

Religious Education

Extended Curriculum Overview 2026-27

At Cleaswell Hill, chronological age determines the Religious Education experiences pupils encounter. Individual starting points determine the level of cognitive demand, communication, support, specialist approaches and independence through which pupils access those experiences. The curriculum follows the Northumberland Agreed Syllabus for RE and its special-school guidance, enabling pupils to encounter authentic religious and non-religious worldviews through age-respectful, developmentally appropriate teaching. Adaptation removes barriers without reducing the ambition or subject identity of RE.

Intent

Our Religious Education curriculum is ambitious, open and age-respectful. Pupils explore what people believe and the difference this makes to how they live. They build knowledge of religious and non-religious worldviews through stories, texts, symbols, practices and lived experiences, while developing the vocabulary, communication and reasoning needed to ask questions, make connections and express views respectfully.

All pupils encounter a broad range of RE experiences. Adaptation is used to remove barriers and enable pupils to work from their individual starting points without reducing the authenticity of the religious content or the ambition of the curriculum.

Implementation

A three-year thematic spine sets out the age-related experiences taught from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4. Across these themes, pupils repeatedly develop the three core elements of the Northumberland approach: making sense of beliefs, understanding the impact of beliefs, and making connections.

Teaching in the special-school context is shaped by the Five Keys planning model: Connection, Knowledge, Senses, Symbols and Values. Pupils may begin by encountering authentic objects, stories, places, people and sensory experiences, then move towards recognising, describing, explaining, comparing, interpreting and giving increasingly reasoned responses. Prior learning is revisited so that important concepts, vocabulary and ways of thinking become more secure over time.

Impact

Pupils know more about religious and non-religious beliefs, practices and ways of life, and can make increasingly meaningful connections between what people believe and how they live. They communicate with greater independence, recognise diversity within and between worldviews, use subject vocabulary more accurately, ask and respond to questions, and give reasons for their ideas. Where relevant, pupils apply this understanding in Preparation for Adulthood, citizenship and community contexts.

What pupils learn

The curriculum separates the substantive knowledge pupils acquire from the RE practices they use. This keeps the focus on what pupils are learning, not simply the activity or festival they experience.

Substantive knowledge - what pupils know	RE practice - what pupils learn to do
Beliefs and concepts: God, creation, salvation, spirituality, worship, meaning, purpose, human value and non-religious worldviews.	Identify, describe and explain beliefs and concepts using increasingly precise religious and worldview vocabulary.
Stories, texts and sources of authority: religious stories, sacred texts, teachings, leaders and sources of wisdom.	Listen to, retell, interpret and make links between sources of authority and what believers think and do.
Practices and lived religion: prayer, worship, festivals, fasting, charity, pilgrimage, rites of passage and community life.	Recognise and explain how beliefs are expressed in practice and why the same religion or worldview may be lived in different ways.

Identity, belonging and diversity: families, communities, places of worship, symbols, traditions and religious/non-religious identity.	Compare similarities and differences within and between religions and worldviews without assuming that everyone in a group believes or behaves in the same way.
Values and ethical questions: kindness, love, forgiveness, justice, equality, service, stewardship, responsibility and care for others and the world.	Ask questions, consider different viewpoints, make connections with contemporary life and give increasingly well-reasoned personal responses while respecting the right of others to differ.

Age-related curriculum experiences: three-year thematic spine

The three-year spine sets the experiences pupils encounter by chronological age. Within each theme, pupils work at the appropriate point on the cognitive progression, so that the context remains age-respectful while knowledge, understanding, communication and independence are built from individual starting points.

Stage 1 - Themes and experiences aligned with Key Stage 1 SACRE			
Term	2026 - 2027	2027 - 2028	2028 - 2029
Autumn	What is precious to me?	Harvest time	What can we learn from visiting a Church of England?
Spring	What makes Easter a special time for Christians?	What does Ramadan mean to Muslim people?	What does Shabbat mean to Jewish people?
Summer	Making the world a better place (Close to home - Acts of Kindness)	Making the world a better place (Community)	Making the world a better place (Wider World)

Nativity is taught each December, sequencing key concepts to develop understanding and knowledge of the Christian faith.

