

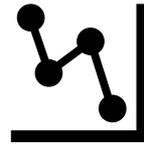


# RE Newsletter

Spring Term 2023

## CHALLENGING DATA

The publication of the census results regarding the religious and ethnic make-up of England and Wales has given us all much to think about. The nation is more diverse than ever, with more people choosing not to identify with a particular religion or tradition. This presents a continuing challenge in RE, but in my opinion makes it even more important that our pupils receive a high-quality religious education that enables them to navigate the complexity of beliefs and worldviews of modern multi-secular and multi-religious Britain.



This year's [RE Conference](#) (see below) will explore this debate about worldviews. We will be trying to unpick the differences between belief, worldview, faith and cultural expression. We have just one guest speaker this year, but there will be a variety of sessions aimed at getting us all thinking.

Other data published this year has revealed that there are still many schools that are not making sufficient time available for RE in the timetable. Are you working in a school where RE is squeezed? Are you aware of teachers who received no RE as part of their Initial Teacher Training? Do you teach in or send your children to a school where there is little or no RE in Years 10, 11, 12 or 13? The Religious Education Council, working with a range of other RE organisations – NATRE, Culham St Gabriels and NASACRE to name but a few – to encourage teachers, SACREs, governors and parents to contact their MPs to raise the question about the provision of RE. Please consider whether you are able to contact your MP to talk about the benefits of RE and urge them to encourage the government to take positive action. There is an article below that will give you some guidance.



My hope and prayer for this coming spring is that the data around flu and Covid will allow schools to continue to offer a normal level of service, and that pupil data will show the progress that all are making to close the gaps and move forward, putting 2020-22 firmly behind us.

As you will see from many of the articles below there is much that is new. So **Happy New Year** to you all.

Remember to get in contact with me if you would like support with any area of RE teaching. I look forward to hearing from you. Have a great term.

Anne Andrews by [email](#) or phone 07884 655097  
Diocesan RE Adviser



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## STOP PRESS

### Grant Opportunity

Do you want to apply for a grant to help improve the teaching of Christianity in your school? Visit [The Jerusalem Trust \(regrants.org.uk\)](http://TheJerusalemTrust.org.uk) to apply for up to £600.

For a video on Orthodox Easter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0fqdxZd36c>

New films coming soon on [Real People Real Faith](#) – Humanist, Baha’i and Buddhist.

A new Locally Agreed Syllabus for Oxfordshire should be launched around Easter time.

*If you spot anything of interest anywhere do let me know for the next edition!*

## TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES THIS TERM

All RE training events and booking links can be found on the new [RE Central Webpage](#) but here is some additional information to help you decide which courses will best meet your needs.

### THEOLOGY, FAITH AND CULTURAL AWARENESS

09.30 – 14.00 on Friday 24 March 2023, Church House Oxford

Have you ever wondered whether religion or culture has a greater influence on a person's worldview? How well do we handle people from a culture different to our own? This session will begin to address some of those issues with reference to RE.

Peter Tate, a cultural awareness researcher and trainer, will lead this conference. Sessions will look at the theology of language and consider the challenge of living in a place where one culture is prominent. He will then move on to two interactive sessions considering how cultures work and understanding the roots of cultures, before addressing some case studies.

Considering the role that culture plays in religious education, and in schools more widely, will help schools to address issues of inclusivity as the culture around us becomes ever more diverse. This will link with the concept of church schools being places of hospitality.

This year the conference will take place in Church House Oxford and places will be limited. Bookings can be made [here](#). **Please book by Friday 17 March at the latest as there is a 30-minute pre-course online session to complete to get the full benefit of this training.**

Cost: £145+ VAT for SLA schools and £195+VAT for schools not in the SLA.  
Refreshments and lunch included.

### RE NETWORK MEETINGS

[Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January](#) 4.00pm – 5.30pm

Microsoft Teams

**Assessing through a concept:** planning for progress – the Easter story

[Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> March](#) 4.00pm – 5.30pm

Microsoft Teams

**Concepts in Sikhi:** Including a virtual tour of a Gurdwara and a question-and-answer panel.

Booking links are available on the [website](#) along with costs. Details of the sessions for the spring and summer terms are also on the [website](#).

