

RE AND INCLUSION:

Providing Effective Learning Opportunities for Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

The Code of Practice on **Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEN) 2015** provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures for children and young people with special needs and disabled children and young people. It relates to Part 3 of the Children and Families Act (2014). It also relates to the Equal Opportunities Act (2010) which prohibits discrimination against anyone with a disability.

All children are entitled to an education that is appropriate to their needs, promotes high standards and enables them to fulfil their potential. Para 6.1¹

Inspectors judge schools on the outcomes they achieve for all pupils, the disadvantaged, highly able and those with disabilities and or special educational needs.

Religious Education and Special Educational Needs Requirements

The National Curriculum states the legal requirement that:

All state schools... must teach religious education to pupils at every key stage. Moreover, schools must publish their curriculum by subject and academic year online.

State schools have to provide a curriculum that is balanced and broadly based which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.”

DfE National Curriculum Framework, July 2013, p4

Teachers can modify, as necessary, the agreed syllabus programmes of study to provide all pupils with relevant and appropriately challenging work at each stage.

All teachers are teachers of children with special educational needs. In religious education, as with other subjects of the curriculum, teachers are engaged in a continuous cycle of planning, teaching and assessing which takes account of the wide range of abilities, aptitudes and interests of children. Assessment for subjects of the National Curriculum and RE (see pages 45-50 of this Agreed Syllabus) will enable the school to consider the individual child's attainment and progress against what is expected for the majority of their peers. Those children whose overall attainment falls outside the expected range may have special educational needs (see the *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice*, 2015, DFE, p15).

¹ Special Education Needs and Disabilities, Code of Practice 2015
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf

Taking account of the schools learning environment and adult/ child relationships should also be considered if there are difficulties in learning.

This means looking at:

- classroom organisation
- behaviour management
- teaching materials (art, images, artefacts, concept keyboards, digital cameras, experiential and sensory, film and video, ICT, music, persona dolls, stories, texts, appropriate faith and other visitors)
- the range of teaching styles and methods to include visualisation and stilling exercises and visits to places of worship, art galleries and museums

Interpretation

Schools adopting *Awareness, Mystery and Value 2016* should secure the curriculum entitlement for religious education for **all** pupils, including those pupils with a special educational need.

The special educational need may be connected with communication and interaction, cognition and learning difficulties, social emotional and mental health difficulties, sensory and or physical needs. (SEN Code 2015 Ch 6 p 97-98) The majority of pupils with statements are now in mainstream schools and all pupils in special schools have statements or are in the process of statutory assessment. They will move from having a statement to being given an Educational Health and Care (EHC) plan.

For **mainstream schools** following this syllabus the requirement to provide religious education for all pupils, including those with a special educational need, has been made clear. All schools are reminded of the estimates of [minimum curriculum time for religious education](#). No exception is made within this recommendation for pupils with a special educational need.

Chapter 6 of the SEND Code 2015 says all pupils should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum para 6.12. This necessarily includes the National Curriculum and religious education, and pupils in the Foundation Stage.

It outlines a 'graduated approach to teaching and learning, which is a four step cycle of actions (assess, plan, do, review). Differentiated teaching tasks are recommended see Ch 6. para 6.37. Teachers should support students with a clear set of expected outcomes and provision should be accurately recorded. All teachers are responsible and accountable for pupil progress in their classes. Para 6.36. It is recommended that schools should review the quality of teaching for pupils who consistently underachieve. They should also be alert to other factors related to social and emotional well being like bullying or bereavement, that may temporarily affect learning.

Schools should ensure that the differentiated curriculum plan includes religious education and relates to the requirements of this agreed syllabus.

Examples of appropriate strategies for RE are provided in the [linked guidance](#)
[>>](#)

The National Curriculum Section 4 on Inclusion, emphasises the importance of:

- setting suitable learning challenges for all pupils, including the most able and those who have low levels of prior attainment
- responding to pupils' needs and overcoming potential barriers for individuals and groups of pupils.

This applies to RE as to other subjects of the national curriculum. In RE, teachers should use the appropriate Agreed Syllabus programmes of study to teach knowledge, understanding and skills using a variety of methods that are appropriate to the abilities of individual pupils. For some pupils it will be necessary to choose work from earlier key stages so that they are able to progress and demonstrate attainment.

Planning, teaching and assessing religious education for pupils with learning difficulties

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) publication, *'Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties: Religious Education'*, 2001, ref. QCA/01/750, contains guidance on planning appropriate learning opportunities relevant to RE, including for pupils 'who are unlikely to achieve above level 2 at key stage 4' and pupils who 'may be working at age-related expectations in some subjects but are well below this in others' (p2).

The document also indicates the importance of RE to pupils with learning difficulties, noting, for example, that 'RE offers pupils opportunities to:

- develop their self-confidence and awareness;
- understand the world they live in as individuals and as members of groups;
- develop positive attitudes towards others, respecting their beliefs and experience; and
- deal with issues that form the basis for personal choices and behaviour' (p6).

Such opportunities can be provided to support pupils' learning about religion and belief and learning from religion and belief. In particular, the document recommends that staff can make RE more accessible for **all** pupils by focusing on the senses:

- 'using sensory materials and resources through sight, touch, sound, taste, or smell, *for example, music, tactile artefacts, plants in a sensory garden;*
- giving pupils first-hand experiences, *for example, visitors to school, visits to religious buildings, involvement in festivals;*
- organising a range of activities to give person experiences, *for example, dance, drama, visits to a range of environments;*
- helping pupils to understand and appreciate their world and its diversity' (p8).

As with all subjects of the curriculum, access to RE can be improved where staff use a range of resources and specialist aids and equipment where appropriate, adapting tasks or environments to allow space, time and freedom for pupils to develop skills for themselves.

The engagement model is the assessment (replacing P scales 1 to 4) for pupils working below the standard national curriculum assessments and not engaged in subject-specific study. The engagement model is statutory for use from 2021/22 academic year.

Qualifications at Key Stage 4

Accredited courses that may be considered appropriate for pupils with a special educational need include:

- GCSE in Religious Studies;
- GCSE Short Course in Religious Studies;
- Entry Level Certificate in Religious Studies;
- Award Scheme of the Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN - Youth Award - Belief and Values Unit);
- Accreditation for Life and Living Skills (ALL) certificate for pupils who have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Teachers should ensure in ALL cases that the [Key Stage 4 requirements in this syllabus](#) are being met.

[Further Guidance on Appropriate teaching for different kinds of learning difficulty](#)

Useful Resources and Links

Brown, Erica, (1996) 'Religious Education for All' pub David Fulton

Krisman, Anne (2008) 'Growing in RE: Teaching RE in Special Schools (RE Today Services)' Free download from shop.natre.org.uk/download/pdfs/growing_in_RE_final.pdf

Krisman Anne (2013) 'Think Piece 5 keys into RE: A new inclusive way of planning for teachers of RE in special schools: <http://www.reonline.org.uk/news/5-keys-into-re/>

The National Curriculum in England Framework Document July 2014: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335116/Master_final_national_curriculum_220714.pdf

Equality and Human Rights <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/religion-or-belief-discrimination>