Developing a Religion and Worldviews approach in Religious Education in England

A Handbook for curriculum writers

Stephen Pett

Religious Education Council of England and Wales

BIG QUESTIONS in CLASSROOMS

TEMPLETON WORLD CHARITY FOUNDATION

Westhill make things happen

RE Today Services

The Handbook and related resources are available at www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/RWApproach

Acronyms/abbreviations:

ASC: Agreed Syllabus Conference

CoRE: Commission on RE

CoRE report: *Religion and Worldviews: The way forward,* report published 2018, following the two-year independent commission set up by the REC

DfE: Department for Education

MAT: Multi-Academy Trust

NCS: National Content Standard for RE (England)

NSE: National Statement of Entitlement

Ofsted: Office for Standards in Education

REC: Religious Education Council of England and Wales

RW: Religion and Worldviews

SACRE: Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Contents

Foreword

This Handbook is the outcome of a three-year long project on behalf of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales.

The project builds on the religion and worldviews approach, advocated by the independent Commission on Religious Education (2018), offering an approach to religious education which is academically rigorous, multi-disciplinary, and which draws on the lived experience of those who inhabit both religious and non-religious worldviews. It draws on the best that religious education has traditionally offered and brings this into dialogue with contemporary academic approaches, resulting in a new level of challenge and engagement for students.

At the heart of the Handbook is the National Statement of Entitlement which aims to establish a shared vision for the subject, and to lay the foundations for building a curriculum. The National Content Standard for RE for England, which is built around the National Statement of Entitlement, provides a benchmark for high-quality religious education and should be read alongside the Handbook.

The Handbook has been developed thanks to the expertise of the Project Director, Professor Trevor Cooling, and the Project Leader, Stephen Pett, both of whom have worked tirelessly to bring it to this point. Its principles have informed the work of three teams whose members included teachers, curriculum leaders, teacher educators and academics, and who have written three exemplar curriculum frameworks, accompanied by sample units of work, for use in their distinct contexts. These frameworks are published separately and we hope they will inspire others, in different contexts, to develop their own curricula using a religion and worldviews approach. These might include Academy Trusts, Agreed Syllabus Conferences and those with responsibility for the religious education curriculum in schools with a religious character. Whilst the principles may be applied in a wide range of settings, the Handbook, the National Statement of Entitlement and the National Content Standard for RE have been written primarily for those within the education system in England.

> **The Religious Education Council of England and Wales embraces a vision that every young person should experience an academically rigorous and personally inspiring education in religion and worldviews.**

The Religious Education Council of England and Wales embraces a vision that every young person should experience an academically rigorous and personally inspiring education in religion and worldviews. This Handbook is a resource which can bring us closer to achieving the vision, and the REC Board is pleased to endorse it.

Sarah Lane Cawte
Chair, RE Council

Introduction

This Handbook represents the culmination of a three-year project carried out on behalf of the RE Council of England and Wales (REC).

It takes forward the vision from the independent Commission on RE (CoRE 2018) and offers guidance for applying that vision to the classroom, building on the strong traditions of religious education (RE) in Britain. It takes into account research commissioned by the REC (Benoit et al. 2020; Tharani 2022) and other work done around worldviews and RE. It responds to extensive feedback received on the first draft (Pett 2022).

This Handbook offers a toolkit for developing the Commission's vision of a religion and worldviews (RW) approach to developing curriculums for religious education (RE). It is offered as a resource for those who wish to use it. It is not a policy statement.

At the heart is a National Statement of Entitlement (NSE). This provides a pedagogical tool for curriculum developers. It supports the selection of content and of appropriate teaching and learning approaches to enrich and deepen pupils' scholarly engagement with religion and worldviews.

The Handbook is accompanied by three frameworks which give examples of how the Handbook and NSE have been interpreted and put into practice in particular contexts. These frameworks were developed by three teams, selected for the quality of their proposals by the REC Board in an open tendering process, representing three distinct contexts. These frameworks and their accompanying units of work are offered as examples to promote thinking by curriculum developers as to processes they might use in their own situations.

The frameworks take the shared vision of the NSE and accompanied guidance, and express it in different ways in different contexts. They affirm the application of local autonomy in developing local curriculums on the basis of a shared national vision.

A significant step but not the final word

The development of religious education towards an RW approach has been part of the national conversation in RE since at least 2017, when the first draft of the Commission on RE's report came out. The conversation has been wide-ranging, with debates about the value or wisdom of such a development, and with both strong advocates and critics publishing responses ranging from social media posts through to academic journals. Research projects are on-going at the time of writing and papers have been published that explore aspects, such as how teachers might make decisions on how to select content (Lewin et al. 2023), what it means to develop pupils' personal worldviews (Plater 2023 , Flanagan 2021), and the worldviews of people who are non-religious (Wright and Wright 2024; Strhan et al. 2024; van Mulukom et al. 2022).

This Handbook is part of that conversation. It builds on a great deal of development in RE over decades, and sets out a rationale for its on-going development, reshaping and reorienting the subject for future decades. This Handbook is not, of course, intended as the final word on the subject. It is intended to provide some clarity around the approach and guidance on how to implement it in a curriculum. The NSE itself sets out expectations and a benchmark for an education in religion and worldviews, and is indicative of the breadth, depth and ambition it has for teaching curriculum content about religious and non-religious worldviews. This is further developed in the RE Council's National Content Standard for RE in England.[1] The NSE is not intended to set out an exclusive or finally definitive position with regard to worldviews; rather, it is a pedagogical tool to assist curriculum developers and teachers in their task of enabling pupils to understand how worldviews work in human lives, including their own.

The Handbook sets out practical steps for developing a religion and worldviews curriculum as well as offering a rationale and a commentary on how we have responded to feedback and considered some of the challenges arising from the approach. The three frameworks and accompanying units of work give evidence of the flexible way in which the NSE can be interpreted and applied to suit different contexts. While there may be differences of opinion over these frameworks, we argue that this is healthy, given the variety of approaches there are to teaching RE.

We recognise that there are resourcing and training implications from this new direction for RE, and that to equip classroom teachers to use this approach requires the kind of national plan called for in the CoRE report, and by the REC subsequently.

> **We recognise that there are resourcing and training implications from this new direction for RE, and that to equip classroom teachers to use this approach requires the kind of national plan called for in the CoRE report, and by the REC subsequently.**

Legal context

The legal requirements governing RE were set out in the Education Reform Act of 1988 and confirmed by the Education Acts of 1996 and 1998. RE is a statutory subject and part of the basic curriculum.

RE must be provided for all registered pupils in maintained schools and academies, including those in Reception classes and sixth forms (Education Act 2002, Sections 78 to 79).

The content of RE in maintained schools is determined at local authority level. The Local Authority must establish an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to produce and recommend a syllabus. Each local authority must convene an ASC to review its agreed syllabus at least every five years. An agreed syllabus should 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian while taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (Education Reform Act 1988, Section 8(3)).

In community, foundation and voluntary controlled (VC) schools with a religious character designation, RE must be provided in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. RE in voluntary aided (VA) schools with a religious character must be provided in accordance with the trust deed of the school and the wishes of the governing body.

Academies must provide RE in accordance with their funding agreements. The Funding Agreement requires that academies with a religious character provide RE in accordance with the tenets of their faith. Academies that do not have a religious character must arrange for RE to be given to all pupils in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses, that is, a curriculum which reflects that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain (Education Reform Act 1988 8(3)). Academies are not, however, required to follow any specific locally agreed syllabus. They are accountable for the quality of their curricular provision.

Who is this Handbook for?

The Handbook is primarily written to assist those who are developing syllabuses and curriculums for RE with a religion and worldviews (RW) approach, including local authorities, Standing Advisory Councils on RE (SACREs), Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs), dioceses, and curriculum leaders in multi-academy trusts (MATs) and other academy trusts.

It is intended to be relevant to schools in England, those with and without religious character, including community maintained schools, academies and free schools, and independent schools wishing to establish a curriculum of ambition for RE.

It is intended to be of use to a wide range of people involved in the subject, including those with responsibility for the subject in schools both with and without a religious character, school leaders and governors, subject leads and teachers in primary and secondary phases, trainee and early career teachers, their tutors and mentors, inspectors and advisers, examination boards and resource developers.

It is intended to be helpful to people with different worldviews, ranging across religious and non-religious, to understand how an education in religion and worldviews approaches and handles organised, individual and personal worldviews.

It is hoped that it will be of interest to parents, pupils and the wider public, to inform them of the content and purposes of the subject.

Note: The Handbook will refer to **religious education (RE)** as the term that is currently in use in legislation and guidance for England. The Commission on RE recommendation that the subject be officially renamed 'Religion and Worldviews' would require legislation, whereas this Handbook is encouraging a shift in approach that can happen regardless of legislative change. This does not, however, prevent schools from renaming the subject as suits their context or needs.

Handbook structure

The Handbook is divided into four sections. Each section is intended for a specific audience, which means that some material is repeated between sections, since it is relevant to different audiences, and some material is amplified and expanded in different sections.

SECTION	CONTENT	INTENDED AUDIENCE
A. Overview	This is intended to give the overview of the RW approach, its key features, including the National Statement of Entitlement (NSE), and a brief rationale.	Head teachers, governors, leaders of MATs and other academy trusts, SACREs, ASCs, dioceses and others who are interested in these developments, including teachers, parents and pupils.
B. Toolkit for developing a religion and worldviews approach in RE	This section has a more practical focus, clarifying some definitions, offering both a commentary on the NSE and some practical advice for taking the NSE and applying it in different contexts. Examples are given of RW approach questions.	The syllabus developer, curriculum leader, or subject leader who wants to apply an RW approach in their SACRE, ASC, diocese, MAT or school context. It is also relevant to teachers, subject leaders, trainee and early career teachers.
C. A religion and worldviews approach: rationale and explanations	This section offers some of the background to the move to an RW approach, offering a more detailed rationale, expanded definitions and explanations, and some engagement with academic responses.	Curriculum leaders and syllabus developers, members of SACREs and ASCs, academics and other commentators, inspectors and advisers, examination awarding bodies and resource developers.
D. Frameworks	Three frameworks based on the NSE and the draft resource (2022), exemplifying three ways of applying an RW approach to the development of a curriculum in three specific contexts.	These are intended to be of interest to all parties, particularly syllabus developers, curriculum writers, teachers, inspectors, advisers and resource developers.

