# United Curriculum

## Primary Religion & Worldviews

Information for school websites



United Curriculum
Primary
Part of United Learning

# Principles of the Religion & Worldviews Curriculum

**The United Curriculum for Religion & Worldviews provides all children, regardless of their background, with:**

- **Coherent** and **sequenced substantive knowledge** of religion and worldviews represented in Britain and the wider world, selected to build pupils' understanding through three vertical concepts. These vertical concepts build a thematic narrative and provide context across diverse worldviews, as well as using small steps to help pupils gain a deep understanding of complex, abstract ideas:
  - **Sacrifice**
    **Giving something up for the benefit of someone else** is a recurring concept across religious & non-religious worldviews and takes many different forms. What motivates human action and what are the societal and personal consequences?
  - **Knowledge & Meaning**
    One of the unique qualities of human intelligence through time has been our quest for knowledge and meaning. How have religion and belief impacted on humanity's search for "Truth"? How do beliefs impact human behaviour? What is it reasonable to believe?
  - **Human Context**
    Human beings exist in, and are influenced by, their place in time and their geographical, political and social context (Person, Time & Place). Everyone is different, so how have our diversities been influenced by our personal context? What influences a personal worldview?
- A Worldviews approach provides opportunities for all pupils to **see themselves reflected** in the curriculum, but also to be taken **beyond their own experiences**. The Religion & Worldviews curriculum teaches pupils about diversity within and between beliefs, cultures and worldviews from across the world, and seeks to teach the skills and knowledge to hold respectful and informed conversations about religion and belief; to be **religiously literate**.
- A conscious inclusion of **vocabulary** and substantive content that recognises the need to **decolonise** teaching materials in a meaningful and accessible way.
- A scholarly approach to the core **disciplinary knowledge** of **theology, philosophy and social sciences**, developing pupils' ability to hold the **types of conversation** and to apply **the methods and processes** of **theologians, philosophers and social scientists**.
- A **curiosity and openminded** approach to the worldviews of others and a **reflective consciousness** of their own worldview.

# United Curriculum: Religion & Worldviews

## Why Religion & Worldviews?

Since the publication of the RE Council's Commission on Religious Education (CoRE) Report in 2018, there has been a shift in the focus of Religious Education syllabuses and curriculums toward what is called a “religion and worldviews approach”. This 1.15m video explains their thinking.

The approach suggests that everyone has (or ‘inhabits’ might be better) a worldview. Our worldview is our way of looking at, experiencing, interpreting and interacting with the world around us. It is personal to each of us and changes as we travel through life. Our worldview is influenced by our life experiences and external influences such as media and our parents and teachers. Our worldview will affect the way we respond to people and situations around us. This 2.34m video explains the concept of a worldview.

As well as **individual worldviews**, there can be institutional or **organised Worldviews** (capital W), these may be the collective values of a religious group, such as the Catholic Church or Sunni Islam. A person who chooses to belong or identify themselves with an organised religious Worldview will be influenced by that, however they may not adhere to everything that religious Worldview represents; they are still an individual within an organisation. In short, it’s complicated!

The religion and worldviews approach to Religious Education has a number of benefits:

- It starts with people, seeking to put the significance of lived experience at the heart of pupils' learning.
- Everyone can recognise themselves in the curriculum, as we all inhabit a worldview whether we identify as religious or not.
- It opens-up our understanding of the lived diversity within religious and non-religious worldviews, rather than seeing a group as homogenous whole.
- Pupils approach substantive knowledge through the development of scholarly, disciplinary skills.
- If we learn to understand what influences a religious worldview, we can apply that understanding in our interpretation of religious text or belief in action; we can seek to see through a believer’s eyes.
- As pupils develop an awareness of what influences their **personal worldview**, they can begin to accept challenges to their preconceptions and understand both themselves and others better. This is important in developing **personal knowledge** in the curriculum.

# United Curriculum: Religion & Worldviews

## Disciplinary Knowledge: Ways of Knowing

Religion & Worldviews is a multidisciplinary subject touching on many academic disciplines. In the United Curriculum for Religion & Worldviews, we focus on developing our disciplinary skills through the **types of conversation** and **methods and processes** required to be scholarly in the studies of **Theology**, **Philosophy** and **Social Sciences**. The statements below are developed at progressive depth throughout the year groups. The curriculum has been sequenced so that the disciplinary content is also reviewed in subsequent units and developed as scholarly tools to access a wide range of substantive content.

