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**Diocese of Carlisle Board of Education**

**Effective RE Governance: Monitoring ideas**

This paper is designed for governors responsible for RE, to use with the school’s RE subject leader, to explore and understand what RE looks like at your school, the reasons why RE is delivered in the way it is, where the strengths are, and where development is needed in order to move forward.

The questions relate directly to the expectations set out in the [SIAMS Evaluation Schedule](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/SIAMS%20Revised%20Evaluation%20Schedule%20%28September%202021%29.pdf) and references to Strands or Grade Descriptors refer to that document.

The bullet-point lists under each question offer ideas, prompts and explanations to help you understand why the question is being asked, or to unpack the question further.

Monitoring the effectiveness of RE is important in helping the school to reflect on its practice and continue to make improvement and developments, with pupils’ best interests at heart.

Please remember:

* To be open minded and supportive (celebrate strengths!)
* Not to expect teaching/books/recording to look a particular way
* You don’t need to know what age-related expectations are
* It is not governors’ responsibility to judge the quality of individual lessons

If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to get in touch with education@carlislediocese.org.uk and we will be happy to help.

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| **1. Is RE an expression of the school’s vision/contributing to ‘flourishing’?** Strand 7, second bullet point |
| * Good RE helps children to make sense of the world around them, to ask ‘big’ questions, to wonder, to explore, to reflect, find quiet time, have moments of awe and wonder and enjoy spiritual encounters. It helps pupils to better understand our diverse and complex world, developing their understanding of world faiths, cultures and practices. It helps them to understand the ‘why’ behind things they might see on TV, or on holiday, in this country or abroad.
* If done really well, RE has the potential to break down barriers, improve respect for and understanding of others, as well as giving pupils practices they can use throughout life to help them to make sense of good times and bad.
* It is arguably the most important subject on the curriculum, because it develops the most fundamental features of a ‘good’ life.
* Does it feel that way in your school?
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| **2. How is priority given to RE?** Strand 1(b) |
| * Compare its prominence on the website with other subjects.
* Speak to children – do they value it; enjoy it; consider it important?
* When is it taught – time of day, day of the week. Is it given a ‘graveyard’ slot or is it prioritised and given a slot when pupils are attentive and engaged?
* How much RE is taught? Does this comply with Statement of Entitlement expectations (“should aim to be close to 10% but must be no less than 5% of curriculum time”).
* Does the school have a policy on RE? Does it reflect the good practice explored in the questions below?
* Is RE well-resourced with quality artefacts, bibles, books and other resources (are they enough so that all children can participate in their use; are they well cared-for, demonstrating their importance?)
* Does the school library contain books to support pupils’ understanding of a range of faiths, religions and cultures?
* What in the EYFS environment tells you that RE is given a high priority? Does the home corner demonstrate diversity? How does RE impact or feature in displays, big books, resources in tough trays or the DT area?
* Are there prayer spaces or reflection areas in each classroom – are they well presented and cared for? Do pupils get to use them? Are they helpful to pupils? Can pupils tell you what they get out of them?