Key terms and how we use them

Some of the key concepts we are dealing with in RE are complex and contested. Wittgenstein once remarked that 'problems arise when language goes on holiday' (Wittgenstein 1967), and so this section sets out how we are using these key terms in the context of advocating an RW approach.

RELIGION	This is a contested conceptual category, to be examined in the classroom. Definitions of religion vary. Some focus on beliefs, such as belief in a deity and a supernatural dimension to existence; some definitions start from the idea of the divine origin of religion; some argue that religion is a human construct, inextricably linked with culture; some definitions focus on the ways of thinking and living of adherents; other definitions look at look at the function religions play within communities and societies. We use the term to accommodate this diverse range of meanings, open to debate in the classroom.
RELIGIONS	These are instances of religion, and the term can be taken as 'multi-aspectual traditions', (O'Grady 2023) usually with some relationship to the idea of the sacred, included in the curriculum on grounds of historical influence. Religions can be explored as social facts as well as having their truth claims examined and weighed up, their teachings and traditions studied and the lived experience of adherents explored.
WORLDVIEW	This is another contested term. We intend the term to be more inclusive than the category of 'religion' or religiousness. At the very least, worldview incorporates the non-religious. Religions may be seen as examples of worldviews.
WORLDVIEWS	These are identifiable instances of worldview, and can be understood at the level of the organised or sometimes institutional, the individual and communal, and in this context, the personal worldviews of pupils. These include both religious and non-religious worldviews. None of these pairings (organised/institutional, organised/individual, religious/non-religious) is intended to be a binary – clearly there are overlaps and fluid borders.

RELIGION AND WORLDVIEWS (RW)	We use this term to describe the approach advocated by this project. – It is a religion *and* worldviews approach in contrast with a 'world religions paradigm' approach. – It is a *religion* and worldviews approach to examine the relationship of worldviews to religion. – It is a religion and worldviews *approach*, including selection of content but also encompassing the ways of engaging with this content and bringing into focus the position of those studying.
NON-RELIGION	We use the term 'non-religion' as an object of study, a category emerging in academic discourse. Scholars use the term in different ways, for example, non-religion is 'a descriptive term for a certain group of understudied phenomena and not … an analytical term aiming to draw clear boundaries between religion and non-religion' (Quack 2014), and 'Non-religion is any phenomenon – position, perspective, practice – that is primarily understood in relation to religion but which is not itself considered to be religious.' (Lee 2015).
SECULAR	This is a contested term with many meanings. a. In common usage, this is often used as a synonym for 'non-religious'. b. In US contexts it tends to be used in opposition to religion, often seen as antagonistic to religion. c. In the UK it commonly refers to a space or attitude where religion is not a primary concern, has little relevance or significance. Lois Lee describes secular as 'phenomena – objects, spaces, people, and practices – for which religion is no more than a secondary concern, reference point, or authority' (Lee 2015). d. This UK usage also describes a more political sense of a public square that does not privilege any variety of religion or worldview. e. It is also more narrowly connected to an argument for separating religious institutions from the apparatus of the state. In this Handbook we generally refer to sense c) when using 'secular', unless otherwise specified.

Acknowledgements

🔍 A. Overview:

introducing a religion and worldviews approach

Intended audience
Head teachers, governors, leaders of MATs and other academy trusts, SACREs, ASCs, dioceses and others who are interested in these developments, including teachers, parents and pupils.

Content
This is intended to give the overview of the RW approach, its key features, including the National Statement of Entitlement (NSE), and a brief rationale.

A1 What is a religion and worldviews approach?

A religion and worldviews (RW) approach offers a new way of handling religious and non-religious beliefs and ways of living in the RE classroom, representing a significant shift in the subject. It reshapes the subject away from a focus on gathering information about the 'world religions' towards gaining an understanding of how worldviews work in human experience, including pupils' own. On the understanding that 'everyone has a worldview', this means that the subject helps pupils to understand 'organised' and 'personal' worldviews, as a way of increasing understanding of the world and of themselves, and how they might act in the world. Integral to the approach are ways of engaging with examples of religious and non-religious worldviews, equipping pupils with the ability to make scholarly judgements about them. At the heart of the approach is the National Statement of Entitlement (NSE) that aims to equip curriculum developers for introducing pupils to an academically rigorous, scholarly approach to the study of religion and worldviews.

The significance of this development is that 'the relationship between the pupil and the content studied becomes more than simply mastering knowledge or retaining information. Rather it becomes an interpretive experience with a focus on understanding how people (those studied and those in the classroom) both shape and are shaped by their encounter with the substantive knowledge specified in the curriculum.' (Cooling, 2024)

The 2018 independent Commission report offered a new vision of RE (CoRE, 2018). While it has deep roots in past and current RE pedagogy (see Section C6 for details), the RW approach outlined in this Handbook advocates a new approach. It is a new engagement, or perhaps a re-engagement with RE's subject matter, a change to how sometimes familiar content is approached. The key focus is on the role worldviews play in people's lives. This RW approach looks at worldviews:

a. as objects of study

b. as part of *how* we study them

c. and as part of the experience of those doing the studying.

a. **Worldviews as objects of study:**
The subject continues to explore organised worldviews:

- with rich histories and traditions that change and grow (and decline)

- with doctrines, texts, rituals, creative expression, spirituality, ethics and philosophical constructs

- often with institutions that carry on their traditions and guide people's living today

- with various responses to big questions on the purpose and meaning of life, and questions of ultimate reality, truth, morality, justice.

These show a weight of tradition, which has long been the traditional focus of RE. However, this RW approach is balanced with the study of 'individual worldviews'. The approach explores the place that individuals have within these organised worldviews, often as part of local or wider communities. It recognises, of course, that none of us is individual in the sense of being entirely isolated and that, therefore, our worldviews tend to be shared or communal. The approach considers the way that individuals' lived worldviews do not always reflect the orthodox teachings or practices of the traditions – but that they are nonetheless part of the wider tradition.

b. Worldviews as part of how we study them:

This RW approach does not see pupils as passive recipients of 'textbook' chunks of knowledge. This approach is not simply about accumulating content about a range of different organised religious and non-religious worldviews. Rather,

- an RW approach is about the exploration of human engagement with these religious and non-religious traditions
- it is about how humans make sense of, respond to and act in the world
- it is about how they make sense of their experience through worldviews, with particular reference to the place and influence of the traditions studied.

If it is not the passive reception of chunks of stuff, then what does this mean in relation to how pupils study? An RW approach draws attention to the process of engagement, to the process of encounter between pupils and the subject content, asking:

- What are the questions we want to ask? What are the questions that other people ask (e.g. adherents, scholars etc.)? Why is it important to ask these questions?
- What are the best ways of finding out the answers?
- How will we explore that relationship between the teachings/traditions and the everyday lived practice?
- How do we as RE students participate in that process of interpretation of the world and experience that is part of different organised, individual or communal worldviews?

A personal 'worldview' describes the way in which a person encounters, interprets, understands and engages with the world.

▶ *See Sections A3, B3 and C2 for more detail.*

c. Worldviews in relation to the experience of the pupils doing the studying:

Recognising that organised worldviews all have their own context and that we do too, so teachers and pupils bring their autobiography to their studies.

As scholars doing research have to consider how their own assumptions might affect their studies, so the RW approach draws attention to the personal worldviews of pupils, and how they affect and are affected by their studies.

The RW approach is not just a cognitive endeavour. To understand how worldviews work is to see that they encompass beliefs and stories, but also hopes and fears, values and convictions, intentions and desires, creativity and imagination, and the experience of living in our own bodies, our own identities, in our own physical and communal and global contexts.

An organised worldview can be understood as 'a view on life that has developed over time as a more or less coherent and established system with certain (written and unwritten) sources, traditions, values, rituals, ideals, or dogmas … [it] has a group of believers who adhere to this view on life'. (van der Kooij et al. 2013).

▶ *See Sections A3, B3 and C2 for more detail.*

A2 What is the purpose of an RW approach?

The RW approach adopted here seeks to embody the vision developed by the Commission on RE (2018). This recognised the truth that 'everyone has a worldview' or, to put it another way, 'nobody stands nowhere'. This vision seeks to engage all pupils in a personally relevant and engaging study of influential religious and non-religious worldviews in a way that enables them to embrace an academically rigorous understanding of their own personal worldview development. Such an approach offers an inclusive experience of religious education for all pupils, irrespective of their background or personal worldview. It puts the pupils' educational outcomes at the centre of RE.

The RW approach seeks the following outcomes for pupils (in no particular order of priority):

1. They have a good understanding of how worldviews (religious and non-religious) work in human life, including knowledge about organised worldviews, their teachings and traditions as well as the lived experience of adherents.

2. They emerge from their schooling with the scholarly skills and attributes to be lifelong learners in religion and worldviews.

3. They become wise interpreters in their encounters with other people and in their treatment of their own worldview, recognising how their personal worldview both shapes and is shaped by their encounters.

4. They learn how to be skilled navigators of the worldview diversity that they will encounter in school and in adult life.

5. The experience of RE makes a positive contribution to their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

6. They are inspired by the study of religion and worldviews as a way of understanding the world, to be curious, creative and thoughtful.

7. They are equipped with skills of dialogue and self-reflection, so as to be able to deal with the challenge of differences of opinion on controversial issues, and able to do so in a positive way that seeks to live well with others.