*These sessions are free to schools that have signed up to the Service Level Agreement. For other schools there is an annual charge to join the Network.*

**Dates for next term are Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May and Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> July**

*If you teach in Milton Keynes, Bracknell Forest or Windsor and Maidenhead look out for fliers about the additional SACRE funded networks taking place in those areas.*

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### [Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> February](#)

Church House Oxford, 1.30 – 3.30 pm

If you are new to teaching this is an opportunity to learn about the essentials of teaching RE in a Church of England School. You will meet fellow ECTS and find out more about the purpose, the methodologies, resources and support on offer across Diocese of Oxford.

### NATIONAL TRAINING AND CPD RESOURCES

#### [Strictly RE](#) and NATRE

Coming to a screen near you in the last weekend of January is the annual RE feast of Strictly RE. Run by NATRE, but with contributors from every area and key stage of the RE world, this is an excellent opportunity to engage with the latest thinking in RE.

#### [Culham St Gabriels](#) and RE Online

There are currently 6 E learning modules on Religion and Worldviews, Curriculum Design, research and Primary Beginning Teacher Courses

#### [Understanding Christianity](#)

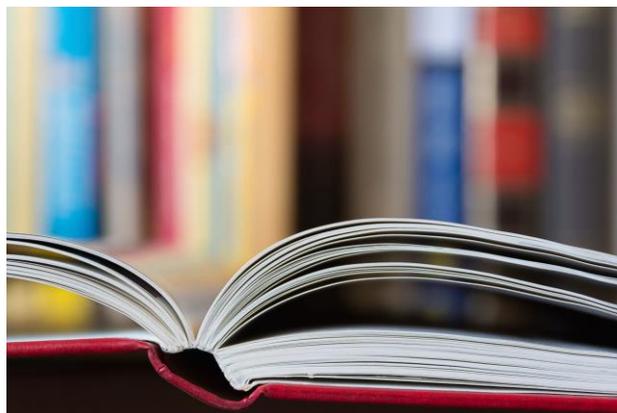
If you have not yet had training on the Understanding Christianity resource, and you can't wait till next academic year for an Oxford based course, then RE Today are running a series of online courses. There are courses for Primary and Secondary teachers. If you would rather be trained in person nearer to home, please register your interest with me and we will look to run a course starting in Autumn 2023.

#### [RE Chat on Twitter](#)

Monthly on Twitter, usually the first Monday of the month, members of the RE community get together on Twitter to discuss topics and share ideas. If you miss it, searching the #REchatUK will take you to the thread. Free to join, as long as you are on Twitter.

#### [James D Holt:](#)

There are several recorded CPD videos on this website, covering things like Assessment, Buddhism, Sikhism, Islam and Storytelling. Free to access.



