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THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich



The Church School RE Subject Leaders Handbook

Thank you for all you do in leading RE in one of our church schools.

The role of the RE subject leader is different to any other subject leadership role. It is a core subject, but not part of the National Curriculum and also has an opt out clause for parents/carers.

It is a crucial subject to ensure that children have the knowledge they need to navigate successfully in an increasingly complex world and to enable each a safe space to explore the questions of meaning that the RE classroom thrives upon.

As a subject leader, you will not only have to promote a much misunderstood subject, model high standards of teaching and think about progress and attainment, but you also need to be aware of the wider RE world and changes and developments in the subject at a national level. You may be aware of the Statement of Entitlement with its ambition for RE specialists in every school and wondering how best to achieve this as well as strengthen your teachers' subject knowledge at a time where it feels every curriculum area is competing for CPD.

I am here to help and support as you navigate through the world of RE. Please do contact me with any queries.

Rachel Cutts, Diocesan Schools' Adviser
Rachel.Cutts@cofesuffolk.org

Effective RE leadership

Based on national subject leader standards, we want to see...

Pupils who...

- show sustained improvement in their RE subject knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to prior attainment;
- understand the key ideas in RE at a level appropriate to their age and stage of development;
- show improvement in overall literacy and oracy skills, as well as their religious literacy;
- are well prepared for any tasks, tests or examinations in RE;
- are enthusiastic about RE, seeing its relevance, and highly motivated to continue with their studies;
- through their attitudes and behaviour, contribute to a purposeful working environment in lessons;
- demonstrate the ability to engage respectfully with those whose beliefs differ from their own

Teachers who...

- work well together on RE, and show an enthusiasm which reinforces the motivation of pupils;
- support the aims of the subject and understand how they relate to the school's aims;
- are involved in the formation of policies and plans and apply them consistently in the classroom;
- are dedicated to improving standards of teaching and learning in RE;
- have high expectations for pupils and set realistic but challenging targets based on a good knowledge of their pupils and the progression of concepts in the subject;
- make good use of guidance, training and support to enhance their RE knowledge and develop expertise in their teaching;
- take account of relevant research and inspection findings
- make effective use of subject-specific resources;
- select appropriate teaching and learning approaches to meet RE objectives and pupil needs

Parents/carers who...

- are well informed about the nature of RE and the idea of being religiously literate in a modern world;
- show interest in their child's learning and achievements in RE;
- know how they can support or assist their child's learning in the subject;

Headteachers and other senior managers who...

- understand the needs of RE, its statutory obligations, and the role it can play in a child's education;

- ensure all children receive their RE entitlement and that all staff are well resourced and trained;
- use information about achievements and development priorities in RE in order to make well informed decisions and achieve greater improvements in whole school development
- work with the Subject Leader, Foundation Governors and other staff, to prepare for SIAMS inspection

Other adults in the school and community, who...

- are informed of RE subject matter, achievements and priorities;
- are able, where appropriate, to play an effective role in supporting the teaching and learning of RE in the school, including the involvement of local faith communities

Documents to read



The Church of England Education Office issues its own Statement of Entitlement to good quality, inclusive RE. Do you feel that pupils in your school currently get this entitlement?

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/re-statement-of-entitlement-for-church-schools.pdf>



It's always good to make yourself familiar with the current **SIAMS Framework**, particularly the sections relating to RE.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/church-schools-and-academies/siams-inspections>



The 2018 **Final Report of the Commission on RE** which sets out a National Plan for RE comprising of 11 recommendations.

<https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/>

RE and the Law

- RE is a statutory subject of the school curriculum for all pupils aged between 5 and 19.
- RE is to be delivered in accordance with the Locally Agreed Syllabus in VC schools and former VC academies. For academies we suggest the Suffolk syllabus.
- In VA schools, or former VA Academies, RE is to be delivered in accordance with the school's trust deeds.