8. They are equipped to function as contributing citizens and as active participants in a diverse nation and beyond.

▶ *For more on purposes of RE and an RW approach, see Section B1.*

A3 What do we mean by 'religion' and 'worldviews'?

The term 'religion' is a complex and contested term. The complexity of the term 'religion' allows for rich dialogue and debate about its nature in relation to beliefs about god(s), the divine, the supernatural and/or the transcendent; its function in communities and societies; its origins in the divine or in human culture; the relationship between believing, belonging and behaving. 'Religions' are instances of 'religion', and relate to the term in different ways.

The term 'worldview' is also a contested term, with a shorter history than 'religion' but one no less complex. This Handbook builds on the idea that we can consider worldviews from different positions. Two understandings drawn from the academic literature have shaped the project's approach:

A person's **personal worldview** describes and shapes how they encounter interpret, understand and engage with the world. A person may have a coherent and considered framework for answering questions about the nature of ultimate reality, knowledge, truth and ethics, or they may have never given such questions much thought – but they still have a worldview, including the beliefs, convictions, values and assumptions that influence and shape their thinking and living.[2]

An **organised worldview** can be understood as a 'more or less coherent and established system with certain (written and unwritten) sources, traditions, values, rituals, ideals, or dogmas' (from van der Kooij et al. 2013).

An RW approach does not see personal and organised worldviews as a binary but explores the complex relationship between them. Individuals within organised traditions may be more or less orthodox in their beliefs and practices, or in their engagement with theological or philosophical discourse, or in their day-to-day practice, or in their identification with that worldview.

An RW approach looks at the relationship between individuals and the organised worldviews to which they may belong, as well as using this exploration to give pupils opportunities to reflect upon their own personal worldviews.

▶ *See Sections B3 and C2 for more detail.*

A4 Why is this change needed?

The move towards an education in religion and worldviews is not about a change of name. It encompasses an adjustment in the way that content is selected and how it is approached within the subject, with the outcomes for pupils the first priority. There are several dimensions to this shift towards an education in religion and worldviews.

a A critique levelled at religious education over past decades has been its over-emphasis on what is known as the 'world religions paradigm' – the idea that there are six major world religions, and lots of minor ones, and that they have a comparable set of core beliefs and practices that we can neatly package up and present in lessons. This approach is seen as distorting by imposing a particular model (deriving from Protestant Christianity) onto diverse traditions. Academic study has largely moved on from this paradigm, and now studies not only the formal/doctrinal aspects of religion and non-religion but also the fluid lived reality of adherents within these traditions, as well as the interplay between orthodoxy and lived experience. The study of religion and worldviews in schools needs to catch up with these academic developments.

b Another dimension is the changing demographics globally (an increase in people affiliated to religions) and nationally (a significant increase in people identifying as non-religious, including a growing majority of young people in the UK). The picture is not simple, of course; many young people in the UK see themselves as 'spiritual but not religious'; for some, their non-religious worldviews embrace beliefs in supernatural phenomena and spiritual practices (Bullivant et al. 2019); for some it is the organised nature of religious worldviews that they are rejecting. Being non-religious is increasing in the UK, so the study of non-religion and non-religious worldviews is an increasingly important academic field, and it needs to be part of the school study of worldviews.

c A third dimension is the challenge of content selection for teachers, as the increased complexity and scope of the field of study, combined with the impossibility of teaching everything about religion and non-religion, lead to the danger of content overload. A new rationale for content selection is needed.

d

A fourth dimension is the educational benefit for pupils from studying RE with an RW approach. This includes introducing pupils to the rich diversity of religion and non-religion as part of understanding how the world works and what it means to be human; enabling them to understand the complex ways in which worldviews work in human life, including their own; inducting them into scholarly processes, virtues and methods with which we can study religious and non-religious worldviews; and including pupils in an exploration of the influences on their own worldviews so that they can better understand and contribute to their community, to society and to the world.

e

A fifth dimension is that across the UK there are many examples of excellent RE provision and practice, but also evidence of too many schools that are neither meeting their statutory requirement nor providing all pupils with their entitlement to high quality RE. In part, the shift to an RW approach is to reinvigorate the subject, to reinforce its importance as part of children's and young people's education in a diverse religious and non-religious world, and to reinspire those schools currently neglecting the subject.

A5 How does an RW approach work?

The concept of worldviews offers an approach that revitalises the subject, taking account of academic developments around the understanding and study of religion and non-religion.

An RW approach accommodates the study of the fluidity within and between organised religious traditions; the diversity of identities and ways of living and thinking among both religious and non-religious people; and the relationship between religious and non-religious worldviews.

It also places the development of pupils' own position and assumptions within the academic processes of the subject. Their perspectives matter: they affect pupils' engagement and encounter with the content of the subject; they might reasonably expect their education to help them develop healthy, scholarly perspectives so that they can better understand and contribute to their community, to society and to the world. Pupils need opportunities to recognise, reflect on and develop their personal worldview, and to understand how their own worldview operates as a lens through which they encounter those of others.

This approach means enabling all pupils to become open-minded, well-informed, critical participants in public discourse and society, thus equipping them to make academically informed judgements about important matters in relation to religion and worldviews which shape the global landscape. They will have opportunities to consider how they might also shape that landscape. The approach sets out a subject for all pupils, whatever their own family background and personal worldviews. It supports them in not only understanding and responding to the world in which they find themselves but also considering the world as they would like it to be. It supports them in learning to live well together in a diverse society.

RE, like all education, has transformational intentions. Learning changes the learner. The approaches to the subject which are developed here, taking into consideration the long-standing debates about the ways in which RE may be legitimately transformational, reinforce the value of studying religion and worldviews for all children and young people. They aim to equip pupils with the scholarly knowledge, understanding and attributes that enable them to flourish as adults in, and contribute positively to, a society where matters of religion and worldviews are contentious and challenging.

The history of the subject includes varying emphases on, for example, edification, learning from religion, personal development including spiritual, moral, social, cultural development (SMSCD), the deconstruction and reconstruction of worldviews, and the human search for personal meaning. An RW approach carries this debate forward, and can provide pupils with vital opportunities to develop reasoned accounts of their own worldviews.

A6 Introducing the National Statement of Entitlement and its role

The key mechanism for supporting an RW approach is the National Statement of Entitlement (see Section B2 below). The NSE sets out:

- a benchmark for standards in a religion and worldviews curriculum about how worldview(s) work in human life (see also the National Content Standard for RE in England[3])

- a pedagogical tool for the selection of content and of appropriate teaching and learning approaches to enrich and deepen pupils' scholarly engagement with religion and worldviews.

The NSE has three interrelated elements, divided into eleven strands. The elements comprise **content**, **engagement** and **position**. Each strand is set out in a brief 'core statement' and an expanded statement (see p. 28–29). The core statements are given below.

Note that wherever the NSE mentions worldviews, it signifies religious and non-religious worldviews.

Notes:
- This National Statement of Entitlement provides a shared vision for the subject that will be interpreted for, and applied in, a variety of different contexts by syllabus writers and curriculum designers. This is exemplified by the three frameworks produced in response to the NSE.

- The NSE offers a benchmark around which the RE community can gather and agree, and as such has been embedded in the RE Council's National Content Standard for RE in England (2023). While this is not statutory, it has widespread agreement from education and RE professionals as well as faith and belief communities.

- The wider context for the NSE is that schools will give sufficient time and resources to the subject and to the equipping of specialist teaching. (See Section B2.1)

Legal requirements

Note that in applying the NSE, the legal requirement still operates, which is that RE 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (Education Act 1996 Section 375).

The NSE core statements:

CONTENT

a. Nature/formation/expression

What is meant by worldview and how people's worldviews are formed and expressed through a complex mix of influences and experiences.

b. Organised/individual

How people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or institutional worldviews.

c. Contexts

How worldviews have contexts, reflecting time and place, are highly diverse, and feature continuity and change.

d. Meaning and purpose

How worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience.

e. Values, commitments and morality

How worldviews may provide guidance on how to live a good life.

f. Influence and power

How worldviews influence, and are influenced by, people and societies.

ENGAGEMENT

g. Ways of knowing

The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing.

h. Lived experience

The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people.

i. Dialogue/interpretation

The field of study of worldviews is to be shown as a dynamic area of debate.

POSITION

j. Personal worldviews: reflexivity

Pupils will reflect on and potentially develop their personal worldviews in the light of their study.

k. Personal worldviews: impact

Pupils will reflect on how their worldviews affect their learning.

Thinking through the NSE

While it is set out as a list, the NSE is not intended to function as one. The three elements are integrated. The relationship between content, engagement and position might be explained in this way:

The NSE presents a realm of religion and worldviews to explore (content strands NSE a-f).

RELIGION AND WORLDVIEWS

a. Nature/ formation/ expression

b. Organised/ individual

c. Contexts

d. Meaning and purpose

e. Values, commitments and morality

f. Influence and power

As with any exploration, you need to prepare; you need to choose the right tools for the job and a suitable route (engagement strands NSE g-i).

But your exploration is always going to be undertaken from your own position – i.e., from within your own worldview (position strands NSE j-k). Awareness of how this affects your exploration, and how your journey affects your own worldview, is an integral part of the exploration, and something to draw attention to throughout the journey – not just something to reflect upon when you get back home.

A7 Introducing the frameworks

In 2022, after an open tendering process, three framework teams were selected by the REC to participate in this project. Their task was for each to develop a framework for an RW curriculum, based on the National Statement of Entitlement (NSE) and the guidance offered in the Draft Resource (REC, 2022), accompanied by sample units of work and examples of pupil responses. The purpose was to test the NSE and the guidance, and to demonstrate ways in which these could be interpreted and applied in different contexts.

The three frameworks are exemplars but not templates. They all reflect specific contexts and have applied the NSE accordingly. As such, they exemplify a process that other SACREs, MATs or schools might follow to apply the NSE and accompanying guidance when developing a curriculum for their own contexts.