| Theology (Beliefs)<br>Theologians | Philosophy (Thinking)<br>Philosophers | Social Sciences (Living)<br>Social Scientists |
|---|---|---|
| **Theologians** deal with **types of conversation** that consider:<br>• Where beliefs come from<br>• How beliefs change over time<br>• How beliefs relate to each other<br>• How beliefs shape the way believers see the world and each other<br><br>**Methods and processes** used by theologians:<br>• Interpretation of story & text<br>• Consideration of reliability of sources<br>• Considering unity & diversity within and between worldviews<br>• Considering how beliefs change over time<br>• Considering impact of belief on practice | **Philosophers** deal with **types of conversation** that consider:<br>• The nature of knowledge, meaning and existence<br>• How and whether things make sense<br>• Issues of right & wrong, good & bad<br><br>**Methods and processes** used by philosophers:<br>• Analysis of the validity of "truth" claims (doubt)<br>• Development and use of coherent questioning<br>• Development of and analysis of coherent argument<br>• Understanding of the human quest for knowledge and meaning<br>• Connecting belief (motivation) with behaviour | **Social Scientists** deal with **types of conversation** that consider:<br>• The diverse nature of religion<br>• The diverse ways in which people practice and express beliefs<br>• The ways in which beliefs shape individual identity, and impact on communities and society<br><br>**Methods and processes** used by social scientists:<br>• Seek evidence of belief in human behaviour and forms of expression<br>• Recognise similarities and differences within and between groups<br>• Consider forms of evidence and its reliability (e.g. data)<br>• Consider individual, local, national and global evidence of lived experience |

# United Curriculum: Religion & Worldviews

## Personal Knowledge: Pupil positionality

The Ofsted Research review series: Religious Education 2021, suggests personal knowledge should be developed alongside substantive and disciplinary knowledge in the curriculum. The review defines it as: **'personal knowledge': pupils build an awareness of their own presuppositions and values about the religious and non-religious traditions they study.**

Through the United curriculum, as pupils develop an awareness of what influences their **personal worldview** (their positionality), they can begin to accept challenges to their preconceptions and understand both themselves and others better. This is important in developing **personal knowledge** in the curriculum.

Development of personal knowledge is difficult to define. All pupils are on a personal, lifelong journey and they will develop at different rates; new substantive or disciplinary knowledge may change (or not) their personal responses to the world in vastly different and sometimes unpredictable ways. For this reason, it is not recommended that teachers attempt to assess this progress. The curriculum includes progressive opportunities to explore personal knowledge in response to the substantive and disciplinary content.

Opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own positionality will take many forms within the cumulative curriculum, some of these are implicit and others explicit. They may also appear at different places in different units. It is important that the teacher is aware of these opportunities and, where appropriate, give pupils the opportunity to apply their knowledge of religion and belief in their personal reflections. Some substantive content naturally lends itself more obviously to these opportunities than others.

Further suggestions can be found in the RE Council's Religion and Worldviews Approach Handbook (Pages 54-57).

In the United curriculum, personal knowledge is explored through different **values** (such as belonging, stewardship, justice and empathy) in relation to the substantive and disciplinary elements of the curriculum. It would be misleading to express these values in terms of a progression map because, as stated before, they represent an unpredictable, deeply subjective, and personal journey. Subject leaders should be aware of the importance of these opportunities as an integral part of the curriculum.

**Teachers should consider:**

What influences **my** pupils?

What shapes their worldview?

Are pupils consciously aware of their worldview(s)?

Do pupils have certain preconceptions about religious and non-religious worldviews?



# United Curriculum: Religion & Worldviews

## Vertical Concepts

Vertical concepts build a thematic narrative and provide context across diverse worldviews, as well as using small steps to help pupils gain a deep understanding of complex, abstract ideas:



### Sacrifice

- **Giving something up for the benefit of someone else** is a recurring concept across religious & non-religious worldviews.
- Sacrifices can be for the benefit of people close to us or people we have never met.
- Sacrifices can be everyday commitments of time, money, material objects or service to others.
- Some worldviews see sacrifices as a way of pleasing God and may involve the motivation of future reward.
- Some people see sacrifices for the sake of others as altruistic acts, with no personal reward.
- Sacrifices can be on a higher level and involve risking or giving up a life for the sake of others.
- In Christianity, the Ultimate Sacrifice of Jesus – giving up his life for the people he loved – is a principal belief.



### Knowledge & Meaning

- Beliefs impact how people make sense of the world: humanity's ideas of right & wrong; truth, meaning & purpose.
- Beliefs impact human behaviour in diverse ways including how people and organisations exercise power.
- Some people seek to question how reasonable it is to believe certain aspects of religious and non-religious teachings.



### Human Context

- Human beings exist in, and are influenced by, their place in time and their geographical, political and social context (Person, Time & Place).
- Everyone is different; our diversities are influenced by our personal context which influences our personal worldview.

