

CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



Making a Difference?

A Review of Religious Education in Church of England Schools

September 2014

Contents

Preface	Page 1
Foreword	Page 2
Section 1: Introduction	Page 5
Section 2: Executive summary	Page 7
Section 3: Main Findings	Page 8
Section 4: Commentary	Page 12
• Primary schools	Page 12
• Secondary schools	Page 16
Section 5: Future Developments	Page 21
• Religious Education and the wider Christian life of the Church school	Page 21
• The architecture of high quality curriculum design	Page 23
• Professional development as a key driver of improvement	Page 25
• Thinking theologically and the art of theological enquiry – a distinctive Anglican contribution to the RE debate.....	Page 27
Section 6: Overall Recommendations	Page 31
Appendices	Page 33



The Rt Revd John Pritchard
Bishop of Oxford

Preface

From the Chair of the National Society Council and Board of Education

It's a pleasure to commend this report as an important contribution to the journey and development of religious education in Church of England schools. We are much in debt to Alan Brine HMI and his team. They have brought the rigour and authority we needed to get a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of our schools in an area of teaching in which we have an obvious special interest. Our thanks too to the schools that took part; their generosity is much appreciated.

I'm very pleased to note the importance every Church school gives to RE. If we are to live up to our claim to offer distinctive education with central attention given to the spiritual heart of the process, then we have to use the great opportunity given by RE to focus that intent. In any case, if we can't do it well, who can?

It's clear to any thoughtful person that no-one can understand the modern world without understanding the place and power of religion. This is true at the global, national and local level. Community well-being depends on a rich appreciation of how our neighbours think and function at the level of beliefs and values. Moreover, RE often provides the only opportunity pupils have to explore their own deepest motivations, their values, disciplines and habits of the heart. As they develop further, pupils are stretched thoroughly in their ability to handle texts, to assess evidence and argue a case. At higher levels they have to work on philosophy and ethics, history and politics, as well as the social sciences. RE is the ultimate integrating subject.

RE has had a tough passage recently and the unintended consequences of government reforms have placed it at a severe disadvantage in terms of status, time and resource allocation, initial teacher training and CPD etc. This important report provides a platform from which to build excellence in RE in our schools, which in turn can lead to a resurgence of high-quality RE across the country. The Church of England, in its dioceses and its central structures, stands ready to work hard for this renewal, knowing that it's never more needed than today, when the soul of holistic education is at stake.

+ John Oxon
The Rt Revd John Pritchard
Bishop of Oxford



Revd Janina Ainsworth
Chief Education Officer and
General Secretary,
National Society

Foreword

From the Chief Education Officer and General Secretary,
National Society

This is an important and timely Report. The national context for RE has been much contested in recent years, with serious questions raised against the training and professional support of teachers, the quality of classroom delivery, the nature and standard of public examinations and the status and support for the subject at Government and school level.

For Church of England schools RE is at the core of their distinctive provision, so it is crucial to know what is happening in the subject in our classrooms. Ofsted subject reports do not include either voluntary aided schools or Church of England academies so up to now we have had no evidence of the quality of RE being delivered.

This report, the result of a process as rigorous as the Ofsted survey, provides just that. My grateful thanks go to the survey team under the leadership of Alan Brine HMI for their professionalism and wise judgement, and to the schools for their willingness to participate and share what they are doing.

The results make mixed reading for us. We are greatly encouraged by the evidence of the excellent quality of RE in our secondary schools. We have a high proportion of well lead and well resourced departments, staff with a depth of subject knowledge resulting in high standards and outstanding exam results, making a real contribution to the Christian foundation of the school. Congratulations to all who are featured in this report: we will be looking to you to be the leading edge of improving RE in Church schools!

The picture in primary schools is, as the Report says, 'a conundrum'. There is very strong commitment to RE in every school but somehow that doesn't translate into excellent practice. We have a major task in raising the standard of RE in a significant proportion of Church of England primary schools.

There are a number of possible reasons why there is a problem in our primary schools.

- Church of England schools draw from the same pool of teachers as community schools so if there is a deficit in RE training across the board then that will be represented in our teachers
- More significantly, many dioceses recommend the use of the locally Agreed Syllabus or have based the diocesan syllabus on the LA provision. The development of RE syllabuses over the last 8 – 10 years has contributed to the deterioration of the quality of RE in schools and so Church of England schools have not been immune from that.
- While the only consistent CPD in RE is being provided by diocesan advisors if this is only targeted at Agreed Syllabus-type RE it will not be particularly effective in raising standards.

The report lays out the issues with great clarity and suggests what needs to happen to address them. Side by side with the work leading to Making a Difference? is The Christianity Project, a long term project to develop a new approach to teaching Christianity in Church of England schools. This embodies many of the aspects that will improve the quality of RE. While this is only spelled out in terms of teaching Christianity it is developed on principles that can be adopted in teaching other faiths.

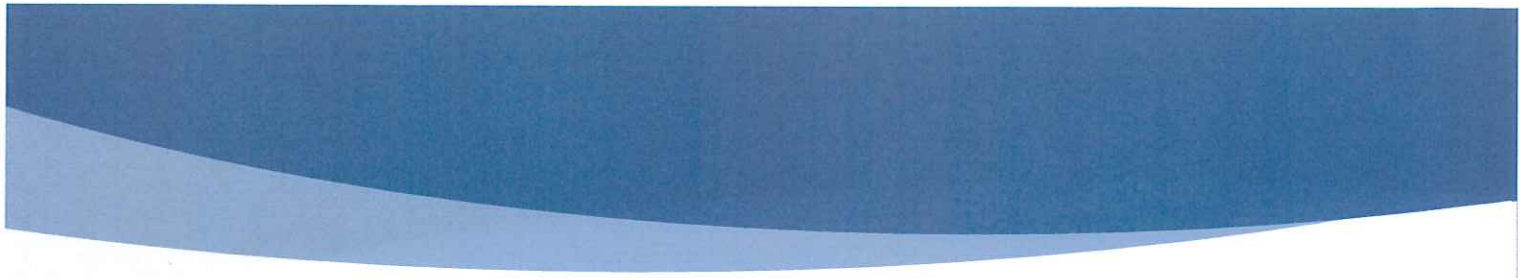


Crucially, a return to the systematic teaching of specific faiths in their own terms is the key to improving children's understanding. In line with the Statement of Entitlement that means the skills being developed are the skills of understanding and interpreting each faith in its own terms and not imposing illegitimate overarching constructs on material that develops within widely different cultural and intellectual contexts.

Making a Difference? suggests that the 'art of theological enquiry' is a distinctive contribution from Church of England school community to the wider RE debate. The Christianity Project is structured around the key theological concepts at the heart of the faith. They are approached through the Biblical narrative and illustrated through the real lives of Christians today and in the past. The exercise required of pupils is of theological enquiry: discovering through activity and question how experience of and reflection on the life of Christ shapes lives and transforms societies.

Making a Difference? presents us with an agenda. The Christianity Project will address a large part of it. In three years time I am confident we will be able to remove the question mark and RE will be making a difference to children's lives way beyond Church of England schools.

Revd Janina Ainsworth





Section 1: Introduction

CONTEXT

- I.1 This review of the effectiveness of religious education in Church schools takes its impetus from the findings in the 2012 *The Church School of the Future* review (referred to throughout as the **Chadwick Report**) which stated that:
- While religious education is seen as an essential component of distinctiveness, anxieties were expressed about the quality of teaching and learning.
 - The current environment presents a number of threats to the place of religious education in all schools, from which Church of England schools¹ are not entirely immune. However, within schools where religious education is identified as essential to their character, there should be a firm commitment to maintaining a high level of resources and raising standards.
- I.2 The Chadwick Report recommended that:
- In partnership with professional associations and other faiths, strategies for the improvement of teaching and learning in religious education should be identified.
- I.3 In the spirit of the findings and recommendations of the Chadwick Report, a decision was taken to undertake an in-depth review of the effectiveness of RE in Church schools. It was important from the outset to clarify that this was not a further inspection activity on top of the existing Section 48 SIAMS programme. Rather the intention was to work in partnership with Church schools across the country to help explore the core aims of the survey which were three-fold:
- to identify, celebrate and share effective practice in the teaching of RE
 - to provide schools, dioceses and the National Society with an understanding and evaluation of the quality of RE in their schools
 - to identify any barriers to success and develop strategies for the improvement of teaching and learning in RE.

THE SURVEY PROCESS

- I.4 In order to carry out the review of the overall effectiveness of teaching and learning in RE, it was decided to undertake a survey of 30 Church secondary and 30 primary schools between January and May 2014. The size of the sample enabled the team to visit a wide range of schools but limits the scope to draw statistical conclusions about the overall pattern of RE across all Church schools and there is a need for caution in generalising too far from the data.
- I.5 The schools identified to take part in the survey were randomly selected but were representative of different types of academy, foundation, aided and controlled Church schools across a range of dioceses. (They included a range to represent for example rural/urban; large/small; high/low FSM; and, across a range of SIAMS and Ofsted grades).

¹ Church of England schools will be referred to as Church schools throughout this document



- 1.6 The survey was led by Alan Brine HMI who has been Ofsted's lead for Religious Education since 2007. Previously he was County Inspector for RE in Hampshire and prior to that Head of Theology and Religious Studies at King Alfred's College of Higher Education (now the University of Winchester). A small team of 8 survey members with extensive Section 48 and RE experience was appointed to undertake this survey. They attended training in advance of the visits. The small size of the team ensured that the purpose of the survey visits was understood and implemented consistently.
- 1.7 Schools were given around two weeks' notice of the survey visit. The purpose and aims of the survey were made clear to schools at the outset with an emphasis on working in partnership with the school to identify strengths, successes, barriers and areas for improvement in the school's provision for RE. Following each visit the school received a letter highlighting the strengths of their RE provision and any specific suggestions for improvements. The survey team member completed a survey record about the visit, the details of which have provided the key evidence for this report.
- 1.8 The survey considered the overall effectiveness of RE in each school. In determining this effectiveness, use was made of the SIAMS descriptors for RE (see **Appendix 1**) and the Statement of Entitlement on RE from the Board of Education/National Society (see **Appendix 2**).
- 1.9 In judging the quality of RE in Church schools, it is possible to contrast the findings with those reported by Ofsted for schools and academies without a religious character* in their 2013 report *Religious Education: Realising the Potential*. However, it is important to recognise the small size of the samples involved and the impact this has on the validity of the comparisons.

*The Ofsted survey did include 5 voluntary-controlled primary schools but no VC secondary schools.