SACRE/Diocese-led Framework

This team, led by adviser Jen Jenkins, worked to create a framework for a locally agreed syllabus for two SACREs, Coventry and Warwickshire. Working with the Diocese of Coventry and the members of the two SACREs, the team took account of the contrasting nature of diverse, urban Coventry and predominantly monocultural, suburban and rural Warwickshire. This draws on the particular connection between Coventry and other parts of the world in relation to reconciliation and peace-making. The selected units of work show the progression along one of the framework's key concepts from 4 to 14.

MAT-led Framework

This team, led by Subject Specialist Lead Nikki McGee, worked within the Inspiration Trust MAT, seventeen academies in Norfolk and north Suffolk. Their particular context includes the application of a particular approach to knowledge in their curriculum, and their framework reflects that, as well as the geographical, historical and religious/non-religious context of East Anglia. The RE context includes the Norfolk 2019 agreed syllabus's use of the disciplines of theology, philosophy and human and social sciences. These disciplinary strands are embedded in the Trust's RE curriculum, and can be seen in, for example, the emphasis of philosophical questions and methods in their Framework. The selection of units shows progression along one strand of the curriculum from 4 to 14.

To follow

Teacher-led Framework

This team, led by Gillian Georgiou, comprised teachers across the country, in different contexts: primary and secondary, community, Church of England, academy, urban, suburban and rural. It addressed the challenge: what do you do to introduce an RW approach when you already have a syllabus or curriculum in place? In response, its framework is set up to allow the curriculum leader or teacher to address a series of questions about the unit they are teaching, so as to apply an RW approach to existing units. The framework is in two forms – one at the curriculum level and one at the unit level. The units of work are selected to show how the framework can be applied in a range of school and curriculum contexts.

Note:
Both the SACRE-led and Teacher-led Frameworks are written to offer examples for those in community schools, foundation schools, schools with a religious character, academies and free schools.

A8 What do schools need to do?

- The Handbook, with its three exemplar Frameworks and accompanying units of work, has been produced to support curriculum developers to create a curriculum that fits their context.

- Section B (see below) gives a series of steps for developing an RW approach curriculum in a school's context, applying the NSE and associated guidance. How schools use this will depend on whether they are at the stage of starting from scratch or adapting a current RE curriculum.

- The Teacher-led Framework offers an example of how to do this at the unit level and at the curriculum level, in a context where there is already a syllabus or curriculum in place. The SACRE/Diocese-led and MAT-led Frameworks offer examples of how these teams created new curriculum approaches, while drawing on the lessons learnt from their previous syllabus/curriculum.

> **'How schools use this will depend on whether they are at the stage of starting from scratch or adapting a current RE curriculum. '**

B. Toolkit

for developing a religion and worldviews approach in RE

Intended audience
The syllabus developer, curriculum leader, or subject leader who wants to apply an RW approach in their SACRE, ASC, diocese, MAT or school context. It is also relevant to teachers, subject leaders, and trainee and early career teachers.

Content
This section has a more practical focus, clarifying some definitions, offering both a commentary on the NSE and practical advice for taking the NSE and applying it in different contexts. Examples are given of RW approach questions.

B1 Purposes for RE in a religion and worldviews (RW) approach

The key purpose for RE in an RW approach is: **for pupils to understand how worldviews work in human experience, including their own, through the study of religion and non-religion, using rigorous scholarly approaches that equip them for adult life in a diverse world.**

This incorporates several other purposes for the subject, drawn from the strong traditions of RE and the wider purposes of education. This education in religion and worldviews will help pupils to engage with, understand and respond to:

- diverse responses to and understandings of the world as presented by worldviews (religious and non-religious)

- relationships between beliefs, teachings, forms of expression within organised worldviews, and the lived experience of adherents

- questions of meaning, purpose and truth, including about ultimate reality, and how these questions may be posed, addressed, understood, evaluated and responded to differently within worldviews and across disciplines

- the concepts, language and ways of knowing that help organise and make sense of religion and worldviews

- the development of 'worldview literacy', including the explicit deconstruction of knowledge about (or representation of) worldviews

- how their own personal worldview shapes their encounters with and responses to the world, and how their context, experiences and study can shape their personal worldview.

The RW approach seeks context-appropriate expression of the key purpose statement. It is not trying to impose a one-size fits all model but recognises the need for diversity of implementation to fit the varied contexts of schools across, for example, local authorities, MATs and dioceses in the realising of a shared vision.

> **As each section of this Handbook has a different intended audience, some of this section repeats elements from Section A, and some sections are expanded in Section C.**

B1.1 Purpose statements

An RW approach will:

Introduce pupils to the rich diversity of religion and non-religion, locally and globally, as a key part of understanding the world, what it means to be human, and how they might respond

Stimulate pupils' curiosity about, and interest in, this diversity of worldviews, both religious and non-religious

Expand upon how worldviews work, and how different worldviews, religious and non-religious, influence individuals, communities and society

Develop pupils' awareness that learning about worldviews involves interpreting the significance and meaning of information they study

Develop pupils' appreciation of the complexity of worldviews, and pupils' sensitivity to the nature of religious language and experience

Induct pupils into the academic processes and methods by which we can study religion and religious and non-religious worldviews

Enable pupils, by the end of their studies, to identify positions and presuppositions of different academic disciplines and their implications for understanding

Give pupils opportunities to explore the relationship between religious and non-religious worldviews and literature, culture and the arts

Include pupils in the enterprise of interrogating the sources of their own developing worldviews and how they may benefit from exploring the profound and complex religious and non-religious heritage of humanity

Give opportunities for pupils to consider how they might respond to the way the world is, and play a part in how they might want the world to be in the future

Provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on the relationship between their personal worldviews and the content studied, equipping them to develop their own informed responses in the light of their learning

Equip pupils with the knowledge, understanding and attributes to make scholarly and reflexive judgements about religion and worldviews

Prepare pupils for active citizenship as adults in a world where diversity of views on religion and worldviews is increasing.

B2 National Statement of Entitlement

The National Statement of Entitlement (NSE) is the pedagogical tool for achieving the above purposes. The NSE sets out:

- a benchmark for standards in a religion and worldviews curriculum about how worldview(s) work in human life
- a pedagogical tool for the selection of content and of appropriate teaching and learning approaches to enrich and deepen pupils' understanding of and scholarly engagement with religion and worldviews.

Note that wherever the NSE refers to worldviews, it means both religious and non-religious worldviews.

This version of the NSE expands on the core statements set out in Section A6.

CONTENT	
CORE STATEMENTS	**EXPANDED STATEMENTS**
a. Nature/formation/expression What is meant by worldview and how people's worldviews are formed and expressed through a complex mix of influences and experiences.	The nature and variety of worldviews, and ways in which people's worldviews are formed through a complex mix of influences and experiences, including (for example) rituals, practices, texts, teachings, stories, inspiring individuals, the creative arts, family, tradition, culture, everyday experiences and actions, and interactions with others and in society. How these may also act as ways of expressing and communicating worldviews.
b. Organised/individual How people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or institutional worldviews.	Ways in which people's individual worldviews relate to wider, organised or (sometimes) institutional worldviews. For example, how individual worldviews may be consciously held or tacit; how they develop in relation to wider communities; how individual and organised worldviews are dynamic; the degree to which individual worldviews may be influenced and shaped by organised worldviews.
c. Contexts How worldviews have contexts, reflecting time and place, are highly diverse, and feature continuity and change.	The fact that worldviews have contexts, reflecting their time and place, shaping and being shaped by these, maintaining continuity and also changing; ways in which they are highly diverse and often develop in interaction with each other. (This applies to organised worldviews as well as to individual worldviews.)

d. Meaning and purpose How worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience.	Ways in which worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions raised by human experience, such as questions of ultimate reality, existence, meaning, purpose, knowledge, truth, creativity, identity and diversity. Ways in which worldviews may play different roles in providing people with ways of making sense of existence and/or their lives, including space for mystery, ambiguity and paradox.
e. Values, commitments and morality How worldviews may provide guidance on how to live a good life.	Ways in which worldviews may provide a vision of, and guidance on, how to be a good person and live a good life, and may offer ideas of justice, right and wrong, value, beauty, truth and goodness. Ways in which individuals and communities may express their values through their commitments.
f. Influence and power How worldviews influence, and are influenced by, people and societies.	Ways in which worldviews influence people (e.g. providing a 'grand narrative' or story for understanding the world) and influence the exercise of power in societies (e.g. on social norms for communities, or in relation to conflict or peace-making). How society and people can also influence and shape worldviews.

ENGAGEMENT

CORE STATEMENTS	**EXPANDED STATEMENTS**
g. Ways of knowing The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing.	The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing. Questions and methods should be carefully chosen, recognising that there are different understandings of what knowledge is deemed reliable, valid, credible, truthful etc.
h. Lived experience The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people.	The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people (e.g. religious, non-religious, embodied, diverse, fluid, material, experiential) in relation to local and global contexts, recognising the complex reality of worldviews as they are held, shared and expressed by people in real life.
i. Dialogue/interpretation The field of study of worldviews is to be shown as a dynamic area of debate.	The field of study of worldviews is to be encountered as a dynamic area of dialogue and debate, and one which engages pupils with practices of interpretation and critical judgement.

POSITION

CORE STATEMENTS	**EXPANDED STATEMENTS**
j. Personal worldviews: reflexivity Pupils will reflect on and potentially develop their personal worldviews in the light of their study.	Pupils will come to understand their own worldview in greater depth, and how it relates to the worldviews of others, becoming more reflective and reflexive. As they develop this awareness of their positionality in relation to that of others, they will be equipped to make informed, justifiable judgements on how (far) this understanding prepares them for life in a diverse world.
k. Personal worldviews: impact Pupils will reflect on how their worldviews affect their learning.	Pupils will develop their understanding of how their encounters with the subject content of RE are affected and shaped by their worldviews, whether conscious or not, and that this is also true for everyone else. They will reflect on how (far) their learning may have an impact on their worldview.

