



The Birmingham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

ADOPTED BY BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL'S CABINET: 8 FEBRUARY 2022

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Users will need to consider the guidance to become fully conversant with the statutory elements.

The Teacher Planning Tools contain guidance for both planning and delivery.

Foreword

On 8th February, 2022, the Cabinet of Birmingham City Council adopted a new, locally agreed syllabus for Religious Education for the city. The syllabus had previously been unanimously agreed by the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus Conference following an extensive consultation and drafting process. That process ensured that the major Faith Communities and a representative nominated by Birmingham Humanists in the city reached agreement with the teachers of Religious Education and the City Council on the content of Religious Education. The 2022 syllabus continues in the same direction as the 2007 syllabus with the learning driven through 24 dispositions. These dispositions represent pluralistic British values and ensure that Birmingham's children have their hearts and minds expanded so that their lives can be led in a city united through interconnected communities.

Significantly, this new syllabus benefits from the support of two Council Cabinet Members and in turn their directorates. Councillor John Cotton, Cabinet member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities (and Chair of Birmingham SACRE) is joined in commending this Syllabus to schools by Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture. This highlights the significant difference encapsulated in the Birmingham approach to Religious Education, an approach which is inclusive across our super-diverse city enabling children of all religions, of recognised non-religious worldviews, and those who do not ascribe a religious identity to themselves, to be understood and respected.

We are most grateful to Dr Simone Whitehouse and Dr Marius Felderhof who together were responsible for the drafting of the Syllabus, to the members of the Conference who generously gave their time and expertise and to the leadership and officers of Birmingham City Council's Directorate for Education and Skills for their support and advice.

Cllr John Cotton

Cllr Jayne Francis

Guy Hordern MBE

*Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion,
Community Safety and Equalities.*

*Cabinet Member for Education,
Skills and Culture.*

*Chair, Birmingham
Agreed Syllabus Conference*

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Teacher Planning Tools

These documents are presented as separate files to ease cross-referencing.

1. Content Overviews.
2. Key Stage 1 and 2 Key Questions
3. Key Stage 3 and 4 Key Questions

Appendices

Appendix 1: Members of the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus Conference. Credits.

Appendix 2: Biographies: The Drafting Secretaries

Appendix 3: Distribution of religious and non-religious teaching across the 24 dispositions

Appendix 4: Influences on the formation of The Dispositions

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Introducing The Birmingham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

Every five years, a group of some sixty people from the locality of Birmingham are appointed by Birmingham City Council to an Agreed Syllabus Conference. Meeting for tens of hours over an extended period, this conference undertakes the sensitive task of reviewing the Religious Education Syllabus for the children and young people of our City. Working towards unanimous agreement, debate ensues between the diverse representatives, the composition of conference being determined by Law.¹

The Agreed Syllabus has to ‘reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.’² The Birmingham approach is designed to be inclusive for all children across our super-diverse city enabling each one to be respected and understood.

The intent of Birmingham’s character-driven approach is to encourage the development of 24 dispositions, or values. The dispositions were created by conference members and have been agreed unanimously. The dispositions derive from a number of sources including the Cardinal Virtues from the Classical tradition, Theological Virtues and Religious Practice. They are equally applicable to, and inclusive of, the religious, those who have an established non-religious world view and those classing themselves as ‘nones’.³ Importantly the dispositions were created by conference members representing all these groups and are therefore ‘religious and non-religious’.

The dispositions both define and promote a flourishing personal, spiritual and moral character. Examples of the dispositions include, ‘Living By Rules’ and ‘Creating Unity And Harmony’. Such dispositions are the starting point for all study in Religious Education, the order and complexity in which they are presented being influenced by child development. A universal perspective is adopted as the starting point for understanding each disposition, gradually exposing pupils to a growing number of Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews as pupils engage with the dispositions. The dispositions encourage pupils to think about, and act upon, a growing understanding of their own faith or viewpoint,

1 Appendix 1 states the composition of the four groups and lists the members of the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus Conference

2 The Education Reform Act, 1996, (Section 375)

3 Pupils from beyond the listed religious traditions and non-religious worldviews may well belong to a further category, one where life is lived independently of the religious traditions and organised non-religious worldviews. ‘Nones’ form an additional and distinctive group. See page 22 for a fuller explanation.

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whilst acknowledging their neighbour's perspective. Lessons focus on discussion and guidance to assist the formation of character-based judgements through the acquisition of knowledge.

During pupils' first few years in school, they are progressively introduced to the dispositions. Subsequently, they re-visit all 24 with increasing depth, enabling a growing sophistication of spiritual and moral character, disposition by disposition, and a growing knowledge of religious traditions and non-religious worldviews. Each time a disposition is encountered, the traditions of one faith or a number of faiths and non-religious worldviews are used to resource the learning. A sacred scripture, religious practice, rite of passage, an institution, piece of literature, art or music can equally trigger learning.

Rather than starting studies from the perspective of a religion or worldview, in Birmingham the dispositions are the starting point, enabling a universal viewpoint to be shared and understood before extending study to points of agreement, and distinctiveness, through four dimensions of learning. These dimensions are; Learning from Experience, Learning about Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews, Learning from Faith and Non-Religious Worldviews and Learning to Discern. The dimensions will assist pupils in developing skills to consider issues, not only from their own perspective but also from an analytical viewpoint.

The syllabus includes the nine religious traditions recorded to have significant representation within Birmingham: Bahá'í, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Rastafari and Sikhism, and established non-religious worldviews such as Atheism, Humanism and Secularism. It responds to the experience of the growing number of pupils whose families identify as 'nones'. The syllabus acknowledges this complete spectrum of beliefs and views and all are accorded equal respect. The use of the syllabus will ensure a Religious Education that complies with the legal requirements. The Teacher Planning Tools comprising content overviews and key questions identify appropriate content from religious traditions and non-religious worldviews.

The Birmingham Agreed Syllabus is particularly appropriate for a twenty-first century education where quality is defined in terms of an education which is cohesive rather than fragmented, developing children holistically to become happy, confident and ambitious. Understanding and living out the dispositions has positive effects on children's wellbeing and mental health. Indeed, there are examples of schools in Birmingham that use the dispositions at their core to ensure positive relationships and define their whole school ethos. The Birmingham Agreed Syllabus is specifically designed to deliver The Birmingham Curriculum Statement⁴, where it is congruent with all eight of

⁴ A Statement for our Children in Birmingham, A Guarantee for Their Future. Birmingham City Council, 2018.

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the curriculum's aims. It promotes every aspect of OfSTED's development of 'Quality of Education'. It integrates with Birmingham City Council's materials to teach Relationships and Health Education and is used as a case study in Birmingham's Community Cohesion Strategy. In contemporary debate about Religious Education, there are recurrent calls for citizens to be religiously literate, that is, to be able to understand and engage effectively with religious and non-religious issues on a local, national and global level. This syllabus recognises that pupils are also part of a community and encourages their contributions to wider society.

A digital version of this syllabus, teacher planning tools and optional week- by-week lesson plans are provided through a dedicated web site, [URL to be confirmed](#). Digital delivery enables tailored routes through the syllabus with differentiated starting points, acknowledging that heritage and home experiences support children and young people's learning.

The members of the Agreed Syllabus Conference trust that the following syllabus will ensure that Religious Education offers the opportunity for the deepest values of human life to be identified, shared and explored. As a diverse, plural and importantly local group, they have worked diligently to represent their religious or non-religious affiliation or viewpoint, always with the best interests of the children and young people of Birmingham at heart.

Navigating the Agreed Syllabus: An Overview

The Agreed Syllabus is in three sections, headlined briefly here and unpacked fully from page 11 onwards.

- **SECTION ONE: Understanding The Birmingham Agreed Syllabus.**

This expands on the elements of the Birmingham approach: the dispositions, the dimensions of learning and the acquisition of religious knowledge and knowledge of non-religious worldviews.

- **SECTION TWO: Planning for Teaching and Learning using The Agreed Syllabus**

The **Teacher Planning Tools** add principles for selecting content. The Teacher Planning Tools comprise:

- **Key Questions** . There are four key questions corresponding to each of the four dimensions of learning for each Key Stage.
- **Content Overviews**. These outline the expected content and how this content develops across the Key Stages. There is one for each of the dispositions.

Data gathered since the launch of the dispositions in 2007 evidences that the great majority of Key Stage One and Key Stage Two teachers prefer to use Birmingham’s optional lesson plans, offered in addition to the Key Questions and Content Overviews. These are written by a group of teacher experts and are readily available on-line. They enable instant delivery, with complete fidelity, through differentiated routes for the heritage make-up of individual schools. Specialist teachers at Key Stage Three and Key Stage Four are more likely to want to plan their own lessons, though there are also lessons available on-line, [URL to be confirmed](#)

Special Needs Education

Birmingham SACRE is committed to supporting all pupils with SEND and their teachers in both mainstream and special school settings. The National Curriculum Inclusion statement requires lessons to be planned to address potential areas of difficulty and remove barriers to pupil achievement.

