

RE in Early Years Foundation Stage



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Religious Education in Early Years should allow exploration of the world and respond to children's natural curiosity about things around them. This syllabus does not presume to specify the approach to be taken when implementing RE as part of the learning in Early Years. The breadth of learning and pedagogy will be determined by individual settings; the concepts should be explored at the level appropriate for the class. Wherever possible, the RE curriculum should match coverage of the Prime Areas in the EYFS. It is better to slim down and cover less content in greater depth.

The RE curriculum contributes to elements of the Equality Act (2010): <http://development-matters.org.uk/>
Practitioners may wish to make reference to *Understanding Christianity* (RE Today Services, 2016) to teach aspects of Christianity: <http://www.understandingchristianity.org.uk/>

Working with the revised Early Years Foundation Stage; Principles into Practice (Julian Grenier, 2020)

"Depth in learning is much more important than breadth. Deep understanding is more important than superficial coverage." p.33

"The Early Learning Goals are a brief check of some of the important skills and concepts children should have by the end of the Reception year. They are not a curriculum." p.33

Page 29 has a Planning and Review cycle which mirrors the RE Enquiry cycle for older pupils.

The guidance which follows is non-statutory for children under five. The concept 'worldviews' covers both religious and non-religious life stances including Humanists, Pagans and Unitarians.

RE in Foundation Stage 1 (RE for 3- and 4-year-olds)

Children in FS1 should be taught according to the statutory requirements of the EYFS 2021 Handbook.

RE is not part of the *statutory* curriculum for children in nurseries and early years settings. However, there are elements of religious education which can contribute to the areas outlined in the Early Learning Goals and in the Development Matters for 3-4 years and sets a foundation for learning in RE in Reception classes.

On the following pages are some suggestions and ideas about how RE can make significant contributions to the Early Learning Goals. Practitioners should adapt them to be relevant to their own settings and communities. Start with positive images of the diversity of Britain to develop positive attitudes about the differences between people from birth, looking at a range of religious and non-religious worldviews.

Suggested activities

- Introduce and use multi-syllabic vocabulary, such as religion, community, Christian
- Listen to longer stories, remembering much of what happens. Read stories from religious traditions, such as *A wet and windy Harvest for Puddles*, *Puddles and the Christmas Play*, together with *The Tiny Ants* and *Seven New Kittens* adapted from traditional Muslim stories (Gill Vaisey, www.booksatpress.co.uk)
- Celebrate festivals such as Harvest, Christmas, Easter, Diwali, Eid and explore the food and clothes linked to them, dress up in clothes from different cultures
- Explore places of prayer, worship and reflection and talk about what happens there
- Talk about people who are special to us, who belongs to our family and look at photos. Celebrate belonging to a family and community, birthdays and naming ceremonies, meeting and talking with faith members from the community. Show care and concern for each other and the people in the community who help us.
- Explore the natural world and respond to questions such as What makes the world a wonderful place? Model and encourage responses to 'why' questions such as Why should we look after the world?

RE in Foundation Stage 2 (RE for 4– and 5-year-olds)

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

Listening, Attention and Understanding ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions
- Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding
- Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.

Share a religious story, saying which religion and book it has come from, ask 'I wonder...' questions. Encourage children to talk about what they have heard, to ask questions and to identify why it might be a story from a religion. Listen and comment on the views and traditions expressed by others.

Speaking ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary
- Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate
- Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.

Explore questions about clothes, artefacts and actions linked to different religions. Children talk about and share their own traditions and experiences and explore new vocabulary linked to religions and worldviews.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Self-Regulation ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly
- Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate
- Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.

Managing Self ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge
- Explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly
- Manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet and understanding the importance of healthy food choices.

Building Relationships ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Work and play cooperatively and take turns with others
- Form positive attachments to adults and friendships with peers
- Show sensitivity to their own and to others' needs.

Understand and be sensitive to differences in diet, style of dress, festivals celebrated.

LITERACY

Comprehension ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary
- Anticipate – where appropriate – key events in stories
- Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during roleplay.

Learn about different festivals and the stories behind them: Diwali and the Hindu story of Rama and Sita, Christmas and the Nativity could be an opportunity for roleplay and to talk in simple terms about the meaning of incarnation.

Word Reading ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs
- Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending
- Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.

Writing ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

Add captions to a Noah's Ark toy or Nativity scene, write a simple response to a story or faith visitor.

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

Past and Present ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society
- Know some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class
- Understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling.

Talk about the work of people from faith communities, such as the vicar, imam, rabbi or priest. Look at similarities and differences in modern places of worship and more ancient religious buildings. Listen to stories from sacred texts and special books and hear how old stories were/are told and shared.

People, Culture and Communities ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Describe their immediate environment using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps

- Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class
- Explain some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries, drawing on knowledge from stories, non-fiction texts and – when appropriate – maps.

Recognise different buildings and places connected with religion in the local community, such as memorials and charity clothing bank, make visits (real or virtual) to different places of worship. Invite people from different cultures and faiths for the children to question. Find out how religious festivals are celebrated in Britain and across the world.

The Natural World ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants
- Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class
- Understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter.

Listen to creation stories and talk about why it is important to look after the natural world.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN

Creating with Materials ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function.
- Share their creations, explaining the process they have used
- Make use of props and materials when role playing characters in narratives and stories.

Make rangoli patterns with chalk, rice, pasta, pattern blocks. Make a simple Easter garden. Provide clothes and materials from different cultures, with sensitivity to religious symbols which are sacred to believers.

Being Imaginative and Expressive ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher
- Sing a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs
- Perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and - when appropriate - try to move in time with music.