Legal requirements

Note that in applying the NSE, the legal requirement still operates, which is that RE 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (Education Act 1996 Section 375).

Notes:

- This National Statement of Entitlement provides a shared vision for the subject. It provides a pedagogical tool that will be interpreted for, and applied in, a variety of different contexts by syllabus writers and curriculum designers.

- The NSE offers a benchmark around which the RE community can gather and agree, and as such has been embedded in the RE Council's National Content Standard for RE in England (2023). While this is not statutory, it has widespread agreement from education and RE professionals, as well as faith and belief communities.

- The wider context for the NSE is that schools will give sufficient time and resources to the subject and to the equipping of specialist teaching. (See Section B2.1)

Note that these three elements and the strands will need to be integrated in practice.

Note also that the NSE appears as a list here, but it is not intended as a list. It can be understood in narrative terms – setting out on an exploration, choosing suitable routes and tools, and reflecting on one's position at key points (see p. 31).

Thinking through the NSE

While it is set out as a list, the NSE is not intended to function as one. The three elements are integrated. The relationship between content, engagement and position might be explained in this way:

The NSE presents a realm of religion and worldviews to explore (content strands NSE a-f).

a.
Nature/ formation/ expression

b.
Organised/ individual

c.
Contexts

d.
Meaning and purpose

e.
Values, commitments and morality

f.
Influence and power

RELIGION AND WORLDVIEWS

As with any exploration, you need to prepare; you need to choose the right tools for the job and a suitable route (engagement strands NSE g-i).

But your exploration is always going to be undertaken from your own position – i.e., from within your own worldview (position strands NSE j-k). Awareness of how this affects your exploration, and how your journey affects your own worldview, is an integral part of the exploration, and something to draw attention to throughout the journey – not just something to reflect upon when you get back home.

Another way of showing the relationship between the content, engagement and position elements of the NSE is through this diagram:
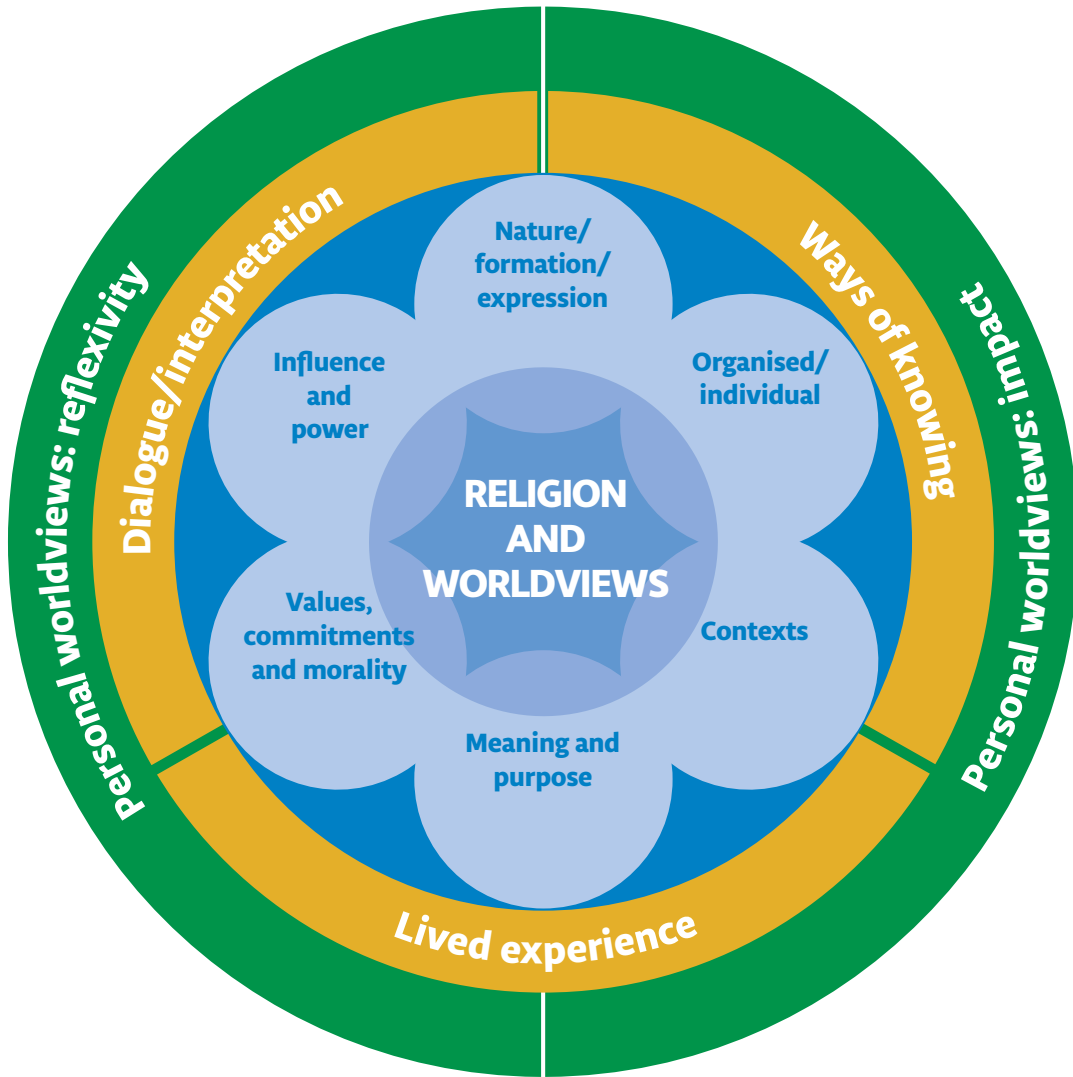
This diagram is not a presentation of the pedagogy, but is an analytic representation of the relationship between the elements. Teaching and learning could begin with an example of content and move 'outwards' towards the pupil's worldview, or with the experience of the pupil and 'inwards' to examine some exemplar material for a religion or worldview. Note also that pupils' personal worldviews are in play throughout any study.

Note also that there is no requirement to balance the elements equally in terms of time; the three elements are integrated within any unit in order to meet the purposes of an RW approach as effectively as possible. In practical terms, this might mean:

- the majority of curriculum time is spent engaging with the content

- varying amounts of time are spent on the model of engagement (more if using a method new to pupils, less as they become more familiar with it)

- appropriate time is spent on the position element, drawing pupils' attention to it at any point and involving some existential self-reflection at different stages. (See Section B7 for more examples of how this might be done, and see also the SACRE-led Framework's 'worldviews passport'.)

When planning units of work, teachers will not be trying to address all eleven strands in every unit. See the use of the mixing desk tool below (see Section B2.2).

B2.1 The context for this statement of entitlement.

All pupils are entitled to receive an education in religion and worldviews in every year up to, and including, Year 13.

Teaching must promote openness, respect for others, objectivity, scholarly accuracy and critical enquiry.

(By objectivity, we do not mean neutrality or some kind of subjectivity-free state. In an RW approach it refers to a person's ability to be reflective about their own personal worldview (i.e. their subjectivity) within their study.)

In line with the DfE Teachers' Standards, pupils are therefore entitled to be taught by teachers who:

i. have a secure knowledge of the relevant curriculum area

ii. foster and maintain pupils' interest in the subject

iii. can address misconceptions and misunderstandings, and handle controversial issues

iv. demonstrate a critical understanding of developments in the study of religion and worldviews

v. promote the value of scholarship.

For all pupils to have equal access to high quality education in religion and worldviews, the subject must be given adequate time and resources commensurate with the place of the subject (RE) as a core component of the basic curriculum.

Schools are required to publish information about their RE curriculum on their website. Ideally, schools should include a detailed statement about how they meet the NSE, and ensure that every pupil has access to it through the curriculum, lessons and wider experiences they provide.

B2.2 Using the NSE to shape units and a curriculum

The NSE offers eleven statements, to be understood as being in relationship with each other. Units of work can focus on a particular *content* strand, alongside one from the *engagement* element to indicate the way in which *pupils* will approach the content, and one *position* strand. However, selecting a single strand does not mean that the others are irrelevant. You might consider the metaphor of a mixing desk, below.

In music, a mixing desk takes all the inputs from a band or orchestra and balances them, fading up a particular instrumental or vocal line (or lines) so that it comes to the fore in the mix. While this happens, it does not mean that the other inputs stop – they continue, and their turn in the spotlight comes at other points.

The NSE functions in a similar way. A unit might draw attention to a particular NSE content strand, or it might fade up two or more. For example, a unit might raise a question of meaning and purpose (NSE d) *and* examine how this is addressed differently in mainstream doctrines and in individual ways of thinking and living (NSE b). The unit may also use examples that show different contexts (NSE c), and while teachers may point this out – and pupils may spot it too – it is not the particular focus of the unit.