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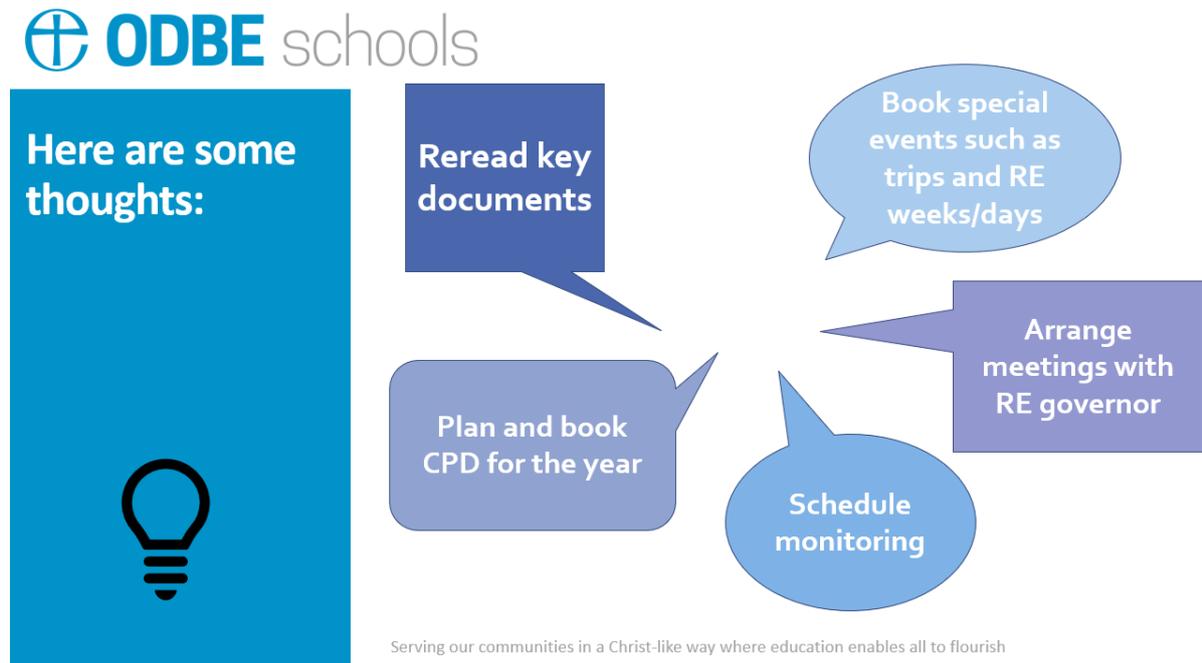
## REPORTS FROM AUTUMN TERM RE NETWORKS

### STARTING WELL

The first session of the academic year was designed to give subject leaders a refresher and fresh impetus.

One focus was on supporting new staff, ensuring that they had the knowledge they need to do a good job of teaching RE. Sharing the RE policy, the overall curriculum, expectations for the amount and quality of work are some of the key things that people new to the school need to know.

We looked at some of the other key tasks for a subject leader:



And we considered the best places to go for support:

- RE Online - [Home - RE:ONLINE \(reonline.org.uk\)](http://reonline.org.uk)
- Culham St Gabriel's: [Culham St Gabriel's Trust Moodle \(cstg.org.uk\)](http://cstg.org.uk)
- RE Today: [RE Today supporting Religious Education in schools](http://re-today.org.uk)
- NATRE: [National Association of Teachers of Religious Education \(natre.org.uk\)](http://natre.org.uk)
- ODBE website: [Oxford Diocesan Board of Education \(odbe.org.uk\)](http://odbe.org.uk)
- BBC clips: [BBC - Class Clips – Primary](http://bbc.com/classclips/primary); [BBC - Class Clips - Secondary](http://bbc.com/classclips/secondary)
- Real People, Real Faith films: [Real People Real Faith \(natre.org.uk\)](http://natre.org.uk)
- School adviser – ask your Headteacher
- RE adviser: [anne.andrews@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:anne.andrews@oxford.anglican.org)
- RE Podcasts: [The RE Podcast: S7 E1 The One About World Views on Apple Podcasts](https://applepodcasts.com/show/the-re-podcast)

Each local authority area also has a SACRE, a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education. These are the bodies responsible for producing the Locally Agreed RE syllabuses and are often engaged in providing support by running network meetings, or hosting

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information on their websites. Most SACREs are also short of teacher representatives, so if you are interested in influencing the Local Authority with regard to RE, this may be an opportunity for you.

