

SUPPORT FOR TEACHING RE AT POST-16

Religious Education (RE) must be taught by all state-funded schools in England whether they are academies or free schools, or maintained by a local authority.

Religious Education is a component of the basic curriculum (but not the National Curriculum) and is compulsory for all pupils in local authority maintained schools aged 5 to 18 years unless they are withdrawn from these lessons by their parents, or withdraw by their own choice after their 18th birthday.

(The provision applies to school sixth forms, therefore, whereas no equivalent is in place for 16-18 year olds in sixth form colleges or other further education institutions.) *House of Commons Briefing Paper July 2016.*

Religious Education in schools (England)

Programmes of Study	To sample a balanced range of key questions drawn from each strand or follow a GCE course in Religious Studies.
Number of Religions Taught	Students may focus on Philosophy and Ethics, drawing on the contributions of the six principal religions and other belief systems.

PROGRAMME OF STUDY

POST-16

Awareness Mystery Value offers some broad suggestions as to the kinds of questions that might be explored Post 16, and recommends creating a balance of study by choosing questions from different strands of Religious Education – see the [Six Areas of Enquiry](#).

AREA OF ENQUIRY A: Beliefs, Teachings and Sources

Religion & Philosophy

Key Question: Have you got a soul?

Students should investigate definitions of the soul and explore issues relating to the Mind-Brain debate reflecting on whether there is a 'ghost in the machine' which enables appreciation of a spiritual dimension, e.g., Students could use a Simpson's episode 'Bart sells his soul' to encourage discussion.

Key Question: Is there life after death?

Students should investigate evidence for and against post-mortem survival and reflect on questions of personal identity, e.g., Students could use selected web-sites to research out of body experiences (O.B.E), near death experiences (N.D.E), after death communications (A.D.C.) etc.

Key Question: If there is a God, Is God guilty of crimes against humanity?

Students should examine the atheist view of a contradiction between the existence of a loving, all-powerful Creator and a world with evil and suffering and then explore various theodicies, e.g., Students could use the evil game from 'RE Today' played in groups and resources from R. Kirkwood, 'If I were God, I'd say sorry'.

Key Question: Is your God too small?

Students should evaluate the stereotypical portrayal of God as male and white and reflect on the specific perspective offered by Feminist theology, e.g., Students could consider issues relating to sexism and/or racism in religion.

Key Question: Is God dead?

Students should investigate the secularisation of society and atheistic responses to the concept of God, e.g., Students could consider the contrasting modern parables of the Invisible Gardener and the ambiguous Resistance Leader and/or respond to the views of a visiting Humanist speaker or faith community representative.

AREA OF ENQUIRY B: Practices and Ways of Life**Religion & Society****Key Question: Who says so?**

Students should consider different perspectives on the origin of secular and religious authority (e.g., divinely derived v. ruling class v. democratic contract) and consequent impact on lifestyles, e.g., Students could visit the House of Commons, the local council chamber and/ or local law court. They could consider the effects of free access to internet in developing extremism.

Key Question: Have you got a conscience?

Students should reflect on our sense of right and wrong and evaluate the contribution of different faiths to law making, e.g., Students could consider Milgram's torture experiment, Amnesty International resources or interview a local politician as to beliefs that underpin their views.

Key Question: Will you stand up for their rights?

Students should study individuals, peoples or movements involved in the struggle for justice and peace and reflect on what responses they might make in their own lives, e.g., Students could evaluate the history of protest movements, consider the legacy of individuals such as Pastor Niemöller or the treatment of asylum seekers.

Key Question: A Multi-Faith Society: Will it all end in tears?

Students should investigate the rise of fundamentalism in different faiths and reflect on the difficulty of balancing tolerance with truth claims, e.g., Students could consider current examples of how the media reports on different religions; e.g., fundamentalists

Key Question: What's your belief or religion: Pic' n' Mix?

Students should investigate to what extent the influence of religion persists, diversifies and expands in a pluralist, syncretistic society, e.g., Students could consider the emergence of New Age groups, e.g., Glastonbury; Celebrity choices: Buddhism; TV programmes that explore new non-religious beliefs. Can you believe without belonging? Can interfaith groups and dialogue include those of no faith? Why should they? How? What do the religious and the non-religious have in common? What do humanists think about the role of religion in politics, society and the world? What issues do humanists differ on and why?

AREA OF ENQUIRY C: Forms of Expressing Meaning

Religion & the Arts

Key Question: Are you in touch with your spiritual side?

