A decorative vertical bar on the left side of the page, colored purple. It features a repeating pattern of white and light purple religious symbols, including a crescent moon with a star, a cross, a wheel, and a stylized figure.

## Understanding Religious Education

### An information leaflet for students, parents and carers

### *Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)*

### *East Riding of Yorkshire Council*


#### **Introduction**

Sometimes parents and carers have concerns about the teaching of religious education (RE). They may think that the RE taught in schools today is like the ‘Scripture’ or ‘Religious Instruction’ lessons that they may have experienced when they were at school. Nothing could be further from the truth. The principle purpose of RE today is to help pupils to understand themselves and the world around them, including people who may have very different cultures and beliefs from their own. It helps them to learn respect for themselves, for others and for the place in which they live, as well as awareness that, for many of those around them, this may also include respect for God. Religion and belief have an impact on people’s values, attitudes, words and actions in their personal, work and social life in local, national and international contexts. RE teaching promotes the wellbeing of each child and also supports community cohesion.

#### **The legal status of RE**

The law requires that every maintained school in England must provide RE for all registered pupils at the school (including those in the sixth form), except to those withdrawn by their parents (or by students withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 and over). Separate regulations covering maintained special schools require them to ensure that, so far as is practicable, a pupil receives RE.

The guidance on the RE provided in each local authority (LA) is contained in a **Locally Agreed Syllabus (LAS)** that reflects the religious and faith communities of the local area. In all maintained schools RE must be taught according to either the LAS, or in accordance with the school’s designated denomination or faith. The headteacher shares responsibility with the East Riding Council and the governing body for making sure that these requirements are met.



In each LA the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is charged with ensuring the quality of provision for RE (and also of collective worship) in local schools and the effectiveness of support for its teaching. SACRE is also able to respond to parental/carers concerns about the provision of RE in a local school. The East Riding SACRE regularly reviews the provision for, and standards of, RE in schools. A report on the quality of RE is produced at the end of each year and will be published on [www.qcda.gov.uk](http://www.qcda.gov.uk).

### **The purposes of RE**

RE explores challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human through:

- developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other principal religions, other religious traditions and other world views, including secular perspectives
- offering opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development
- enhancing pupils' awareness of religions and beliefs, teachings, practices and forms of expression, as well as of the influence of religion on individuals, families, communities and cultures
- encouraging pupils to learn from different religions, beliefs, values and traditions while exploring their own beliefs and questions of meaning
- challenging pupils to reflect on, consider, analyse, interpret and evaluate issues of truth, belief, faith and ethics and to communicate their responses
- encouraging pupils to develop their sense of identity and belonging
- enabling them to flourish individually within their communities and as citizens of the global community
- playing an important role in preparing pupils for adult life, employment and lifelong learning
- enabling pupils to develop respect for and sensitivity to others, in particular those whose faiths and beliefs are different from their own and so helps to combat prejudice.

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### RE supports:

- **spiritual development**, for example by promoting discussion and reflection on key questions of meaning and truth, such as the origins of the universe, life after death, good and evil, and beliefs about God
- **moral development**, for example by helping young people to explore the influence of family, friends and media on moral choices and how society is influenced by beliefs, teachings, guidance from religious leaders and sacred texts
- **social development** and provides opportunities for pupils to express their own and others' ideas on a range of contemporary social issues
- **cultural development** through enabling pupils to engage with people, literature, arts and resources from differing cultures.

**RE contributes significantly** to each school's duty to promote the **wellbeing** of pupils. It is particularly relevant to wellbeing in the relational, emotional, social, moral, intellectual, economic and spiritual aspects of life.

### RE contributes significantly to the five outcomes of **Every Child Matters**:

- offering information and insights on the impact of beliefs, practices and values
- allowing pupils to explore the consequences of attitudes to authority, property and relationships, and to develop empathy for others
- challenging pupils in ways that stimulate them and give them a sense of achievement
- fostering a sense of self-awareness and identity that encourages positive participation in school and community life
- raising issues of immediate and future relevance such as attitudes to wealth and poverty, skills for living and working in a diverse society and sustaining the planet.



**RE contributes significantly to community cohesion** by helping to promote shared values, respect for all, and challenging racism and discrimination. It also involves the study of matters of global significance recognising the diversity of religion and belief and their impact on world issues.

### **Further information**

#### **The latest national guidance on RE:**

[www.qcda.gov.uk/libraryAssets/media/8222-DCSF-Religious\\_Ed\\_in\\_Eng-consultation-FINAL.pdf](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/libraryAssets/media/8222-DCSF-Religious_Ed_in_Eng-consultation-FINAL.pdf)

*Non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education*  
Qualifications & Curriculum Authority [QCA] 2004

#### **Local guidance on RE:**

[www.reweb.org.uk](http://www.reweb.org.uk)

**Anglican Diocese of York** - syllabus and guidelines for CE (VA) schools:

[www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/education](http://www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/education)

**Catholic Education Service** for RC (VA) schools:

<http://www.cesew.org.uk>

#### **East Riding SACRE officers:**

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