Stage 2 - Themes and experiences aligned with Key Stage 2 SACRE			
Term	2026 - 2027	2027 - 2028	2028 - 2029
Autumn	Celebration of Light	Special Food	The Salvation Army
Spring	Creation Story	Special clothes	The Good Samaritan
Summer	Going on a journey	Signs and Symbols	Spirited Arts

Stage 3 - Themes and experiences aligned with Key Stage 3 SACRE			
Term	2026 - 2027	2027 - 2028	2028 - 2029
Autumn	Spirituality	Kindness and Love - Who is Sikh and how do they live?	Places of worship
Spring	Charity	Religious Stories	Speaking Up
Summer	Who is Buddha?	Inspiration!	Spirited Arts

Stage 4 - Themes and experiences aligned with Key Stage 4 SACRE			
Term	2026 - 2027	2027 - 2028	2028 - 2029
Autumn	UK government and political system; role of monarchy	UK citizens - rights, responsibilities and precious liberties	Human Rights; diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the UK and the need for mutual respect and understanding
Spring	UK Parliament	Groups in society working together to solve problems, improve communities and contribute to society	Functions and uses of money - budgeting and managing risk
Summer	Justice system - rules and laws, the police and operation of courts	Opportunity to participate in school-based activities	Opportunity to participate in community-based activities

At Stage 4, citizenship and Preparation for Adulthood contexts are used to explore beliefs, values, diversity, rights, ethical questions and respect for religious and non-religious worldview

Cognitive progression: building RE knowledge and skills from individual starting points

Progression is not tied to chronological age or a fixed pathway. It shows how the same Religious Education knowledge and practices can build from a pupil's individual starting point. A pupil may be at different points in different aspects of RE, and teaching should move learning forward through reduced prompting, richer vocabulary, stronger connections, deeper explanation and increasingly independent, reasoned responses.

Making sense of beliefs - Progression moves from authentic encounter and recognition towards increasingly informed description, interpretation and explanation of religious and non-religious worldviews.

Skill thread	Explore & respond	Recognise & communicate	Describe & connect	Explain & compare	Interpret, evaluate & generalise	PSHE Assessment anchor(s)
Core beliefs & concepts	Attend to or engage with an authentic story, object, image, person or experience linked to a belief or concept.	Recognise a familiar belief, person, celebration or concept and communicate a simple association or preference.	Name and describe a core belief or concept and connect it to a religion or non-religious worldview.	Explain a belief or concept using examples and compare how it may be understood in different contexts.	Give reasoned explanations of beliefs and concepts, using evidence and recognising different interpretations.	Prerequisite: purposeful attention, recognition and communication.
Stories, texts & sources	Experience a religious or moral story through objects, pictures, drama, music, sensory cues or shared reading.	Recognise a familiar story, character, action or repeated phrase and communicate what happens.	Retell or sequence key parts and say what a story, text or teaching means to believers.	Make clear links between a source of authority and beliefs or practices; suggest meanings and compare interpretations.	Interpret sources in context, explain why people understand them differently and justify an interpretation with evidence.	
Symbols, language & expression	Encounter significant symbols, sounds, artefacts, clothing, food, places or actions through authentic experiences.	Recognise a familiar symbol or artefact and indicate who or what it is connected with.	Use key vocabulary to describe symbols, artefacts, places or actions and give a simple meaning.	Explain how symbols and forms of expression communicate belief and compare their significance.	Analyse how religious and non-religious ideas are expressed in different forms and explain why meanings may vary.	
Religious & non-religious worldviews	Notice that people have different beliefs, traditions, identities and ways of living.	Recognise examples of different religious and non-religious identities without assuming everyone is the same.	Describe features of religious and non-religious worldviews and identify simple similarities and differences.	Compare beliefs and worldviews, recognising diversity within as well as between groups.	Explain and evaluate how worldview, context and experience can shape belief and identity.	WIL1 Respecting differences / Diversity, rights and responsibilities SA3 at KS3-4 where prejudice is explicit.

Understanding the impact - Progression moves from observing lived religion towards explaining and evaluating how beliefs influence identity, practice, values and life in diverse communities.

Skill thread	Explore & respond	Recognise & communicate	Describe & connect	Explain & compare	Interpret, evaluate & generalise	PSHE Assessment anchor(s)
Worship, ritual & celebration	Experience or observe an authentic action, routine, celebration, place or object associated with worship.	Recognise a familiar religious practice or celebration and communicate a simple feature.	Describe what people do in worship, festivals or ceremonies and link the practice to a belief.	Explain why practices matter and compare how the same belief may be expressed in different communities.	Account for diversity in practice and evaluate the significance of worship, ritual or celebration for different people.	

