter faith projects, relevant national updates, research projects, funding opportunities.



And why not reach out to the **Faith & Belief Forum** (www.faithbeliefforum.org), a charity which runs multiple projects connecting schools to their local diverse communities and connecting students across barriers of difference, or places of worship near to your school?

More information

If you need more information about a specific religious group, a good place to start in doing 'due diligence' on specific or minority groups is through getting in touch with **Inform** (www.inform.ac), they have a database of over 5,000 different groups and movements and can give details on affiliation and any known areas of controversy to help you contextualise a group or movement. It's best to email inform@kcl.ac.uk.



CPD in Religion and Worldviews

Culham St Gabriel's offers some **free training courses** (www.courses.cstg.org.uk) to upskill in the Religion and Worldviews approach.

Signposts teacher training module: **Teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education** (www.theewc.org/resources/signposts-teacher-training-module-teaching-about-religions-and-non-religious-world-views-in-intercultural-education). The aim of this free online training module developed by the European Wergeland Centre (EWC) is to offer safe ways for teachers to address issues connected to religion and non-religious world views in the framework of intercultural education.

Check out the **events listing** (www.natre.org.uk/courses-events/upcoming-courses-events) on the NATRE website.

The Open University has a number of free online courses on the **Open Learn** platform to up-skill your knowledge on specific areas that university researchers think are important to the subject area, some of which might also be suitable for GCSE and A-level student resources. Some of these include:

- **Introducing the philosophy of religion**
- **Religious diversity: rethinking religion**
- **Census stories: bringing statistics to life in Milton Keynes**
- **Revolutions of the Sixties**
- **Why Not World Religions?**

Specialist post-graduate level training in Religious Education



Find a university-level course which offers professional post-graduate qualifications in Religious Education [here](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subject-knowledge-enhancement-course-directory/subject-knowledge-enhancement-ske-course-directory#religious-education) (www.gov.uk/government/publications/subject-knowledge-enhancement-course-directory/subject-knowledge-enhancement-ske-course-directory#religious-education).

Become a **Chartered Teacher** (www.chartered.college/chartered) and reflect upon best practice in teaching religious education.

Culham St Gabriel's also offers **grants** to support re-training and further specialist training for already qualified teachers and other sources for financial support for teacher training, available [here](http://www.ucas.com/ucas/teacher-training/finance-and-support-trainee-teachers) (www.ucas.com/ucas/teacher-training/finance-and-support-trainee-teachers).

Become research-reflective

There are quite a few accessible ways of engaging with the research community on issues of both content and pedagogy in the teaching of religion and worldviews. Some resources you might want to check out include:

- RE:Online has a **Research section** (www.reonline.org.uk/research) specifically aimed at research-informed resources for school teachers.
- The **British Journal of Religious Education (BJRE)** (www.tandfonline.com/journals/cbre20) is an international peer-reviewed academic journal with roots reaching back to 1934. It is the leading journal in Britain for the dissemination of international research in religion and education, and for the scholarly discussion of issues concerning religion and education internationally.
- The **Journal of Beliefs and Values (JBV)** (www.tandfonline.com/toc/cjbv20/current) is a peer-reviewed journal run by AULRE and places particular emphasis on the interface between the theory and practice of religion and education.
- For a quick accessible insight into debates within university-level study of religions, check out the **Religious Studies Project** (www.religiousstudiesproject.com) which offers regular podcast reflections on current events and new publications in the field of university-level Religious Studies. You can also follow them on social media for the latest updates.