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Monitoring visits to a sample of Birmingham’s special schools during 2016 and 2017 revealed that teachers and carers in special education find it particularly difficult to deliver the statutory requirements for Religious Education. The monitoring also revealed concerns that some pupils with SEND are more vulnerable to the pressures that can lead to radicalisation. In answer to these concerns, a growing resource is being authored and presented on-line [URL TBA](#) to assist special school teachers.

The first materials prioritise KS3 and KS4 where teachers indicate that there is a greater need for specialist materials for their pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). The principles of differentiation demonstrated in these lesson plans can, however, be applied across the Key Stages. For pupils with MLD, minor revisions are suggested which simplify key questions and lesson activities. For pupils with SLD and PMLD, differentiation enables the awe and wonder in the world around all pupils to shine through simple, multimedia experiences. The shared sense of community and connections with each other and the materials enable all to participate and experience the dispositions’ value and flourish within their own capabilities.

Additionally, the syllabus recognises the particular needs of gifted and talented pupils. Teachers might, for example, extend study around the dimension ‘Learning to Discern’ or extend their approach to compare and contrast more dispositions around a particular area of study.

Elective Home Education

Those home educating their children will find a parents’ guide to teaching The Birmingham Agreed Syllabus at the [URL TBA](#). The home educating section features accessible lesson plans that enable broad and balanced Religious Education to be delivered and assessed at home with very little extra preparation

- **SECTION THREE: Managing Religious Education Using The Birmingham Agreed Syllabus**

For those managing schools, this section provides further advice on aspects of managing Religious Education. Legal requirements vary school by school. Headteachers will also want to consider the advice offered on time allocation for Religious Education for the Key Stages relevant to the pupils in their care. There is guidance on how to assess pupils’ progress in Religious Education.

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SECTION ONE: Understanding The Birmingham Agreed Syllabus

This section expands on the three building blocks of the syllabus from the overview: the dispositions, the dimensions of learning and the acquisition of religious knowledge and knowledge of non-religious worldviews.

The 24 Dispositions

Pupils' learning in this syllabus is guided by encouraging 24 dispositions, values or facets of character. Taken together, the dispositions constitute a person's spiritual and moral character.

The origins of the 24 Dispositions include:

- **The Cardinal Virtues** from the Classical tradition of wisdom, justice, courage and temperance.
- **The so-called Theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.**
- **Religious practice, theological considerations and philosophical practice.** For example, 'Appreciating Beauty' is inspired by the beauty of Holiness in addition to Plato's concept of the One that embraces Truth, Beauty and The Good. 'Living by Rules' is inspired by The Noahide Laws, viewed by scholars throughout the ages as a link between Judaism and Christianity, but agreed by the non-religious to espouse universal norms for ethical conduct- these are the basis of both British and International law. Equally, 'Sharing and Being Generous', particularly within Islam as one of the five pillars, can be found in many other religious and non-religious traditions as a response on a spiritual and human level to supporting others in need, encapsulating fundamental human rights for all. Appendix four gives background information on the origins of many of the dispositions.

The study of the dispositions is centred on continuing reference to our represented religions and non-religious worldviews. Such study evolves over time, respecting a pupil's own stage of development.

Table 1 lists the 24 dispositions and:

- **defines them in *universal terms*.** For example, the disposition ‘Living By Rules’ recognises the need for authority and the needs of shared life as communities within a moral code.
- **explores them in *religious and non-religious terms*.** For example, in the same disposition, religious traditions and non-religious worldviews have codes about how people should live in accordance with laws. Ignoring laws impairs the relationship with the divine or, for those with a non-religious worldview, with other human beings. The exploration is therefore an interpretation of a disposition that those who follow a particular religious tradition or non-religious worldview would recognise, to a greater or lesser degree. The way that the disposition is understood or lived out within a particular religious tradition or non-religious worldview is explored in the Teacher Planning Tools: Content Overviews.
- **encourages *considerations*.** Testing the boundaries of the dispositions takes us in a new direction and helps to define possible areas of critique and discernment.

TABLE 1: THE DISPOSITIONS

Disposition	Universal (How the disposition is understood by the general population, including the non-religious and those who don't identify with the religious or non-religious.)	Religious (How the disposition is understood by people who practice a faith)	Considerations (How the disposition may be evaluated)
1. Being imaginative and exploratory	Developing the ability to look at things differently, together with the capacity to see the promise and potential of the individual and the world about us.	Seeking out where holiness and signs of God may be found. Or considering how to put your faith into practice.	Are there times when it is not right to be imaginative and exploratory? Do people ever think in an unrealistic wishful way?
2. Appreciating beauty	Developing a deep sense of awe and wonder for the world about us, and an awareness of how people respond to it.	Showing awareness that the world is created and responding with respect and reverence. Humans respond to this sense through their own works of creative expression.	To what extent is beauty determined by cultural contexts? What about when the beauty is superficial? Can beauty be determined by individuals themselves?
3. Expressing joy	Being aware of a range of human emotions, particularly happiness, and being able to express joy and share it with others, for example, in music, in language, or via body language.	Finding joy through being aware of blessings and gifts, and knowing how precious each person is to God. Responding to God individually, and in community, through festivals, music, dance etc.	Are there times when it's appropriate to express sadness? Do people ever find pleasure in the misfortune of others?
4. Being thankful	Being conscious that individuals are not self-sufficient but are dependent upon others and the resources of the natural world.	Being aware of God's gifts in creation and expressing gratitude, growing an appreciative heart.	When is mere thankfulness insufficient? E.g. if we are just glad for the good things we have and don't give any thought to those without.

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5. <u>Caring for others, animals and the environment</u>	Being aware of that which is around us, recognising that others, animals and the environment matter, and having the will to do something about them.	Sensing that concern for other people, animals and the planet, beyond oneself is not a matter of self-interest, but a divine duty laid upon people.	When is compassion for others ever inappropriate? Do people ever ignore their primary responsibilities? E.g. neglecting one's own children while supporting an orphan abroad, or saving an animal at the expense of a human being?
6. <u>Sharing and being generous</u>	Considering the needs of others in relation to our own. Desiring for others to benefit from our resources even when these are limited.	It is because God gives freely that people feel inspired to do likewise. (Because God is generous, people follow this loving example).	Is there ever a point when we should stop giving? Eg giving to a drug addict or an alcoholic in a way that worsens the addiction.
7. <u>Responding to suffering</u>	Recognising the pain of self and others, nurturing the will to help, and maintaining one's solidarity with and empathy for others.	As the reality of suffering is part of the human condition many followers recognise God being alongside them as they face it. Many followers feel that God can transform pain and suffering, giving the strength that helps them, and gets them through, so that they learn from the process.	Are there any circumstances when we can take the suffering of others too much to heart? Do people ever respond to the suffering of others in a way that has negative consequences for their own friends and family? Is it possible to embrace suffering for a perceived greater good, but one which is not accepted by wider society?
8. <u>Being merciful and forgiving</u>	Acknowledging that our making mistakes is a part of human life, and allowing for the restoration of relationships, even though it may be costly.	The desire for reconciliation is often accompanied by an awareness of powerlessness to bring it about. Reconciliation needs divine initiative and mercy, and a human response of mercy and forgiveness of others.	Is there any offence that we should not forgive? Who has the right to forgive? Are there occasions when being merciful could lead to injustice not being challenged? Does the promise of eternal forgiveness ever encourage bad behaviour?

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9. <u>Being fair and just</u>	Recognising that human beings deserve to be treated equally, and being prepared to take action where this is not the case.	Getting on with each other is based on divine notions of fairness and justice.	What do we do if we see that being 'fair and just' comes into conflict with what our tradition says? Do we ever demand what is owed to us, in a strict interpretation of equality and justice, while ignoring all negative consequences for others? Does fairness and justice ever require that some, who have been historically disadvantaged, are subject to positive discrimination? Should we recognise that, as society changes, what we think of as fairness and justice needs to be constantly reviewed?
10. <u>Living by rules</u>	Recognising authority and the needs of shared life.	Human beings were created to live in accordance with divine rules as received by particular faith communities. Religious traditions have codes about how people should live in obedience to these divine laws. Ignoring these laws is seen as disobedience and seen to impair the relationship with the divine.	Should we follow the rules of a community even if they can be shown to be wrong? What about times when the claims of justice are stronger than the rules of the tradition? When do laws challenge religious people? Do people ever apply laws regardless of the consequences? Is it possible for people to follow letter the of the law while ignoring the spirit of the law? How can our conscience be informed by teachings in sacred texts?
11. <u>Being accountable and living with integrity</u>	Being willing to be answerable to oneself and others for one's actions. Having integrity requires that one would always act in such a responsible way even if one would not be held publicly to account.	To God, everything is transparent and no motives are hidden. Some followers anticipate a future judgment for their actions, which influences their behaviour in the present.	Can there be times when concern for our own integrity is greater than our compassion? Do people ever prioritise their own integrity at the expense of that of others? Can integrity be affected by fear of punishment, rather than pleasing God?