Identity, belonging & community	Engage with familiar ideas of special people, groups, places and belonging.	Recognise that people belong to families, faith groups and other communities.	Describe ways people express identity and belonging through actions, symbols, places or celebrations.	Explain how religious or non-religious identity can influence family and community life and recognise diversity within groups.	Evaluate how identity, belonging, rights and community shape people's lives in contemporary Britain.	WIL12 Belonging to a community WIL11 Respecting differences / Diversity, rights and responsibilities.
Belief into action & values	Respond to examples of kindness, care, sharing, service or responsibility.	Recognise that beliefs and values can influence what people choose to do.	Give examples of how teachings influence actions such as charity, forgiveness, service or caring for creation.	Explain connections between beliefs, values and action, including where people make different choices.	Analyse how beliefs guide moral decisions and evaluate their impact on individuals, communities and wider society.	SA2/SA5 positive relationships WIL15 care for the environment WIL11/SA3 equality and prejudice.
Diversity within traditions	Notice similarities and differences between people, objects, places or practices.	Recognise that two people from the same religion or worldview may not do exactly the same thing.	Describe simple differences in how people from the same tradition practise or express belief.	Explain reasons for differences in practice, denomination, culture or interpretation.	Use evidence to account for diversity within traditions and avoid treating religions or worldviews as uniform.	WIL11 Respecting differences / Diversity, rights and responsibilities.

Making connections - Progression moves from personal response and simple comparison towards reasoned reflection, respectful dialogue, ethical thinking and evaluation of different viewpoints.

Skill thread	Explore & respond	Recognise & communicate	Describe & connect	Explain & compare	Interpret, evaluate & generalise	PSHE Assessment anchor(s)
Questions of meaning & purpose	Respond to experiences or prompts about what is special, important, beautiful, difficult or meaningful.	Choose or communicate a response to a simple question about belonging, celebration, care, life or belief.	Ask and answer questions about meaning, purpose and belief, giving a simple reason for an idea.	Explore different answers to challenging questions and explain why people may respond differently.	Evaluate contrasting responses to questions of meaning and purpose, using evidence and a reasoned personal position.	
Compare viewpoints	Attend to two contrasting experiences, images, stories or responses.	Recognise a simple similarity or difference between people, beliefs or practices.	Compare examples from religious and non-religious worldviews and communicate a similarity or difference.	Explain similarities and differences, including differences within traditions, and recognise that viewpoints are shaped by context.	Weigh up contrasting religious and non-religious viewpoints and explain the strength of different reasons or evidence.	WIL11 Respecting differences / Diversity, rights and responsibilities.
Ethical reasoning & action	Respond to examples of fair/unfair, kind/unkind, caring/not caring or helpful/unhelpful action.	Recognise a simple moral choice and communicate what they think should happen.	Connect a teaching or value with a question of right and wrong and give a reason for a view.	Apply religious and non-religious ideas to ethical questions such as justice, equality, care, service or stewardship.	Evaluate ethical viewpoints, consider consequences and justify a reasoned response while recognising disagreement.	SA2/SA5; WIL15; SA3; CG4/MF2 where the RE content directly addresses those areas.
Personal response & respectful dialogue	Communicate a preference, feeling or response using the pupil's most effective communication method.	Listen or attend to another person's response and indicate agreement, difference or choice.	Express a personal idea and listen to a different view respectfully.	Give reasons, ask follow-up questions and respond constructively to different viewpoints.	Articulate and revise a reasoned position, challenge ideas respectfully and recognise the right of others to hold different beliefs.	WIL11; SA3 at KS3-4 where prejudice/discrimination is considered.

Strong PSHE framework connections

RE reinforces selected PSHE outcomes where the subject content directly overlaps. These links are deliberately limited and do not replace discrete PSHE teaching or assessment.

