

RE in the Early Years Foundation Stage: Programme of Study

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) describes the phase of a child's education from birth to the end of the Reception year at the age of 5. RE is statutory for all pupils registered on the school roll, including all in reception classes. The statutory requirement for RE does not extend to nursery classes in maintained schools. RE may, however, form a valuable part of the educational experience of children throughout the key stage. In the EYFS curriculum, learning does not fit into boxes: play-based and child-centred approaches will encourage the learning to follow where the child's interest and curiosity leads.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)		Key Stage 1
Nursery	Reception	Year 1 and upwards
RE is non-statutory, but teachers may choose to incorporate RE material into children's activities.	RE is a compulsory part of the basic curriculum for all Reception-age pupils and should be taught according to this syllabus.	RE is a compulsory part of the basic curriculum for all Key Stage 1 pupils and should be taught according to this syllabus.
ELGs outline what pupils should achieve by the end of the Reception year. The National Curriculum is not taught.		The National Curriculum is taught alongside RE.
Some settings have children from both nursery and Reception in an EYFS unit. Planning will need to take account of the needs and expectations of both age groups.		

This syllabus sets out experiences, opportunities and appropriate topics for children in the Foundation Stage. The suggestions made for EYFS RE are good learning in themselves. These also connect to the EYFS seven areas of learning.

Planned teaching experiences will support children's learning and development needs, as identified through holistic assessment. Good Early Years teaching stems from children's own experiences. Many practitioners will find ways to draw on the wealth of religious or spiritual experiences that some families may bring with them. The EYFS statutory framework also outlines an expectation that practitioners reflect on the different ways in which children learn and the characteristics of effective learning as they plan continuous provision.

- Playing and exploring: children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
- Active learning: children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties and enjoy achievements.
- Creating and thinking critically: children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

What do children get out of RE in this age group?

RE sits very firmly within the areas of personal, social and emotional development and understanding the world. This framework enables children to develop a positive sense of themselves and others, and to learn how to form positive and respectful relationships. They will do this through a balance of guided, planned teaching and pursuing their own learning within an enabling environment. They will begin to understand and value the differences of individuals and groups within their own immediate community. Children will have the opportunity to develop their emerging moral and cultural awareness.

RE in the Early Years Foundation Stage Children in EYFS should encounter religious and non-religious worldviews through special people, books, times, places and objects and by visiting places of worship. They should listen to and talk about stories, poems and songs. Children can be introduced to subject-specific words and use all their senses to explore beliefs, practices and forms of expression in religions and worldviews. They ask questions and reflect on their own feelings and experiences. They use their imagination and curiosity to develop their appreciation of, and wonder at, the world in which they live.

Following DfE Guidance ('Development Matters', 2021) RE can be taught through all areas of the curriculum, developing children's knowledge and abilities through the following possible opportunities.

Prime area: Communication and Language. RE enables children to:

- Develop their spoken language through quality conversation in a language-rich environment, gaining new vocabulary about religion and worldviews
- Engage actively with stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems from the RE field, taking opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts
- Share their ideas via conversation, story-telling and role play, responding to support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate their thoughts in the RE field
- Become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures in relation to RE content.
- Offer explanations and answers to 'why' questions about faith stories, non-fiction, rhymes, songs, poems.

Prime area: Personal, Social and Emotional Development. RE enables children to:

- Observe and join in warm and supportive relationships with adults and learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others, using a widening vocabulary of emotions and feelings
- Manage emotions and develop a positive sense of self, understanding their own feelings and those of others e.g. through religious story, through talking about how experiences make us feel
- Talk and think about simple values as they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peacefully
- Notice and respond to ideas of caring, sharing, generosity + kindness from RE content: stories, sayings and songs.

Prime area: Physical Development. RE enables children to:

- Use and develop their motor skills through RE based arts and craft activities and, for example, small world play, visual representations of their ideas and thoughts, role play

Specific area: Literacy. RE enables children to:

- Build their abilities in language comprehension through talking with adults about the world around them, including the world of religion and belief
- Engage with stories and non-fiction in RE settings and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together
- Build their skills in RE-related word reading, recognizing religious words and discovering new vocabulary in relation to religions and worldviews
- Articulate ideas and use RE examples to write simple phrases or sentences that can be read by others

Specific area: Mathematics. RE enables children to:

- Develop their spatial reasoning skills, noticing shape, space and measures in relation to RE content
- Look for patterns and relationships and spot connections, sorting and ordering objects simply in relation to RE content.

Specific area: Understanding the World. RE enables children to:

- Make sense of their physical world and their community, e.g. on visits to places of worship, or by meeting members of religious communities
- Listen to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems to foster understanding of our culturally, socially and ecologically diverse world
- Extend their knowledge and familiarity with words that support understanding of values, religion and belief
- Talk about the lives of people around them, understanding characters and events from stories
- Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read, seen and experienced in class
- Explore the natural world around them making observations of animals and plants, environments and seasons, making space for responses of joy, wonder, awe and questioning

Specific area: Expressive Arts and Design. RE enables children to:

- Develop artistic and cultural awareness in relation to RE materials in relation to art, music, dance, imaginative play, and role-play and stories to represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings
- Build their imagination and creativity by exploring and playing with a wide range of media and materials using RE content, responding in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and taste
- See, hear and participate in a wide range of examples of religious and spiritual expression, developing their understanding, self-expression, creativity, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts
- Create work drawing from religions and beliefs with a variety of materials and tools, sharing their creations and explaining the meaning of their work
- Adapt and recount religious stories inventively, imaginatively and expressively, and sing, perform and learn from well-known songs in RE imaginatively and expressively

RE in the nursery

Activities children engage in during their nursery years are experiences which provide the building blocks for later development. Starting with things which are familiar to the children and providing lots of hands-on activities and learning through play, are an important part of children's learning at this stage.

Some ideas for RE in the nursery can include:

- creative play, make-believe, role play, dance and drama
- dressing up and acting out scenes from stories, celebrations or festivals
- making and eating festival food
- talking and listening to each other; hearing and discussing stories of all kinds, including religious and secular stories with themes such as goodness, difference, the inner world of thoughts and feelings, and imagination
- exploring and talking about authentic religious artefacts, including those designed for small children such as 'soft toy' artefacts or story books
- seeing pictures, books and videos of places of worship and meeting believers in class
- listening to a range of example of religious and spiritual music; singing and enjoying music
- starting to introduce and use simple religious terminology, noticing religion in everyday life, spotting differences and similarities
- being creative in their play and learning around themes from religion and worldviews
- work on nature, growing and life cycles or harvest
- seizing opportunities spontaneously or linking with topical, local events such as celebrations, festivals, the birth of a new baby, weddings or the death of a pet
- starting to talk about the different ways in which people believe and behave, and encouraging children to ask questions in increasing depth

Themes that lend themselves to opportunities for RE work include the following:

Myself	People who help us	Our special times
My life	Friendship	Our community
My senses	Welcome	Special books
My special things	Belonging	Stories
Songs and music	We are all different and we are all special	Thinking big thoughts
People special to me	Special places	The natural world

Good teaching of RE will connect continuous provision, play and child-initiated learning to ideas and experiences from the RE field. In EYFS, RE will always build on children's interests and enthusiasm as well as their learning and development needs, and themes should be developed accordingly.