Right of Withdrawal for Parents/carers: Due to the history of the subject, the right to withdraw was first granted in 1944. RE used to be called Religious Instruction and focused far more on nurturing Christian faith. RE is very different now to how it was then – it's now multi-faith and non-confessional. Parents/carers still have the right to withdraw their children from RE on the grounds that they wish to provide their own RE. This right of withdrawal exists for all pupils in all types of school, including schools with and without a religious designation. Students aged 18 or over have the right to withdraw themselves from RE. Parents/carers also have the right to withdraw their child from part of RE and can do so without giving any explanation. It is always the parents/carers responsibility to provide learning activities during this RE time, and the schools responsibility to provide supervision.

Right of Withdrawal for Teachers: Teachers may have the right to withdraw from the teaching of RE. However, this does not apply to teachers who have been specifically employed to teach or lead RE or teachers in VA schools. If a teacher wishes to withdraw from the teaching of RE, a letter requesting this must be submitted to the head of the school and chair of governors. If a teacher withdraws from the teaching of RE, the school must still make provisions for the pupils to receive their entitlement to RE.

GUIDANCE: DEALING WITH WITHDRAWAL FROM RE



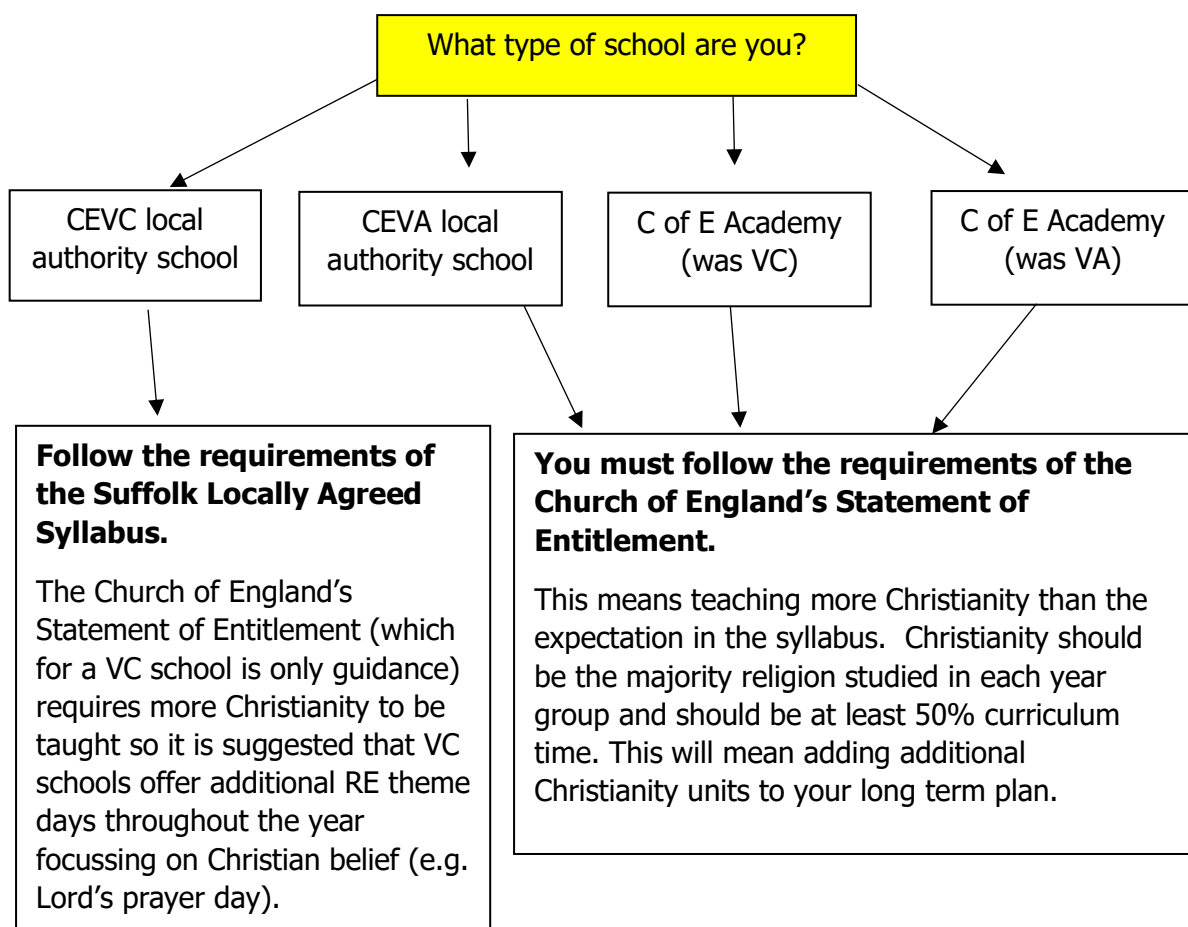
<https://www.natre.org.uk/membership/guidance-on-withdrawal/>