Students should explore experiences of beauty, wonder and peace, the sense of the numinous, e.g., Students could respond to viewing an art gallery display set up in school, marvels of space on the Hubble web-site, a guided meditation exercise. They could consider such questions as: What would a non-religious 'spirituality' be like? The roles of science, nature and art in humanist thinking and feeling. Is Humanism just another word for philosophy? What's the difference? What are the differences between 'agnostic', 'atheist', 'freethinker', 'humanist', 'rationalist', 'sceptic', 'secularist', 'non-religious' or 'nothing'?

Key Question: Did you see Buddha or Jesus in *The Matrix*?

Students should investigate religious themes and symbols in film, e.g., Students could consider and discuss the use of religious language and references in *The Matrix* or *Lord of the Rings* or any other modern film.

Key Question: Have you felt the despair in modern stories?

Students should explore the history of despair and search for love and purpose in modern literature and TV dramas, e.g., Students could participate in writing/drama workshops to create alternative endings that reflect religious views for selected final chapters/episodes of novels and soaps.

AREA OF ENQUIRY D: Identity, Diversity and Belonging

Religion & Psychology

Key Question: Is this life just a dream I am dreaming?

Students should explore ideas about dreams, illusion and reality, e.g., Students could consider Buddhist views about how we make meaning of our lives in a world that is ever changing. They would explore the question of 'real' versus virtual reality on the internet e.g., avatars in games.

Key Question: Is religion mad about sex?

Students should explore changing attitudes to sexual relationships in a secular society, e.g., Students could consider the issues raised by the role of dating sites and apps compared to arranged marriages.

Key Question: Is forgiveness possible?

Students should reflect on and evaluate a range of teachings and examples from different religions on forgiveness and reconciliation, e.g., Students could consider the work of the Forgiveness project; what is the purpose of remembering the Holocaust; and whether placing flowers at the roadside is a healthy response to loss?

Key Question: Are religious people neurotic?

Students should investigate possible psychological explanations for religious experience and behaviour, e.g., Students could consider the differences between Freud and Jung's attitudes to religion.

Key Question: Where are you on a scale from Stalin to Snow White?

Students should explore biographies of faith as a source of inspiration for one's own life journey, e.g., Students could, in groups, investigate and present the spiritual qualities they admire in someone seen as a role model by many.

AREA OF ENQUIRY E: Meaning, Purpose and Truth**Religion & Science**

Key Question: If there is a God, What was God doing a nanosecond before the Big Bang ? Students should explore the Kalam cosmological argument for the existence of God and reflect on other contributions to the debate e.g., from Stephen Hawking and Paul Davies, e.g., Students could raise questions with a panel of Science and RS teachers.

Key Question: Where have all the dark peppered moths & green rabbits gone?

Students should explore the extent to which science has replaced religious explanations for life and reflect on the complexities, inconsistencies and tensions between different sets of beliefs, e.g., Students could consider popular misunderstandings of evolution, design or chance debate, probability of life in other solar systems.

Key Question: Does God do magic?

Students should evaluate contrasting claims of modern miracles and reflect on the issues arising from the idea of the supernatural and an interventionist God, e.g., Students could consider Hume's arguments against miracles and attested healings at Lourdes.

Key Question: Have you been genetically modified yet?

Students should explore issues arising from advances in science and the challenges these may present to humanity, e.g., Students could watch extracts from *Gattaca* or *Brave New World* and consider the merits and demerits of GM foods, chemical additives, designer babies, organ transplants, cosmetic surgery.

Key Question: Have Scientists become our new High Priests?

Students should explore the extent to which science and religion have conflicted and complemented each other and reflect on future common

ground, e.g., Students could evaluate and respond to Equinox programme: God only knows.

AREA OF ENQUIRY F: Values and Commitments

Religion & Ethics

Key Question: I shop, therefore I am?

Students should evaluate the basis for ethical decision making in the world of leisure, e.g., Students could consider ethical tourism e.g., respecting local culture and ecology. They should also examine whether consumerism makes people happy.

Key Question: What's it got to do with me?

Students should reflect upon their own attitudes and values and evaluate those of others, e.g., Students could consider the life choices and decision making process that someone who is poor or homeless or addicted faces daily and the work of charitable agencies to empower them.

Key Question: A right to die; a right to live?

Students should analyse a moral dilemma in medical ethics and consider the responses of different world views, e.g., Students could investigate euthanasia, abortion, embryo research, hospice movement.

Key Question: Should you leave your principles at home when you go to work? Students should evaluate the basis for ethical decision making in the world of work, e.g., Students could consider the moral challenge of working in the arms industry.

Key Question: Whose money is it anyway?

Students should explore issues linked to globalisation such as sweatshop labour and international debt and reflect on notions of justice, e.g., Students could participate in the Trading Game.