Key stage	Direct PSHE framework links	When the link occurs in RE
KS1	WIL11 Respecting differences; WIL12 Belonging to a community; WIL15 Taking care of the environment; SA2 Kind and unkind behaviours; SA5 Getting on with others.	Religious identity and belonging; caring for others and the natural world; Christian teaching on love, forgiveness, peace and inclusion.
KS2	WIL11 Respecting differences; WIL12 Belonging to a community; WIL15 Taking care of the environment; CG4 Different types of relationships; SA2/SA5 positive relationships; MF2 where loss and bereavement are explicitly studied.	Diversity within religions; family and community identity; commitment and marriage ceremonies; service, generosity, stewardship; religious/non-religious responses to difficult times.
KS3	WIL11 Diversity, rights and responsibilities; SA3 Prejudice and discrimination where explicitly taught; WIL15 Taking care of the environment.	Religious and non-religious identity in Britain; equality, marginalisation and prejudice; Sikh service/equality; Christian stewardship.
KS4	WIL11 Diversity, rights and responsibilities as the core link; SA3, WIL15 and CG5 only where the RE content explicitly addresses these areas.	Religion and worldview in contemporary Britain; freedom of religion or belief; discrimination and human rights; environmental or relationship ethics when explicitly included.

SMSC and Fundamental British Values through Religious Education

SMSC and Fundamental British Values are developed naturally through the study of religious and non-religious worldviews, reflection, dialogue, ethical questions, diversity and lived experience. The curriculum provides meaningful opportunities for pupils to encounter different beliefs, develop their own ideas and participate respectfully in a plural society.

SMSC / FBV area	What RE develops	Expected RE activities and applications
Spiritual	Questions of meaning, purpose, belief, identity and human experience; reflection, wonder and personal response.	Explore beliefs about God, creation, life and meaning; experience places, music, stories and symbols; reflect on what is important, precious or inspiring.
Moral	Reasoning about right and wrong; values, consequences, justice, forgiveness, responsibility and care.	Explore religious and non-religious teachings about kindness, justice, service, forgiveness, stewardship and human value; give reasons for ethical responses.
Social	Dialogue, listening, cooperation, belonging and understanding how communities live together.	Discuss viewpoints; visit or learn from faith/community settings; explore charity and service; listen respectfully and work collaboratively.
Cultural	Knowledge and appreciation of religious and non-religious diversity, heritage, practices, art, stories and communities.	Study Christianity and other principal religions/worldviews; encounter festivals, food, clothing, sacred spaces, art, music and lived faith in Britain and beyond.
Democracy	Listening to different viewpoints, reasoned discussion, participation and respect for people's right to hold different beliefs.	Take part in structured discussion; consider more than one viewpoint; contribute to class decisions and community-linked activities; explore citizenship contexts at Stage 4.
Rule of Law	Understanding the relationship between beliefs, rules, responsibilities, rights and laws in communities and society.	Explore religious rules and moral codes; compare them with rights and responsibilities; consider human rights, justice and the legal protection of freedom of religion or belief.
Individual Liberty	Developing personal viewpoints and recognising freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief.	Express personal ideas without being required to adopt a belief; compare religious and non-religious responses; understand that people may choose different worldviews.
Mutual Respect & Tolerance	Understanding difference, challenging stereotypes and respecting people whose beliefs, identities or practices differ from our own.	Study lived religion and non-religious worldviews; recognise diversity within traditions; discuss prejudice and discrimination; practise respectful disagreement.

Progression, accreditation and pathways: Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5

Religious Education supports Preparation for Adulthood by helping pupils understand themselves, other people and the diverse communities in which they live. These links are most powerful when the RE learning remains clear and pupils use their knowledge in authentic adult-life, community and vocational contexts.

PfA outcome	What RE develops	Expected RE activities and applications
Employment	Respectful communication, listening, reasoning, empathy, teamwork, confidence in expressing a viewpoint and understanding diverse colleagues and communities.	Discussion and presentation; collaborative enquiry; community or faith visits; charity and fundraising activity. Career awareness can include care support, teaching assistant, youth work, fundraising, charity work, counselling support and volunteer coordination.
Independent living	Understanding identity, values, rights, responsibilities, communities and how to make respectful, informed choices in a diverse society.	Recognising places of worship and community spaces; understanding festivals and practices; expressing personal beliefs or non-belief; respecting others' choices; navigating community events with increasing independence.
Health	Reflection, emotional language and understanding how beliefs and communities can respond to difficult experiences, where these themes are explicitly taught.	Explore hope, loss, bereavement, belonging, care and sources of support through appropriate RE units; communicate feelings and viewpoints safely. RE complements, but does not replace, PSHE and health education.