From NATRE: Ten tips to manage the right of withdrawal in your school

1. Include a short statement about RE being **inclusive** in your prospectus and on your website. Inclusive RE is essential.
2. Give information about withdrawal on your website after **positive explanations** about what RE in your school is. Parents/carers are often trying to withdraw from something you don't do.
3. Use parents/carers' evenings, assemblies and displays to **showcase** what goes on in RE lessons and to promote religious literacy, cultural diversity and visits to places of worship.

4. Parents/carers have a right of withdrawal from all of RE or part of RE. Some schools choose to state that they are not supportive of selective withdrawal from part of RE. This does not override a parental right to withdraw from part of RE – if requested, this partial withdrawal must be granted.
5. Ask parents/carers considering withdrawal to contact the head teacher to arrange a discussion.
6. Ensure that parents/carers who wish to withdraw their children are met with quickly.
7. Discuss the religious issues the parents/carers would object to their child being taught about.
8. Show parents/carers the kinds of things you do in RE by showing the locally agreed syllabus, aims of RE, learning objectives and examples of lessons.
9. If a parent has withdrawn their child from RE it is **good practice to review** this with the parent every year.
10. Parents/carers can only withdraw their child from RE, not other curriculum areas. For example, pupils can't be withdrawn from a study of religious art in an art lesson, or parts of the history curriculum such as the study of Christian conversions.

How much Christianity should I teach?



Please do contact me if you have any queries regarding this. I am very happy to help with shaping your long-term plans to fit your school.



All church schools have a SIAMS inspection (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist schools) every 3 to 5 years. The principal objective of the inspection is to evaluate the distinctiveness, effectiveness and sustainability of the school as a church school.

You can find your school's last report on our Diocesan website, although it should be on your school website too. <https://www.cofesuffolk.org/inspections>

SIAMS explores ways in which each school's theologically rooted Christian vision drives its work and enables the school to live up to its foundation as a Church school. It does so by seeking to answer Inspection Questions (IQs).

IQ1: How does the school's theologically rooted Christian vision enable pupils and adults to flourish?

IQ2: How does the curriculum reflect the school's theologically rooted Christian vision?

IQ3: How is collective worship enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually?

IQ4: How does the school's theologically rooted Christian vision create a culture in which pupils and adults are treated well?

IQ5: How does the school's theologically rooted Christian vision create an active culture of justice and responsibility?

IQ6: Is the religious education curriculum effective (with reference to the expectations set out in the Church of England's Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education)?

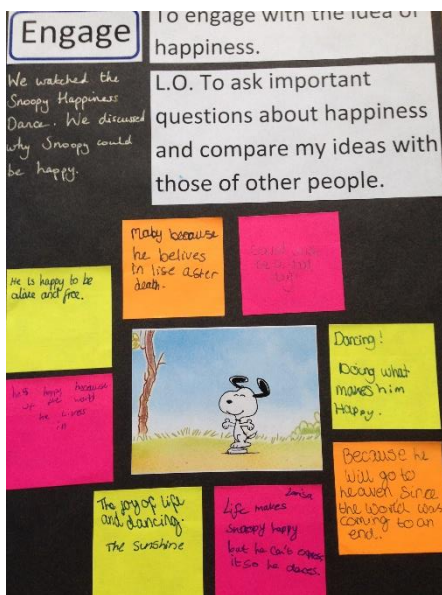
IQ7: What is the quality of religious education? (**just VA or formally VA schools**)