Retell stories from a sacred text, acting out a known story with a moral message. Sing songs and hymns relating to faith stories. Use Tap Sticks to do a stick dance as part of Diwali celebrations. Retell a story with signifiers (Talk for Writing style).

Development Matters in Foundation Stage 2

LINKING RE TO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Playing and exploring

- Use small world to recreate and retell stories from different religions*
- Provide cultural and religious artefacts - or pictures of them - for the children to explore*

Active learning

- Make visits to religious places in the community*
- Talk to visitors about their life and role in the community*

Creating and thinking critically

- Pretend play to think beyond the 'here and now' and to understand another perspective*
- Make suggestions about why and how the characters act in a story, such as in a Godly Play setting*

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

Understand that some places are special to members of their community:

- Name and explain the purpose of places of worship and places of local importance to the community to children, drawing on their own experiences where possible.
- Take children to places of worship and places of local importance to the community.
- Invite visitors from different religious and cultural communities into the classroom to share their experiences with children.

Recognise that people have different beliefs and celebrate special times in different ways:

- Weave opportunities for children to engage with religious and cultural communities and their practices throughout the curriculum at appropriate times of the year.
- Help children to begin to build a rich bank of vocabulary with which to describe their own lives and the lives of others.

Recognise some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries:

- Teach children about places in the world that contrast with locations they know well.
- Use relevant, specific vocabulary to describe contrasting locations.
- Use images, video clips, shared texts and other resources to bring the wider world into the classroom, listen to what children say about what they see. Avoid stereotyping and explain how children's lives in other countries may be similar or different in terms of how they travel to school, what they eat, where they live, and so on.

Be aware of religious sensitivities when handling objects and the way they should be shown respect:

- washing hands prior to opening the Qur'an, placing it on a clean surface and then wrapping and storing it higher than any other books
- a Sikh kirpan should never be unsheathed.

Practitioners may wish look at the EYFS thematic grid that follows with suggested content for various topics.

Early Years Themes

Themes	Activities	Key vocabulary	Key concepts
Special Places	Identify places special to children’s lives Church, mandir, temple, synagogue, gurdwara, mosque Cut-outs/pictures of places of worship and what happens there Virtual/actual visits to community places of significance including in school, memorials, plaques Meeting people from different cultural communities either in school, their special place or virtually	Earth church temple mandir mosque synagogue gurdwara	Creation Incarnation Salvation God Allah Oneness of God Buddha
Special Times	Christmas, Easter, Shrove Tuesday, Remembrance Day, Harvest, Diwali, Eid ul Fitr, Hannukah Marking times special for the school or setting Birthday and achievement assemblies Festivals and celebrations, local and specific to faith and community groups across the world Naming ceremonies and ways to mark special times of life (baptisms and weddings) Music associated with special times	Christmas Easter Harvest Diwali rangoli patterns Eid Hannukah Guru Nanak Jayanti	
Special People	People who are important to us at home, in school, in the community, what they do and the clothes they wear Jesus, vicar, pandit (priest), Muhammad (pbuh), imam, Buddha, monks and nuns, rabbi, Guru Nanak Ji Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish, Baha’i communities as appropriate	Jesus, Christian vicar Buddhist monks Hindu/Sikh pandit Muslim imam Muhammad (pbuh) Jewish rabbi	
Special Books	Bible, Ramayana (Rama & Sita), Torah, Guru Granth Sahib Ji- living Guru, Qur’an, prayer books Stories from different faiths and cultures across the world	Bible Ramayana Qur’an Torah Guru Granth Sahib Ji	
Special Things	Christingles, cross, candles (Christianity) murti, diva lamps (Hindu) lotus flower, prayer wheel (Buddhism) Star of David (Judaism) Ik Onkar, khanda (Sikhi) star and crescent (Islam) nine-pointed star (Baha’i) special things for worship	cross lotus flower prayer wheel murti prayer mat Star of David Five Ks turban	

Early Years Foundation Stage exemplar unit

About this unit

This unit builds on children's understanding of themselves as 'special' people. Explore the child's self-concept, enabling an appreciation of their uniqueness as a human being. Promote a positive attitude to children's identity and use alongside work on naming ceremonies from any world faith.

Concepts and Vocabulary

Draw from the *Key Content and Vocabulary* grids for Christianity and other chosen faiths (see p.26-41 in the *2022 Agreed Syllabus*)

Prepare for learning

Explore what makes the children special such as their features and abilities

Think about who they are special to, including family and friends

Introduce the children to a 'child of faith', using a persona doll, e-book or other resource

Identify learning questions

What makes a name special?

What do some Christians do to welcome a new baby into the Christian Family?

What symbols and artefacts are used in an infant baptism (Christening) and what do they represent?

What does another religion do to mark the birth of a new child?

How did Jesus show care for different people?

How do stories from another religion show care for others?

How should we care for others?

Enquiry: consider

- infant Christian baptism by watching a video and/or by taking part in a roleplay ceremony
- pictures of participants in an infant baptism, identifying the symbols used in the ceremony
- a naming ceremony from a different religion and talk about similarities
- stories from the Bible about Jesus caring for people
- creatively retelling Bible stories through drama, artwork and writing:
- stories from a sacred text from another religion about caring for others

Dive deeper, question further

Talk about what matters in a naming ceremony

Reflect on learning

Express ideas and feelings about naming ceremonies

Talk about why it's important to show care for others

Demonstrate new understanding

Plan a naming celebration and party for a doll:

- roles
- food
- activities
- cards

Create a display/book about the ceremonies encountered, showing some of the elements of the ceremony, the symbols and artefacts used

Create a display/book about caring for others