Section 2: Executive Summary

- 2.1 The key findings of the survey confirm that the overwhelming majority of Church schools are clear that RE should be an essential part of their distinctiveness although the interpretation and implementation of this varies significantly from school to school.
- 2.2 The survey took the National Society Statement of Entitlement (**see Appendix 2**) as its key benchmark defining the success of RE in Church schools. This includes the statement:

The aims of Religious Education in Church schools are:

- To enable pupils to encounter Christianity as the religion that shaped British culture and heritage and influences the lives of millions of people today
 - To enable pupils to learn about the other major religions, their impact on culture and politics, art and history, and on the lives of their adherents
 - To develop understanding of religious faith as the search for and expression of truth
 - To contribute to the development of pupils' own spiritual/philosophical convictions, exploring and enriching their own faith and beliefs.
- 2.3 Where RE was most effective, the primary purpose to develop pupils' expertise in understanding religion and belief, their religious literacy, was the context for the wider goals of fostering their personal development, nurturing a search for meaning, and encountering the Christian faith. In the best cases RE was seen as an important subject, alongside other subjects, with its own intellectual integrity and rigour.
- 2.4 In most secondary schools visited this understanding is translated well into good quality teaching and learning in RE. However, by contrast the majority of primary schools visited were struggling to bring this aspiration to reality.
- 2.5 In the majority of secondary schools the effectiveness of RE was good or outstanding. A key strength was the high quality of subject expertise amongst the teachers. One particularly encouraging finding was that most of the Church secondary schools visited were protecting the provision for RE from many of the threats to the future of the subject which concern the wider subject community.
- 2.6 Where RE was struggling in primary schools a core reason was that, despite the recognition that high priority should be given to the subject, this was not being translated into practice. There was confusion about the underlying purpose of the subject coupled with a lack of clarity about what constitutes high quality and how to lead and manage the subject effectively. The survey has highlighted that in some regards this was compounded by uncertainty about the distinctive role which RE should play within a Church school setting.
- 2.7 In identifying the priorities for the improvement of the teaching and learning of RE in all Church schools four key areas were identified.
- There is a need to clarify how the distinctive place of RE in Church schools should be translated into high quality teaching and learning.
 - Schools need more support to improve the quality of the design of the RE curriculum.
 - A more coherent and strategic approach is needed towards continuing professional development with a stronger focus on improving the quality of planning, teaching and assessment
 - Greater emphasis should be placed on thinking theologically and the art of theological enquiry as a distinctive Anglican contribution to the improvement of RE nationally.



Section 3: Main Findings

3.1 Primary schools

- There was too much variability in the quality of RE both between and within the primary schools visited. In 18 of the 30 schools (60%) RE was not good enough. The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be good or better in just 12 schools (40% of the sample). It was judged to be outstanding in 1 school but was inadequate in 5 schools. There was little difference in the findings between voluntary aided and controlled schools. These findings match the findings in the 2013 Ofsted survey of RE in primary schools without a religious designation.
- A key weakness of RE in the majority of schools was the superficial nature of the pupils' learning. Too often teaching failed to challenge pupils. As a result the depth of pupils' knowledge and understanding of religion and belief was not good enough. Specifically pupils were not developing a coherent understanding of the key beliefs, practices and ways of life of Christianity. Their ability to apply higher level skills such as investigation, interpretation and evaluation was also limited.
- In the schools where the effectiveness of RE was judged to be good or outstanding the support of the senior leadership team and governors was a key factor in securing and promoting high quality.
- In all but 3 of the primary schools visited there was a clear understanding on the part of the leadership that RE should be a priority in a Church school. However, in too many schools this understanding was not being realised in practice. Few headteachers were aware of the National Society's Statement of Entitlement for RE.
- In many of the schools detailed assessment data was being collected about pupil progress. However, in most cases this data was unreliable and generated over-generous information which misled schools about the real quality of the RE provision.
- In the majority of schools the governors took RE seriously as a key expression of the distinctiveness of the Christian character of the school. However, there was a wide variation in the degree to which the governors fulfilled their role in checking the effectiveness of the RE provision. In many cases governors had an over-inflated view of the quality of RE in their school.
- In the majority of schools the leadership of the school had a limited or inaccurate view of the quality of teaching in RE because the arrangements to monitor it were weak.
- One key factor limiting the effectiveness of RE in many schools was confusion about the relationship between the subject and the wider Christian ethos of the school. For example, this sometimes restricted the breadth of learning about Christianity to a narrow diet of bible stories.
- In two-thirds of the schools visited there was some training and support for RE. Most schools had access to the local diocesan adviser and/or local network group. However, the impact of this support in raising standards and improving the quality of teaching was very variable. Around a third of schools identified problems accessing effective training.
- Some schools were concerned about how to develop their assessment practice in a 'post-level' context.



3.2 Secondary schools

- The overall picture of RE in the secondary schools and academies visited was very positive. In 21 of the schools (70%) the overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be good or better. It was outstanding in 7 (nearly 25%) of the schools. However, there was a tail of less effective practice and RE was judged to require improvement in a further 7 schools and was inadequate in 2 schools. There was little significant variation in quality across the different types of schools and academies visited.
- These findings contrast sharply with the figures from the 2013 Ofsted survey of RE in secondary schools without a religious designation, where only 44 of the 90 schools visited (48%) were judged to be good or better.
- Teaching and learning were strengths in most schools. Teachers' subject expertise was good and lessons were well planned. As a result, students generally enjoyed their RE lessons and valued the subject. A strong emphasis in teaching was on the importance of challenging students to think and discuss ideas.
- However, the quality of curriculum design was less strong. In many schools there were some weaknesses in the overall design of the RE curriculum. As a result students were not always clear enough about the journey they were taking in developing their subject expertise.
- In most of the schools where RE was found to be less than good, the shortcomings had been identified and action was being taken to improve the provision. In one school, for example, Section 48 had identified weaknesses in the Key Stage 3 curriculum. This had resulted in rapid and effective action to improve the provision, and pupil attainment was now good.
- In the schools where RE was effective the provision made in terms of staffing, time allocation and resourcing was good reflecting the high status of the subject in the schools. However, few schools were aware of the National Society's Statement of Entitlement for RE.
- In the majority of schools good provision was made for most or all of the pupils to take a GCSE qualification in RE. However in around a third of schools the time allocation for the full course GCSE was below that provided for other GCSE subjects.
- As in primary schools some subject leaders were concerned about how to develop their assessment practice in a 'post-level' context.
- The leadership of RE in most schools was good and the subject invariably received strong support from the senior leaders in the school.
- While in most of the schools and academies visited the governors clearly recognised the importance of RE, there was little evidence of governors being actively involved in monitoring and supporting RE. The role of governors was not identified as a key factor in securing the effectiveness of RE in the majority of schools visited.
- In the majority of schools visited the provision for RE had withstood, and/or been protected from, the negative impact of recent changes in national education policy, such as the exclusion of RE from the Ebacc.
- There was too much variability in the access to, and quality of, subject training. While most subject departments had access to some form of CPD, only around half of the schools identified this as a key factor impacting on the quality of their provision.
- Around-two thirds of the schools with sixth forms were not making appropriate provision for core post-16 RE.



RECOMMENDATIONS

3.3 All schools should:

- review their RE curriculum to ensure it provides a more coherent, progressive and challenging approach to the teaching of Christianity within the context of the wider exploration of the diversity of religion and belief in the modern world
- explore ways of extending pupils' ability to think theologically and engage in theological enquiry as part of their learning in RE
- widen access to a full range of professional development and support within a strategy for the the improvement of RE.

3.4 Primary schools should:

Ensure that the high priority accorded to RE is translated into effective practice by:

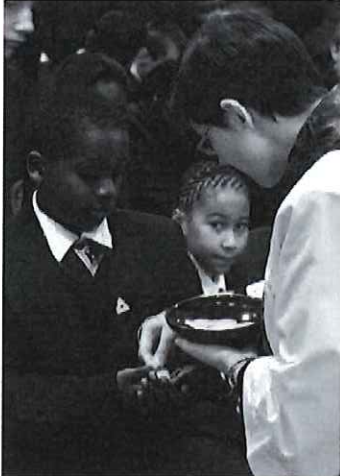
- championing a clear shared understanding of the place and purpose of RE within the school
- ensuring RE is focused on the key priority of developing pupils' subject knowledge, understanding and skills
- building greater consistency in the quality of planning, teaching and assessing RE across all year groups and classes
- making sure the leadership and governance of RE in primary schools is strategically focused on raising standards and improving provision based on a clear understanding of best practice in RE in Church schools.

3.5 Secondary schools should:

- raise standards and improve quality further by ensuring the provision made of RE at GCSE allows for depth of learning and positive opportunities for critical thinking, evaluation and reflection
- in schools with post 16 provision, ensure all sixth form pupils receive their entitlement to a high quality programme of 'core' RE.

3.6 The National Society and Diocesan Boards of Education should:

1. Provide schools with support in understanding the distinctive role of RE within a Church school setting as set out in the Statement of Entitlement
2. Ensure that all schools have appropriate support to improve the quality of the teaching of Christianity
3. Promote the development of pupils' ability to think theologically by providing:
 - a clear rationale for the place of theological enquiry in RE as a key to the distinctiveness of RE in Church schools
 - curriculum models which promote the progressive development of theological thinking within the pupils' study of Christianity
 - a repertoire of approaches to learning that promote the development of the skills of theological enquiry alongside other aspects of enquiry in RE
 - guidance on how the process of enquiry can be built into the way pupils' progress in RE is defined and assessed.
4. Establish a more strategic and coherent approach to the provision of RE continuing professional development focused on improving the quality of planning, teaching and assessment of RE



5. Improve the quality of RE inspection through SIAMS especially in primary schools by:
 - establishing and maintaining robust systems for the quality assurance of inspectors
 - strengthening the focus on the importance of high quality RE as an expression of the distinctiveness of voluntary-controlled schools
6. Ensure greater consistency of practice across dioceses in following up schools where a SIAMS inspection identified significant weaknesses in RE to ensure that effective action is taken to address the issues
7. Work more closely with the wider RE professional community to:
 - develop guidance about the principles of high quality curriculum design
 - define more closely the core content (knowledge, understanding and skills) which should underpin an effective RE curriculum
 - exemplify ways of designing a coherent and progressive curriculum for RE at each key stage



Section 4: Commentary

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

A conundrum posed

- 4.1 The picture of RE in Church primary schools poses a conundrum. In almost all of the schools visited, the senior leaders and governors placed a high priority on RE and saw the subject as making a key contribution to the pupils' personal development and to the wider Christian life of the school.
- 4.2 However, in reality the RE was judged to be good or better in just 12 schools (40% of the sample) and was outstanding in only one school. It was found it be inadequate in 5 schools. Although comparisons are not entirely reliable, these figures suggest that, despite the high priority given to RE in Church primary schools, there are similar issues faced by schools without a religious designation as reported by Ofsted.
- 4.3 In too many schools there was a lack of strategic thinking around improvement with insufficient attention given to securing a shared vision for the success of the subject.
- 4.4 In three schools which had recently been judged by Ofsted to 'require improvement', emphasis was being placed on improving English and mathematics to the detriment of RE. The immense pressure to drive up standards in the core subjects had squeezed time for RE to an unacceptable level.
- 4.5 The findings of the 2013 Ofsted report on RE identified a number of factors limiting the effectiveness of RE in primary schools without a religious designation. These included its low status within the curriculum and weaknesses in provision in terms of teaching, planning, time, staffing, resources and training.
- 4.6 The conundrum about RE in Church primary schools becomes more difficult to unravel because almost all the schools visited accorded RE high status recognising it as an important element in the distinctiveness of the Church school setting. Most of the schools visited had an enthusiastic subject leader and the senior leaders and governors took the subject seriously. In the majority of schools the provision made for RE in terms of curriculum time, training, staffing and resources was good. Nearly all the schools ensured that the equivalent of at least one hour a week was dedicated to RE. In all but four of the schools RE was taught by the class teacher and in a further two schools it was taught wholly or in part by the subject leader. While many of the schools did not have a specific budget for RE in most schools the provision of resources was good. In nearly three-quarters of the schools, the subject leader had access to some form of training through, for example, the support of the local adviser and/or network groups.
- 4.7 Many of the weaknesses in the quality of learning identified in the 2013 Ofsted report were also evident in Church schools. In the schools where RE was not good enough pupils' learning tended to be too superficial. Often the activities provided for pupils, while enjoyable, lacked a clear purpose and failed to extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding; the connection between the purpose of the lesson and the tasks given to the pupils was unclear. Teachers' questioning often did not challenge the pupils to deepen their thinking. There were not enough opportunities for pupils to engage in real enquiry and develop their own ideas and opinions. Many teachers lacked confidence in teaching RE and did not have the subject expertise needed to be effective.