Likewise with the engagement element: emphasis may be placed on a disciplinary approach (NSE g) while also using examples from lived experience (NSE h); this element is noted but plays in the background. With the position element, both strands are likely to be in play but units might focus particularly on one rather than the other.
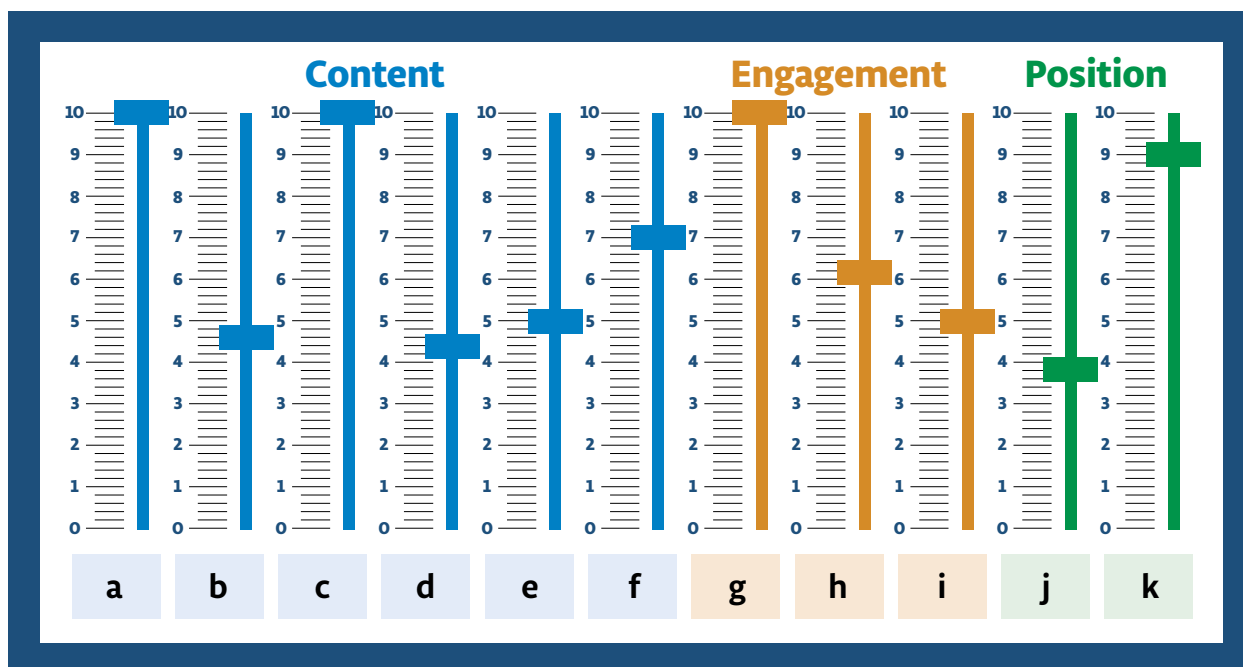
The mixing desk tool can be used to balance the use of the NSE across the curriculum too. The SACRE/Diocese-led Framework makes use of this model.

B3 What do we mean by worldview?

There are many definitions of 'worldview'. Alongside religion, it is another term that sparks debate. Fundamental to the RW approach advocated in this Handbook is the idea that **everyone has a worldview** – or at least, the idea that 'no one stands nowhere': everyone experiences the world from their own context, experience and position.

This does **not** mean:

- that everyone has a ready set of coherent, consciously held responses to a set of ultimate questions about life, the universe and everything. A person's worldview may be unconsidered and even unconscious, drawing on a wide variety of influences and implicit assumptions, and containing contradictions.

- that only people with a religious worldview have a worldview. As part of a religious community's nurture, religious people may have consciously learnt about and practised their tradition, and may have a considered worldview that reflects this. Alternatively, they may have unconsciously absorbed ideas and ways of living and being that have shaped and coloured their worldview, so that it is recognisably a religious worldview, even as they may well have absorbed non-religious influences too. Non-religious people – sometimes in transparent and deliberate ways, such as through membership of an organisation such as Humanists UK, and sometimes unconsciously – will also have absorbed ideas and ways of living and being from their own context, which may have had non-religious or religious influences, to different degrees. These will shape the way non-religious people encounter, view, and live in the world.

The RW approach balances what the CoRE report called personal and organised worldviews.

Note that when this Handbook refers to **personal worldviews**, it refers to *pupils'* personal worldviews.

When pupils are studying the worldviews of people within an organised worldview, the Handbook uses the term '**individual worldviews**'.

Use of the term 'individual' is not intended to imply that anyone's worldview is entirely unique or someone is completely isolated – we are communal beings, and we grow and develop in relation to others. However, 'individual' here functions as a scholarly tool focusing attention on the exploration of the relationship between an individual person and the communities to which they belong, including those of organised or institutional worldviews.

The term is also not intended to set up a simple binary between individuals and institutions. The relationships may be fluid and complex and are worth examination. With one element of an RW approach being that of examining lived religion, individuals' accounts of their worldview will be a key way of exploring these relationships.

The Handbook is making this distinction between **individual worldviews as case studies and objects of study** and **personal worldviews as the position of pupils** (also open to reflective consideration by the pupils). It is making this distinction in order to ensure that when we suggest that studying *individual* worldviews of adherents in relation to organised/institutional worldviews can contribute to the development of pupils' personal worldviews, pupils are not expected to resemble the people they study, nor aspire to do so, nor shape their worldviews in line with those under study.

B3.1 Personal worldviews
This Handbook's entry-point definition is:

> A personal 'worldview' describes the way in which a person encounters, interprets, understands and engages with the world.

- This encompasses a person's beliefs, attitudes, identities, assumptions, intentions, convictions, values, hopes and ways of being in the world.

- It will affect, and be affected by, a person's thoughts, emotions, experiences, encounters, desires, commitments, actions and reactions; much of this is individual, but much will be shared too – people are not islands.

- A person's worldview will be influenced by their context, in terms of time, place, language, sex, gender, the communities that surround them, ethnicity, nationality, economics, history, class, access to political power etc. (Some contextual influences will be obvious and recognised; some will not.)

- It will change as a person grows and faces new experiences, encounters new people and situations, and engages in learning new knowledge. (Some changes may be conscious and deliberate, some may not.)

- This means a person's worldview may be visible or invisible to the individual, but it will show up through their words, attitudes and actions.

- A person's worldview affects how they interpret the world around them as they try to make sense of the world they encounter.

- A person's worldview is about more than religion, even if they are an adherent.

- It might be better to say that a person *inhabits* a worldview rather than *has* one.

- A person may or may not have considered the kind of existential, epistemological and ethical questions addressed by organised worldviews (see below). The RE classroom is an ideal place to encounter such questions, of course, and to learn how to respond in a reflective and informed way.

B3.2 Organised and institutional worldviews

The CoRE report also identified 'organised' worldviews as 'shared among particular groups and sometimes embedded in institutions', adopting the term 'institutional' worldviews for the latter.

There are many definitions offered of organised worldviews. For example, Jacomijn C. van der Kooij et al. (2013) offer this definition:

> An organised worldview is 'a view on life that has developed over time as a more or less coherent and established system with certain (written and unwritten) sources, traditions, values, rituals, ideals, or dogmas … [it] has a group of believers who adhere to this view on life'.

Some scholars set out worldviews around a set of questions (Sire 1976, 2004, 2020, Taves 2020, Aerts et al. 1984) to which organised worldviews have differing responses, embracing existential, ontological, epistemological, ethical questions for example. (See Section C2.5)

The way a worldview might be seen as 'organised' or 'institutional' will differ. There are global institutions such as the Roman Catholic Church, whose teachings and practices might present a Roman Catholic 'institutional worldview'. The teachings of the Ismailis might be another example of an 'institutional worldview', with the central authority of the Imamate manifested in institutional structures across different nations. Other Muslim groups, while still 'organised', might have less tight structures, with variation in practice across cultures or even within a single local community.

Tim Hutchings, University of Nottingham, notes that 'a religion, an institution and an institutional/organised worldview are not necessarily the same thing. The Church of England, for example, is part of a religion and it is an institution, but it is not an organised or institutional worldview. What unites the Church of England is certain points of shared history, texts, rituals and an institutional structure, designed to allow for a diversity of interpretations and worldviews.' (Hutchings 2023).

A world religions approach to RE has tended to see institutions representative of each religion as the focus of study. The RW approach explores how communities and individuals *interact* with these organised or institutional worldviews – how people experience them, and their impact on people's lives. For some:

- the scope and riches of their tradition are not captured in the austerity of the term 'institutional worldview' – instead, they experience it as spiritual, dynamic, creative and life-enhancing, for example

- the institution gives them a sense of community and identity, without their necessarily subscribing to the institution's beliefs and practices

- in addition to the positive benefits derived from belonging, an organised or institutional worldview may have negative effects, oppressing and limiting their identity and personhood

This kind of interaction is what is being explored through examination of *community* or *individual* worldviews.

B3.3 Studying religion and worldviews

This Handbook builds on the understanding of worldviews presented in the CoRE report. It balances personal and organised worldviews. Tim Hutchings comments: 'It is this balance that allows RE to justify attention to religious and non-religious texts, traditions, and complex theologies and philosophies alongside the everyday lived experiences of people who live in dialogue with those traditions. It is this balance that establishes valuable and exciting common ground between school and university teaching in the subject. From age 4 to age 19 – and beyond in higher education, teachers are inviting pupils to explore how humans interpret, understand, experience and engage with the world, including everyday life stories as well as some of the most impressive and sophisticated accomplishments of human thought.' (Hutchings 2023).

B3.4 Points to note

Religion and worldviews

- An RW approach examines the dynamic between these terms.

- Part of that dynamic allows for encounter with, and study of, diverse voices and the experiences of individuals within wider 'organised' worldviews. Thus, the individual worldviews of adherents within such organised worldviews come under the content to be studied.

Organised and individual worldviews

- Some organised worldviews may be expressed through widely approved doctrines and practices set out by official hierarchies, e.g. Christian creeds and catechisms; the Rehat Maryada in Sikh traditions. Some 'organised' worldviews may be embedded in institutions, e.g. the Roman Catholic Church.

- Individuals within these traditions may have an individual worldview that reflects these widely approved teachings to a greater or a lesser extent.

- Some involvement with an 'organised' worldview may take the form of devotion by a group to a particular guru or saint, e.g. A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder of ISKCON, or Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, chair of the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewa organisation.

- Some individual worldviews may weave together influences from diverse streams (e.g. be a practising Anglican with a preference for Celtic Christianity and an interest in Zen Buddhism, married to a pagan, and integrating pagan festivals and sensibilities into their living and being).

- Some may have left their religious upbringing behind but retain at least a trace of a religious worldview (e.g. brought up a Catholic, left it all behind in their teens and now living as non-religious, yet still practising fasting during Lent).