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12. <u>Being temperate, self-disciplined and seeking contentment</u>	Avoiding excess, exercising self-control, and caring for self and others can enable one to be content with what one has, rather than striving for more. Learning to be responsible for ourselves – and the importance of holding ourselves in check even in difficult situations.	Embracing one's circumstances in the light of confidence and trust in God, and recognising the need for personal change. This can be a willingness to see that one's situation is not simply 'a cup half full', but 'a cup that runs over'.	Are there times when we are too trusting in our own sufficiency and reject the generosity of others, thus giving up on an opportunity for cultivating inclusion and belonging? Is there a danger that acceptance of circumstances leads to injustices being perpetuated? Without striving against difficult circumstances, would we have social progress? Are there times when passion and action are called for?
13. <u>Being modest and listening to others</u>	Recognising our own dignity, and valuing the worth and dignity of others, to judge how much of a contribution to make, while avoiding false humility on the one hand, and boastfulness on the other.	By developing attentiveness, putting aside one's own wishes, and by seeking to live in a way that pleases God, it is possible to gain a sense of one's true worth, and to have proper relationships with others. It is also recognising that God may speak through anyone who listens, whoever they may be.	When is it not right to be modest and listen to others? E.g. in seeking to be modest, it is possible to become overly submissive to people who are arguing aggressively, or asserting a point of view that is intolerant of your beliefs or is extremist, racist, sexist or homophobic etc. Is everyone to be modest, or just some groups, e.g. women, or children? Who should be encouraged <u>not</u> to be modest? Can the interpretation of some religious teachings and scriptures encourage the domination of a few over many.
14. <u>Creating inclusion, identity and belonging</u>	Learning to appreciate others as individuals, then exploring similarities and differences, enables true respect and understanding between different groups. Deliberately excluding others prevents each from developing relationships through which they can thrive.	The worship of God is both a personal and a communal activity. Many religious people believe that the whole of creation, human beings and the natural world are interconnected, interrelated and interdependent and has its origins in God's plan.	Are there times when we give priority to those inside our group, at the expense of those outside? Are we ever guilty of treating as 'outsiders' those who do not belong in our group? Do we ever favour people within our own religion, nation or area at the expense of others?

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15. <u>Creating unity and harmony</u>	Desiring good relationships and being able to restore broken relationships, as well as bridge-building and peace-making in order to achieve more by being together.	The importance of good relationships with God and others flows from the belief that all people are created by God. They can be achieved by becoming aware of the divine presence in oneself, or even aligning oneself with the divine attributes within, as well as recognising God in others.	Are some relationships beyond repair? Is recognising this sometimes an appropriate option? Do we seek peace at the expense of addressing genuine concerns and grievances of individuals? At what cost? Who suffers? Can we develop unity while still valuing difference? Can we make unity more important than individuality?
16. <u>Participating and being willing to lead</u>	Awareness of what one can contribute to shared life, together with a willingness to be proactive in it.	Standing before God, as equally-created beings, implies a relationship and responsibility for the well-being of all.	Can some people be too willing to lead and participate at the expense of those who are more modest and humble? Does the value of leadership and participation depend upon the context? Are there some contexts where it is not honourable, e.g. within extremist and fundamentalist groups and gangs?
17. <u>Remembering roots</u>	Recognising how the past can shape the present and the future, it is a reminder of human duties, obligations and opportunities.	People of religious tradition are shaped by the stories and practices of their community, drawing from a past that helps shape life in the present and the future.	When should living in the present take priority over remembering the past? Are our memories ever unhelpfully selective when thinking about the past and making choices about the future?
18. <u>Being loyal and steadfast</u>	Always being willing to offer people support in good times and bad, showing responsibility, integrity and care.	Choosing to follow God is trusting that God's ways are right. This faith should be held onto despite any distractions, problems or difficulties one may face, including opposition from others. This is a response to God's enduring loyalty to us.	What happens when loyalty doesn't appear to be rewarded? When does loyalty to another, or to a tradition, have to take a back seat to justice? When you do something that is wrong, is it acceptable to give the excuse that you were following orders?

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19. <u>Being hopeful and visionary</u>	Being hopeful, and having a vision of the future should be based on some realistic expectation, rather than upon luck or chance.	Hope is based on the promise offered by God and God's power to transform the world. It contrasts sharply with the mood of despair.	When is hope misplaced? Do people ever embrace hope to escape from reality?
20. <u>Being courageous and confident</u>	Acting selflessly with a commitment to the good, and the well-being of others. Acting in this way is not the same as foolishness, or cowardice.	It is a courage based upon confidence in God, believing that doing the right thing sometimes matters more than our reputation and personal welfare but trusting in the safety of being in God's hands, no matter what may happen.	Are there ever times when being self-reflective and critical is wiser than being courageous and confident?
21. <u>Being curious and valuing knowledge</u>	Valuing knowledge for its own sake. Humans foster enquiry into new insights.	Believing in a good creation, the pursuit of knowledge and the fostering of curiosity together have the opportunity to draw us deeper into the life of God.	Can one be so focused on studying, working, on one's own career that one does not have time or attention for the needs of others?
22. <u>Being open, honest and truthful</u>	Recognising the inherent value of others as separate individuals who should not be manipulated or exploited. Acknowledging that desiring truth and the well-being of others requires openness and integrity.	Being responsible to God, religious people are called to an ethic of truthfulness and honesty as a model for how human beings are intended to relate to each other, and to God.	Are there ever times when concern for truthfulness is in conflict with compassion? Do people ever 'tell the truth' to another in a way that is deliberately hurtful?
23. <u>Being reflective and self-critical</u>	Being clear-sighted about our own strengths and weaknesses, right and wrong actions.	To live before God is to be aware of our strengths and weaknesses, and to desire to change for the better.	Are there times when being self-critical stops us from participating and being willing to lead? Can self-criticism undermine people's self-confidence resulting in inactivity?

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Disposition	Universal (How the disposition is understood by the general population, including the non-religious and those who don't identify with the religious or non-religious.)	Religious (How the disposition is understood by people who practice a faith)	Considerations (How the disposition may be evaluated)
<p>24. <u>Being attentive to the sacred, as well as the precious</u></p>	<p>In the midst of everyday life, having the ability to observe and focus on things that really matter, which one would consider sacred or precious. This is helped by making time for reflection and by learning to be mindful, i.e. clearly aware of the present moment without being clouded by a distracted or preoccupied mind.</p>	<p>Being attentive to the spiritual part of one's being, and living in a way that constantly recognises God's presence in the world. This awareness can be nurtured day by day, through prayer and silent meditation, through reading, singing or listening to sacred teachings, as well as through the experience of serving others selflessly and engaging in creative activity.</p>	<p>Can this lead to a misunderstanding? When should silence be ended and speaking begin again? Do people ever concentrate too much on the sacred and not enough on taking responsibility for the care of others?</p>

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The Dimensions of Learning

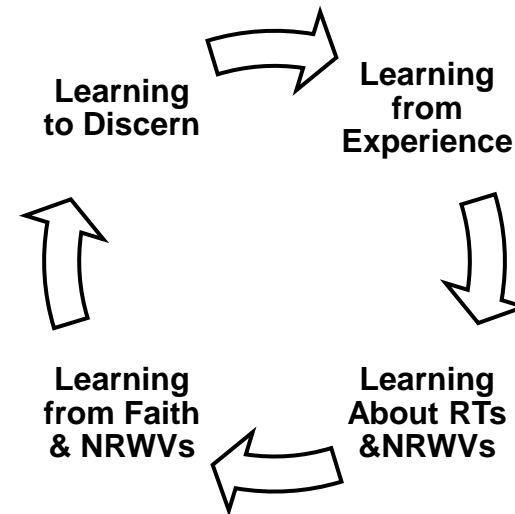
This syllabus uses a learning model which breaks the dispositions into four tangible, interconnected aspects. They are:

- **Learning from Experience**
- **Learning about RTs and NRWVs***
- **Learning from Faith and NRWVs***
- **Learning to Discern.**

Key:

*RTs- Religious Traditions

*NRWVs- Non-Religious Worldviews.



In secondary school, Learning about Religious Traditions and Non- Religious Worldviews and Learning to Discern will take greater priority. This enables there to be greater emphasis on the knowledge and skills needed in preparation for those studying an examination specification. Each dimension will be explored at an appropriate level for every phase of a pupil's education.

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1. Learning from Experience

Effective Religious Education takes into account pupils' experiences and backgrounds. Pupils come to Religious Education with a variety of divergent experiences including: those from religious backgrounds, those with a background in organised non-religious worldviews, and those not identifying with either the religious or non-religious, the 'nones'. Each disposition is initially encountered by discovering what pupils know about the concept from their experiences. This way of exploring the disposition is particularly inclusive as the full range of perspectives represented in the classroom can be harnessed. This dimension addresses the concern that pupils from a background not identifying with the religious or non-religious, a 'none', may find it difficult to access religious content or established non-religious worldview content since they may not perceive the relevance of it to their own lives. Some may have a personal ideology to which they adhere and on which they will want to reflect, but all will have relevant experiences against which to examine their thinking. Learning from Experience is therefore a powerful and universal foundation from which to move on to explore the other dimensions of the disposition.

This dimension also enables teachers to make effective links between the disposition and the framework of Birmingham City Council's Curriculum Statement. It enables teachers to link Religious Education to other congruent curriculum areas such as Relationships and Health Education; Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education, and widespread curriculum interventions in Birmingham, such as UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools' Award.