Check out the website of your local SACRE for information and contact details:

- **Bracknell:** [Committee details - Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](#)
- **Bucks:** [SACRE | SchoolsWeb \(buckscc.gov.uk\)](#)
- **Milton Keynes** [Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education \(SACRE\) | Milton Keynes Council \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](#)
- **Oxford:** [Religious education | Oxfordshire County Council](#)
- **Reading:** [Religious Education - Reading Borough Council](#)
- **Slough:** [Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education \(SACRE\) – Slough Borough Council](#)
- **West Berks:** [West Berkshire Council - Browse meetings - Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education](#)
- **Windsor and Maidenhead:** [Outside bodies - Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)
- **Wokingham:** [SACRE \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](#)

#### CROSS CURRICULAR RE

The autumn meeting in the second half of term looked at different ways to strengthen learning in RE through cross-curricular links. We tried to broaden the focus to include English, history, art and music, but we could also have looked at DT and dance. The important thing is to ensure that clear RE learning objectives are included.

Delegates considered whether it was more beneficial to bring other subjects into the time dedicated to RE or take the RE out into other curriculum areas. They also began to consider whether some of the skills of RE were replicated in other subjects, and whether by considering expectations in those, teachers could ensure a more coherent and progressive set of skills. For example, what is expected of children in handling source material or artefacts in history? Can those expectations be brought into the handling of sources and artefacts in RE?

Here are some other suggested cross-curricular skills:

- Interpreting text
- Analysing data
- Making comparisons
- Drawing conclusions
- Asking questions
- Solving problems and creating solutions
- Making careful observations
- Describing and explaining
- Making hypotheses

Think about what is expected of pupils in these skills across the board of subjects. Are you expecting, and getting, a similar level of competence in these skills where appropriate in RE?

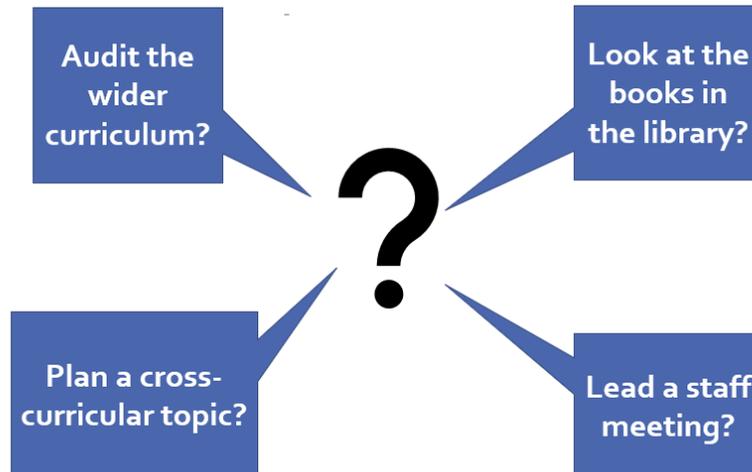
In terms of the amount of time that can be devoted to RE, it is often better to take the subject matter of RE out to other subjects. Where are there already texts in English, topics in history, pictures in art, pieces in music, patterns or foods in DT or ethical issues in PHSCE that you can link explicitly to your topic in RE? It is important that the links are real connections and not straining credibility. A topic on pirates for example, is not going to sit comfortably with RE, unless you are exploring the underlying inequalities that led to much piracy or exploring the (un)ethical background!

Below are some of the resources that we explored during the session.

- The Lion and the Unicorn by Shirly Hughes
- Rose Blanche by Roberto Innocenti and Ian McEwan
- The Devil's Children by Peter Dickinson (KS3 probably)
- The illustrated [Ihringen Haggadah](#) – the Jewish Museum (through Show.Me 24 hour museum)
- BBC Bitesize history KS2
- KS2 Resource Pack Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, Norwich Castle Museum and art Gallery
- [Shabad Kirtan – Sikh Devotional Music - YouTube](#)

What other resources can you think of? If you have any that you would recommend, please email me and I will share them in the next edition of this newsletter. I have already received the suggestion for the text 'I Am David' by Ann Holme.