- Some individuals may have reflected on their personal worldview through encountering a set of worldview questions (for example, through the work of Christian scholars such as James Sire, or non-religious scholars such as Ann Taves or John Valk) and have their own coherent worldview, influenced by the answers from organised worldviews. Many others have not reflected on such questions – until, perhaps, they encounter these kinds of questions in RE.

- In a country such as the UK, people's worldviews may absorb Christian *and* non-religious influences (alongside consumerist influences, for example), as part of the air they breathe. Weeks and years are shaped by Christian festivals and observances; Christian ideas underpin law, morality, sanctity of life, the legislature, the monarchy. However, the media, TV, film, popular culture and education often present a secular perspective (where religion has little significance or relevance) as the default position.

Religious worldviews

- Some religious worldviews incorporate the idea of divine revelation – that a divine being has communicated the truth about the way the world is and how people should be. People holding these religious worldviews may believe in this kind of revelation, and part of their way of living and being involves adherence to the divine path, a participation in the deity's on going purpose, a celebration of the goodness, wisdom and mercy of the deity, and/or fear of divine judgement.

- Other traditions may see the idea of the divine as part of a human construct, a powerful metaphor, a transformative idea that motivates and illuminates ways of living, offering wisdom from the ages, refined through experience, conversation and debate, to guide actions.

- Some people within a religious tradition may seek to live in accordance with a sense of cosmic order and truth, and to ever-deepen their sense of connectedness to all life.

- Some people within a religious tradition may say that their own worldview is beside the point – the truth of divine revelation is true regardless of whether their individual worldview lines up, or whether their way of living matches the moral ideals of their tradition. They may therefore reject the idea that their beliefs are 'just a worldview'.

- For some, their religious identity is also associated with their ethnic identity. For example, many Jewish people are ethnically Jewish, with genetic roots in a particular time and place. Ethnicity is inescapable, even if, where linked to religious identity, people with specific ethnic backgrounds may not see themselves as having the linked religious 'worldview', or may see themselves as firmly part of it, or somewhere in between. They may have their own position on how, or sometimes even whether, they belong to an 'organised worldview'.

- Some religious people reject the term 'religious': they may say, 'I'm not religious; I'm Christian/ Muslim/ Sikh' etc.

- Some individuals who see themselves as being within religious traditions or communities may have never given much thought to the existential, epistemological or ethical questions addressed by the organised worldview to which they belong. They just do the stuff.

- People who identify with a religious worldview may not necessarily believe, belong or behave according to teachings and traditions, for example, research shows that a significant number of people in the UK who identify Christians do not pray, read the Bible, attend church or believe in the resurrection, or even in God.[4]

- Many people will vigorously defend their worldview because they believe it to be true. The philosopher Michael Polanyi described this as holding beliefs with 'universal intent'. Beliefs matter to people, because their identity is tied up with them.

Non-religious worldviews

- Non-religious worldviews are diverse and complex, with fluid boundaries. People may draw upon a wide range of influences, and there are no rules about what should or should not be incorporated into a non-religious worldview. Some influences are part of a person's cultural or social background; consumerism may not be a conscious choice for a person's non-religious (or religious) worldview, but it is difficult to escape in the contemporary UK. Other influences may be more deliberately chosen, such as ethical veganism, environmentalism or Sentientism. These may equally align with some religious worldviews, but adopting them does not require any assent to religious beliefs or teachings. The term non-religion itself does not entail any particular attitude towards religion.

- The term 'spiritual but not religious' is a contemporary sociological category, often indicating that someone rejects organised religion but embraces a belief in something greater than themselves or the transcendent, perhaps with a focus on their interior life or their relationship with the natural environment, for example.

- For some, their non-religious worldview includes elements of what some might call supernatural phenomena such as belief in ghosts or ancestor spirits; some have a sense that things happen 'for a reason' or are 'meant to be'; some embrace religious or spiritual practices, such as mindfulness meditation or belief in the healing power of crystals; some trust their horoscope for guidance (e.g. Bullivant et al. 2019). Non-religiousness has no orthodoxy or orthopraxy.

- Some non-religious people could reasonably be categorised as materialists, believing that as matter is the fundamental substance in nature, all things, including mental states and consciousness, are results of material interactions of material things. Many of these also embrace both metaphysical naturalism (a complete denial of the supernatural) alongside the application of methodological naturalism (a leading principle of scientific enquiry, that everything should be explained in this-worldly terms).

- Some non-religious people embrace Humanism as a worldview, in that their thinking is aligned with or shaped by the kinds of existential and ethical statements set out in the Humanist Manifesto, for example. Some are active in Humanist communities, and may offer their services as celebrants for non-religious people at significant times of life, as one expression of their worldview. For some, Humanism may function as an organised worldview, with parallels to organised religious worldviews.

- Scholars sometimes differentiate between Humanism and humanism, in a way consonant with the idea of organised and individual worldviews: 'The former is associated with explicit discourses and organisations such as Humanists UK and Ethical Culture, and includes an identification with Humanist histories and traditions; the latter is an analytic category which identifies a worldview that does not necessarily include explicit association or identification with these organizations or histories, even if it continues to be shaped by their inheritance.' (Strhan et al. 2024)

- Some non-religious people reject the term 'non-religion'. They do not believe in a non-religion nor do they define their beliefs in relation to religion.

- Some non-religious people may be secular in the sense of seeing the public square as a neutral place that does not privilege any worldview; or they may be secularist in the sense of wishing to remove religion from public life and restrict it to the private sphere. Those elements may be more or less significant in the impact they have on any individual's worldview.

- Lois Lee (2015) points out that the non-religious worldviews of her interviewees were rarely articulated as coherent credal expressions, that they emerged in fragmentary ways through expressions of belief, accounts of lived experiences, and embodied ways of living, and that they are often woven together in creative and even contradictory ways in people's lives.

- Some non-religious people's worldviews see existential/religious questions as meaningless, or are indifferent to them. Worldview is not just about substantive content, but about underlying orientations, as people will inhabit their worldview regardless of its relationship to religion. (Hancock 2024)

All of the above bullet points offer scope for pupil enquiry in an RE curriculum applying an RW approach.
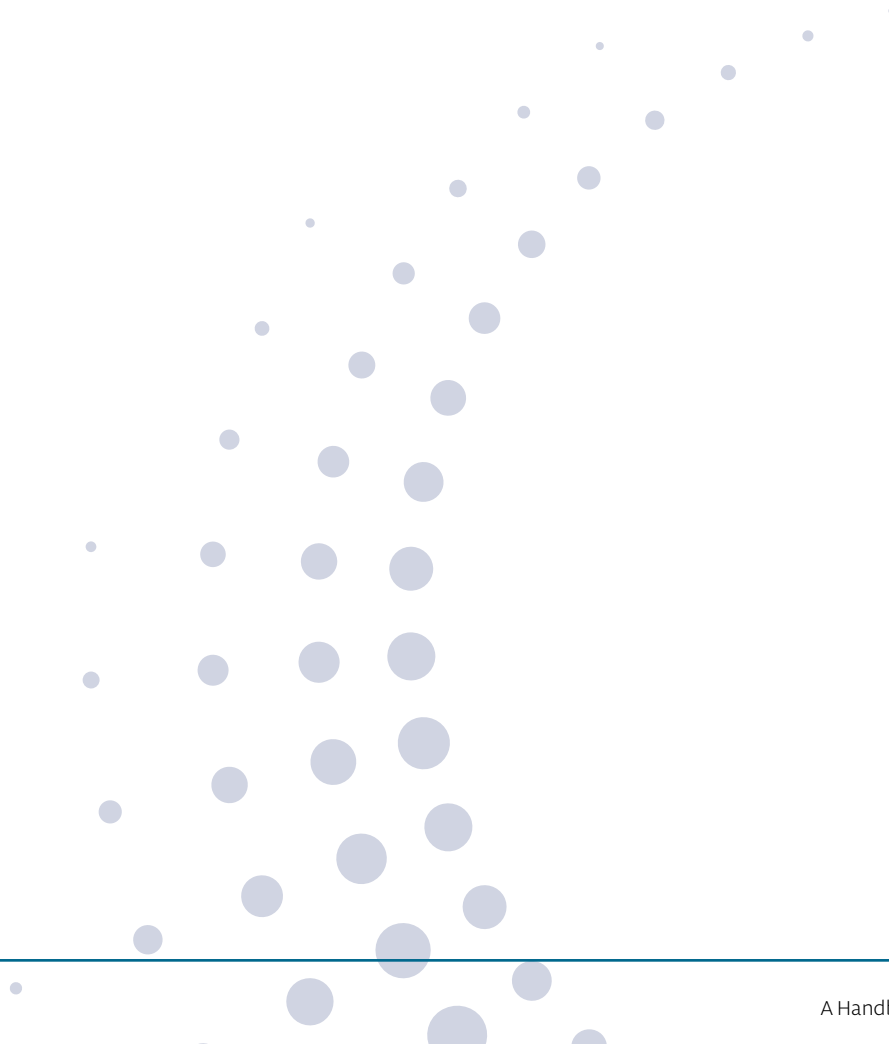
B3.5 Pupils' personal worldviews

Demographic data suggests that across Britain most pupils are not part of organised religious traditions. The RW approach brings pupils' personal worldviews into play within the study of religion and worldviews. From the pupils' early days in primary school, the development of their personal worldviews includes a growing self-awareness of how our autobiography affects our worldview, and how it shapes our encounters in life.

In RE, an RW approach involves helping pupils to develop their personal worldview in conversation with the content and methods of study in the subject. As they move through their education, it helps them to make informed judgements about the content studied, the methods used, and their own perspectives and position, in the light of evidence and argument. This draws pupils' attention to ideas of critical 'positionality', as practised in academic study at undergraduate level and beyond.