The SIAMS inspector will look at RE in all church schools to see how it contributes to the overall effectiveness of the school as a church school. School leaders and managers can expect questions about issues related to RE such as:

- 1. Do arrangements for RE meet statutory requirements?**
- 2. Is priority given to staff expertise and specialist qualifications in RE?**
- 3. Is priority given to professional development in RE?**
- 4. What is the level of resourcing for RE?**

If you require more support in preparing for a SIAMS inspection, do contact me. We can discuss what they day may look like and visit your school for a SIAMS support session. We can also provide training, bespoke for your school, for governors and/or staff.

How should we record our RE learning?



Scrapbooks

Alongside the introduction of The Emmanuel Project, many schools were encouraged to adopt the use of class 'scrapbooks' for RE. Trials showed how using scrapbooks could make a huge difference to pupil attitudes to learning in RE and helped teachers focus their teaching more clearly and learn to enjoy RE and understand religions better **themselves**.

Scrapbooks contain a record of the teaching and learning of a particular unit of work in the RE scheme. It may contain pictures, photos, post-its and text describing the journey through the unit. A particular feature should be the recording of children's responses to key questions asked in each lesson, making it a valuable record of 'pupil voice'.

Scrapbooking may help...

The RE subject leader to help a teacher see the flow and focus of the unit and gain a sense of what they are doing as they progress through the Enquiry cycle (it is easier to check this with a single book), make suggestions to improve delivery, offer encouragement, spot misunderstandings about RE and consider possible training needs.

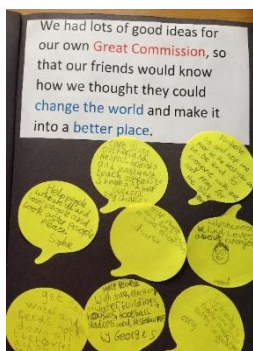
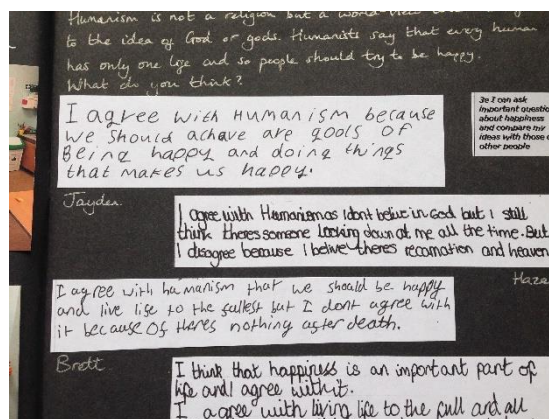
The class teacher to celebrate the children's learning, especially the answers / comments they give in discussion and to have a record of children's ideas and questions.

The pupils to record their ideas and learning, so it can be used for review in class, for reading with friends, and also for sharing their learning with Leaders, Governors and Inspectors.

Older pupils to take responsibility for creating the scrapbook and to share their own take on the work being done by their class

The Governors to be able to see what is happening in RE and have a clearly set out body of work to discuss with children.

For Inspectors and Senior Leaders to have easy access to the pupils' attitudes and insights in RE.



All scrapbooks should:

- Leave the reader clear as to the RE being taught.
- Connect the pictures and text to the key questions of the unit
- Feature a range of children's answers to key questions
- Contain pictures labelled referring to the activity/ purpose.
- Have a sense of progress through a unit/key question.
- Be owned, shared and reviewed with children

