

Church of England Schools

Peterborough Diocese



RE Newsletter

January 2026

INTRODUCTION

In the start of this new year, I am reminded that the work we do in RE is both timely and timeless. The days may feel full, the demands pressing, yet beneath it all runs a deeper current: the steady shaping of young people who are learning how to think wisely, listen attentively, and act with integrity.

The words from *Esther 4:14* have stayed with me this term: “*And who knows but that you have come to your position for such a time as this?*” They were shared with me several times last term, arriving almost as a refrain, including at the headteachers’ conference, where Peter encouraged us all to step forward and take on challenges with courage and purpose. Each time I heard them, they seemed to gather weight, speaking quietly but insistently into the realities of leadership, teaching, and faithful service in the present moment.

In a global political landscape that feels increasingly complex and ever-changing, this work matters profoundly. RE offers something distinctive and necessary: the space for pupils to encounter difference with confidence rather than fear, to discuss beliefs and religious practices in informed and caring ways, and to grow in understanding of both others and themselves. It helps children learn that disagreement need not mean division, and that listening is as important as speaking.

This is what I love best about RE: at its heart, it continues to nurture discernment, empathy, and hope. It invites pupils to see themselves as part of a bigger story, one in which their choices, values, and voices matter. Perhaps, in ways we cannot yet fully see, this is their moment too.

Thank you for all you continue to do to keep RE rooted, rigorous, and alive in your schools. In uncertain times, your work remains a quiet but powerful witness to wisdom, generosity, and moral courage. Perhaps this, indeed, is the moment for which we have been created.



Ziggy Brown

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Subject to availability, I offer bespoke RE training, which is **entirely cost free for all our Gold SLA schools** covering areas such as RE subject leadership, curriculum knowledge (religious and non-religious worldviews), disciplinary knowledge, assessment, and a worldviews approach. Please contact me to book or discuss tailored support for your school’s RE development.

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SPRINGS
DANCE COMPANY

EASTER PROJECT

"From the first few minutes of the workshop I knew that Springs had something special about them. They just had a way of engaging every child with enthusiasm, passion and hard-work. It was faultless"

Head Teacher, Easter Project at St Andrews School, Streatham.



Click the picture to access the SPRINGS DANCE COMPANY website.

DIOCESAN RE TRAINING THIS TERM



All RE training events and booking links for this term can be found below by clicking on each training listed. All sessions are free with your Gold SLA, and the RE Network meeting is open to all schools at no cost. We hope you'll join us for these opportunities to connect, reflect, and grow together. For full details, please see the document on our [website](#).

<p><u>Understanding Christianity – The Big Frieze</u> 1.00pm - 3.00pm via Zoom</p>	<p>A deeper dive into the Understanding Christianity Frieze - what it represents, how it can greatly enhance RE lessons and collective worship.</p>
<p><u>RE Network Meeting</u> Tuesday 3 March 2026 4.00pm - 5.15pm via Zoom Free for all schools</p>	<p>A termly online session offering updates on national and diocesan RE developments, and a space to share good practice across schools. This time we will be joined by Caroline Wallace, Humanist Representative of Northants SACRE who will help us to</p>
<p><u>New to Leading RE</u> (Session 2) Tuesday 10 March 2026 1.00pm - 3.00pm via TEAMS</p>	<p>Note the change of date A follow-up session: reflecting on progress so far, monitoring RE, and taking effective follow-up steps after monitoring. Attendance for those who joined Session 1.</p> <p>If you would like to join in the cohort, contact me to have an initial session. Ziggy.brown@peterborough-diocese.org.uk</p>
<p><u>RE Conference</u> Thursday 12 March 2026 9.30am - 3.00pm Bouverie Court, 6 The Lakes Bedford Road, Northampton NN4 7YD</p>	<p>A full day exploring RE through practical sessions on multi-disciplinary approaches, diversity within religions, and insights from faith visitors.</p>

NATIONAL UPDATES

THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT REVIEW FINAL REPORT - RE

[**Curriculum and Assessment Review final report: Building a world-class curriculum for all**](#) (Click to access the report)

Main points regarding RE in the CAR:

Key Points – Curriculum and Assessment Review: Religious Education

- RE reaffirmed as vital for pupils' intellectual, moral, spiritual, and cultural development.
- Current provision described as uneven, fragmented, and outdated, with limited SACRE capacity and inconsistent local support.