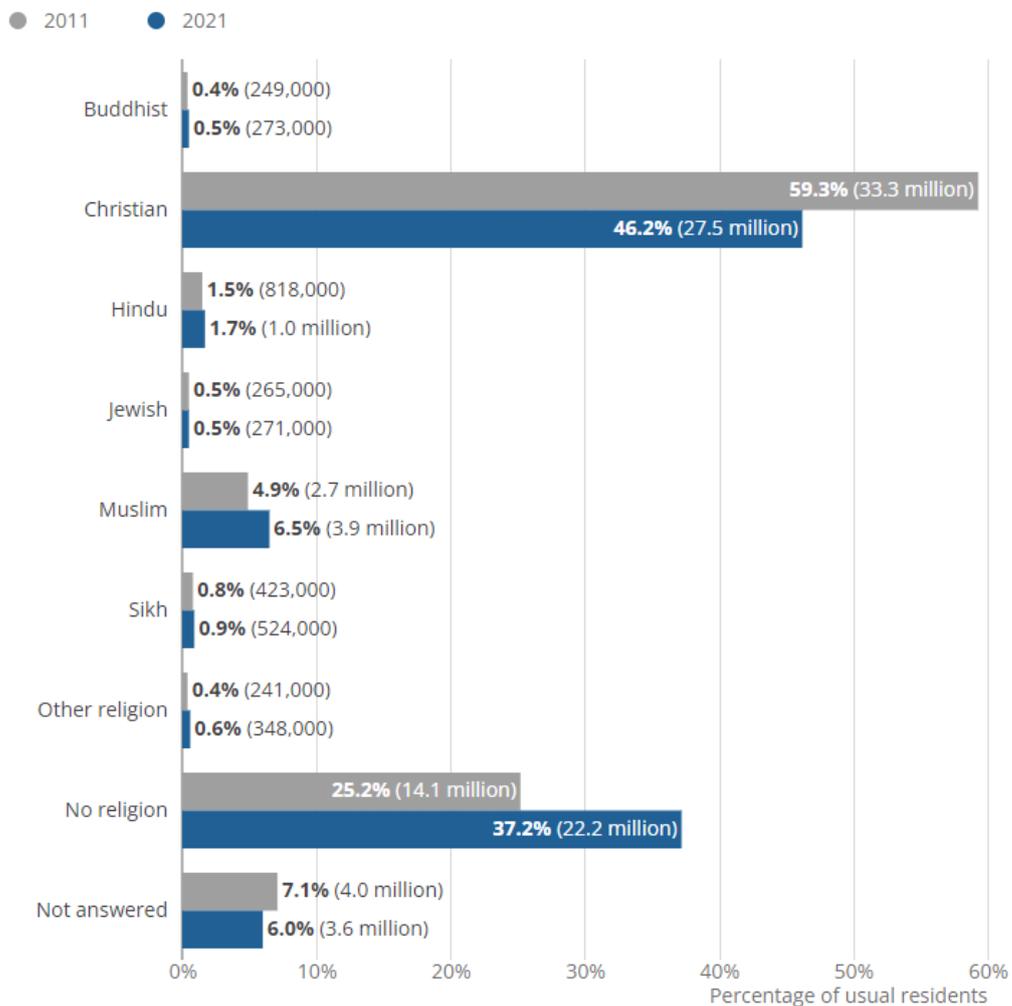
What steps will you take to strengthen the cross-curricular links in your school?



## CENSUS DATA AND HOW TO USE IT

The census data from the March 2021 census has finally been published and many religious and non-religious groups have reacted to the statistics that it reveals. Theos has published a short, but insightful article which considers how the data may be interpreted. Below are a couple of the tables extracted from the ONS data. The first one shows the change in reporting between this census and the previous one in 2011. The changes certainly merit some consideration as they may have a longer-term impact on Religious Education in schools.

Religious composition, 2011 and 2021, England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

There are some interesting details to be looked at here, with the two headline figures being the decline of the number of people reporting as Christians and the increase of those reporting as having no religion. All other religious groups reported relatively small increases in adherence, except for Islam. [In another article](#), based on a recent report by Hannah Waite, Theos unpacks the attitudes of those who probably ticked the no religion box on the census. According to her data there are three distinct groups of ‘nones’ – spiritual (32%), tolerant

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(35%) and campaigning (34%). [The full report](#) is available to read, but the summary must be that not everyone who ticks the no religion box is antagonistic towards religion or belief.