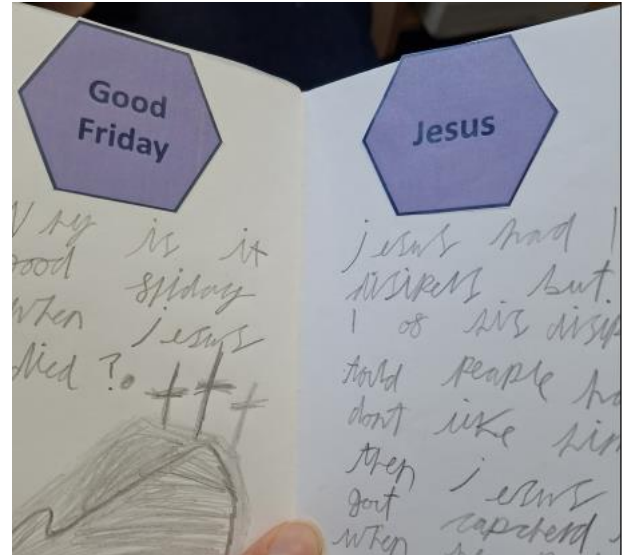
What about alternatives to scrapbooks?

Scrapbooks in RE are not compulsory. Many schools are now using other methods of recording instead of or to supplement class scrapbooks. These include the following:

- A pupil book for RE
- A pupil book for assessment in RE, which contains one assessment piece for each unit, and is added to as they move up the school.

It is for you to decide what method of recording is most appropriate for your school and teachers but it may be useful to consider the following questions:

1. If you commit to class RE books, how will you ensure the work recorded is of a high standard?
2. How will you avoid a set of incomplete exercise books by the end of the year?
3. If you commit to scrapbooks, how will you ensure that all children have their responses recorded?
4. How can you ensure that the method you choose will not be overly cumbersome for the class teacher?



What will you call it?

Some schools feel that the term 'scrapbook' may indicate that work included is 'scrap' and of less value. To avoid this, other suggested names include, "Class book", "Big book" or "Floor Book".

Remember that evidence doesn't always have to be written!

Avoid the temptation to turn RE into another Literacy lesson (although to have high expectations and use of Literacy targets whilst writing in RE is fine). Written work has its place but should be mixed with other ways of communicating. Photographic or video evidence of dance, drama or role play can be used and can be stuck into books or kept electronically. For an inspection it is necessary and useful to keep progressive evidence but that doesn't mean pupils writing facts in every lesson.

Subject: RE			
Date:	30.09.24	Waymarker:	Judaism
LO: To ENGAGE with the idea of saying sorry, changing and forgiveness			
		Teacher	
		B	E
I understand what it means to say sorry			✓
I can show different ways people say sorry			✓
I understand that sometimes Sorry can be a hard word to say			✓

EYFS and RE

Are Foundation stage children too young to do RE?

Research seems to suggest that early childhood is a time when deep spiritual experiences often happen.



Can young children understand abstract ideas such as God?

Abstract ideas are things that cannot be seen or touched. John M. Hull, in his book 'God Talk with Young Children,' suggests it is a mistake to think that young children cannot understand these types of ideas at all. They have some degree of understanding of ideas such as love and

other things that cannot be touched or seen, such as 'tomorrow.' If abstract ideas are embedded in concrete experiences or stories, children have more chance of understanding them.

Some things that make RE easier for young children

Children can handle more if what they are being asked to think about is well within their experience. The following may help

- Learning is within the context of stories and situations.
- Role play is helpful.
- Encourage imagination and empathy, as these are crucial to moral and spiritual development. Ask questions about characters; how do you think he feels? Insist on a few seconds thinking time before a response
- Encourage the use of stories and books in RE.

More information and resources are available on our EYFS Padlet:

<https://cofesuffolk.padlet.org/jacquistudd1/eyfs-re-tocf2p7qhdpwqzv>

Visits and Visitors

We have a padlet which can help with finding suitable places to visit and/or visitors to come into school. <https://cofesuffolk.padlet.org/jacquistudd1/organising-visits-and-visitors-hmxu6h3ldfm5wmhs>

Visits to places of worship are an invaluable learning opportunity, as is a visitor who communicates clearly and relates with young people. Both can create memorable and challenging learning experiences but it is important to get it right, to ensure the experience is a positive one for all involved. It is important to have a very clear rationale available to parents/carers and others about visits to places of worship. Reasons for arranging such visits include:

