

Religious Education (RE) in the Primary Knowledge Curriculum (PKC) is designed to be *knowledge-rich*, coherently sequenced, and cumulatively structured to ensure that pupils develop a secure and meaningful understanding of religious and non-religious worldviews over time. The subject identifies and explores questions about human existence that have been asked since the dawn of time, offering children opportunities to develop their own personal knowledge. It aims to develop both academic understanding and respectful engagement with diverse perspectives.

The PKC RE curriculum aspires to ensure that all pupils:

- Acquire a rich and coherent body of knowledge about the six major world religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism) and selected non-religious worldviews (e.g. Humanism)
- Understand the complexity, diversity, and lived experience within each tradition
- Develop the skills to enquire, analyse, and interpret religious and ethical beliefs and practices
- Express informed personal responses while demonstrating empathy, openness, and academic rigour
- Recognise how religion intersects with other disciplines e.g. history, art, geography, and literature, to inform a wider worldview

Weekly opportunities for reflection and discussion help develop pupils' emotional intelligence, ethical awareness, and ability to form reasoned views. In doing so, the curriculum not only lays a foundation for further academic study, but nurtures pupils to become curious, conscientious, and compassionate individuals capable of engaging respectfully with the beliefs of others.

Within the discipline of RE, **substantive knowledge** refers to the core concepts, beliefs, and practices found within and across religious traditions and worldviews. Examples of this include:

- **Monotheism** – the belief in one all-powerful God, as found in religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- **Polytheism** – the belief in multiple gods, as seen in traditions like Hinduism and the ancient religions of Greece and Egypt which children will study in PKC History.
- **Dharma** – a concept with various meanings across religious contexts, but generally referring to a person's duties, ethical living, or the right way to live. In Hinduism, Dharma is linked to one's role in society; in Buddhism, it signifies the teachings of the Buddha; and in Sikhism, it relates to living truthfully and justly.
- **Karma** – the idea that actions have consequences, often understood as a moral cause-and-effect principle found in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

Alongside this, the curriculum fosters **ways of knowing**, an understanding of *how* we study religion. This includes identifying different types of evidence (such as sacred texts, artefacts, oral traditions, and practices), recognising the diversity of interpretation within traditions, and understanding how scholars construct and critique knowledge about religion. This is closely aligned with the idea of **disciplinary knowledge** in other PKC subjects like history, geography, or science, where pupils learn how experts in the field think, question, analyse, and justify claims.

Importantly, RE also encourages the development of **personal knowledge**. Our RE curriculum offers frequent opportunities for children to reflect on content they have learned and what it means to them. This strand focuses on helping pupils reflect on their own views, experiences, and values in dialogue with the material they encounter. It is not about religious instruction, but about forming thoughtful, self-aware individuals who are respectful of difference and complexity.

The PKC RE curriculum identifies specific knowledge for each unit, year group, and lesson. This ensures that learning builds cumulatively and conceptually from one stage to the next. Pupils encounter a rich body of content, from festivals and places of worship to deeper philosophical and ethical concepts, in a carefully structured progression. Teachers are encouraged to consider the needs of their children when teaching PKC RE and be sensitive to any content that may be upsetting for children at particular times, for example content that refers to death. PKC RE can and should be adapted to meet the specific needs of individual children where necessary.

From the earliest stages, children are introduced to theological, philosophical, and ethical concepts in accessible ways. For example, in early Key Stage 1, pupils may explore what it means to belong, linking this to community life in Christianity and Judaism. In later years, they go on to consider more abstract themes such as justice, sacrifice, or freedom, applying their accumulated knowledge across multiple contexts.

Teachers are supported through the resources that accompany this curriculum, including unit overviews, detailed subject knowledge, and clearly identified cross-curricular links. Accurate representation is a key principle: the curriculum encourages teachers to use language with precision, avoiding generalisations and ensuring inclusivity. For example, the phrasing “many Muslims believe...” or “some Hindus may...” ensures sensitivity to diversity within traditions and avoids oversimplification.

As previously mentioned, RE lessons within PKC do not require pupils to participate in any religious instruction. Children are not asked to join in with any religious rituals. Children should not be asked to ‘imagine’ what it may be like to follow a religion. Instead, they are encouraged to learn about practices and beliefs through informed, respectful enquiry. For example, when studying the life of Jesus, children may learn about what life was like in at the time under Roman rule, rather than speculate on personal experiences of being a Christian at that time. This approach fosters academic rigour alongside building historical understanding.

The PKC RE curriculum follows a structure in which key themes and concepts are revisited across year groups with increasing complexity. This supports children to know and remember more over time. Each academic year in Years 1–6 begins with a multifaith thematic unit (e.g. *places of worship, creation stories and symbols*), designed to re-engage prior knowledge and explore commonalities across faiths. This is followed by deeper study into Christianity and another world religion each year. In the summer term, pupils often return to multifaith explorations that draw upon prior knowledge and consolidate learning.

For example:

- In Year 2, pupils may explore the concept of prayer in Islam and Christianity.
- In Year 4, they may explore sacred texts, examining the Bible, before studying multifaith units that examine other sacred texts.
- In Year 5 pupils learn about Humanism, recognising how non-religious people can also get together to reflect, learn and celebrate without prayer.

This approach balances breadth; understanding a range of traditions and depth; examining each tradition thoroughly enough to avoid superficial understanding. It also helps children’s learning feel meaningful, as they continually use their knowledge when encountering new content. Revisiting key concepts allows pupils to make quick and meaningful connections across content, supporting cognitive load and reinforcing learning.

In Key Stage 1, the curriculum focuses on Abrahamic monotheism; Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and introduces pupils to the concept of shared sacred history. These traditions are introduced in chronological order to support understanding of their development and interrelationship. Pupils explore figures such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad with historical sensitivity and theological clarity.

In Key Stage 2, pupils encounter polytheistic belief systems through Hinduism and ancient civilisations studied in history, such as Ancient Greece and Egypt. They also explore non-theistic or philosophical worldviews like Buddhism, broadening their understanding of belief systems that do not centre on a creator God.

Recurring themes, such as Dharma (ethical duty and order), Karma (actions and consequences) are revisited within different traditions (e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism), enabling pupils to see the connections between different religious and non-religious belief and understanding. Disciplinary understanding, or ways of knowing, is embedded throughout the curriculum: pupils are asked questions like “How do we know about this faith?”, “How do people practise this tradition today?”, and “Do all followers of this religion practice in the same way?”

Year 6 serves as a culmination of prior learning and a platform for conceptual exploration. Pupils examine universal themes, such as *freedom, authority, justice, and charity*, exploring questions that have been asked by humans for centuries. For example, when learning about philosophy, children learn that philosophers ask questions such as, “what is truth?” “How do we know what is real?” “What makes something right or wrong?” Throughout the curriculum, reflections such as these offer children the opportunity to relate what they are learning to their own lives.

In each lesson there is an opportunity for personal reflection enabling children to relate what they are learning to their own experiences. In doing so, the RE curriculum nurtures pupils to become curious, conscientious, and compassionate individuals capable of engaging respectfully with the beliefs of others whilst understanding more about their own beliefs. Our carefully chosen content aligns with British Values, promoting tolerance, individual liberty, and mutual respect. This equips pupils not only for secondary RE but for life in a diverse and pluralistic society.