4.8 Seven factors stood out as limiting the effectiveness of RE in the survey schools visited:

1. There was a **significant lack of clarity about the purpose and place of RE within the life of a Church school** – often teachers confused developing pupils' moral awareness with the educational goals of RE as a curriculum subject. This issue is considered in greater detail in Section 4 of the report.
2. A familiar theme where RE was less effective was the **inconsistency in the monitoring and evaluation of provision across the school**. In one school, for example, the senior leadership spoke of the importance of RE and their confidence in the subject leader. However, by not monitoring teaching, failing to insist on the establishment of effective assessment strategies, and accepting the uneven quality of provision across the school, the professed commitment was unconvincing.
3. Most of the schools were smaller than average, sometimes significantly, and there were **pressures on the leadership of the subject** because the RE co-ordinator had to undertake other leadership roles in other areas of the curriculum or wider school life, for example, literacy.
4. In 8 out of 10 of the schools visited the subject was taught primarily in a weekly slot resulting in **isolation from the wider curriculum and limiting opportunities for more sustained and challenging learning**. Where there were more imaginative approaches to the timetabling of RE, the quality was often better and the subject was able to make a more significant contribution to the curriculum and wider aspects of the pupils' learning.
5. Too often there was a **lack of strategic thinking in the way the leadership of RE identified subject specific improvement priorities**. These were rarely based on an accurate judgement about pupil achievement and rigorous monitoring of the quality of planning, teaching and assessment.
6. Some schools were creating **over-burdensome and inappropriate assessment arrangements** to try to collect detailed level, and in some cases sub-level, data about progress. This was surprising given what is known about the serious problems in interpreting and applying levels in RE. Usually these arrangements were unreliable and generated spurious information which misled schools about the real quality of the RE provision. One of the contradictions in many schools was that, while they could provide detailed, albeit inaccurate, level data about attainment in RE, the quality of dialogue with pupils about their progress was weak and very little use was being made of assessment in planning.
7. While most schools were accessing some training and support for RE, **the range of professional development opportunities was often limited and was not focused sufficiently on promoting high quality RE**. Too often training had little impact on the quality of teaching and learning. There was scope for schools to strengthen their understanding of current thinking around best practice in RE by exploring further links to the wider world of RE; for example, through links to professional associations, subject social networking and initiatives such as the RE Ambassadors programme and the RE Quality Mark.



Getting it right

4.9 In those primary schools where RE was judged to be good or better a key feature of the success was the way in which the commitment to RE was rigorously translated into practice. In these cases it was recognised that good RE involves a clarity of purpose shared across the school, challenging teaching and learning, a well-planned, progressive curriculum, and strong leadership with a strategic cycle of monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning.

4.10 Where RE was effective, a number of different features characterised the provision:

- **High quality curriculum planning** – where, for example, great care had been taken to analyse and evaluate the local authority and local diocesan syllabuses to find an approach which would embed enquiry into RE. This provided a basis for building a curriculum around key questions to support the development of high level thinking skills and proved easily accessible to teachers who were not specialists.
- **A high quality enrichment programme to support learning in RE** – for example, one school had carefully audited local resources to support the pupils' learning. These included a local Cathedral schools festival; opportunities for some Jewish parents to talk to the children; inviting the Muslim children in the school to share their faith with others; fieldwork visits to a local mosque; and, using the local vicar to introduce topics on marriage and baptism. A key to the success was the careful integration of the fieldwork and visitors into the pupils' learning.
- **High quality enquiry-based learning** – in one school with outstanding RE, learning was rooted in a clear process of enquiry with careful attention to building the skills of investigation, interpretation, analysis, empathy and reflection (see **Prime Practice 1**).
- **Effective and purposeful assessment** – where, for example, teachers used skilful questioning to formatively assess what pupils were doing and restructure their lessons in response to their understanding. More formal assessment was undertaken termly with pupils given guidance about their progress and how to improve. An annual moderation of work was used to discuss achievement and agree judgements.
- **Effective approaches to the delivery of RE** – for example, one school has enriched the timetabled RE with additional 'Deep learning' days on topics as Harvest, Candlemas and Pentecost held at, and supported by, the local Church. They contributed to learning about these festivals and Anglican practice and provided opportunities for spiritual development. Year 6 pupils helped to plan activities and experiences for other pupils in the school (see **Prime Practice 2**).
- **Promoting professional conversations within the school about best practice in RE.** Where RE was most effective there was an open, honest dialogue about barriers to success and extended opportunities to share best practice and encourage colleagues to be creative and innovative in their teaching.
- **High quality monitoring and improvement planning which actively involved pupils in the review process** – among the best strategies seen were:
 - a. monitoring of teaching through regular curriculum walks and lesson observations
 - b. maintaining portfolios highlighting key work in RE for each year group which is moderated once a year



- c. setting up opportunities for pupils to take an active role in reviewing RE
- d. monitoring the overall effectiveness of RE through routine use of the National Society and/or RE Quality Mark self-evaluation documents
- e. providing governors with regular reports on RE to ensure they are able to hold the school to account for the quality of RE
- f. establishing a comprehensive action plan informed by best practice in RE and focused on raising standards, with clear timescales and evidence of actions taken to secure improvement.

Prime Practice 1: Securing consistency based on a shared model of enquiry-based learning

In one voluntary-controlled school teachers have a secure understanding of the importance of placing open investigative enquiry at the heart of learning. In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 RE is delivered through cross curricular themes as part of the school's creative curriculum. RE concepts are carefully chosen and mapped. Each classroom has a reflection area.

At Key Stage 2 RE is delivered as part of cross curricular themes where they fit, for example the topic One Big Family includes welcoming rituals (belonging), but if it does fit, for example in a topic on Images of Angels, it is delivered as a standalone subject. The process of learning in RE embeds the notion of enquiry. In Year 5 for example pupils were questioning and thinking about the nature and characteristics of God at a level that would not have been out of place at Key Stage 3. They were able to debate and question the omnipresence of God. 'God must be everywhere otherwise people all over the world couldn't pray to him' and his omnipotence 'If God is so powerful why did he create Hitler and why didn't he stop Hitler'.

Throughout the school there was a clear understanding that the contribution of RE to the Christian ethos of the school has to be rooted in the intellectual integrity of RE as a subject.

Prime practice 2: Using 'Godly Play' to enrich story-telling and theological enquiry

An inner city school with a highly diverse catchment including children from a wide range of different ethnic and religious backgrounds where the use of the storytelling methods and 'wondering' found in Godly Play has impacted on RE across the school. One of the observations of Ofsted had been that pupils occasionally made slower progress than they could, especially when they are kept sitting on the carpet for too long, or when teachers do too much that the pupils could do for themselves'. The school had also identified that pupils do not always have enough opportunities to learn independently.

The school decided to introduce strategies based on Godly Play as a vehicle to enable teachers to teach biblical stories and then 'let children go' in order to respond to the material and explore their own wondering questions. The principles of Godly Play were used across both key stages (rather than in Key Stage 1 as is often the case). Teachers were asked to use Godly Play once in each unit of RE in which it is appropriate. The elements of Godly Play used were the storytelling method, the 'I wonder' questions, and free response.

Pupil feedback was positive. They remembered the stories told through Godly Play and how they had developed their own ideas in response. Teachers reported that pupils used the time given for wondering (religious and personal reflection) to produce their own big thinking and big questions. It had been effective in encouraging pupils to become more independent by increasing their opportunities to explore and express their own ideas. It was also making an important contribution to pupils' spiritual development.



SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A story of success

- 4.11 The overall picture of effectiveness of RE in the 30 Church secondary schools visited was positive with 70% judged to be good or better and 25% judged outstanding.
- 4.12 Many of the features of good practice are ones that would be shared with all good RE anywhere. However, a number of more distinctive strengths underpinned the high quality. Crucially these included:
- **The subject expertise of the teachers** was often of high quality. They were very well-informed about current developments and best practice in RE. This strength was often underpinned by excellent opportunities for professional development. In one school, for example, two teachers had completed or were completing an MA leading to a strong programme of peer coaching and classroom-based research linked to the RE Quality Mark.
 - The strong emphasis in teaching on **the importance of challenging students to think and discuss**. Planning was frequently focused on very active learning and the systematic development of the skills of critical enquiry and debate. In the best cases this was linked to high quality department-wide thinking about pedagogy (see **Prime Practice 6**).
 - As part of the focus on challenge, the best schools ensured that RE was at the heart of the overarching school drive to **develop the students' wider learning skills**. In one school, for example, very effective use was being made of literacy mats to support students and close the gap in attainment (see **Prime Practice 5**).
 - In many of the schools RE benefited from **high quality subject leadership**. The features of effective leadership included: a clear vision for the subject rooted in its academic credibility; enthusiastic support for RE from senior leadership; good allocation of resources for the subject, including curriculum time and budget; effective arrangements for monitoring and self-evaluation; bright and stimulating classrooms with vibrant and challenging displays celebrating the RE curriculum (see **Prime Practice 4**).
 - **Marking and assessment were often of high order** with a strong emphasis on encouraging a dialogue with students about their progress (see **Prime Practice 6**).
 - Many of the schools placed a high priority on **the provision of enrichment activities** to ensure that students were given first-hand experience of religion. In the words of one teacher: 'Visits are crucial; you can't teach the smell of a cathedral' (see **Prime Practice 7 and 8**).
 - A key strength of RE in secondary schools was **the clarity of the teachers' understanding of the contribution of RE to the Church school setting**. This contrasted sharply with the findings from the primary schools in the survey (see **Prime Practice 4**).
- 4.13 One encouraging feature of two schools in which RE was judged inadequate was the swift action that was being taken to address the weaknesses. In one school, for example, where RE had experienced a turbulent period of staffing difficulties the senior leadership had made a brave decision to suspend RE from the timetable in order to re-launch RE not only as a valued curriculum subject, but also as one which contributes to the Christian ethos of the school. After a comprehensive review, the subject is being re-branded with a new name, new accommodation and new subject



leader, an outstanding teacher, already working in the school. Through an extensive programme of support through the Diocese and through collaboration with another Diocesan school, the foundations have been laid in order to reintroduce the subject successfully.