2. Learning about Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews

In Birmingham, Religious Education is open, inclusive and represents diverse convictions in a fair and honest manner that is accessible to all. As pupils approach successive Key Stages, they will have the opportunity to learn about a growing range of different religious traditions and non-religious worldviews, the balance and selection recognising that Christianity is the predominant faith in the country.

Pupils will acquire knowledge of religious traditions and non-religious worldviews enabling an understanding of their own faith or established view and those of others. Additionally, this knowledge will enable pupils to understand others around them as they encounter diverse

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communities, festivals and places of worship that are part of the everyday life of this multifaith city. Such understanding feeds positively into Birmingham’s Community Cohesion Strategy. Crucially, ‘such knowledge enables pupils to identify, challenge and resist radical views.’⁵

Pupils’ appreciation of the dispositions is enriched through explicit reference to religious and non-religious traditions. In this way, pupils will encounter a variety of narratives, rituals, events and sacred texts, while gaining an understanding of why people act according to their beliefs and views in order to live well.

Legally, ‘Every agreed syllabus shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain’⁶ and that Religious Education must accord equal respect to religious traditions and non-religious worldviews.⁷ The syllabus takes into consideration pupils who are members of families who have no religion. Only some of these families belong to organised non-religious worldviews, for example Humanists, but many do not hold an established religious or non-religious view, perhaps holding spiritual but not religious views. Termed ‘Nones’ by some sociologists of religion, they may turn to faith at critical times or acknowledge awe and wonder of an aspect of life. In the same vein, people of faith may question, and indeed may abandon their faith when faced with adversity. The syllabus and its resources acknowledge the complete spectrum of pupils in the classroom.

Learning about the Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews is more fully described in a later section, starting on page 25.

3. Learning from Faith and Non-Religious Worldviews

The life-enhancing expression of the disposition, is then explored in age-appropriate ways. In doing so, pupils will be supported as they reflect on their own practice in the light of their experiences so that they can learn to live well. In Religious Education character is developed through a growing acquisition of religious knowledge and knowledge of non-religious worldviews. To develop as a whole person means to grow intellectually, emotionally and behaviourally; sometimes referred to as developing cognitively, affectively and conatively.

⁵ Birmingham Curriculum Statement https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/452/birmingham_curriculum_statement (Accessed October 2021)

⁶ Education Act 1996, (Section 375).

⁷ R (Fox) v Secretary of State for Education (2015)

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Following the Birmingham approach to Religious Education, pupils will develop:

Intellectually (or cognitively):

- Through developing knowledge and understanding of religious traditions and non-religious worldviews;
- by evaluating and reflecting on these in the light of their own experiences;
- by developing informed judgment.

Emotionally (or affectively):

- through having their feelings deepened;
- by acknowledging, and responding to, shared human experiences, such as joy, grief, thankfulness, care;
- by expressing any personal reflection, which could include the spiritual or religious in words, or through other media.

Behaviourally (or conatively):

- through being encouraged to act responsibly;
- by cultivating widely recognised values and virtues such as honesty and integrity;
- by being motivated to act upon their new-found understanding.

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4. Learning to Discern

In learning to critically interpret and evaluate the content that is presented, pupils will grow in their ability to discern. Pupils will be encouraged and challenged to reflect and evaluate, to think critically about what they have learned. This will involve reflective and interpretative skills, as well as the ability for pupils to examine themselves in the light of the information encountered. This embeds the notion of dimension three, *learning from faith and Non-Religious Worldviews*. Pupils will have the opportunity to analyse a variety of narratives, rituals, events and sources of authority. In doing so, pupils will begin to understand that the interpretation of these sources can be used both legitimately, or inaccurately, to support a particular point of view. They will learn how individual aspects may conflict with each other. Pupils will also acknowledge that plurality exists in religious traditions and non-religious worldviews, which leads to divergence in practice.

Pupils will grow in their ability to discern how and why religious views, non-religious views and the views of the 'nones' vary and why there is variance within traditions. Pupils will also explore how religious interpretations, non-religious interpretations and the outlook of 'nones' have been challenged to adapt and change over time in order to respond to contemporary concerns. Pupils will be given the opportunity to reflect on the negative and positive portrayal of religious traditions and non-religious worldviews in the media and the impact of each of these. Through these opportunities to critically evaluate, pupils' religious literacy will be developed in making sense of, and being able to reflect on, differing forms of religious and non-religious practice within the city in which they live and beyond.

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Learning about the Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews

In this section, the second dimension of learning is explored through learning about:

Religious Traditions

The nine religious traditions identified as being those with the greatest number of adherents in Birmingham at the last census available at the time of writing are represented in the syllabus. They are in alphabetical order:

- Bahá'í
- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Jainism
- Judaism
- Rastafari
- Sikhism.

Non-Religious Worldviews

The syllabus also exemplifies the dispositions through reference to a range of established non-religious worldviews. Regularly used examples, alphabetically listed, include:

- Agnosticism
- Atheism
- Humanism
- Secularism.

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'Nones'

Pupils from beyond religious traditions and non-religious worldviews may well belong to a further category, one where life is lived independently of the religious traditions and organised non-religious worldviews. Termed 'Nones' by some sociologists of religion, they form an additional and distinctive group.

For those unfamiliar with the identified religious traditions, non-religious worldviews and 'Nones' they are very briefly, and by no means exhaustively, defined as follows.

Bahá'í

The Bahá'í (pronounced ba-high) Faith was founded by Bahá'u'lláh in the 19th century in Iran. Bahá'u'lláh teaches that God has been revealed and will continue to reveal His message through a succession of Messengers and Prophets. The principles of the Bahá'í faith are unity, peace and advancement. Bahá'ís pray daily and gather regularly, generally in homes rather than a place of worship, without a leadership figure. Bahá'u'lláh's teachings call upon Bahá'ís to work together in service to better their communities and society. Only through education, Bahá'ís believe, can each individual achieve their potential. This education, however, must be both intellectual and spiritual.

Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama lived nearly 2,500 years ago in India. He became Buddha, which means 'enlightened one'. Buddhists follow the Buddha's teachings with the aim of avoiding the recurrence of suffering in order to gain enlightenment. There are many branches of Buddhism, however meditation is important to all in order to replace negative thoughts of anger or hatred with positive ones of loving kindness and peace. Ritual devotion takes place at home or in a temple; a vihara. Buddhists call the teachings of the Buddha 'dharma', which means 'truth'.

Christianity

Christianity is focussed on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the Middle East over 2,000 years ago. The essence of Jesus' teachings is to love God and love your neighbour. In the New Testament part of the Bible Jesus' life and teachings are recounted. Christians believe Jesus to be the Son of God. Christians refer to God as three in one: Father, Son and Spirit. Christians believe that through the death and resurrection of Jesus their sins are forgiven and the relationship between God and humanity is restored. Many Christians worship in churches led by priests or ministers. Christians model themselves on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Hinduism

Hinduism is over 4,000 years old. It is not dependent on a single founder but originated in India. It is made up of a variety of beliefs and practices with four basic agreed principles: belief in one God (Brahman or supreme soul) which can manifest in many divine forms; the presence of an eternal self or Atman (loosely translated as soul); a belief in the law of Karma (being ultimately responsible for one's own actions) and, Dharma (right or selfless actions) which should initiate action and behaviour. Hindu worship (puja) takes place at home or at a mandir. Daily life is guided by holy scriptures including the Bhagavad Gita.

Islam

Muslim belief is centred on one God, Allah, in accordance with His 99 names (attributes) as revealed in the Qur'an, the Muslim holy book. Allah is the Arabic for God, Who has no child, parents or partner of any kind. His will is communicated through prophets and messengers beginning with Adam continuing through Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, before reaching its completion and perfection through Muhammad in seventh century Arabia. Muslims look to the character of Prophet Muhammad, may peace and blessings be upon him, when thinking about virtues and dispositions. It is essential for Muslims to believe in Allah, His angels, books, messengers, life after death, the day of judgement and divine decree. The Five Pillars summarise how Muslims should live well through declaring faith in the Oneness of Allah and Prophet Muhammad being His messenger (Shahadah); offering five daily prayers (Salah) alone or in groups, often at a mosque; fasting during the month of Ramadan (Sawm), also a time to reflect and strengthen one's relationship with Allah and the community; giving of charity (Zakah) to encourage justice and care for the community; and going for pilgrimage to Makkah (Hajj), a once in a life time duty for able bodied Muslims if they can afford it, to celebrate that human dignity, respect and equity amongst human beings, is the essence of Islam. Muslims use their scripture, the Qur'an, and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (Hadiths) to guide their daily lives.

Jainism

Jainism is an ancient religion from India with followers called Jains. Jains believe there is a path to spiritual purity and enlightenment through 'ahimsa', non-violence and reverence to all living creatures. This path is set out by previous human beings called Jinas or the Tirthankars, people who have conquered their inner enemies such as pride or anger. Mahavira is regarded as the founder, his teachings written in the Agamas. There are no religious leaders, though monks and nuns are revered for their superior abstention including celibacy. There are three guiding principles (the jewels): right belief, right knowledge and right conduct. Some Jains meet and pray in temples where there are likenesses of the Jinas.