Another interesting element of the census data is the breakdown of the groups that ticked other religion:

Among the 405,000 (0.7% of the overall population in England and Wales) who chose to write-in a response through the "Any other religion" option were the following religions:

- Pagan (74,000)
- Alevi (26,000)
- Jain (25,000)
- Wicca (13,000)
- Ravidassia (10,000)
- Shamanism (8,000)
- Rastafarian (6,000)
- Zoroastrian (4,000)

The largest increase was seen in those describing their religion as "Shamanism", increasing more than tenfold to 8,000 from 650 in 2011.

Of those who wrote-in a non-religious group to "Any other religion", the largest numbers were:

- Agnostic (32,000)
- Atheist (14,000)
- Humanist (10,000)

This data raises many questions. Are there really no Baha'i adherents recorded? Are there any other groups that have not been recorded? Why might that be? Is it down to the questions that were asked? Or was the data statistically insignificant? Is there other information that is missing? What about the denominational variations in many religious traditions?

To explore the data in your own Local authority or smaller region follow this [link](#). The searchable map and database will reveal a lot of information about your area.

What might you do with this information in school? Could you find a way to represent the data pictorially? Or compare the local data with the school's data? Does this tell you more about the school or the area? Could you compare your data with another school in the same area? Or a completely different area, but maybe in the same Local Authority district?

There will be further work on the census by national bodies in the RE world, and doubtless further reports as people digest the data. Please share any activities that you do with classes on this information.

From September 2023 there will be a new [SIAMS Framework](#). The key message for schools is that the picture of what a good Church School is remains unchanged. It is inspectors who will notice the biggest differences.

There are two Inspection Questions (IQs) focused expressly on RE:

**IQ6:** Is the religious education curriculum effective (with reference to the expectations set out in the Church of England’s Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education)?

*a) How do school and trust leaders ensure that the provision, profile, and priority of religious education in all key stages reflect its place on the curriculum of a Church school?*

*b) How do school and trust leaders ensure that the religious education curriculum is challenging, accurate, well-sequenced, well-balanced, relevant, and diverse?*

*c) How do school and trust leaders ensure that religious education is well-resourced, and that continuing professional development for staff has an impact on the effectiveness of the curriculum?*

**IQ7:** (VA schools only) What is the quality of religious education in voluntary aided and former voluntary aided schools, or in former voluntary controlled schools in which denominational religious education is taught?

*a) What is the quality of teaching?*

*b) How well do pupils make progress in their learning as a result of a balanced and well-structured religious education curriculum?*

*c) How does assessment inform teaching and learning?*

As you look at the questions on RE above, you will see that the themes remain largely the same, so if you are already delivering good quality RE you should not need to radically alter what you are doing. What you will notice mainly, is that there are no criteria or grade descriptors. This is much more about how you as a school choose to live your vision, as appropriate to your context.

The overall thrust of the new framework can be summarised like this:

How does the school’s theologically rooted Christian vision drive and shape, curriculum, policy, practice, actions, and behaviours in order that all pupils and adults live well together?

The distinctive Christian vision remains, and the theological underpinning of that vision will be more thoroughly explored than in the previous schedule. The inspection process will result in one of two judgements for schools. Judgement 1 will refer to schools that have a well-developed, theologically underpinned vision that is enabling the school community to flourish. Judgment 2 will indicate that: The school’s vision and practice are not enabling it to fully live up to its foundation as a Church school. RE, that is not effective, or in a VA school well taught, could lead to this J2 judgement.