Prime Practice 3: Addressing improvement by meeting the needs of the students

One academy in challenging circumstances with a very high proportion of pupil premium students has taken a radical approach to its Key Stage 4 curriculum. Alongside an opportunity for students to opt for a full course GCSE, the school introduced a core RE programme called 'Life' (referring to the promotion of life skills and the focus on exploring life's ultimate questions). This does not lead to a qualification at the end of the course but focuses upon big human questions looking at the issues which students will face in their day to day lives and helping students to engage with up to date events in the media.

Each topic starts with a focus on life skills, for example, personal responsibility, before moving straight into big philosophical and religious questions such as: Who is responsible for evil in the world? This is a move away from all students taking short course RE which was not working for the school – there was a lack to motivation for students and results were poor as were attitudes towards RE.

There is a conviction that this curriculum model meets the particular needs of the academy's students. It is early days for this curriculum but many students find it interesting and enjoy talking about stimulating issues. They enjoy debating and the opportunity to express their own views without the pressure of 'learning it for an exam'.

Prime practice 4: A case study in effective leadership

In one large comprehensive school with a sixth form and a very diverse catchment achievement in RE across the school was outstanding.

Two examples illustrate the outstanding practice:

Clarity of purpose about the place of RE within a Church school

The Head of RE is clear that the contribution RE makes to students' personal development and to the wider life of a Church school has to be rooted in its credibility as an academic subject. The priority is to provide students with a challenging and intellectually stimulating curriculum. Striving to achieve academic excellence is seen as the context for providing excellent opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In lessons there is a secure atmosphere with an expectation that students share their ideas and beliefs. Students feel able to express ideas different from those of the teacher. Students of different faiths feel able to talk about their own beliefs and practices. The collaborative activities and reflection time in the lessons observed demonstrated that RE provides an excellent opportunity for students to work out their own beliefs and values in a safe environment.

An effective programme of monitoring

Every three years the subject has a 'Departmental Profile' which is a mini-Ofsted subject inspection. RE was rated outstanding in this during 2013. In addition there is a senior leadership review of the department which includes lesson observation in the autumn term, a review including observation by the line manager in the spring term and meeting with SLT link in the summer term. Subject leaders also undertake regular learning walks around the department. There is a termly 'professional learning community' which meets to share good practice.



Prime practice 5: Leading teaching and learning

An average-sized ethnically diverse academy has had a positive journey from 'notice to improve' to success! The RE subject leader had been seconded onto the senior leadership team to take a lead across the academy in developing teaching and learning. As part of this she conducted a 'Practitioner Research project' into effective ways to motivate learners in Religious Education.

She had identified that 'one extremely effective way to inject challenge and engagement into RE lessons is to encourage pupils to question or challenge their peers. This form of learning activity, using role play is one used throughout this investigation and the impact it had on motivation and engagement was significant.'

In a GCSE lesson this approach was used to investigate the religious and moral considerations involved in genetic engineering. Pupils were given roles such as evangelical Christian, Archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Robert Winston, mother of a disabled child, and a catholic point of view etc. They were then asked to prepare a 1 minute speech from that point of view. Other students were allocated the role of peer assessors. The first student gave their speech. The other students were asked to 'cross examine' mostly in role but occasionally from their own point of view. The first speaker had to respond still in role. The peer assessor awarded marks based on the use of religious viewpoints and arguments. The rest of the class noted strong arguments for their exam answers.

The level of debate spiralled upwards until it reached a level that would normally be expected in an A level group. This was repeated a number of times as time allowed. Finally, students answered a typical exam question under timed conditions. A look at the answers showed that almost all would have achieved high marks in an exam. Students were wholly engaged in the discussion, enjoyed trying to trump each other with religious arguments. All students were happy to 'hide' behind roles to explore ideas.

Prime Practice 6: Engaging students in their learning

The school is a large comprehensive with a sixth form with a predominantly mono-cultural catchment. Achievement in RE is outstanding. The RE department is committed to professional development and keeping up-to-date with developments in relation to pedagogy. As part of the commitment to improvement, the department has undertaken a research exercise investigating students' learning. The students' views about learning were researched and the information gathered has been used to develop a wide variety of teaching strategies that help students engage more fully in lessons.

The head of RE described how previously Key Stage 4 lessons had been very examination focused. However, the review of learning revealed a need for more variety and opportunities to explore at greater depth. This resulted in a change in the way lessons were planned and increased student enjoyment and engagement.

Also in response to the survey the Department introduced a system of 'green pen comments'. These are more personal, anecdotal annotations on students' work. They are designed to start a 'conversation' to promote deeper/wider thinking and serve as 1:1 written tutorial. Students respond and take the 'conversation' forward.

Students now have more choice about how they present their work. They are often given a choice about which aspects of a topic they want to take responsibility for researching. Teachers are skilled at using structured discussions and students know and respect the conventions used. As a result students were comfortable expressing their own views and used to having to give reasons to justify their opinions. Students are encouraged to question and the 'green pen' initiated conversations enable them to follow up areas of personal interest and ask whatever questions they want.

As a result of these strategies to engage students more effectively in their learning, a stronger link has been forged between the academic goals of the subject and the promotion of students' wider personal development.



Prime Practice 7: Building partnerships

In one long established boys school pupils from the sixth form visit primary local schools in the summer term to 'teach' RE lessons with the support of the teachers. The purpose is to encourage high achieving students to consider careers as teachers and as RE teachers in particular. The school has identified, through a process of interview, sixth form pupils ideally suited to be a part of this project. All primary schools in the city, Church and community, are invited to take part. The boys have had a training session from a RE coordinator in a local primary school and the diocesan RE adviser. The students have 'planned' their lessons with support from the diocesan RE adviser and in consultation with the primary schools involved. They have also contacted their link schools and, where possible, made an initial school visit. Over 4 weeks the boys deliver the lessons within the primary schools and each keeps a reflective journal as they undertake this work.

Prime Practice 8: Meeting students' diverse needs in a challenging context

The school is an above-average sized comprehensive with a sixth form and strongly diverse intake. At the time of the visit the school was graded by Ofsted as requiring improvement. However, the RE department was described by the senior leadership as the best in the school. A key feature of the effectiveness of RE is the diversity of strategies used to meet students' needs.

One example was the use made of reflective/creative extended homework tasks to encourage independent and reflective learning and to help students relate their learning in RE to their own context. This is an approach the department has had embedded for several years and students are expected to discuss the work with their parents and to include their insights. The students do two homework projects a half term. There is a broad theme, but they negotiate the aims of the project with their teacher. For example, the year 8 project was based on community life in Islam. Some students had explored, and many Muslim students had created, examples of Islamic art.

The commentary, often informed by talking with their family and relatives, produced high level and detailed accounts of the importance and role of Islamic art in the community. Many of the students from non-Muslim backgrounds were able to do well having worked with their Muslim peers and families. This approach enabled homework to make a more personalised and significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural, as well as their academic development.

Building on the success

4.14 While the overall picture of RE in the secondary schools and academies visited was positive, a number of areas to improve emerged from the survey. Five specific issues were identified:

1. In the majority of the 9 schools where RE was judged to be less than good, the senior leadership of the school had identified the weaknesses and were working actively with the department to address the concerns. The reasons behind the limited effectiveness of RE varied but generally reflected the patterns identified in the 2013 Ofsted report. They included:
 - a. Weaknesses in teaching often related to a lack of challenge and a poor match between the work set and the ability of the students.
 - b. A lack of opportunity for students to engage with 'big' questions and discuss different viewpoints linked to limited opportunities for them to work independently.
 - c. A lack of coherence and progression in the Key Stage 3 curriculum.
 - d. Weaknesses in subject leadership with a lack of understanding of what constitutes high quality RE.

In many of these cases RE was identified as needing improvement at the previous SIAMS inspection. The survey found significant variability of practice across dioceses in following up these schools to ensure that effective action had been taken to address the areas of weakness.



2. **In many schools the underlying coherence of the content of the RE curriculum was not clear enough.** The quality of the secondary RE curriculum did not always match the strengths in the quality of teaching. This reflected the need to improve curriculum design based on a more secure grasp of the progressive development of students' knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, in one school with good overall provision for RE, the Key Stage 3 curriculum was a collection of individual units without a clear rationale to link them together. Students were finding each unit stimulating but were not always connecting learning across units to see how their subject expertise was deepening. As a result there was a lack of opportunity for students to reflect on their 'learning journey' in RE. The journey that students were taking to develop the progressive mastery of RE as an academic subject was not clear. Assessment was too focused on narrow outcomes defined by the level descriptors rather than a deeper understanding of what it meant to become more proficient in terms of subject expertise. There remains an issue of supporting schools with high quality curriculum design based on greater clarity about subject content. The finding reflects similar issues identified by Ofsted and there is scope to work closely with the wider RE professional community in addressing this.
3. While in most schools visited there was a virtuous circle of good provision and positive outcomes, there were **issues around the quality of provision for full course GCSE** in some schools. In around a third of the schools the time allocation for full course GCSE was significantly less than that being provided for other GCSE subjects. This pattern often applied when all or most of the year group cohort of pupils were being entered for the examination. While this limited time allocation was not always reflected in examination results, it did have a number of negative consequences. The opportunities for students to deepen their understanding were limited; teaching often had to focus heavily on narrow examination preparation; and, the work load in terms of marking on the RE teaching team was often very high.
4. There is **too much inconsistency of access to high quality training and support.** Around a half of the schools had strong provision for subject specific continuing professional development (CPD). Many of these schools benefited from individual support from their diocese, local network groups, national courses or links with local higher education providers. However while other schools were able to identify some training opportunities they were not seen as particularly well-targeted or effective. For some CPD was limited to generic training provided by the school or, in some cases, the academy chain. Some only had access to training provided by the examination boards. In some cases training provided by the local diocese was too primary focused and did not meet the needs of the secondary specialist. The voluntary-controlled schools visited as part of the survey were finding it increasingly difficult to access training from their local authority and there is some evidence of a widening gap in support between the voluntary aided and controlled sectors.
5. **Too many schools with sixth forms were not making appropriate provision for core RE.** 20 out of the 30 secondary phase schools visited had a sixth form. While almost all were offering RE-related GCE A level courses, only six of the 20 were making appropriate provision for post 16 'general RE'. The quality of provision varied significantly. Some sixth forms included a lesson of general RE each week; others delivered RE through a programme of 'off timetable days'. In one school, for example, all sixth form students followed a core RE course with a number of drop-down days on various issues related to the place of religion in the modern world. One recent successful day had focused on New Religious Movements giving students the opportunity to discuss and explore the challenges posed by religious cults. However, some schools made no provision for any 'core' RE and in others it was delivered through tutorial or PSHE programmes where the provision lacked any genuine subject focus.