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Judaism

Judaism began around 4,000 years ago when The Prophet Abraham received a revelation from God. Jews believe in one God with whom they have a special relationship called a covenant. The holy book, the Tanakh, is a collection of texts of which the first five, The Torah, are most important. Additionally, the Talmud gives extra detail on the original written law. A system of commandments, also known as the seven Noahide Laws, was given to all humanity. Compliance with these codes fulfils the Divine Will and affords humanity the opportunity to bond with God through the law. Jews worship in synagogues with a Rabbi (Hebrew for teacher) as the spiritual leader.

'Nones'

'Nones' do not actively identify with, nor live their lives dependent on, any particular religious tradition or non-religious worldview. They may, or may not, have a personal ideology to which they adhere. 'Nones' are identifiable by making up their own minds, issue by issue, without regard of a framework either offered by a religion or non-religion. They often have no constructed opposition to institutional religion, nor of established non-religious worldviews, they more simply do not attach importance to such matters. Pupils in this category may well have a defined ethical stance and may also class themselves as 'spiritual'. Whilst not belonging to a faith community, 'Nones' may turn to faith at critical times. In the same vein, people of faith may question, and indeed may abandon their faith when faced with adversity. The syllabus and its resources acknowledge this spectrum of belief and non-belief over time. The 'Nones' therefore form an additional and distinctive group.

'Learning from Experience' will be a powerful dimension for 'Nones' to examine their thinking using the knowledge base of the other dimensions to gauge their thinking.

Non-Religious Worldviews

Those who follow a non-religious worldview reject the idea of, or belief in, a supernatural being such as God. They rely on humanity's discoveries to answer big questions such as the origins of life. Moral and ethical decision-making is actively based on reason, empathy and compassion for others, which offer responses to existential questions. Non-religious celebrants may lead followers at gatherings to celebrate a new life at a naming ceremony, or by providing focus at a funeral. With no belief in an afterlife, there is a focus on seeking fulfilment in this life. Such happiness is sought ethically, with a respect for the environment and every person's rights. Many who live by the most popular non-religious worldviews feel awe and wonder from the natural and man-made, secular and sacred, although would not see this as an opportunity

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to venerate a creator. Although Humanism is a well-established non-religious worldview, Humanists do not have an agreed, shared definition of what Humanism is, as each humanist tries to 'think for [them]selves, act for everyone'.⁸

However, roughly speaking, the word humanist has come to mean someone who:

- trusts to the scientific method when it comes to understanding how the universe works and rejects the idea of the supernatural (and is therefore an atheist or agnostic)
- makes their ethical decisions based on reason, empathy, and a concern for human beings and other sentient animals
- believes that, in the absence of an afterlife and any discernible purpose to the universe, human beings can act to give their own lives meaning by seeking happiness in this life and helping others to do the same.

Humanists International add: 'Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance that affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. Humanism stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethics based on human and other natural values in a spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. Humanism is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality.' (The Minimum Statement on Humanism, Humanists International).⁹

Rastafari

Rastafari, also known as Rastafarianism, has followers known as Rastafarians or Rastas. It is a recent religious movement that accepts Haile Selassie I, Ethiopian King (1930-74), as having truly embodied the divine. Rastafari believe Haile Selassie will deliver believers to the promised land, Ethiopia. Rastas adhere to many of the Jewish and Christian beliefs. Although there are no clearly set doctrines or centralised authority as this is seen as being in resistance to exploitation, slavery and poverty of an oppressive culture. Features of Rastafari life include: reggae music, dreadlocks (spiritual commitment of not cutting one's hair), distinctive language to express a relationship with God ('I and I') and the use of colours (red, black, gold and green). Rastafari worship includes chanting, drumming and meditating to reach a state of heightened spirituality.

Sikhism

Sikhism was founded in India by Guru Nanak, born 1469. Sikhs believe in one God, Waheguru (wonderful teacher) who gives life to everything. Beginning with Guru Nanak, ten human gurus demonstrated the Sikh teachings and lessons of the importance of listening, practice,

⁸ Humanists UK (2021) Defining Humanism. Available at: <https://humanists.uk/humanism/>

⁹ Humanists UK (2021) Defining Humanism. Available at: <https://humanists.uk/humanism/>

commitment and selfless service (sewa). The word 'Sikh' means disciple or one who learns from the Guru or divine teacher. Sikh disciples take Amrit, or the initiation, which commits them as practitioners to their faith. In doing so they pledge to wear the five articles of their faith as a constant reminder of the relationship between Sikh, Guru and God. The Sikh scripture is the Guru Granth Sahib containing songs, prayers and hymns from Gurus. The Guru Granth Sahib is considered the eleventh Guru and is treated as a living person. Worship takes place in a Gurudwara, such places offering food, shelter and company to all people.

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SECTION TWO: Planning For Teaching and Learning Using the Agreed Syllabus: Primary and Secondary

This section explains the set of teacher planning tools that bring together the Dispositions, Dimensions of Learning and Religious and Non-Religious Worldview content. As you plan, you will need to become fully conversant with the guidance set out in the **Teacher Planning Tools files. They are:**

For All Schools: Content Overviews
Primary: Key Questions for Key Stage One and Key Stage Two
Secondary: Key Questions for Key Stage Three and Key Stage Four

Support for Primary Schools

Data gathered since the launch of the dispositions in 2007 evidences that the great majority of Key Stage One and Key Stage Two teachers prefer to use Birmingham’s readily available week by week lesson plans. These are available on-line. [URL to be confirmed](#). Films and photography vibrantly visualise the dispositions in action in Birmingham. The lesson plans enable instant delivery, with complete fidelity. Differentiated routes are available to suit different schools.

For those who wish to plan their own lessons, the Teacher Planning Tools will ensure that schools comply with UK legislation. The planning selection overall must give due attention to Christian traditions and principal religions, whilst giving equal respect to Non-Religious Worldviews (as explored in R. Fox, 2015).¹⁰

In the readily available primary lessons, the dispositions are introduced in a spiral curriculum approach, with each disposition featuring once at Key Stage 1, a second time at Key Stage 2a (Years 3 and 4) and a third time at Key Stage 2b (Years 5 and 6). Each disposition has a series of mostly three lessons, the first of which is usually ‘universal’ in its focus. This addresses the learning dimension *Learning from Experience* where teachers enable pupils to draw from their

¹⁰ R. Fox vs Secretary of State for Education, 2015

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own experience and their family background (whether religious, non-religious or none) to understand what the disposition means to them in a 'universal', wider sense.

At Key Stage 1 pupils are intentionally introduced gradually to a small number of Religious Traditions and a more generic appreciation of Non-Religious Worldviews. Almost always, lessons with a 'universal' focus will acknowledge, or even centre upon, a non-religious perspective of the subject matter, although not necessarily one that can be attributed to one specific worldview or philosophy. Primary lessons introduce different Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews, through the learning dimension *Learning about Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews*. Whilst *Learning from Faith and Non-Religious Worldviews* is also an important at Key Stage One and Two, *Learning to Discern* is only introduced in an age-appropriate manner, at each phase.

For those in Key Stage One and Key Stage Two using the readily available lesson plans, the lessons are available in three routes:

- Route 1 used where most pupils in the school would be most familiar with Christian traditions*.
- Route 2 used where most of the pupils in school would be most familiar with Muslim traditions.
- Route 3 used where there are significant numbers of pupils in school from two or more religious traditions. No one religious tradition is predominant.

*To comply with current UK Law, in schools where a large number of pupils are from families with non-religious worldviews or are 'nones', schools are advised to choose Route 1 as this route draws on the heritage of the UK and Birmingham.

Support for Secondary Schools

Religious Education at Key Stage Three

In Key Stages One and Two the dimensions *Learning about Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews* and *Learning from Faith and Non-Religious Worldviews* predominate as they support a foundation understanding of the dispositions. Each disposition will have been encountered three times during primary education. For secondary pupils, their deepening understanding of the dispositions should be nurtured. The emerging dimension *Learning to Discern* will assist pupils to frame their own opinions and develop critical, or critically aware, and reflective responses to religious and non-religious material that they may come across from sources beyond school.

Religious Studies at Key Stage Four and Key Stage Five

At Key Stage 4 or 5 students opting for a nationally accredited course in **Religious Studies** do not also have to be taught **Religious Education** in accordance with an Agreed Syllabus. However, the Agreed Syllabus' on-line lessons planned for use with Key Stage 3 or 4 can be adapted when following a direct GCSE specification (many schools do this in Year 9 – Key Stage 3).

Conversely, the remaining students at Key Stage 4 or 5 who do not opt for further study in **Religious Studies** at GCSE or at A level should be taught **Religious Education, potentially following The Agreed Syllabus**, in accordance with their school type (see Table 5).

How To Plan: All Schools

Users will need to become conversant with the Teacher Planning Tools:

- Key question documents. These outline four key questions corresponding to each of the four Dimensions of Learning for each Key Stage.
- Content Overviews. These outline the expected content and how this content develops across the Key Stages.