- Education is about extending pupils' knowledge, understanding and experience of the world.
- Religion is a very important factor in society and it is essential that children have opportunities to explore religious practice and belief
- The experience of visiting a place of worship can help children to learn about religions but isn't about indoctrination or persuading children and young people to agree with the beliefs of the religion being studied.
- A visit to a place of worship also provides opportunities for pupils' cultural development by enabling them to experience new or different forms of art, architecture and music.
- The atmosphere of many places of worship can provide an opportunity for pupils to consider questions about life, religion and spirituality.
- The visit is often led by a guide who is able to answer the children's questions and thus they have the benefits of meeting an adherent of a worldview that might be different from their own.

A pre-visit is suggested. It is important that teachers are familiar with the location and with the members of the faith community who will be welcoming the visit. During this visit teachers can note items of specific interest so that activities or trails can be prepared for the pupils. They can also conduct a risk assessment and find out answers to the following:

- Dress code and formal greetings - pupils should be prepared beforehand that some places of worship may require a dress code.
- What pupils can and cannot do at the place of worship - pupils need to be aware that it would be considered disrespectful to touch things without invitation. Moving quietly and respectfully is essential in a place of worship especially where people may be coming in and out for private prayer.
- Whether food will be offered to pupils during the visit, and how this will be managed in accordance with your school policies.
- Whether photos / video may be taken

Natre have produced a checklist to support schools with RE visits and visitors.

[https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Guidance%20on%20Resources/7\)%20Visits%20and%20visitors/\(8.2\)%20Checklist.pdf](https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Guidance%20on%20Resources/7)%20Visits%20and%20visitors/(8.2)%20Checklist.pdf)

During the visit

To help pupils to realise that the building is about people in the present, as well as the past, they may have an opportunity to meet and talk to people who worship in the building. They may spend some time sitting in silence to appreciate the atmosphere, the splendour or simplicity of the building. The children may be encouraged to consider key questions, such

as: What interests you? What puzzles you? How does it feel to sit here? How might this building help people worship? What clues are there about how people worship? What is similar here to other places of worship? What is different here?

Children may be asked to observe design, symbols, colours and objects and to consider their importance: Where are objects situated? Why? What is this for? Who uses it? What books are used? Who uses this building? What posters and notices are there? What do they tell us about this worshipping community? They may: listen to music; listen to a speaker from the faith community; draw things that interests them; follow a religious objects trail and make notes and sketch things of interest to them.

Handling parental concerns

In accordance with the 1998 School Standards & Framework Act, it is the right of any parent to withdraw their child from Religious Education (either all, or part). If a request is made concerning withdrawal from a visit, alternative provision must be made available for such children at school. It is usually better to pre-empt any worries by letting parents/carers know in advance exactly what is and is not going to happen.

Tips:

1. Combining a visit to a place of worship with other activities can help to avoid parents/carers withdrawing their children from the visit and also broaden pupils' experiences.
2. Be clear that the purpose of the trip is educational. The children have a role: to be investigators and observers.
3. Ensure children are well-prepared and have a key question they know they are going to investigate. This needs to be communicated to parents/carers. It is not just a 'visit'; they are going to find out certain things and they will report back.
4. Visits to places of worship provide an opportunity to find out about what goes on, and why, but not to take part. Some parents/carers raise concerns about their child having to cover their head or take off their shoes when entering a place of worship. It is helpful to anticipate this concern and make it clear to parents/carers that such actions are signs of respect not a prelude to or part of any act of worship. The school has been invited into someone else's private space and it is entirely appropriate that children and staff are respectful to their traditions and etiquettes.
5. All children should understand that if they are present at an act of worship their role is to observe patiently and quietly – what can they learn? Children may be offered food; they need to know they can say: Yes please or no politely with a smile.
6. Particular care should be taken over certain elements such as 'dressing up' or 'acting out', and teachers should be aware that for some pupils and/or their parents/carers, this may cross the line between observing and participating. It may be safer to ask for a volunteer to demonstrate e.g. wearing clothing, prayer positions, rather than suggesting that 'everyone does it', or at the very least, making it clear that such actions are voluntary.