Section 5: Future Developments

5.1 The purpose of this section is to reflect on four themes emerging from the survey findings as priorities for the improvement of RE in Church schools:

- RE in the context of the wider Christian life of the Church school
- The architecture of high quality curriculum design
- Professional development as a key driver of improvement
- Thinking theologically and the art of theological enquiry – a distinctive Anglican contribution to the RE debate.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WIDER CHRISTIAN LIFE OF THE CHURCH SCHOOL

5.2 There was an almost universal recognition in the schools surveyed that RE should have a high priority in the life of a Church school. In the words of one Headteacher: *'RE is part of who we are. All staff must buy into this concept. It is different to a community school'*.

5.3 One of the main findings of the survey was the diversity of ways in which schools articulated their understanding of this relationship. What was also clear was that while the relationship between RE and the wider Christian life of the school can be mutually enhancing, it also can be a barrier to success.

5.4 The survey found that **ambiguity around the nature and purpose of the subject within a Church school setting was widespread, particularly in primary schools**. One of the key findings of this survey was that in many primary schools this uncertainty was often compounded by confusion about the role of RE as part of the mission of a Church school.

5.5 In the words of one member of the survey team:

In describing the relationship between RE and the wider life of a Church school can we use the analogy of a ball and socket joint? Some schools are in danger of separating the ball from the socket so RE is a 'separate thing' to the wider Christian life of the school. For others the ball is grating against the socket too much and the joint becomes damaged as a result. What we need are ways of enabling the joint to work properly; to enable the RE to support the ethos, but also enabling it to function well in its own right as a rigorous academic subject.

5.6 There was a clear difference between primary and secondary schools in the way in which they interpreted this relationship.

5.7 In most secondary schools the distinctive place of RE was reflected pre-eminently in the priority given to ensuring RE was of the highest quality. In most schools the fundamental purpose of RE was not significantly different in character from community schools. Where RE was distinctive the difference lay in the way:

- the priority given to RE was translated into high quality provision and classroom practice
- the study of Christianity was given a clear priority within the curriculum
- RE was given a high profile in the wider life of the school through links with the collective worship programme and/or the school chaplaincy
- RE was seen as a key driver in overall school improvement.

5.8 The greatest ambiguity about the place of RE in a Church school was in the primary sector. The teaching of Christianity being limited to the expression of Christian values or more general moral teaching is an example of this.



- 5.9 In one school the senior leadership team were very explicit about the problems they were facing in defining the place of RE in a Church school. The interplay between ethos, RE and collective worship was not clear amongst the leadership team. The governors in particular felt that they needed clarification over what could be assessed and measured in RE and what could not.
- 5.10 One disappointing finding, given this level of confusion, was that the majority of both secondary and primary schools visited were not aware of the National Society Statement of Entitlement **which clarifies the aims of Religious Education in Church schools are:**
- to enable pupils to encounter Christianity as the religion that shaped British culture and heritage and influences the lives of millions of people today
 - to enable pupils to learn about the other major religions, their impact on culture and politics, art and history, and on the lives of their adherents
 - to develop understanding of religious faith as the search for and expression of truth
 - to contribute to the development of pupils' own spiritual/philosophical convictions, exploring and enriching their own faith and beliefs.
- 5.11 Where RE was most effective the core purpose to develop pupils' expertise in understanding religion and belief, their religious literacy, was the context for the wider goals of fostering their personal development, nurturing a search for meaning, and encountering the Christian faith. In the best cases RE was seen as an important subject, alongside other subjects, with its own intellectual integrity and rigour (see **Prime Practice 4**).
- 5.12 However in those schools where RE was less effective, uncertainty about how to integrate these different goals inhibited the quality of the subject. This uncertainty was evident in a variety of ways in different schools participating in the survey:
- In some schools the uncertainty was reflected in the **weaknesses in aspects of the quality of subject leadership**. Too many headteachers did not fully grasp the implications of the claim to give RE high priority in the school. For example, some schools identified RE with the wider Christian ethos of the school resulting in a lack of rigour in the way the quality of the subject provision was evaluated, monitored and improved.
 - In other schools RE was **limited by a narrow concept of Christianity**, leading, for example, to over-use of bible stories at the expense of a wider exploration of Christian belief and practice. Frequently RE was dominated, especially at Key Stage 1, with a diet of re-telling stories and asking pupils how they would respond in that situation. A common problem was that pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith was not strong because the focus was mainly on moral imperatives they could learn from Biblical stories rather than on learning about the central beliefs of the Christian faith.
 - Linked to the narrow teaching of RE was the **lack of clarity about the value of RE to pupils' spiritual development**. The contribution of RE to pupils' wider personal development was often narrowly focused on understanding cultural diversity and promoting moral development. The 'spiritual' was often superficial, neglected or conflated with morality. Too often RE failed to engage pupils effectively with the deeper aspects of religious belief or practice and opportunities for reflection were too shallow.
 - In some schools there was an **over-emphasis on 'learning from' religion to the detriment of 'learning about' religion**. In one school, for example, RE was interpreted as being primarily about personal development as an expression of the Christian mission of the school. Pupils had very good opportunities in RE



to discuss their own feelings and personal experiences; religious material was selected to stimulate this exploration. However, as a result their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other religions was weak.

- In some schools, although these were few in number, there was **an imbalance in the RE curriculum with limited opportunity for pupils to investigate other religions**. As a result the pupils' understanding of the rich diversity of religion, essential to developing their overall religious literacy, was weak.
- Frequently, where **the challenge of matching an open enquiry approach to RE with the perceived need to nurture the children's faith was unresolved this was a barrier to success**. Too often there was a tendency to cap the opportunities for more independent work and extending pupils' lines of questioning for fear that it would undermine the pupils' faith. Although teachers appeared to use key questions this did not lead to a genuine sense of enquiry. This seriously limited the quality of learning, particularly with older pupils.
- One further issue that was highlighted in some voluntary-controlled schools was **the absence of any inspection of RE in voluntary-controlled schools**. The requirement for a section 48 inspection to assess the quality of religious education in voluntary-aided schools does not apply to voluntary-controlled schools and this is having a detrimental effect on the development of RE in those schools.

Recommendations

- 5.13 In order to improve the understanding of the contribution of RE to the wider life of the Church school, the National Society and Diocesan Boards of Education need to:
- strengthen the implementation of the Statement of Entitlement in Church
 - find ways to assess the quality of RE in voluntary-controlled schools.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF HIGH QUALITY CURRICULUM DESIGN

- 5.14 One thread running through the findings of the survey was the need to improve the quality of curriculum planning. Specifically there was a need to develop a deeper understanding of the key principles of curriculum design.
- 5.15 One of the consequences of the lack of clarity of purpose about RE in many primary schools was that curriculum planning lacked coherence. Where the aims of RE were unclear, it was difficult to identify what it meant for pupils to make progress. As a result it was hard to plan a progressive curriculum.
- 5.16 In secondary schools a key finding was that, while teaching was often good, this does not always translate into the best outcomes because of weaknesses in curriculum planning. This finding echoed that reported in the 2013 Ofsted report. Often the overall coherence of the Key Stage 3 curriculum and the links with GCSE provision at Key Stage 4 were unclear.
- 5.17 Across both primary and secondary schools the principles being used by schools to plan the breadth, balance and coherence of RE curriculum were often unclear. The links between individual topics were not well-defined. As a result pupils often did not understand how the knowledge, understanding and skills they were developing joined together to form a coherent 'learning journey' of developing mastery of RE.
- 5.18 Teachers need much more specific guidance about the content which they need to teach at each key stage and how to translate this into a well-designed, coherent and progressive curriculum.



- 5.19 One analogy used by the survey team to describe their findings involved a contrast between curriculum design as an 'architectural' rather than a 'building' process. Too often the RE curriculum in schools was like a series of rather random bricks put together with little sense of the overall structure of the building. What effective curriculum design needs is an architect's vision about the shape and purpose of the building in order to construct a coherent and progressive pattern of learning.
- 5.20 Some schools had grasped the importance of developing better curriculum design and the survey discovered some examples of emerging good practice but these need further consolidation. A number of more recent local syllabuses, from the local authority or diocese, were beginning to have a positive impact on curriculum design but the overall picture across schools is still too inconsistent.

Prime Practice 9: Four ideas about Curriculum design

A number of schools in the survey were exploring new ideas about curriculum design:

One voluntary-controlled primary school was seeking to enrich the requirements of their locally agreed syllabus through use of ideas from the syllabus developed by Blackburn Diocese. This creative combination of approaches was providing a stimulus to design a more challenging, balanced curriculum. Key Christian themes were revisited throughout each key stage and the overall approach placed a strong emphasis on enquiry as a key to good learning. One example of the good practice was the effective use of artefact boxes to promote the development of thinking skills such as speculation and creative thinking; to encourage skills of enquiry and questioning skills; and to arouse pupils' enthusiasm and curiosity.

One middle school had begun to develop a more coherent approach to curriculum planning by embedding an enquiry-based approach to learning. This approach was gradually being introduced across the school to provide a more coherent rationale for the subject and to focus the curriculum content around theological questions which would drive the learning. Their approach emphasised the importance analysing and evaluating evidence as part of an enquiry process. For example, in a Year 5 topic built around the significance of the Exodus story pupils debated different theories about the plagues in the story of Moses. The pupils engaged with ideas about the nature of God, natural phenomenon and other explanations for the plagues including the idea that they might be symbolic. The children focused on different theories about the plagues with some excellent discussion to identify and share ideas about the different perspectives.

One secondary school had used its freedom as an Academy to develop a distinctive pedagogical approach to the RE curriculum. The head of RE had taken the critical realist approach to RE and sought to apply it consistently to RE in the academy. The basic outline of the locally agreed syllabus had been kept but the school's approach took a key philosophical question for each faith being studied rather than attempting to provide wide coverage of belief and practice. As a result the content of the Key Stage 3 curriculum became more manageable and intellectually challenging. The consistent application of an 'express, explore, evaluate' structure to lessons had given pupils of all abilities the capacity to evaluate religious and philosophical questions to levels well above national expectations.