# Religion & Worldviews in Our Local Context

Religion & Worldviews is is taught in 6-lesson units, over a half term.

The United Curriculum is sequenced so that meaningful links are made between subjects, and the order of units allows these connections to be made. For example, pupils are taught about the Romans in European in History in Year 5 Autumn and Spring, so that they can review and build upon knowledge of the spread of the Roman Empire while considering the impact of the conversion of Emperor Constantine on the rapid spread of Christianity across Europe in Religion & Worldviews in Spring 2.

The United Curriculum for Religion & Worldviews has been adapted for Wellington Eagles by bringing in the religious demographics of our local area and considering the context of our pupils and the community.

For example:

- Across the school, every year we consistently consider the evidence of lived religion in our local area by visiting our local Church and finding out about Christian festivals as well as having local volunteers in to do workshops around these special festivals too.
- When learning about expression of life's purpose in Year 6, we include Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish and humanist beliefs to reflect the religious demographics of our local community.

# Implementation

The implementation of the United Curriculum for Religion & Worldviews reflects our broader teaching and learning principles.

For Religion & Worldviews in particular:

- **Substantive knowledge** ('what we know') is always carefully situated within existing schemas. Where prior learning is being built-upon in a unit, that knowledge is reviewed and contextualised, so that pupils can situate new knowledge in their broader understanding of different worldviews.
- **Disciplinary knowledge** ('how we know') is introduced in steps, beginning as implicit lenses of study and building to explicit introduction of key terminology and opportunities to engage in the **types of conversation**, and to apply the **methods and processes**, of the three disciplines. **For example, in KS1 pupils are explicitly introduced to the 'puzzling questions' asked by a philosopher in relation to the concepts of creation and freedom; in Year 3, pupils explicitly learn to apply the methods of a theologian when considering the reliability of Biblical text; in Year 4, pupils explicitly practise the methods of a social scientist to analyse Census data.**
- **Personal knowledge** (a pupil's awareness of their own worldview) is developed through regular opportunities for paired and class discussion, modelled, reasoned oracy practice, as well as explicit examination and challenge of misconceptions through substantive knowledge. **For example, in Year 3, pupils learn about the words of the Qur'an on modesty of dress and see examples of how this is interpreted in different ways by many Muslim women. Pupils learn about both the challenges and empowering experiences of different Muslim women and consider how they might support a pupil who chooses to wear a hijab in school.**
- **Vertical concepts** are **implicit** thematic threads used within overall curriculum design to connect significant aspects of religious and non-religious worldviews. These are not explicitly shared with pupils to avoid cognitive overload as pupils are already managing complex substantive and disciplinary knowledge.
- Opportunities for extended, scholarly writing appear throughout the curriculum. These have a clear purpose and, crucially, allow pupils to write as a theologian, philosopher or social scientist. **For example, in Year 4, after considering the complex philosophical nature of truth, doubt and reality, pupils write a balanced argument and explain whether they agree or not with the statement, *People should always tell the truth*.**

# Impact

The careful sequencing of the curriculum – and how concepts are gradually built over time – is the progression model. If pupils are keeping up with the curriculum, they are making progress. Formative assessment is prioritised and is focused on whether pupils are keeping up with the curriculum.

In general, this is done through:

- Questioning in lessons. Teachers check understanding so they can fill gaps and address misconceptions as required.
- Pupil conferencing with books. Subject leads and SLT talk to pupils about what they have learnt – both substantive and disciplinary knowledge – and how this connects to learning in previous years and other subjects. **For example, pupils in year 4 may be asked to talk about examples of sacrifice and ways it may be significant to different Christians, Muslims and Humanists.**
- Post-learning quizzes at the end of each unit. These give teachers an understanding of the knowledge that pupils can recall at the end of the unit, and can be used to identify any remaining gaps to be filled. **These are generally simple recall questions, such as the meaning of key terms or symbolism, or some of the reasons why people, places, events, artefacts, stories and practices may be seen as significant.**
- Pre-learning quizzes at the start of each unit. These assess pupils' understanding of the prior knowledge that is required to access the new content in the unit. These are used to identify gaps to be filled prior to teaching the new unit. **For example, in a unit about the significance of the resurrection to Christians, pupils need to recall Christian teachings about the significance of the life and person of Jesus as well as the concept of sin. This knowledge is assessed in the Pre-Learning Quiz, and teachers can plan to fill any identified gaps.**

# Parental Right to Withdraw

RE is provided for all pupils, and is objective, critical and inclusive. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of religious education.

Parents who wish to withdraw their children from religious education must let the school know.

As always, we welcome parents to discuss any concerns or questions you have with us.