In addition, teachers should also take account of:

- the family background of all pupils in the classroom¹¹
- the opportunity to build community cohesion and stability
- a range of different religious traditions and non-religious worldviews

¹¹ The curriculum selection overall should give due attention to Christian traditions and meet the statutory duty to reflect 'the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (Education Act, 1996, Section 375)

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- the need to challenge and engage pupils, meeting their learning requirements relative to their ages, aptitudes, experience and special needs, including the gifted and talented
- pupil interest and choice
- providing opportunities for pupils' perspectives to be aired and valued.

Though the syllabus must reflect 'the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (Education Act, 1996, Section 375), planning may subtly respond to the heritage of the predominant background of the pupils in a school. For example, in a setting where pupils are predominantly from Muslim families, a teacher might decide to use familiar examples from the Qur'an as the starting point from which to comprehend the principle of any given disposition, while in a setting where pupils would be most familiar with the Christian tradition a teacher would use the Bible in the same way. Both sets of pupils would be exposed to the other's viewpoint as a teaching sequence develops, and each may be exposed to one or more further viewpoints depending on the age of the pupil. (Detailed in the Teacher Planning Tools).

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Planning Layers

The first layer of planning starts with the dispositions

After choosing an appropriate disposition as a starting point, planning will move to the following layers.

The second layer of planning uses the four Dimensions of Learning and Key Questions.

The Dimensions of Learning frame a pupil's encounter with the dispositions. They are: Learning from Experience, Learning about Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews, Learning from Faith and Non-Religious Worldviews and Learning to Discern.

To support this second layer of planning, key questions (Teacher Planning Tools) have been designed to ensure that the learning dimensions are explored in every disposition at each phase of education. The spiral nature of the planned curriculum ensures that pupils encounter each disposition, at increasing depth, in each key stage. Pupils develop their appreciation and understanding of the disposition, in age-appropriate ways, each time they meet it. Thus, progression is assured. The Key Questions should form a reference point during planning. Sample pages are reproduced in Table 2A, primary and 2B secondary. The colour code references the four dimensions of learning.

TABLE 2A

Disposition	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
4. Being Thankful	<p>When do we say 'thank you'?</p> <p>What 'thank you' prayers and reflections are used in T*?</p> <p>When and why do I say 'thank you'?</p> <p>Is just saying 'thank you' always enough?</p>	<p>Can people be self-sufficient?</p> <p>2a When and why do followers say 'thank you'?</p> <p>2b What different ways do followers have of saying 'thank you'?</p> <p>When and why and for what do I say 'thank you'?</p> <p>When is mere 'thankfulness' insufficient?</p>
5. Caring for Others, Animals and the Environment	<p>Who or what do we care for?</p> <p>How do followers show that they care?</p> <p>What would it be like if no one cared for me or my world?</p> <p>Is there a time when I feel I should not show concern?</p>	<p>Why is it important to show concern for all that is around us?</p> <p>2a How does God want followers to care for others? How do those with Non-Religious Worldviews care for others?</p> <p>2b How does God want followers to care for the world? How do those with Non-Religious Worldviews care for the world?</p> <p>2a Is there a time when I feel I should not show concern?</p> <p>2b. Do I think that the family unit is an important part of society?</p> <p>2a Is there a time when I feel I should not show concern?</p> <p>2b Do I think that the family unit is an important part of society?</p>
6. Sharing and Being Generous	<p>Have we ever given or received presents?</p> <p>Why do followers give presents on special occasions?</p> <p>Do I like to give or receive presents? Am I rich enough to share?</p> <p>Is there ever a point when I should stop giving?</p>	<p>Is it ever right to wish for others what one wishes for oneself?</p> <p>2a What do followers of T* teach about sharing with others?</p> <p>2b How do followers of T*& share/show generosity?</p> <p>2a Do I like to give or receive presents?</p> <p>2b Am I hospitable? Do I ever volunteer?</p> <p>2a Is planned and directed giving a good thing? Or not?</p> <p>2b Do our motives for giving or serving make any difference to the giving or service?</p>
	<p>Have we ever been hurt or in pain?</p>	<p>Can we recognise when others are hurt or in pain?</p>

Learning from Experience: a question stimulating the general understanding of the disposition from pupils' experiences.

Learning about Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews: a question to prompt the acquiring of knowledge and understanding of the faiths and non-religious perspectives, where appropriate to the disposition.

Learning from Faith and Non-Religious Worldviews: a question opening-up the opportunity to respond to the religious and non-religious ideas explored in their widest sense.

Learning to Discern: a question enabling a critical (or critically aware) and reflective response to religious and non-religious traditions presented.

***T DEFINITION: In the Key Questions where the abbreviation T is used, this refers to The Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews.**

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TABLE 2B

Disposition	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
11. Being Accountable and Living with Integrity	<p>What does it mean to live with integrity? Why do T* think integrity is important? How do they show this? Why is integrity a characteristic that I should develop? Who judges my integrity? Do these people matter?</p>	<p>Can we think of any examples where people are held to account for their actions? Who do the followers of T* believe they are accountable to? Why? Who should I be accountable to? How do I show that I take this? Should we be accountable because it is a positive thing rather than just because we fear the consequences of not being so?</p>
12. Being temperate, self-disciplined and seeking contentment	<p>When do we need to show self-discipline? Is it always easy? How do followers of T* develop self-discipline and contentment? What strategies can I learn from T* that will help me to be more self-disciplined and content? Should I always be content in my situation – are there times when I have to fight for change?</p>	<p>Where are we temperate (avoiding excess) in our own lives? How do followers of T* show temperance? When do I need to show temperance in my own life? Should I always be temperate – are there times when I should not show self-restraint?</p>
13 Being Modest and Listening to Others	<p>Is it important that we listen to the views of other people? What is the value of dialogue between T*? What can I learn from the views of T*? When do I need to speak out and challenge views I consider to be wrong?</p>	<p>Can we think of any examples of people who are modest? What do T* teach about the need for modesty? How can modesty help to improve my relationships with others? Are there times when it is appropriate to be modest? Should I feel empowered to talk about my achievements?</p>
	<p>How do people show that they belong to different groups or organisations?</p>	<p>How does society show that inclusion is important?</p>

Learning from Experience: a question stimulating the general understanding of the disposition from pupils' experiences.

Learning about Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews: a question to prompt the acquiring of knowledge and understanding of the faiths and non-religious perspectives, where appropriate to the disposition.

Learning from Faith and Non-Religious Worldviews: a question opening-up the opportunity to respond to the religious and non-religious ideas explored in their widest sense.

Learning to Discern: a question enabling a critical (or critically aware) and reflective response to religious and non-religious traditions presented.

*** T DEFINITION: In the Key Questions where the abbreviation T is used, this refers to The Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews**

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The third layer of planning uses the Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews, identified in the Content Overviews.

When planning, you should refer to religious traditions and non-religious worldviews supported by this syllabus and create lesson content which, though led by the disposition and dimensions of learning, builds a body of knowledge.

As an example, **Table 3** contains a ‘content overview’ for the disposition ‘Living by Rules’, mapping the overall educational intent and the four dimensions of learning for each of the four disposition cycles (KS1, KS2a, KS2b, KS3/4). The table also shows how ‘Learning about Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews’ builds into an expanding body of knowledge.

Using the readily available lessons that support the syllabus, or planning in a similar vein using the Teacher Planning Tools, will ensure that Religious Education in your school fulfils the legislative requirements to be, in the main, Christian, accord equal respect to religious traditions and non-religious world-views and to be inclusive, broad and balanced.

TABLE 3: LIVING BY RULES

By the end of Key Stage/Year Group	KS1	KS2 a	KS2 b	KS3/4
Summary Statement of Intent	Rules express and facilitate relationship both with the rule-giver and with society	All rules do not always apply to everyone	Some rules originating in religious traditions underpin the rules of law whilst others contradict and conflict with it	Rules, whether statutory or religious affect every aspect of our lives. The extent to which we keep the rules depends largely on our own religious or non-religious viewpoint
Learning From Experience	Activities and discussion to explore pupils' understanding of the importance of rules to the functioning of society	Activities and discussion to show the complex hierarchy/structure of rules (eg in respect of - education) and how they govern a range of situations/relationships	Rule-making activity designed to stretch the pupils' understanding of the purpose and nature of rules for social government	What rules do we need to follow in our lives?
Learning About Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Islam – Pillar 2 – Prayer – ritual cleansing Sikhism – 5 Ks - tying the turban Judaism – the Torah Judaism – story – the giving of the law Judaism – the purpose of the commands (Mitzvah) Christianity – the story of Moses Christianity – intro to the 10 commandments Christianity – Jesus' key teaching about the law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christianity - The Ten Commandments given by God; interpreted/explained by Jesus Christianity – Jesus summarised the 10 Commandments into two Christianity – Jesus taught a fresh understanding of law Christianity – the purpose of the law Islam – The 5 Pillars – Salah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christianity – exploring links between 10 Commandments and UK law- the human construct of rules Traditions and The Golden Rule (treat others as you would like to be treated) Humanism- importance of empathy, compassion, reason and respect 	<p>Morality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-religious and religious - concepts of absolute and relative morality Humanism- Utilitarianism- morality as a human construct- Peter Singer Religious and non-religious views - of the conscience or inner voice Baha'i - reflection and consultation Religious and non-religious views - for and against

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanism- The Golden Rule • Islam – 5 Pillars • Islam Pillar 1 – Shahadah • Islam – Pillar 2 - Salah 			<p>abortion including religious views</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christianity - views on euthanasia <p>Wealth and Poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious and non-religious responses - to having/not having wealth • Christian teaching on wealth – 1 Timothy 6; Matthew 6; Luke 12; Matthew 25. • Sikh teaching on giving • Islam - 3rd Pillar – teaching on wealth and giving Zakat - Sadaqah and Qurbani • Buddhism - teachings on wealth – the Eightfold Path, right livelihood • Hinduism – teachings on wealth in relation to the four purposes of life, the four Varnas, the four stages of life
Learning From Faith and Non-Religious Worldviews	Could I live without rules?	Could I live without rules?	Could I live without rules?	How does following rules benefit society and me?
Learning to Discern	Is life improved by rules?	How should I decide which rules I should follow?	Should I follow religious rules when they contradict with the law?	What do I do when I am asked to follow rules that I think are unfair and unjust?