In one secondary school with outstanding RE provision an innovative approach to the Key Stage 4 curriculum had been adopted designed to meet students' diverse needs and interests. Year 9 students were given a range of choices. A cohort of able students could pass over GCSE and do GCE AS level instead. Two sets followed a full course GCSE taking papers in Mark's Gospel and Religion and Society. Another group followed full course GCSE with papers in Religion and Life and Religion and Morality. One further set took short course GCSE Religion and Life including a number of students who were following an alternative educational pathway mainly at a local college. Students opted on the basis of a mix of preference, guidance from the department on their strengths, and parental support. This gave the subject great credibility in the eyes of students and meant they felt they have been given genuine options. Students had a clear rationale for why they were doing RE and what they were going to get out of the subject.



Recommendations.

- 5.21 In order to improve the quality of curriculum design there is a need for the Church of England to engage with the wider RE professional community in:
- developing guidance about the principles of high quality curriculum design
 - defining more closely the core content (knowledge, understanding and skills) which should underpin an effective RE curriculum
 - exemplifying ways of designing a coherent and progressive curriculum for RE at each key stage.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS A KEY DRIVER OF IMPROVEMENT

- 5.22 High quality professional development is a key driver in securing the improvement of RE. The survey of Church schools confirmed that two-thirds of primary schools reported that they had received some recent training usually from their local diocese.
- 5.23 The 2013 report All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education inquiry into the supply and support of RE teachers *RE: The Truth Unmasked* (RE APPG March 2013) reported that there is a 'disparity of CPD opportunities between schools and academies with a religious character compared to those in community schools' (pg. 29). Generally they found that teachers in Church schools were much better served in terms of professional guidance and support. The APPG inquiry reported that: 'Diocesan education boards generally provide more training opportunities for RE subject leaders than do most local authorities' (page 29).
- 5.24 However, our survey found that the impact of this training in raising standards and improving the quality of teaching in Church schools was patchy. In secondary schools, while most RE departments reported that they had access to some form of professional development, only around half the schools identified that as a key factor in securing improvement.
- Crucially this report has highlighted that:
- in too many primary schools RE was not good enough and **pupils' learning tended to be too superficial.**
 - in some secondary schools **the underlying coherence of the RE curriculum was not clear enough.**
- 5.25 There is a concern about the effectiveness of RE training and support in addressing these weaknesses.
- 5.26 One specific and urgent need for support and guidance which was identified concerned the approach to assessment 'beyond levels'. Many Church schools, partly with an eye to SIAMS inspection, placed a high priority on collecting detailed level data about pupil progress in RE. There is now a concern about how to develop new arrangements which acknowledge the drawbacks of using levels and provide a more meaningful approach to assessment.
- 5.27 Too often professional development focused on providing 'interesting' but rather ad hoc ideas for classroom activities and resources. Where training was most effective it involved the more systematic development of teachers' and subject leaders' subject expertise; their ability to join up thinking about purpose, content, curriculum design and pedagogy into a coherent whole (see **Prime Practice 10** and **11**).



Prime Practice 10: The impact of effective professional development

In one secondary school a highly effective programme of professional development stemmed from partnership working with the local university to embed a 'critical realist' approach to RE throughout their curriculum and classroom practice. The approach is underpinned by a very holistic approach to assessment through which students become increasingly articulate about their overall progress in becoming critical thinkers— students use the language of critical realism when referring to the viewpoints of others. Although in its early stages of development the approach is proving particularly useful in supporting the development of planning and the promotion of high quality theological thinking.

The department also uses ideas from training on philosophy for children (P4C) to develop students' thinking, reasoning and justifying their views. The school has hosted Peter Baron's 'Philosophical Investigations' for a 6th form conference on two occasions and will continue to do so.

Both strands – theology and philosophy – underpin the curriculum and pedagogy within RE throughout the school. The challenge is reflected in three new Key Stage 3 units on: Salvation history; The Bible: the big picture; and, Religion in the news. The skills, attitudes and thinking are clear throughout all curriculum planning.

Prime practice 11: A fresh approach to professional development

As a result of teacher feedback and adviser evaluation of current CPD provision by the Diocese of Norwich, it was decided to take a fresh approach to professional development from September 2014. As well as offering the traditional courses for RE, packages will be offered aimed at promoting:

- sustained impact with long term aims and goals
- effective classroom practice based on a theological enquiry approach
- collaborative and reflective practice
- more effective use of adviser expertise

The packages have been designed for groups or hubs of schools to sign up funded by the Diocesan Board of Education and use of a grant made by Keswick Hall Trust. The packages focus on teaching Christianity confidently; theological enquiry; and, outstanding subject leadership. Each package includes adviser input, use of a lesson study approach or collaborative review, and a presentation of developments to participants. For example:

Better Together: Becoming a confident teacher of RE

- A half day training on theological enquiry which will include assessment for learning.
- A half day training on the lesson study approach and planning for the school-to-school reflective practice. The lesson study would focus on one aspect of the enquiry process.
- A lesson study activity with at least one other participant to take place in school time.
- A half day follow-up training session where participants will present the outcomes and findings from their lesson study and next steps will be identified.

Better Together: Becoming an outstanding subject leader of RE

- Prior to the training, each school will need to complete a form of self-evaluation
- A whole day course focusing on a rationale for RE, curriculum design, theological enquiry, monitoring and evaluating and the SIAMS framework.
- Teachers will work in pairs as reflective partners. Each school will receive a half day visit from the Diocese adviser and their 'partner' teacher. Together they will work together to review the RE in the school and identify strengths and areas for development. The other partner school will then receive a visit, where a review will also take place. The pairs of teachers agree to visit each other at least once to review progress against a maximum of three action points identified in their review.
- A half day follow up session with all the participants presenting one aspect of RE that they have developed within their school as a result of the partnership visit. In addition, time will be given to share next steps and information on how to set up a network and apply for the RE Quality Mark.



Recommendations

5.28 The survey found a need to develop a more strategic approach towards professional development in order to raise the bar by:

- helping schools get behind the issues which are limiting improvement of RE and focus more systematically on the links between the purpose of the subject and how this is translated into effective curriculum design, classroom practice and assessment
- providing support and guidance about how to develop effective assessment 'beyond levels'
- more sharing, both across dioceses and with the wider RE professional community, of effective and innovative models of professional development
- ensuring greater consistency in terms of access to professional development across different dioceses
- monitoring the impact of professional development more closely.

THINKING THEOLOGICALLY AND THE ART OF THEOLOGICAL ENQUIRY – A DISTINCTIVE ANGLICAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DEBATE

5.29 The purpose of this section is to highlight a potential distinctive contribution of the Anglican school sector to the wider debates in RE. This links to the work of the Church of England Christianity project on the promotion of pupils' ability to think theologically as one important element in the development of religious literacy.

5.30 This draws together four different findings of the report:

1. **The conundrum of RE in Church primary schools where its high priority is not translated into high achievement.** Many primary teachers are 'feeling their way' towards an approach to RE which reflected the Christian context of the school but are struggling to embed this effectively in their planning and teaching. For example, while teachers were often using biblical stories with younger children they struggled to use the material more 'theologically' to explore key Christian ideas and practices. The dilemma was often exposed once the children reached Key Stage 2 and teachers recognised that a diet of biblical stories was not enough but found it difficult to incorporate greater 'theological depth' into the learning about Christianity.
2. While **the effectiveness of RE in secondary schools was often good, the quality of overall curriculum design was sometimes limited.** While students often spoke positively about the quality of their learning, where they were less secure was in recognising a clear thread in the development of their subject expertise or religious literacy. Many of the topics and activities were interesting but students sometimes struggled to explain the underlying coherence. One example was the lack of a sustained and progressive development of students' ability to 'think theologically'.
3. A third thread relates to **uncertainty around the distinctiveness of RE within a Church school setting.** Earlier in this report use was made of the analogy of the 'ball and socket joint' as a way of interpreting this issue.

A key finding of the survey is that further guidance is needed to support schools in articulating this distinctiveness. A focus promoting the notion of thinking theologically is one potential dimension of this support.



4. Many of these issues reflect wider national findings about **a lack of depth in pupils' subject knowledge and understanding**. The 2013 Ofsted report highlighted the importance of promoting religious literacy defined as pupils' having:

- an ability to offer informed responses to a range of profound religious, philosophical or ethical questions
- an understanding of the way in which the beliefs, practices, values and ways of life of specific religions and non-religious world views are linked
- an understanding and interpretation of the distinctive nature of religious language
- a deepening understanding of the diverse nature of religion and belief in the contemporary world
- a more sophisticated understanding of the impact, both positive and negative, that religion and belief can have on individuals and society.'

Para 1 Religious Education: realising the potential (Ofsted 2013).

Thinking theologically has potential to contribute to the promotion of pupils' religious literacy and raise standards in RE.

An agenda for change

5.31 These four threads of thinking come together to suggest an important agenda for change and improvement based on three priorities:

- **promoting the distinctive character of RE in a Church school**
- **making the RE curriculum especially the teaching of Christianity more intellectually coherent and challenging**
- **raising the level of pupils' religious literacy.**

5.32 One important finding from the survey is that where these three priorities were being addressed effectively one element in the success was **a focus on developing pupils' ability to think theologically and engage in theological enquiry**. The ability to think theologically means that pupils go beyond the mere collecting of information about religion and belief. It involves pupils exploring the key ideas and crucial inner meanings within the religious material they are studying. It involves, in the case of Christianity, the exploration of key concepts such as incarnation, resurrection, atonement. It involves the recognition of the diversity of different ways of thinking theologically within the Christian tradition.

5.33 For all pupils, whether they have a faith or not, this involves engaging with the ideas and beliefs of different faiths. For pupils who bring a personal commitment to the religion being studied this could involve them reflecting more deeply on their faith and 'doing theology' for themselves.

5.34 Any effective RE programme will involve pupils in a range of different ways of thinking and enquiring. A balanced RE curriculum would place the goal of 'thinking theologically' within the context of a repertoire of other approaches towards the promotion of religious literacy drawn from, for example, social sciences and philosophy. One key feature of the distinctiveness of RE in a Church school should lie in the priority given to Christianity as the major, but not exclusive, context for the development of the skills of theological enquiry.



- 5.35 A major way in which the Anglican Church school RE community can make a distinctive positive contribution to the wider debate about the improvement of RE in all schools is by modelling and sharing good practice in the development of pupils' ability to think theologically. Crucially, this has the potential to address the confusion which persists about the distinctiveness of RE within a Church school setting.
- 5.36 The recent work of the National Society's Christianity Project due for publication in late 2014 makes a valuable contribution towards establishing the key role of thinking theologically in RE for Church schools. Included in its approach are a number of key principles of theological enquiry:
- At the heart of Christianity is a narrative of salvation. In order to understand this narrative it is necessary to be able to engage with certain key theological concepts
 - Practitioners and children need to be able to have a clear understanding of the inter-relatedness of these concepts in the Christian story
 - Christian practice and the life of the Church are rooted both in this narrative and these theological concepts

Knowledge and understanding underpin enquiry; but without enquiry, the depth of theological understanding cannot be explored.