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| **3. Who teaches RE? Class teachers? One PPA teacher? One teacher who swaps with other classes? Someone else?** Strand 1 Grade Descriptors; Strand 7(b) |
| * Why is teaching arranged in this way? Is it in the best interests of the pupils?
* What training have those teaching RE had? Training may come from Diocesan training sessions; Diocesan RE clusters; RE teachers in Cumbria Facebook page; RE Today; CEFEL documents and online sessions from other sources.
* What opportunities for CPD are offered and taken up?
* Do any staff lack confidence in teaching Christianity?
* How do you ensure (with the subject leader) that the quality of teaching is comparable in each class?
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| **4. Does the RE leader have enough release time to be able to effectively monitor the subject and support colleagues, share new ideas and build confidence?** Strand 7 Grade Descriptors |
| * This is another way of telling whether priority is given to RE.
* Does it feature regularly in staff meeting sessions?
* What does monitoring look like?
* Is there an RE development plan, with actions? If so, is it used effectively to improve standards?
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| **5. What does the RE course look like in your school? Who designs it? How? Using which resources? Does it reflect the** [**RE Statement of Entitlement**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/RE%20Statement%20of%20Entitlement%20for%20Church%20Schools.pdf)**?** Strand 7 (first bullet point); 7(a); Strand 7 Grade Descriptors |
| * This is all about the RE curriculum being balanced (see also the next two questions) coherent and progressive, so that pupils have *age appropriate* skills in terms of enquiry, critical analysis and interpretation, and understanding of the faiths they have been taught about.
* Talk to pupils. Can they give you an account of Christianity, with some reference to theological concepts (e.g. Christians believe Jesus was God’s son, both human and divine, He died and rose again etc)?
* Remember that SACRE’s locally agreed syllabus sets out the subject matter only, it is not a curriculum (i.e. the totality of content to be taught).
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| **6. In addition to Christianity, which faiths do you teach your pupils about? What is the balance of Christianity and faiths other than Christianity?** Strand 7(a)(iii); Strand 7 Grade Descriptors |
| * Does your curriculum reflect the Statement of Entitlement? Remember that, “*in Church schools Christianity should be the majority religion studied in each year group and should be at least 50% of* [RE] *curriculum time”.*
* Why do you teach the faiths you teach? What is the intention behind this choice? Are you reflecting the school context (eg. in terms of the other faiths who are, or are not, represented in the wider community) rather than plucked out of the air at random?
* Can pupils tell you which faiths they have studied? Can they make comparisons and tell you about any similarities or differences they have encountered in the faiths they have studied?
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| **Milking Stool7. How do you manage the balance between the following aspects of RE?****Theology:** knowledge and understanding of a range of world faiths (believing). Strand 7(a)(i) and (iii)**Sociology:** impact of Christianity on Britain’s cultural heritage; impact of major world religions on society and culture (living). Strand 7(a)(ii)**Philosophy:** safe space to explore personal religious, spiritual and/or philosophical convictions (thinking) and develop through appropriate challenge. Strand 7(a)(iv) |
| * How is philosophy contributing to pupils’ own spiritual development?
* How do you create safe spaces in which pupils can discuss religious, spiritual and/or philosophical questions?
* Listen out to ensure that language used by staff and pupils is inclusive and doesn’t result in ‘othering’. A pupil telling you “I believe” is lovely – that’s them sharing their own personal belief. A pupil telling you “we believe” is something to follow up – who are the “we” (not everyone at the school will believe the same thing). Do they, in fact, mean “Christians believe” in which case how would someone who wasn’t Christian (whether of another faith or none) feel about an assumption that “we believe” something?
* Can pupils speak respectfully about a range of world faiths? Do they understand Christianity as a living and diverse faith?
* Can they tell you about the impact of religions on culture (e.g. festivals, holidays, customs, structure of society)?
* How do you challenge pupils’ thinking, to help them to develop? Can pupils explain ways in which their thinking has been challenged?
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| **8. Do you (and if so how) use Understanding Christianity in your RE delivery?**  |
| * Understanding Christianity is not a complete curriculum for Christianity on its own. It’s great for the theology of Christianity (understand key themes in Christian belief and practice – e.g. incarnation). It is also great for some elements of philosophy, challenging pupils’ thinking and engagement. However, it is not enough on its own.
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| **9. Do teachers share effective practice locally and regionally?** Strand 7(b) |
| * Does the subject leader attend Diocesan RE cluster meetings and/or RE meetings via local cluster?
* Do you moderate with other schools locally?
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| **10. How do you know what pupils have learnt and whether they are making progress?** Strand 7(b) |
| * What system is used at your school? What does assessment look like? Are governors presented with achievement or progress data or information?
* If floor books are used, can you see the progression across the school? Consider the same question for RE books, in terms of the quality of tasks set and the responses from pupils.
* What are the expectations at the end of EYFS, KS1, Year 4 and Year 6? Is there progression in the underlying skills expected at each of these stages (increasingly analytical, and requiring more independent, deeper thinking).
* How is pupils’ thinking captured? The rich discussions or contributions of pupils can be lost if you then ask them to write it down: it is often the case that pupil’s ability, sophistication and speed of thought and self-expression exceed what they can record on paper. Do you film conversations? Does an adult scribe or capture conversations?
* How is feedback given to pupils to help them move forward in their learning? Do they have the opportunity to respond to feedback and develop their thinking?
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| **11. Do you currently have any pupils who are withdrawn from RE lessons? What is your approach if a family asks to withdraw their child from RE?** |
| * If yes, why? Is Christianity incompatible with their own faith?
* What do you do to reassure families about the inclusive and invitational way you teach RE – do they understand that it is an academic subject, that you teach pupils what people of any given faith believe or do, that there is no presumption of any belief or faith in pupils, that spiritual development does not necessarily involve belief or religion?
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