Key Recommendations

- Move RE onto the national curriculum (in stages) to secure parity and quality across all schools.
- Establish an independent task and finish group, chaired by Dr Vanessa Ogden CBE, to build on the 2023 REC National Content Standard and draft a national RE curriculum.
- DfE to review:
 - The 2010 non-statutory RE guidance.
 - The legislative framework, including SACRE functions and funding.
- Remove the statutory requirement for RE in non-faith school sixth forms, while faith schools may continue provision in line with their character.
- Protect the distinctive needs of schools with a religious character within any reform.

Further Points

- Mentions of core content, end-of-phase expectations, and SEND exemplification, but no new subject-specific detail.
- No recommendations on accountability, assessment, or classroom practice.
- Focus remains on systemic reform and building national consensus to strengthen RE provision in the long term.

UPDATE ON THE RE STATEMENT OF ENTITLEMENT

The Church of England has published an updated [**Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education**](#) on Friday 16th of January 2026. This will come into effect from **September 2026**. Schools currently listed for a **SIAMS inspection during this academic year will continue to be inspected against the existing Statement of Entitlement**, and there is no expectation that practice should change in advance of the new implementation date. The updated document largely clarifies and strengthens existing expectations, rather than introducing a new direction for Church school RE.

What's the same

The new Statement of Entitlement does not represent a change of direction for Church school RE. It reaffirms long-held principles that will already feel familiar to many RE leads. Christianity remains at the heart of RE in Church schools, taught as a living, diverse and global faith. RE continues to be a distinct, non-confessional academic subject, clearly separate from collective worship. High expectations for curriculum quality, subject leadership, and inclusion remain firmly in place.

Most importantly, the vision is unchanged: RE exists to help every pupil flourish, developing religious literacy, respectful understanding of others, and space to explore their own worldview in a complex world.

What's different

What has changed is the level of clarity and confidence with which these expectations are now expressed. The new Statement is more explicit about curriculum balance, disciplinary approaches, and time allocation. It clearly names theology, philosophy, and the human and social sciences as essential lenses for RE. Non-religious worldviews are referenced consistently and intentionally.

There is also sharper accountability. The Statement now aligns directly with the National Content Standard for RE and will be used as a key reference point for SIAMS from September 2026. Expectations around curriculum time, Christianity comprising at least 50% of RE, and provision at KS4 and KS5 are stated plainly.

In short, the new Statement does not ask schools to start again, but it does invite RE leads to look again with fresh eyes, ensuring that strong practice is made visible, intentional, and sustainable for the years ahead.

STATEMENT OF ENTITLEMENT – RE LEAD CHECKLIST

RE Leads' Traffic-Light Self-Review

Updated Statement of Entitlement (from September 2026)

- Green – securely in place
- Orange – partially in place / in progress
- Red – not yet in place / needs attention

Curriculum intent and structure

- ● ● RE is clearly separate from collective worship and identified as an academic subject
- ● ● Christianity is at least 50% of RE curriculum time in each phase
- ● ● A range of religious and non-religious worldviews is studied
- ● ● The RE curriculum is well-sequenced and shows progression
- ● ● Curriculum time meets expectations (minimum 5%, aiming towards 10%)

Curriculum approach and content

- ● ● Teaching uses theology, philosophy, and human/social sciences
- ● ● Pupils develop religious literacy, not just factual knowledge
- ● ● Global Christianity and diversity within religions are evident
- ● ● Belief, practice, identity, continuity and change are explored
- ● ● Common misconceptions are challenged explicitly

Teaching, learning, and assessment

- ● ● RE is taught in an objective, critical, pluralistic way
- ● ● Pupils explore and articulate their personal worldviews
- ● ● Classroom dialogue is respectful and informed
- ● ● Assessment reflects different forms of knowledge
- ● ● Provision meets the needs of all pupils, including SEND

Leadership and support

- ● ● There is a named RE lead with appropriate time and status
- ● ● Senior leaders understand and champion RE's distinctive role
- ● ● Governors know how RE is monitored and evaluated
- ● ● Staff teaching RE access training and subject support
- ● ● The curriculum has been discussed with or shaped alongside the diocese

Secondary and post-16 (where applicable)

- ● ● All pupils follow a recognised RS qualification at KS4
- ● ● Christianity is a significant component of KS4 provision
- ● ● RE provision is in place at KS5, beyond A-levels where relevant

THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION QUALITY MARK

The **Religious Education Quality Mark (REQM)** is a nationally recognised award that celebrates strong Religious Education and supports schools in developing it further. For Church schools, it aligns closely with the expectations of SIAMS and the Church of England Statement of Entitlement.