Visitors

Inviting visitors to school can be a valuable experience for pupils. Ensure the visitor is briefed on the following:

- the purpose of the visit
- the age and ability of the pupils
- the time allocated for the visit and what you hope will be achieved in the given time
- travelling instructions

Ensure that the visitor is aware that the school visit must not be used in order to impose their personal views upon pupils. The speaker must not denigrate other faiths or organisations in an attempt to promote their own. It is your responsibility to do what you can to ensure that the visitor is highly likely to offer the quality of experience that you and the pupils expect. Ideally, you should meet the visitor in person prior to the visit.

Other preparation:

- Pupils should be encouraged to prepare questions to ask the visitor.
- Inform the class about behaving respectfully towards visitors and any artefacts they might use.
- The teacher should remain in the classroom during the lesson. The teacher needs to be in control of the session and can prompt pupils or the speaker to ensure that the discussion is relevant and that the objectives of the visit are achieved.
- At the end of the lesson, thank the visitor and ensure that they can leave the premises safely.

The NATRE Code of Conduct:

Members of belief communities taking part in the life of the school, including visits to places of worship, should:

- be willing to share their own experiences, beliefs and insights, but avoid:
 - i. criticising the experience and insights of others and
 - ii. imposing their views on pupils in any way
- be familiar with the school's aims, ethos and policies and plan their involvement in the light of the aims and curriculum at the school;
- seek to use engaging teaching and learning methods that involve the pupils actively, and to communicate at appropriate levels for the age group(s) concerned;
- be willing to respect and value the beliefs of any pupils and adults in the school when they are different from their own;
- develop ways of speaking to pupils that communicate their open approach, avoiding any hidden agenda to 'convert' or proselytise;
- seek to uphold the principle of the 'Golden Rule' e.g. *'If a member of another religion or belief visited my child's school and contributed in the same way that I have done, would I, as a parent, be happy with the education given?'*

Resources and Grants

Our website remains the best place to find RE resources that are relevant to Church schools in our diocese. <http://www.cofesuffolk.org>

The following Padlet contains many useful resources for you as a leader of RE in a church school, including model policies, long-term plans and Emmanuel Project resources. There are also links to other Padlets.

<https://cofesuffolk.padlet.org/jacquistudd1/re-subject-leaders-church-schools-mp0xoug5i3jxyoj4>

A selection of websites which may also be useful to you:

<https://www.sikheducationalservice.co.uk/>

<https://www.islamresources.co.uk>

<https://thegitaproject.org>



<https://www.tts-group.co.uk/primary/re/>



<https://shop.retoday.org.uk/>



<https://www.reondemand.co.uk/>



Books at Press

<https://www.booksatpress.co.uk/>

Supported by

The Jerusalem Trust

<http://regrants.org.uk/>



<https://www.cofesuffolk.org/for-parishes/funding-for-your-parish/elizabeth-walters/>



The RE Community



RE Quality Mark is an excellent tool for improving RE leadership skills. Many RE networks use this as the basis of improvement, whether they apply for an award or not. <http://www.reqm.org/>



NATRE is the subject teacher association for RE professionals. It works to support those who teach and lead in all schools and institutions and at all stages of their career. <https://www.natre.org.uk/>



RE:Online is a useful online community for all involved in RE, with resources, background and helpful materials for leaders. Includes online CPD opportunities.



Farmington Institute supports teachers of RE in schools, and Headteachers working on values and standards. It awards grants of up to 30 days' supply to research or develop any aspect of RE. Awards can be made to individuals or small groups of teachers. The closing date each year is mid-January. <http://www.farmington.ac.uk/index.php/farmington-scholarships/>



REC: A useful place to keep updated on national news for RE. <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/>



Teach:RE Courses has free courses, designed to support teachers in all stages of their career with modules ranging from subject knowledge to policy to curriculum to research. www.teachre.co.uk



Religion Media Centre: their factsheets are particularly useful <https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/>