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SECTION THREE

Managing Teaching and Learning in Religious Education Using The Birmingham Agreed Syllabus

This section will be found to be particularly useful by School Governors and Headteachers in managing high-quality delivery of Religious Education and the assessment of pupils' progress.

Advice for Headteachers on when the Agreed Syllabus applies

There is a statutory requirement for schools to provide a basic curriculum. For most schools, this consists of the national curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for Religious Education. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of the Religious Education curriculum.

TABLE 4 outlines the categories of maintained schools and the framework for how Religious Education should be provided:

Any of the listed schools not *obliged* to use the locally agreed syllabus may nevertheless *choose* to use it.

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TABLE 4

Type of School	Framework for Religious Education
Community, Foundation, Voluntary-Aided or Voluntary Controlled School without a religious character	Religious Education is taught according to the agreed syllabus, save that if the school is a secondary school and arrangements cannot conveniently be made for the withdrawal of pupils to receive RE elsewhere and the local authority is satisfied that (a) the parents wish the pupil(s) to receive RE in the school in accordance with the tenets of a particular religion or religious denomination, and (b) satisfactory arrangements have been made for the provision of such education to the pupil(s) in the school, and for securing that the cost of providing such education to those pupils in the school will not fall to be met by the school or the authority, the authority shall provide facilities for the carrying out of those arrangements, unless satisfied that special circumstances mean that it would be unreasonable to do so.
Above schools with Sixth Forms	Religious Education should be provided for all pupils in the Sixth form according to the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus.
Special Schools	Religious Education is taught to all pupils as far as practicable. (Differentiated lesson materials for SLD, MLD and PMLD are available online URL TBA.)
Foundation Schools and Voluntary Controlled Schools with a religious character	Religious Education is taught according to the locally Agreed Syllabus. <i>However where the parent of any pupil at school requests Religious Education is provided in accordance with provisions of the trust deed relating to the school (or, where there is no provision in the trust deed, in accordance as having a religious character) then the governors must make arrangements for securing that Religious Education is provided to the pupil in accordance with the relevant religion for up to two periods a week unless they are satisfied that there are special circumstances which would make it unreasonable to do so.</i>
Voluntary Aided Schools with a religious character	Religious Education is taught in accordance with the school's Trust Deed. <i>However, where parents prefer their children to receive RE in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus, and they cannot reasonably or conveniently send their children to a school where the syllabus is in use, then the governing body must make arrangements for RE to be provided to the children within the school in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus unless they are satisfied that there are special circumstances which would make it unreasonable to do so.</i>
Academies	Religious Education should be provided as part of a broad and balanced curriculum and in line with requirements for Agreed Syllabuses. The requirements [for] the type of RE that an academy provides, will be set out in their funding agreement. For schools without a faith designation, this will usually mirror the requirements for local authority-maintained schools without a religious character. Academies which were formerly Voluntary Aided schools should follow the guidance for Voluntary Aided schools.

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Time Allocation

While the law does not stipulate statutory times for Religious Education, in order to maximise pupil outcomes, Birmingham SACRE strongly recommends the following hours in order to be compliant with the syllabus:

Reception and Key Stage 1:	36 hours per year
Key Stage 2:	45 hours per year
Key Stage 3:	45 hours per year
Key Stage 4:	40 hours per year (non-exam)
Post 16:	20 hours per year (non-exam)

It is a statutory requirement for Religious Education to be offered to all pupils registered on the school roll from compulsory school age to 18 years. This requirement does not extend to nursery classes in maintained schools. However, Birmingham SACRE endorses the view that Religious Education will form a valuable part of the educational experience of children from the age of three to the beginning of compulsory school age.

Planning is available to support the Early Years Foundation Stage on-line. [URL TBC](#)

The time allocation recommended for KS4 and Post 16 is for students who are **not** following an examination specification in Religious Education.

At Key Stage 4 or 5 students opting for a nationally accredited course in **Religious Studies** do not also have to be taught **Religious Education** in accordance with an Agreed Syllabus. However, the Agreed Syllabus' readily available lessons planned for use with Key Stage 3 or 4 can be adapted when following a direct GCSE specification (many schools do this in Year 9 – Key Stage 3).

Conversely, the remaining students at Key Stage 4 or 5 who do not opt for further study in **Religious Studies** at GCSE or at A level should be taught **Religious Education, potentially following The Agreed Syllabus**, in accordance with their school type (see Table 4).

Quality of Education

The Birmingham Agreed Syllabus is designed to deliver the Birmingham Curriculum Statement, released jointly by The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture and The Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities in 2019. This syllabus supports all aspects of ‘A statement for our children in Birmingham, a guarantee for their future’, having specific relevance to all eight sections of the guarantee, quoted selectively below to emphasise this relevance:

‘The curriculum will

- promote children’s engagement in learning through enquiry-led approaches that develop skills, dispositions and attitudes to learning
- equip children for their futures in a rapidly changing world recognising the importance of... dialogue and understanding between different groups
- value, celebrate and build on children’s religious and cultural heritage...
- promote...mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- help children develop an understanding of all faiths and none, and participate in the celebration of different religious events in understanding and accepting differences
- develop children holistically; their intellectual, practical, aesthetic, spiritual, social and emotional capacities
- ensure an understanding of protected characteristics of the Equality Act and how, through diversity, they can be celebrated
- develop...compassion for others.’¹²

This syllabus responds to the requirements of the OfSTED education inspection framework, 2019, which requires a curriculum which is cohesively planned (Quality of education, Intent), which ‘provides for learners’ broader development... supporting learners to develop their character- including their resilience’. The disposition-based approach paired with the Dimensions of Learning delivers these aspects. Further, the disposition-based approach ensures that the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus ‘prepares learners for life in modern Britain by equipping them

¹² Birmingham Curriculum Statement https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/452/birmingham_curriculum_statement Accessed October 2021.

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to be responsible, respectful, active citizens...developing their understanding of fundamental British values...[and] their appreciation of diversity...'¹³

In regard to Fundamental British Values, teachers will find opportunities to deliver the majority of the British Values as they map their lesson plans.

The Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development of pupils (SMSC) is apparent through the teaching of the dispositions and the dimensions of learning. For example; for spiritual development, the dimension Learning about Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews facilitates 'knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths, feelings and values', whilst Learning to Discern empowers pupils to be 'reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life'.¹⁴

Birmingham City Council's planning documents to support Relationships and Health Education map the continuities between the dispositions and effective delivery of this recently introduced curriculum area.

The approach taken in this Agreed Syllabus offers abundant opportunities for teachers to connect with other areas of the curriculum. Teaching through the dispositions encourages links to be made with different subjects and areas of interest. This can further enhance pupil engagement in, and enjoyment of Religious Education. Connections with many curriculum areas can be made whether that be literature, music, art, history, geography, science or aspects of mathematics. We encourage teachers to take opportunities to explore these natural connections when planning. These opportunities can also be made on a local and global level, for example, from the exploration of stained-glass windows during a visit to a local church, to the examination of Jesus Christ portrayed in African art. To list such opportunities would be limiting the possibilities of the connections that could be developed.

¹³ OfSTED Education Inspection Framework for September 2019

¹⁴ OfSTED Education Inspection Framework for September 2019

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Assessment

Purpose

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve pupils' learning and teachers' teaching. In the case of Religious Education, a **holistic** approach is taken to the assessment of pupils' learning and development through not only assessing pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills but also their personal development and growth in response to what is learned. DfE's document '*Religious education in English Schools: Non-statutory guidance*', issued in 2010 but still current at the time of writing, makes it clear that:

- 'learning in Religious Education must have both continuity and progression' and include
- 'clear statements about expected standards and assessment arrangements'.