One of the strengths of the REQM is that **much of the evidence is already familiar**. Curriculum intent and implementation, pupil voice, leadership oversight, staff development and impact are the same areas you routinely consider for SIAMS. The REQM simply brings this together in a focused and purposeful way.

Importantly, the REQM offers a way to **demonstrate ongoing development in RE even when you are not in a SIAMS window**. It supports subject leaders in reflecting on practice, identifying next steps and raising the profile of RE across the school. The bronze, silver and gold awards allow schools to engage at a level that matches where they currently are.

I went through the REQM process a couple of years ago with St Mary's CEVA, where we were awarded Gold, and found it a genuinely helpful and affirming experience. If you are considering the REQM and would like to talk it through or have some support along the way, please do get in touch.

CELEBRATING RE AND SPECIAL NEEDS

WHAT CAN YOU DO? SPECIAL NEEDS



There's no better place to celebrate the diversity and meaning of RE than in the setting of a special school. Try something new. Explore some different sensory experiences and show parents, carers and visitors that the school values RE.

Bring a new artefact to the classroom A new Buddha statue, image of Krishna or Ganesha, or a Celtic cross could be wrapped up, with children taking turns to unwrap it. They could then show where they would like to put the new addition to the room and help create a beautiful place to put it, using gold and silver material.

Experience a different festival Taking the theme of Tu B'Shevat (the Jewish New Year for Trees), children could experience a new linked fragrance, such as pomegranate or rosemary. Where appropriate, taste some different fruit, such as Sharon fruit. Children could touch the trees around the school building and make rubbings from the bark.



Celebrating RE
Special Needs



Make sensory RE umbrellas A sensory umbrella is Flo Longhorn's idea. Create a sensory umbrella using a range of objects hanging from the spokes so pupils can literally be surrounded by stimulus from the faiths. An Easter umbrella, taken into a sensory room, could include symbols of new life, plastic daffodils, bunnies and chicks as well as crosses made from fluorescent paper or material. Ultraviolet light and Christian devotional music will add to the awe and wonder. www.multi-sensory.com.co.uk



Create RE windows The pupils could make stained glass style windows by putting sticky backed plastic sticks inside a simple template. The moon and star symbol for Islam could be used. Add tissue paper onto the plastic and then PVA glue all over to make it stiff and glossy. The end result could be displayed on the windows of the classroom.



Explore a new religion Teachers, support assistants and pupils can learn together about a religion or belief, for example, Zoroastrianism, Judaism or the Bahá'í Faith. Pupils could learn Makaton symbols for love, peace, unity and one world. They could recognise the beautiful Lotus Temple in Delhi www.bahaindia.org/temple and the Bahá'í nine pointed star and ringstone symbol.

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Religious Education Council of England and Wales

The Statement of Entitlement makes it clear that **all learners must have access to and engage with RE**. What does this mean in practice for pupils with special educational needs. RE is often a subject in which children who struggle with reading and writing can thrive, particularly through discussion, reflection and shared thinking. However, for some pupils, needs go further and even oracy can present significant challenges. This guidance from the Religious Education Council offers practical support and thoughtful prompts to help teachers consider how RE can remain meaningful, inclusive and ambitious for pupils with a wide range of needs, ensuring that entitlement does not become aspiration alone. **Click the image to access the full document on the RE Council website.**

SPIRITED ARTS COMPETITION

Spirited Arts is NATRE's long-established creative competition for pupils aged 3 to 19, offering a structured opportunity to explore big questions about religion, belief and spirituality through art, writing, performance and other expressive forms. Schools may submit up to ten entries responding to one of the annual themes, with judging organised by Key Stage wherever possible. Prizes are awarded generously: individual winners receive a £20 Amazon voucher, paired entries receive £10 per pupil, and group or class entries typically receive a £50–£100 award in the form of a voucher or school cheque. Additional awards may be made for exceptional work, particularly from 14–19 learners, and schools with winning entries also receive prizes, often including vouchers or publications from RE Today or NATRE.