Prime Practice 12: Opportunities to think theologically

Immanuel College in Bradford was not one of the survey schools but is currently piloting materials from the National Society's Christianity Project. The following gives a flavour of their work.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been re-designed to build in 'layers' of theological knowledge to lead to a deeper cumulative understanding over time. In one thread of the curriculum:

- Year 7 students learn about the concept of 'covenant' as part of an in-depth study of Judaism
- Year 8 students build on this with an enquiry titled 'Why did the Israelites want a King?' using material from Judges through to Prophets.
- Year 9 students use their theological knowledge as a basis for an enquiry into the concept of Jesus as the Messiah, exploring Jewish and Christian interpretations of the term.

A further example is the theological development of the understanding of Jesus planned through Key Stage 3, adding layers of knowledge over time:

- In Year 7, students study the example of Jesus as a teacher linked to the school's wider Christian values. This is in addition to an interdisciplinary art-based unit that explores the identity of Jesus through various forms of artistic expression, focusing on the themes of incarnation and salvation.
- Year 8 students develop their knowledge of the identity of Jesus as Christ and his authority as the Son of God through an in-depth theological study of John's Gospel.
- In Year 9 students explore the developing understanding of the Trinity and role of Jesus in the lives of Christians through an enquiry into 'What happened after Easter?' based on the text of Acts.

This approach has led to students' developing a much higher level of theological literacy. Students are more confident in articulating the purpose of their learning and how this fits into their developing understanding of Christianity.

The curriculum is balanced by giving students a broader understanding of religion and its place in today's world. One example is a Year 8 unit of work which comprises an interdisciplinary study of the nature and philosophies of science and the relationship between scientific and religious thought.



Prime practice 13: Opportunities to think theologically

A boys' school with a higher than average proportion of FSM and SEN students. Achievement in RE at GCSE and Key Stage 3 is outstanding. The department benefits from strong links with a local teacher education provider and has extensive programme of extra-curricular activity to enrich the RE programme.

A key to the success of RE is the innovative approach to developing students' ability to think theologically. One aspect of this success story is the 'Reach for the stars' initiative for the most able Year 11 students. The aim is to enrich students' religious literacy by helping them to engage more deeply with theological thinking. It involves collaborative working using the most able Year 13 students and the part-time chaplain. It uses a three part model of:

- Extended reading group once a month engaging with challenging texts which give breadth and depth and aims to prompt theological discussion
- Seminars led by Chaplain on theological topics
- Extended essays choosing from:
 - Is Christianity relevant?
 - Does Scripture hold authority?
 - Who you are is more important than what you do
 - For it is for freedom that Christ has set you free' (Gal 5 v 1). Can freedom be found through faith?

This is a radical approach goes way beyond learning to answer the standard GCSE questions. It is proving mutually beneficial for Year 11 and Year 13 students and is boosting results and numbers opting for A level course in the sixth form.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5.37 There is a need for the National Society and Diocesan Boards of Education to develop further thinking to provide:

- a clear rationale for the place of theological enquiry in RE as a key to the distinctiveness of RE in Church schools
- models of curriculum design which promote a progressive and coherent understanding of theological thinking within the study of Christianity
- a repertoire of approaches to learning that promote the development of the skills of theological enquiry alongside other aspects of enquiry in RE
- guidance on how the process of enquiry can be built into the way pupils' progress in RE is defined and assessed.



Section 6: Overall Recommendations

1. All schools should:
 - review their RE curriculum to ensure it provides a more coherent, progressive and challenging approach to the teaching of Christianity within the context of the wider exploration of the diversity of religion and belief in the modern world
 - explore ways of extending pupils' ability to think theologically and engage in theological enquiry as part of their learning in RE
 - widen access to a fuller range of professional development and support and ensure this is targeted more strategically on the improvement of RE.
2. Primary schools should:

Ensure that the high priority accorded to RE is translated into effective practice by:

 - championing a clear, shared understanding of the place and purpose of RE within the school
 - ensuring RE is focused on the key priority of developing pupils' subject knowledge, understanding and skills
 - building greater consistency in the quality of planning, teaching and assessing RE across all year groups and classes
 - making sure the leadership and governance of RE in primary schools is strategically focused on raising standards and improving provision, based on a clear understanding of best practice in RE in Church schools.
3. Secondary schools should:
 - raise standards and improve quality further by ensuring the provision made of RE at GCSE allows for depth of learning and positive opportunities for critical thinking, evaluation and reflection
 - in schools with post 16 provision, ensure all sixth form pupils receive their entitlement to a high quality programme of 'core' RE.
4. The National Society and Diocesan Boards of Education should:
 - a. Provide schools with support in understanding the distinctive role of RE within a Church school setting as set out in the Statement of Entitlement
 - b. Ensure that all schools have appropriate support to improve the quality of the teaching of Christianity
 - c. Promote the development of pupils' ability to think theologically by providing:
 - a clear rationale for the place of theological enquiry in RE as a key to the distinctiveness of RE in Church schools
 - curriculum models which promote the progressive development of theological thinking within the pupils' study of Christianity
 - a repertoire of approaches to learning that promote the development of the skills of theological enquiry alongside other aspects of enquiry in RE
 - guidance on how the process of enquiry can be built into the way pupils' progress in RE is defined and assessed.



5. Establish a more strategic and coherent approach to the provision of RE continuing professional development focused on improving the quality of planning, teaching and assessment of RE
 - Improve the quality of RE inspection through SIAMS especially in primary schools by:
 - establishing and maintaining robust systems for the quality assurance of inspectors
 - strengthening the focus on the importance of high quality RE as an expression of the distinctiveness of voluntary-controlled schools
6. Ensure greater consistency of practice across dioceses in following up schools where a SIAMS inspection had identified significant weaknesses in RE to ensure that effective action is taken to address the issues
 - work more closely with the wider RE professional community to:
 - develop guidance about the principles of high quality curriculum design
 - define more closely the core content (knowledge, understanding and skills) which should underpin an effective RE curriculum
 - exemplify ways of designing a coherent and progressive curriculum for RE at each key stage



Appendix 1

SIAMS Inspection grade descriptors for RE

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION?

This section deals with the way religious education contributes to a Church school's Christian character. At the heart of religious education in Church schools is the teaching of Christianity, rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ. As inclusive communities, Church schools encourage learning about and learning from other religions and fostering respect for other religions and world views.

EVALUATION STATEMENTS

When judging the effectiveness of the religious education, inspectors must evaluate:

- the achievement of learners in religious education
- the quality of teaching and learning in religious education
- the effectiveness of the curriculum in religious education and especially the teaching of Christianity
- the effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Inspectors may take account of:

1. Progress and standards based upon the school's performance data

- a. standards attained by learners at the end of each key stage
- b. progress for individuals and groups of learners, considering their starting points
- c. how well gaps in performance are narrowing for different groups of learners (where information is available)

2. Quality of teaching and learning

- a. teachers' understanding and implementation of high quality religious education teaching over time as evidenced by observation of lessons, the school's own monitoring, other learning activities, discussion with learners and scrutiny of their work
- b. the extent to which learning activities address both learning about and learning from religion and enable learners to acquire and apply knowledge and skills set out in the syllabus for religious education
- c. the extent to which religious education makes a contribution to the distinctively Christian values of the school and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners
- d. the extent to which learners enjoy religious education and are enabled to speak about religious ideas and faith

3. Quality of the curriculum

- a. the extent to which the school's syllabus reflects **the National Society Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education** and in particular, whether Christianity is the majority study:
 - in Key Stages 1 – 3: at least Christianity
 - in Key Stage 4: the study of Christianity will be a significant and substantial part of courses that lead to any public qualification
 - in Key Stage 5: the opportunity to study Christianity at AS and A level

(NB: The Statement of Entitlement does not apply to Methodist schools)

- b. the religious education provision for all students in the sixth form
- c. the proportion of curriculum time dedicated to meeting religious education objectives (5% - 10%)

- d. the extent to which pupil achievement in religious education is equal or better than comparable subjects
- e. the proportion of learners taking a recognised and appropriate qualification at KS 4

4. Effectiveness of leadership and management of religious education

- a. the extent to which monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment leads to an improvement in the performance of learners across the school
- b. the extent to which religious education works with and informs effective teaching and learning across the curriculum

GRADE DESCRIPTORS: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

OUTSTANDING (1)

- Standards of attainment of learners are at least in line with national expectations with a significant number attaining higher than the national expectations*.
- Attainment is high and progress is rapid in developing an understanding of Christianity and a broad range of religious beliefs.
In exceptional circumstances, where groups of learners attain below those nationally, the gap is narrowing dramatically over a period of time as shown by attainment data.
- Learners are inspired by the subject and learn exceptionally well. They develop and apply a wide range of higher level skills to great effect in their enquiry, analysis, interpretation, evaluation and reflection of their understanding of the impact of religion on believers.
- Learners are impressive in the way that they use creativity and originality to apply their knowledge and skills in religious education to their own personal reflections on questions of meaning and purpose.
- The majority of teaching is outstanding and it is never less than consistently good.
- Highly effective use of assessment informs teaching and learning in religious education and exemplar evidence demonstrates progress made by learners.
- Religious education has a very high profile within the school curriculum and learning activities provide fully for the needs of all learners.
- The religious education curriculum is rich and varied enabling learners to acquire a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith through a wide range of learning opportunities.
- The religious education curriculum provides opportunities for learners to understand and to make links between the beliefs, practices and value systems of the range of faiths studied.
- Links with the Christian values of the school and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are intrinsic to the religious education curriculum and they have a significant impact on learners.
- Rigorous and extensive monitoring and evaluation results in well focused action plans that demonstrably lead to improvement.
- Subject leadership has the highest level of subject expertise and the vision to realise ambitious expectations and improvement.

* 'National expectations' throughout the descriptors for religious education refers to those set out in the syllabus adopted by the governors of the school and the extent to which they may reflect the QCA's 8 point scale. Guidance on this may be revised as and when required.



GOOD (2)

- Standards of attainment for the large majority of learners are in line with national expectations and sometimes higher.
- Learners make good progress given their starting points. Or, standards of attainment are average but learners make rapid and sustained progress given their starting points over a period of time.
- In exceptional circumstances overall attainment may be slightly lower than national expectations but with some groups of learners making outstanding progress.
- Learners understand the value of the subject and they mostly learn well. They develop a range of skills including some of the following: enquiry, analysis and interpretation, evaluation and reflection. Learners have a good ability to apply these skills to understanding the impact of religion on believers.
- Learners show originality and creativity in applying their knowledge and skills in religious education and are developing the ability to apply this to questions of meaning and purpose.
- The majority of teaching is good.
- Assessment procedures are in place and these inform planning, teaching and learning.
- Religious education has a high profile within the school curriculum and learning activities are differentiated to meet the needs of different groups of learners.
- Learners display a secure knowledge of many of the key aspects of Christianity and the Bible and the main practices and beliefs of the other faiths and cultures studied.
- Religious education makes a good contribution to the Christian values of the school and to the learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Effective use is made of a range of routine monitoring and evaluation procedures that accurately identify strengths and focus on raising standards that lead to improvement in pupil performance.
- The subject leader effectively communicates expectations to senior leaders, governors and staff about improvement in teaching and learning in religious education and is well informed on current developments in religious education.