Methodology

Assessment in Religious Education generates information which must be used by both teachers and pupils in order to be most effective in developing through the dispositions and dimensions of learning. Assessment is best achieved through a well-planned, formative approach to an assessment process, which is ongoing, meaningful, manageable and focused on improving pupils' learning and development. Through this formative approach, teachers provide assessment tasks to elicit knowledge, skills and/or understanding from pupils. This approach also needs to take into account assessing the application of understanding, personal response and evaluation through:

- **The Dispositions**
In this syllabus the dispositions are crucial. These are the first consideration when assessing a pupil's progress. The required dispositions are introduced gradually in a pupil's first few years in school and re-visited through a spiral curriculum within and across phases.

- **Dimensions of Learning**

In both primary education and secondary education, the four dimensions of learning are encountered for every disposition. At each phase, the key questions for each dimension of learning form the framework through which pupils' understanding, knowledge and responses can be assessed:

- **Learning From Experience**

Assessment, in the case of this syllabus, begins with finding out about what pupils already know by activating prior knowledge/learning perhaps through discussion or mind-mapping knowledge as a starting point.

- **Learning About Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews**

Within this dimension a pupil's knowledge and understanding of religious and non-religious content is assessed. Pupils will encounter a variety of religious and non-religious worldviews through narratives, rituals, events and sources of authority. Their understanding of this material can be assessed in line with the key questions for Learning About Religious Traditions at an appropriate level.

- **Learning From Faith and Non-Religious Worldviews**

When assessing pupils against the Key Questions there needs to be some consideration to, and assessment of, how pupils think, feel, and respond in the light of what is being taught. Assessment will vary according to pupils' ages and abilities but should make use of a range of strategies including, observation, oral and written evidence. This guidance is flexible enough to enable schools to identify strategies to meet their own needs.

- **Learning to Discern**

Within this dimension a pupil's ability to reflect, evaluate and to critically interpret will be explored. This area will be assessed through pupils' responses to various religious and non-religious material.

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Primary

In the primary phase, the 24 dispositions are introduced gradually. Pupils' understanding is best assessed through the Dimensions of Learning and appropriate progress is broken down by the Key Questions which illustrate the required progression.

The approach to assessment recommended in the readily available lesson plans is centred on group discussion, team-based research, and sharing of experiences promoting a more active and creative style of learning. Such activities will generate evidence to support each dimension of learning. In primary education, whilst 'Learning to Discern' is important it is a higher-level skill that will be explored selectively.

The impact of such exposure and learning stimulus may not be easily articulated or recorded by the youngest pupils but may be clearly heard in discussion and/or seen in behaviour change and noted as evidence that the teaching has been effective and clearly understood.

For example, with the disposition 'Living By Rules', a Key Stage Two pupil might be able to express their knowledge of and be able to use vocabulary in relation to society's rules and religious rules explored using the Key Questions from 'Learning from Experience' and 'Learning about Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews'. They are, 'Are rules helpful in everyday life?' and 'What impact do rules of traditions have on society?'. Additionally, pupils will need to personally reflect in relation to their own participation enabling an assessment of 'Learning from Faith and Non-Religious Worldviews' and 'Learning to Discern'. They are 'Could I live without rules?' and 'How should I decide which rules I should follow?' Some will be capable of considering the higher order question 'Should I follow religious rules when they contradict with the law?'

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An Early Years approach such as building a class portfolio or individual ‘learning journey’ may be a useful way to capture evidence of learning e.g. through collecting and collating examples of pupils’ work, annotated photographs, observations, and verbatim notes, as illustrated here, of pupils’ responses.

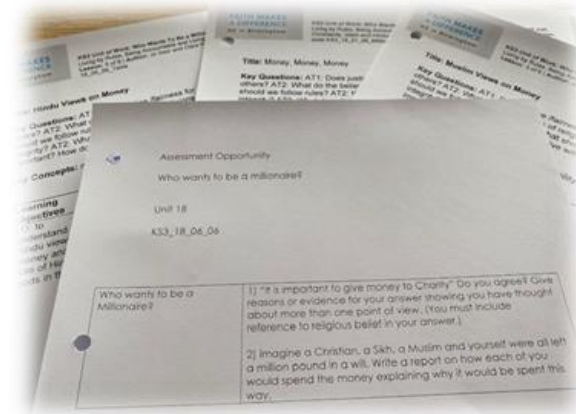
Teachers should collect and collate evidence over time ensuring this includes contributions illustrating the expected target, working towards the expected target and working above the expected target. These should be recorded using the school’s standard procedures.

Alternatively, you may wish to consider the use of a more ‘personal’ classroom-based or individual reflective journal allowing pupils’ reflections and responses to be recorded on a regular basis. Ideally each entry would make reference to the disposition and to the religious and non-religious-source material used as well as demonstrating the impact of the teaching and learning against each module in the form of personal response (e.g. “As a Sikh, I was surprised to find out that Christians also believe...”) or comments on changed attitude or behaviour (e.g. “I have learnt that part of being a good friend is listening and accepting/respecting someone else’s point of view – even when it’s different from my own”) or even (“following this lesson, three pupils ‘owned up’ to...”).

Secondary

In the secondary phase, whilst continuing to assess formatively against the 24 dispositions and the four dimensions of learning, 'Learning about Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews' and 'Learning to Discern' will take greater priority. This enables there to be greater emphasis on the knowledge and skills needed in preparation for those studying an examination specification.

Similar to primary, assessed responses can be recorded in a variety of ways and may take a more formal approach including: presentations, personal response or examination-style questions and answers. Pupil responses can be recorded and should show progression in personal response, knowledge gained, evaluative stance and personal response. You may wish to adapt the readily available lesson plans to align with the system that your school has devised.



Progress

Table 5 outlines key points of progress for the end of each Key Stage using the example of the disposition *Remembering Roots*. The Learning About Religious Traditions examples are taken from *Islam*.

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TABLE 5. How do I measure progress in Religious Education?

The following table outlines key points of progress for the end of each Key Stage. Examples are taken from the Key Questions Planning Tool for the disposition *Remembering Roots* and the religion of *Islam*.

Learning Dimension/Key Stage	By the end of Key Stage One pupils will be able to:	By the end of Key Stage Two pupils will be able to:	By the end of Key Stage Three pupils will be able to:
<p>Learning from Experience: The general understanding of the disposition from the pupils' experiences</p>	<p>Develop an understanding of the disposition encountered in the context of their lives and family backgrounds. There is an awareness that this may be different to other pupils in their class. <i>For example: Why do we celebrate some people or events every year?</i></p>	<p>Understand the disposition as encountered in the context of their everyday experience and develop an understanding that this may be different to the experience of others. Begin to explore these similarities and differences. <i>For example: Why do we commemorate some people and events with others in our family/faith/group/nation?</i></p>	<p>Understand the dispositions in the context of their everyday experiences and previous knowledge of the disposition. <i>For example: What events in history have shaped how the world is today?</i></p>
<p>Learning about Religious Traditions and Non-Religious Worldviews: The acquiring of knowledge and understanding of faiths and secular perspectives</p>	<p>Recall and recognise features of belief and practice, in relation to how the dispositions are lived out in people's lives. <i>For example: Which times do the followers of RT remember?</i> <i>For example: To understand why and how Muslims fast during Ramadan. To know what the festival of Eid ul Fitr celebrates and how it is celebrated.</i></p>	<p>Describe and recognise key beliefs and practices. Explore similarities and differences in what people believe and how people live (religiously and non-religiously). <i>For example: 2a- What does (festival/observance of RT) commemorate?</i> <i>For example: To learn about the fourth pillar of Islam (Zakah) and what this practice means to Muslims.</i> <i>2b – Which stories do the followers of RT think are very important to retell?</i> <i>For example: To understand the story of the Black Stone and how it demonstrates resolving disputes with fairness.</i></p>	<p>Demonstrate an understanding of key teachings/aspects of belief and practice in order to explain how the dispositions (religious and secular) have an impact on how people live their lives. <i>For example: What can followers of RT learn from events in the history of their religion?</i> <i>For example: To understand the story of Ibrahim and Ishmael and the impact that sacrifice has in the lives of Muslims today.</i></p>
<p>Learning from Faith and Non-Religious Worldviews: The opportunity to respond to the religious and secular ideas explored in their widest sense</p>	<p>Begin to recognise connections between their experiences and those of others. Begin to respond in the light of their own experiences. <i>For example: Why should I celebrate events again next year?</i></p>	<p>Recognise connections between their experiences and those of others, being able to reflect on similarities and differences. <i>For example: How do I remember special people, places and events?</i></p>	<p>Ask questions about the beliefs and practices being explored. Consider the implications of their views, beliefs and actions in response to those being studied. <i>For example: What can I learn from historical events?</i></p>
<p>Learning to Discern: Enabling a deepening, reflective response to the religious traditions and secular perspectives presented</p>	<p>Ask questions and begin to form their own feelings and views in response to what has been explored. <i>For example: Which events should I try not to remember?</i></p>	<p>Raise questions in response and begin to evaluate points of view. Begin to develop a critical awareness and reflect on what is being presented. <i>For example: Do I ever ignore things happening in the present when celebrating things from the past?</i></p>	<p>Express a viewpoint in response to what is being examined. Evaluate different points of view. Respond critically to beliefs presented by raising questions. <i>For example: Should I always be proud of my past? How should I respond to difficult events in the past?</i></p>

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