For 2026, pupils are invited to respond creatively to one of the following **Spirited Arts themes**:

- **Living in a diverse world**
- **Stories that change lives**
- **Thinking about God?**
- **Sacred Places**
- **All God's Creatures?**
- **Making sense of life**



Each theme offers rich scope for theological, philosophical and personal exploration across the age range. Click the image below to explore the themes in more detail and find guidance on how to enter.



EXPLORING THE SACRED IN RE

Exploring the Sacred in RE

Guidance created by the SEER group, July 2025

What do we mean by 'sacred'?

The word 'sacred' can mean different things to different people. For many people, 'sacred' is connected with religious belief or practice; for others, it might refer to valuing the natural world, for example. It can refer to something that is set apart or special, for example, a sacred text, object or ritual.

How might we explore the 'sacred' in RE?

By introducing pupils to special moments, places, objects, rituals or stories, for example, the arti ceremony (Hindu Dharma), the festival of Hanukkah (Jewish worldviews), the story of creation (religious worldviews)

By supporting pupils to understand that the opportunity to learn about other people's worldviews is a gift from those who live them out and therefore must be treated with respect



Key Questions to Consider

Why are we using / doing this? Where does it sit within our sequence of learning?

Do the pupils understand how it is viewed and used within the religious / non-religious worldview?

How might an adherent of the worldview feel about the way that we are using it?

Exploring the Sacred in RE: Case Study

Year 2 are due to learn about Shabbat as part of their broader learning about Jewish worldviews. Mr Patel has been planning the lesson. He wants the pupils to understand how important the Shabbat meal is to many Jewish people. He decides to introduce the learning by teaching the pupils about the Jewish creation story. He wants pupils to make connections between the importance of the day of rest in this creation story and the Shabbat meal. Pupils have previously learned about the story of creation in Early Years.

Mr Patel is keen that pupils understand the lived reality of Jewish worldviews. He wants them to begin to understand that not every Jewish person will celebrate the Shabbat meal in exactly the same way. However, he also wants them to understand that there are some things about the Shabbat meal that make it distinctively Jewish and very special.

How might Mr Patel go about introducing pupils to Shabbat? What would the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches be? Are there any approaches he should avoid? Why might this be? Reflect on the options – not all would represent best practice!



Option 1: Buy a loaf of bread the day before the lesson and during the lesson, arrange the classroom so that all pupils are sat around one large table. During the lesson, pupils share the bread, and Mr Patel plays a kiddush prayer on the whiteboard via YouTube.

Option 2: Introduce some special objects, e.g. candlesticks and candles, challah bread, Kiddush cup, Havdalah, seder plate. Ask pupils to say how they think Jewish people might use these objects during the Shabbat meal. Show pupils a video of a Jewish family sharing the Shabbat meal and make connections with the objects. Ask pupils to draw a Shabbat table and label special objects. Ask pupils to discuss whether Shabbat is a special time for Jewish people

Option 3: Ask pupils to reflect on the idea of rest and how rest is part of their own lives. Explore the Jewish story of creation and discuss how different Jewish people might be inspired by the story of creation. Introduce pupils to at least one Jewish person and support them to ask questions to find out more about what the Shabbat meal looks like in their household. Support them to understand that it might look different in a different Jewish home, e.g. by watching a video clip and asking questions like, 'What is happening here? Who is this? Where is this? When is this? Does everyone do this in the same way? Which moments are special? How do we know that this meal is important to (many) Jewish people by watching this video? How do we know? What does this tell us about rest?'

Questions to Consider

1. Mr Patel wants his pupils to make connections between rest, Shabbat and Jewish worldviews – how does he know whether the option he chooses is the most authentic way of representing this aspect of Jewish worldviews?
2. How might the sequence of previous learning impact on the choices Mr Patel makes in this lesson?
3. How does Mr Patel know that the objects he is using in his lesson are a) authentic and b) appropriate?
4. How does each option support pupils to understand the significance of Shabbat to Jewish people and the different ways in which it might be celebrated by different Jewish people?
5. How might a Jewish person feel about the way Mr Patel is representing Shabbat in his classroom? Does this matter?