SATISFACTORY (3)

- Standards of attainment for the majority of learners are in line with national expectations.
- Progress is satisfactory with learners making at least comparable progress to national expectations. Or, attainment is low but there is accurate and convincing evidence that progress over a sustained period of time is improving strongly and securely.
- The quality of learning and engagement within the subject are generally good but with some variation in some year groups or key stages.
- Teachers sometimes, though not always, ensure that lessons are structured around the development of skills such as enquiry and reflection.
- Learners have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of Christianity and some religions and beliefs but their ability to answer questions of meaning and purpose is limited.
- The majority of teaching is satisfactory and there is likely to be some good teaching.
- The religious education curriculum caters for the learning needs of some learners but those needing either reinforcement or more challenging learning activities are not routinely planned for.
- Some assessment takes place but this is inconsistent across year groups and does not always accurately inform future teaching and learning.
- The religious education curriculum offers some opportunities to enhance the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners.
- The religious education curriculum offers learners some opportunities to understand the main teachings, beliefs and practices of Christianity and some other world faiths but implementation is inconsistent and is therefore not fully effective. As a result, learners do not have sufficient knowledge or understanding of religions nor of respect between diverse faith communities.
- Religious education has modest links to some aspects of the school's Christian values but these are not made explicit and are not consistently identified in teachers' planning.
- There is regular monitoring of some aspects of religious education and self-evaluation is broadly accurate in identifying priorities for improvement that offer adequate challenge.
- The subject leader is aware of current developments in religious education and incorporates some of these in his/her practice.

INADEQUATE (4)

Inspectors should use their professional judgement in making this judgement. The effectiveness of RE may be inadequate if more than one of the following apply:

- Standards of teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate with the result that standards of attainment and rates of progress, for the majority of learners and groups of learners, are consistently lower than national expectations.
- The religious education curriculum makes little contribution to the Christian values of the school and its promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is limited.
- Insufficient opportunities exist to develop learners' knowledge and understanding of Christianity or other faiths and the impact on the lives of believers.
- Subject leadership is poor. Procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of religious education are weak and fail to identify essential improvements in teaching and learning.



Appendix 2

National Society Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CHURCH SCHOOLS: A STATEMENT OF ENTITLEMENT

Education and Mission

1. The General Synod motion of 1999 affirmed that Church of England schools stand at the heart of the mission of the Church to the nation. This was followed by the Dearing report *The Way Ahead*, which looked in detail at how this was to be exemplified in the life of the schools.
2. *Going for Growth* (endorsed by General Synod in 2010) examined the work of the church with children and young people within the mission framework. The final Action Points have significant application to schools, especially the first: *'the Church at national, diocesan and local level is called to work towards every child and young person having a life enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ'* (5.2)
3. The mission imperative was clearly stated at the first meeting of the National Society in 1811, when the commitment to set up Church of England schools across the nation was undertaken specifically so that 'the national religion (should be) the foundation of national education.'
4. Consistent with this understanding of mission church schools put spiritual development at the heart of the curriculum. All members of the school community should experience Christianity through the life of the schools, as well as through the taught curriculum.

Religious Education

5. Religious Education is central to this understanding of education and mission. The aims of Religious Education in church schools are:
 - to enable pupils to encounter Christianity as the religion that shaped British culture and heritage and influences the lives of millions of people today
 - to enable pupils to learn about the other major religions, their impact on culture and politics, art and history, and on the lives of their adherents
 - to develop understanding of religious faith as the search for and expression of truth
 - to contribute to the development of pupils' own spiritual/philosophical convictions, exploring and enriching their own faith and beliefs
6. The outcomes for pupils at the end of their education in church schools are that they are able to:
 - think theologically and explore ultimate questions
 - reflect critically on the truth claims of Christian belief
 - develop the skills to analyse, interpret and apply the Bible text
 - recognise that faith is a particular way of understanding and responding to God and the world
 - analyse and explain the varied nature and traditions of the Christian community
 - make a well informed response to Christianity
 - respect those of all faiths in their search for God
 - reflect critically on areas of shared belief and practice between different faiths
 - enrich and expand their understanding of truth
 - reflect critically and express their views on the human quest and destiny

Teaching and Learning about Christianity

7. Christianity should be the majority study in RE in every school. In church schools that should be clearly adhered to. Understanding Christianity as a living religion is the foundation of pupils' Religious Education in schools. It is important that this draws on the richness and diversity of Christian experience in the breadth of its Anglican and other denominational forms, and in the variety of worldwide forms. The encounter must be an open one which stems from and instils respect for different views and interpretations and in which real dialogue and education takes place. Pupils will be enabled to deepen their understanding of God as encountered and taught by Christians.

Teaching and learning about other faiths and world views

8. Church schools have a duty to foster an accurate and increasing understanding of world religions and world views. As a result, pupils will gain greater insight into the world in which they are growing up. They will also be able to appreciate the faith of others and develop a deeper understanding of their own beliefs and practices. These outcomes must contribute to harmonious relationships within and between communities, promoting social inclusion and combating prejudice.

Curriculum balance

9. Christianity will form the majority study in all church schools
- KS 1 – 3 at least 2/3 Christianity
 - KS 4 the study of Christianity will be a significant and substantial part of any public qualification
 - KS 5 the opportunity to continue the study of Christianity at As and A level

Curriculum time

10. Sufficient dedicated curriculum time, meeting explicitly RE objectives, however organised, should be committed to RE. Normally this should be between 5% and 10%.

Staffing

11. It should be a priority in Church schools to build up staff expertise in RE.
- At least one member of staff should have specialist RE qualifications
 - All teachers teaching RE to have appropriate professional development
 - RE to have equal status with other core subjects in staffing, responsibility and resourcing

Outcomes for pupils

12. Pupil achievement in RE should equal or be better than comparable subjects, and all pupils should take a recognised and appropriate qualification at KS 4

Board of Education/National Society Council, July 2011



Appendix 3

Acknowledgements

The Church of England and National Society would like to express their deepest gratitude to Alan Brine HMI who led the survey. Alan Brine HMI has been Ofsted's national lead for Religious Education since 2007. Previously he was County Inspector for RE in Hampshire and prior to that Head of Theology and Religious Studies at King Alfred's College of Higher Education (now the University of Winchester).

The Church of England and National Society would like also like to thank the members of the survey team:

- **Carol Berry**
Humanities Curriculum leader, St Michael's CE High School Chorley and SIAMS inspector, Diocese of Blackburn
- **Jane Brooke**
Principal Consultant, Diocese of Chester
- **Virginia Corbyn**
Assistant Director of Education, Diocese of Rochester
- **Jo Fageant**
Principal RE Adviser, Diocese of Oxford
- **Derek Holloway**
RE Adviser Diocese of Salisbury and Dorset SACRE
- **Celia Roberts**
SIAMS Inspector, Diocese of York
- **David Shears AI**
Independent Education Consultant, Ofsted/SIAMS inspector, Diocese of Gloucester
- **Kathryn Wright**
Diocese of Norwich RE Advisor

Participating schools

Our thanks are due to the pupils, staff and governors of following schools which participated in the survey:

Secondary and middle schools:

- David Young Community Academy, Leeds
- Archbishop Tenison's (VA) School, Lambeth
- St Alban's Academy, Birmingham
- St Chads Catholic and Church of England (VA) High School, Halton
- Venerable Bede (VA) Secondary School, Sunderland
- Greig City Academy, Haringey
- All Saints' Academy, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
- St Hild's (VA) School, Hartlepool
- St Augustine's (VA) High School, Westminster
- Burlington Danes Academy, Hammersmith and Fulham
- St Mark's Church of England Academy, Merton
- Bradford Academy, Bradford
- St Catherine's Academy, Bolton
- The Samworth Enterprise Academy, Leicester
- Magnus CofE Foundation School, Nottingham
- The West Grantham Academy St Hugh's, Lincolnshire
- St Luke's (VC) Science and Sports College, Devon
- The King's (the Cathedral) School, Peterborough
- Holy Trinity (VA) Secondary School, Crawley, West Sussex

- Minster (VA) School, Nottingham
- Bishop Wordsworth's Academy Grammar School, Wiltshire
- Manshead (VA Academy) Upper School, Central Bedford
- The Archbishop's Foundation School, Kent
- Hutton (VA) Grammar School, Lancashire
- The Priory (VA) School, Surrey
- Abbey Grange Church of England Academy, Leeds
- Alban Academy, Bedford
- Ashton (VA) Middle School, Central Bedfordshire
- Windsor Park (VC) Middle School, Staffordshire
- St Mary's (VA) Middle School, Northumberland

Primary schools:

- Sutton Oak (VC) Primary School, St Helens
- Rusthall St Paul's (VA) Primary School, Kent
- St Pauls (VC) Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent
- St Luke's (VA) Primary School, Lambeth
- St Lukes (VC), Bury
- All Saints Featherstone (VA) Junior Infant and Nursery School, Wakefield
- St Stephen's (VA) Primary School, Tameside
- Milnrow Parish (VA) Primary School, Rochdale
- St John's (VC) Primary School, Worcestershire
- Oswaldtwistle St Paul's (VA) Primary School, Lancashire
- St Christopher's School (VC) Cowley, Oxford
- St Clement and St James (VA) Primary, Kensington and Chelsea
- St Mary's Farnham Royal (VA) Primary School, Buckinghamshire
- St Michaels (VA) Primary School, Durham
- Cragside (VC) Primary School, Northumberland
- Harpole (VC) Primary School, Northamptonshire
- Abbots Ripton (VA) Primary School, Cambridgeshire
- Bulphan (VC) Primary School, Thurrock
- Ellingham (VC) Primary School, Norfolk
- All Saints (VC) Infant School, Hessle, East Riding of Yorkshire
- Castlemorton (VC) Primary School, Worcestershire
- Thorverton CE (VC) Primary School, Devon
- High Bickington CE (VC) Primary School, Devon
- Bussage (VA) Primary School, Gloucestershire
- Upton Noble (VC) Primary School, Somerset
- Great Bedwyn VC Primary, Wiltshire
- Antrobus St Mark's (VA) Primary School, Cheshire West and Chester
- Archbishop Runcie (VA) First School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
- St Andrew's (VC) Primary School, Cambridgeshire
- Leesland, St Mary the Virgin, Hampshire



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION





CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



Making a Difference?

A Review of Religious Education in Church of England Schools

Archbishops' Council Education Division, 2014
www.churchofengland.org/education