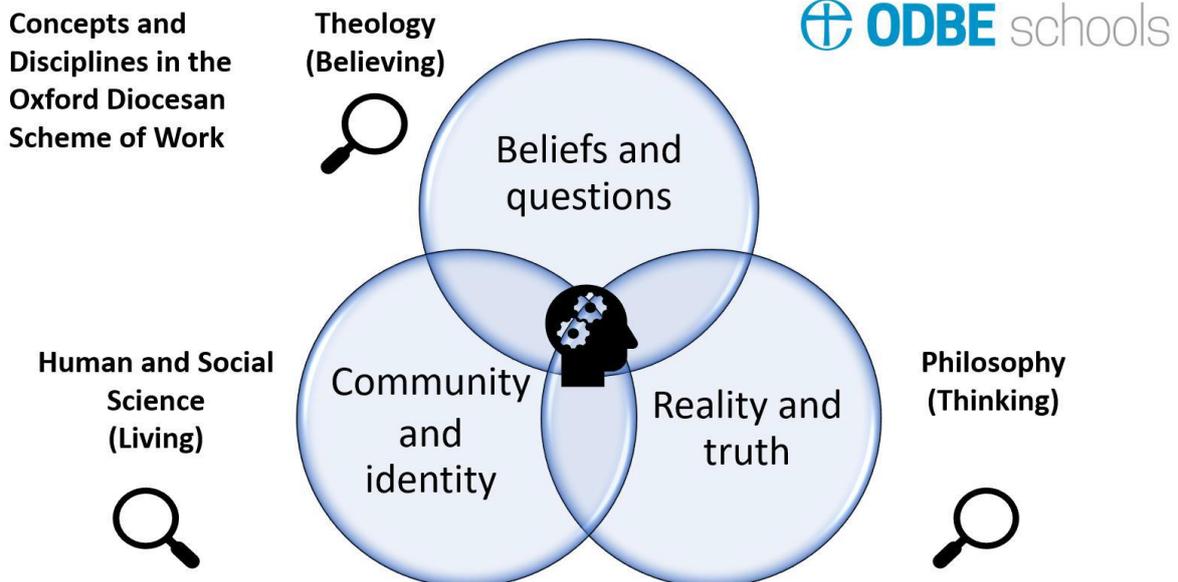
Look out for training on this new Framework as it becomes available.

## NEW SCHEME OF WORK – COMING SOON

Many of you are using the Diocesan Scheme of Work, written originally in 2014, and updated in 2017-8. The world of RE, education, SIAMS and Ofsted has changed a lot in these years and so the time has come to look at revising the scheme of work.

The revision has become more substantial than intended and is going to result in a very new scheme. There will be no requirement to move to this scheme if it doesn't suit your context, but like the old scheme will be freely available to all schools in the Service Level Agreement.

It will be structured around the three disciplines of theology, social and human science and philosophy. It will offer three units of Christianity for each year group, and three focusing on a different worldview.



The intention is that eventually there will be enough content to allow schools some freedom in their choice of worldviews, but initially the focus is on Judaism for KS1, and Islam and Hindu Dharma for KS2. This will keep it largely in line with the new Buckinghamshire Syllabus for RE.

Twelve teachers are currently engaged in writing exemplary units, following a suggested knowledge progression and it is hoped that the first units will be ready by Easter 2023. These will be available alongside the existing scheme, so don't panic that you will lose access to what is already there. In the early days, I will be asking for feedback, and probably for volunteers to produce further units.

Look out for more news in the coming weeks and months.

## NEW BUCKINGHAMSHIRE SYLLABUS

If you teach in a Voluntary Controlled School in Buckinghamshire, you should already be aware of the new syllabus that was launched at the end of the summer term. It is an evolution from the previous syllabus, drawing more on some of the debate about worldviews, and proposing a more spiral curriculum, as faith traditions are introduced and revisited later.

Many of the questions cover similar topic areas to the previous syllabus, though the splitting of KS2 into phases means that some topics you might have looked at in year 3 and 4 are now explicitly referenced for years 5 and 6. Pilgrimage is one of those topics. The context for the areas of study has also been clarified, so some units of work may need a little refining.

I have produced a two-page summary of the information for primary schools. If you are interested in a copy, please let me know and I will send it to you.

If you are teaching in a VA school or an academy in Buckinghamshire, I would advise you to be mindful of the changes, especially if you are feeding into a community secondary school.