Top Tips

School Leaders

- School have a duty to promote British Values and work within the Equalities Act 2010; this includes having due regard for the right to freedom of religion and belief. It is important to be confident that the whole curriculum is in line with this legislation.
- Parents have the right to withdraw their children either partially or wholly from the RE curriculum. Schools should have a clear process that is accessible to parents. Part of this will include sharing information about the RE curriculum, including how different religious and non-religious worldviews are respectfully presented and engaged with
- Care should be taken to ensure that the context of the school is reflected in its approach to curriculum, teaching and learning

RE Subject Leader

- Regular monitoring and evaluation should provide confidence in the way in which the RE curriculum is being implemented. There are a variety of different pedagogical approaches that could be used in the context of the RE curriculum. Where pupils are engaging with the lived experience of religion and belief, care needs to be taken to avoid unintentionally presenting misconceptions and stereotypes. It is important to be sensitive to and show respect for religious and non-religious worldviews, considering when it may be appropriate or inappropriate to 'act out' sacred rituals, rites of passage, stories, etc.
- Regular monitoring and evaluation should provide evidence of teachers' confidence in teaching RE. Where necessary, staff should be supported through ongoing professional development and training to explore the sacred in the RE classroom effectively

Classroom Teacher

- Learning about religious and non-religious worldviews should not be superficial; pupils should have the opportunity to engage with key concepts, beliefs, practices, traditions, ways of thinking, etc., including the ways in which they connect with each other
- Pupils should engage with different ways in which people live out their religious and non-religious worldviews, asking questions about how this may be affected by their context
- Learning in RE should help pupils become more consciously aware of their own worldviews, including their own beliefs, values, ways of living, ways of thinking, etc.



BRILLIANT RE IN ACTION

Over the past year, I have had the privilege of working alongside a number of schools through dedicated RE focus days. There is now a small suite of fully planned RE days available for free to Gold SLA schools, which can be accessed by emailing me directly or via your DSC. These days are designed to support strong, thoughtful RE that is both academically robust and deeply engaging for pupils.

BRIGSTOCK LATHAM'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

One of these has been the RE in 3D Day, where pupils explore what it means to study RE through theological, philosophical, and sociological lenses. Children are invited not only to understand these disciplines, but to use them, reflecting on what they reveal about belief, meaning, identity, and ultimately their own worldview. Pupils at Brigstock Latham's CE Primary School responded with insight and creativity, producing thoughtful and personal outcomes that demonstrated genuine depth of understanding.



WESTON FAVELL CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Alongside this, Big Frieze launch days have been helping to re-ignite interest in the Big Frieze as a powerful resource for anchoring children's understanding of the big story of the Bible. Through story, enquiry, and visual mapping, pupils encounter how individual biblical narratives fit into a wider, coherent whole. Weston Favell CE Primary School did particularly strong work in bringing the Frieze to life in ways that were both accessible and theologically rich.



RE DAYS FOR YOUR SCHOOL

There is also the opportunity to book a **Global Christianity day**, a **Spirituality in RE** focus day, or an **RE and Global Justice** day, or to work with me to create a **bespoke RE day** shaped to your school's context and priorities. This support is included within **Gold SLA entitlement** and can be accessed via your **DSC** or by emailing ziggy.brown@peterborough-diocese.org.uk.

POSADA CELEBRATIONS AT ST JAMES CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

During Advent, pupils across the school took part in a Posada journey, welcoming Mary and Joseph into their classrooms as a focus for prayer, reflection, and discussion about welcome, inclusion, and the true meaning of Christmas. Through the story *The Grumpy Owl and the Joy of Christmas*, children explored themes of belonging, kindness, and compassion.

Pupils responded through art, writing, prayer, and role play, reflecting on how they could show welcome to others in their own lives. Each year group engaged with age-appropriate questions linked to joy and hospitality, and acts of kindness were shared across the school community. The journey concluded in church during the Christmas service, as Baby Jesus was placed in the manger, drawing the Posada to a close and celebrating the Advent message of love, hope, and welcome for all.