As a member of Buckinghamshire SACRE, I would be very interested in any feedback that you have on the new syllabus, and I will try to answer any questions, or at least pass them on to the SACRE chair and adviser.

## SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE AND WHERE TO FIND IT

One of the challenges of offering a knowledge rich curriculum is that as teachers we need that subject knowledge. The wide range of religious worldviews that exists means that any one person cannot know everything about everything. Therefore, it is perfectly acceptable not to know, or not to be quite sure about something. That must not be an excuse to avoid finding out the information that you need to teach the current unit well.

The challenge with gathering subject knowledge for RE is that there are a wide variety of sources, both in books and on the internet. How do you know what is reliable? Is what you discover true for everyone, or only a minority?

[RE Online](#) is a trustworthy source for information about a wide range of belief systems. The knowledge dropdown box at the top of the page will lead you to essays covering the 'big six' as well as Baha'i, Humanist, Jain, Pagan and Rastafari, to name but a few.

For those of you who prefer a book, the OUP series, '[A very Short Introduction](#)' covers many religious worldviews and topics. Again, this information is reliable, informative and not too expensive. Sometimes they can be bought on 3 for 2 offers in bookshops.

The [Religious Education Council](#) has a list of member organisations. These are likely to be a reliable source of information but remember that many of these will be coming from a faith perspective. But then remember that [Nobody Stands Nowhere...](#)

### Dance company

*The Good Samaritan* and *The Easter Project* workshops are available to book for this term.

#### PARABLE Workshops: The Good Samaritan

Creative, curriculum-based workshops.

Our workshops help children try out new and exciting dance skills and to go deeper into RE.

A great way to ensure depth in the Religious Education curriculum, in line with the new Ofsted criteria.

*"An excellent workshop, which engaged and challenged even our most reluctant learners."*

Jo Cardush, Y4 Teacher

**Springs Dance Company** specialises in cross-curricular dance, in particular with Religious Education, Citizenship and PSHE. *The Good Samaritan* workshops focus on the importance of helping others and standing up for them, even if they are not like you. The workshops touch on themes of living in a multi-racial / multi-religious society, ask moral questions and go deeper into RE.

The Springs Easter Project leads pupils through a series of dance workshops that help them engage with the Easter story. Children will learn and create movement in response to the story. There is opportunity for spiritual development and the children will use their imaginations and creativity, growing empathy, self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. The workshops can culminate in an informal sharing or performance of the Easter story by the pupils, which can be shown to the school and parents through either a live or filmed presentation. The project can be anything from one to six days and can be split into workshops looking at different sections of the Easter story. The project can be adapted to suit the school. Many schools choose to use the company one day a week leading up to Easter. Some schools prefer to fit the workshops into an intensive week or another format.



For a full list of all the workshops Springs can deliver, including *The Good Samaritan* and *the Easter Project* please visit

<https://springsdancecompany.org.uk/index.php/join-in/schools-workshops>

To book and to find out more please email [touring@springsdancecompany.org.uk](mailto:touring@springsdancecompany.org.uk) or call 07876 752 910.

If you have used this company, it would be great to have a review.

*The Diocese of Oxford does not offer an endorsement of any of the above resources. Please use your professional judgement to decide whether these materials are suitable for your school.*



**WINTERSHALL Education**

**Bible drama supporting RE Teaching and Learning and Collective Worship:**

- Actor-led school assemblies
- Lent retreat days March and April
- INSET and retreat days for staff
- Year 6 leavers days July
- Travelling Crib and Advent days November and December
- Online material and resources for Pause and Enquiry days
- Meeting national education requirements
- Supporting provision of a broad, balanced curriculum
- Adaptable resources for community and family groups

*Experience the story*

I would love to receive more articles about the exciting things you have done in your school and the resources that you recommend. The summer edition of this newsletter will be out early in May so please send any articles by the end of the spring term to [Anne Andrews](#) who edits this newsletter.

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