Intellectual virtues
The development of pupils' personal worldviews thus involves developing some intellectual virtues, such as

- curiosity

- intellectual humility about the certainty of their own conclusions

- a willingness to learn from others

- developing the habit of careful listening before responding or making judgements, as they recognise the interplay between their own worldview and the worldviews of others in interpreting content

- being prepared to change their mind and adjust their worldview in the light of new encounters, knowledge and experiences.

The development of these intellectual virtues arises (in part) from the modelling of these virtues in the way pupils are taught. The ways that questions are raised and addressed in the classroom, and how the content is handled, will exemplify the kind of openness, humility, curiosity, even-handedness, accuracy, fairness, willingness to be challenged and self-awareness that the subject wants to promote,

both for academic reasons and in preparation for life in a diverse world. Such virtues will promote scholarly attributes such as asking insightful questions and making wise and informed judgements.

Personal transformation
The subject, as with all school subjects, includes the possibility of personal transformation. The pupil engages with learning about ways of thinking, living and being that are outside their own experience. The inclusion of pupils' personal worldviews within the educational process draws attention to the possibility that the learning experience will change them (by increasing their interpretive skills, for example), and offers opportunities for them to reflect on how this might happen.

The centrality of pupils' personal worldview development is driven by the entitlement of all children and young people to understand human experience and the way things operate in their own and others' worlds. It is, therefore, part of the identify formation of pupils. They are given opportunities to examine the sources of their own worldviews, and the impact of their contexts on these.

Through the classroom encounters, pupils will develop awareness of how their own worldviews relate with the varied worldviews of others. They will have opportunities to grasp how their worldviews have a bearing on their understanding of, and engagement with, curriculum content. Recognising that this also applies to others is a valuable preparation for life in a world of diverse viewpoints.

While personal worldviews extend beyond matters of religious belief, study of religious and non-religious worldviews offers opportunities to examine important existential and ethical questions. These include questions around ultimate reality, meaning, purpose and truth, identity, diversity, morality, values and commitments, and the accumulated knowledge and understanding arising from centuries of religions and philosophies addressing such questions.

' **While personal worldviews extend beyond matters of religious belief, study of religious and non-religious worldviews offers opportunities to examine important existential and ethical questions.** '

B3.6 The NSE and Ofsted's three types of knowledge

The Ofsted 2021 *Religious Education Research Review* outlines three types of knowledge that pupils should make progress in:

- **substantive knowledge:** this includes knowledge about religious and non-religious traditions, e.g. core concepts, truth claims, teachings and practices, behaviour and responses of adherents, wider concepts such as spirituality and secularity, and how worldviews work in human life

- **ways of knowing:** this is where pupils learn 'how to know' about religion and non-religion, incorporating methods from academic disciplines

- **personal knowledge:** pupils build an awareness of their own presuppositions and values about the religious and non-religious traditions they study, and of the lived experience of adherents.

The study of the relationship between religion and worldviews is thus a core element of the **substantive content** of the subject.

This substantive content includes **organised/ institutional/ community/ individual worldviews**. These range from precise credal expressions and central teachings to the complex fluidity of individual worldviews within wider traditions.

This Handbook recognises that there are differing interpretations of personal worldviews and personal knowledge, so the terms are not intended to be exact equivalents.

The methods used to explore, examine and engage with religion and worldviews form part of 'ways of knowing'.

There is consonance between Ofsted's accounts of these three types of knowledge and the content/engagement/position elements of the RW approach presented in this Handbook. (See Section C6 for more on the context of the NSE.)

B4 Selecting content

It is vital that syllabus writers and curriculum developers make wise decisions on the selection of knowledge for a curriculum. Time for RE is limited, and the RW approach is intended to offer a solution to the impossibility of comprehensive coverage of the diversity of religious and non-religious traditions. The criteria for deciding content include the following:

1

Intention

The NSE frames the intent behind the content selection. The treatment of that content then contributes to the progression of understanding of the elements in the NSE, and the links between them.

2

Legal framework

The legal requirement operates, which is that RE 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (Education Act 1996 Section 375). For most schools and academies with a religious character RE is determined by the governors and is set out in their trust deed or equivalent. This primary legislation along with case law, set an expectation that pupils will develop knowledge and understanding of the matters of central importance for the religious and non-religious worldviews studied.

3

Inclusive principle

Good practice in RE, as well as European and domestic legislation, has established the principle that RE in schools without a religious character should be inclusive of both religious and non-religious worldviews. There is widespread acceptance that study of Humanism is an appropriate example of a non-religious worldview, as is stated within case law ('The content of religious education teaching must include, at least to some degree, the teaching of non-religious beliefs (such as Humanism)', Bowen vs Kent County Council 2023 para.68[5]). Schools should ensure that the content and delivery of the RE curriculum are inclusive in this way, according equal respect to religious and non-religious worldviews (noting that this does not imply equal time between them) (Fox vs the Secretary of State for Education para.74 2015[6]).

All religious and non-religious worldviews studied must be represented fairly and accurately, and teaching should be critical, objective and pluralistic. This Handbook interprets '*critical*' as meaning that pupils learn to make good judgements; '*objective*' here means developing the ability for a person to be reflective about their own personal worldview (i.e. their subjectivity) within their study; and '*pluralistic*' in this context means honouring the fact that diversity is part of our world.

4 Contextual factors

Local context is important, including school character, local community character, pupil knowledge and experience, teacher knowledge and experience. Local context also includes the history of local areas, allowing opportunities for local studies that connect teaching and learning with the geographical and historical background.

5 'Collectively-enough' principle

Pupils need to gain 'collectively enough' or 'cumulatively sufficient' knowledge (Ofsted 2021), not total coverage. In this Handbook, 'collectively enough' needs to relate to the NSE, with its three broad elements of *content, engagement* and *position*.

6 Coherence

Schools should be able to give a clear account of their curriculum choices, and carefully consider how they will enable the construction of a coherent curriculum for pupils. The choices taken should be transparent and shared with pupils.

B4.1 Implications of this model

A wide range of content could be selected to enable pupils to understand religion and worldviews in the way set out in the NSE. The move to an RW curriculum gives great flexibility and freedom in this regard.

The selection of content is no longer driven by the 'world religions paradigm'. The world religions are 'social facts', and the Education Act still requires that RE 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'. However, an education in religion and worldviews includes these traditions as well as developing pupils' awareness of the causes and functions of that paradigm and its effects. This is part of the self-awareness of the approach – it examines the assumptions and perspectives at play.

According to Rob Freathy, University of Exeter:

'The fact that selection has been made should also be part of the content examined in lessons, so that pupils know why they are studying this content and not something else. When dealing with subject matter that is about ideas, beliefs, values, and so forth, and which some people promote, others accept, oppose, reject, or find controversial, there may be a higher level of attentiveness and perhaps suspicion on the part of some pupils about why schools are teaching what they are, how they have come to select that subject matter, what subject matter they have decided not to select. Schools should try as far as possible to make clear their selection criteria, and the nature/extent of the material from which a selection is being made. If pupils are being presented with a part – a case study, for example – then what is the whole from which the part has been selected, and on what grounds has the selection been made? By setting out the context, and describing the selection process, then it is possible to present the broad landscape and focus on one particular element without feeling the need to cover all of the ground in intimate detail. This helps to deal with criticisms that selections may be skewed, and to help fulfil the requirement to study 'cumulatively sufficient' content.' (Freathy, personal correspondence)

The NSE helps to give a rationale for selection. It outlines the features of worldviews, and how they work in human experience, that pupils should grasp by the end of their schooling, richly explored and examined through a wide range of exemplar content. However, the elements of the NSE are not separate – the engagement element indicates some of the ways in which the encounters with content should be shaped – namely, encounters with lived examples of adherents in organised worldviews, encounters that are brought into focus in the classroom, that use different methods, that evaluate methods and exemplar content appropriately, equipping pupils for handling questions raised by religion and worldviews. The position of the pupils in relation to the content and engagement can be focused on at any point.

B4.2 Principles for selection

The above criteria offer some guidance to shape, and limit the extent of the curriculum. Alongside that we might add 'fewer things in greater depth' as a principle.

The content element of the NSE is designed to give some criteria for selection. For example:

- A teacher can select examples and case studies to enable pupils to understand some ways in which worldviews are formed and some ways in which they can be expressed through, for example, use of ritual, stories and art in family and community life (NSE strand a), comparing some traditions within organised worldviews and the lived reality of adherents' lives (NSE strands b and h).

- Pupils can examine the kinds of answers that worldviews offer to questions of ultimate reality, meaning and purpose (NSE strands d and c), and how they may have changed across different contexts (NSE strand c) – through time and across different parts of the world, exploring the dialogue and debate that might have taken place as organised worldviews grapple with such huge questions (NSE strand i).

The 'After Religious Education' project[7] includes the principles of 'pedagogical reduction', where teachers make self-conscious choices about the selection, simplification and representation of content, and 'exemplarity', where something significant or fundamental about the world is opened up through concrete examples. This Handbook suggests that the NSE is a tool to support 'pedagogical reduction', and supports the idea of exemplarity. (See e.g. Lewin 2020, Lewin et al. 2023)

▶ *More examples of how the NSE can guide content selection can be found in Sections B8 and B9.*

B4.3 Curriculum planning

Content selection for a syllabus or curriculum needs to provide pupils with the foundations for learning about religion and worldviews through their schooling. Current good practice emphasises the critical focus on how early learning prepares for later learning, to create a coherent narrative across the curriculum. Two of the frameworks offer examples of how to show this kind of curriculum progression (SACRE/Diocese-led and MAT-led Frameworks).

▶ *Section B8 includes some steps for curriculum planning.*

B5 The NSE engagement element

The NSE engagement element indicates that content should be approached in a variety of ways:

- an emphasis on lived experience

- introducing pupils to, and including them in, some of the dialogues and debates within and between organised worldviews

- highlighting the ways interpretation is at the heart of human responses to living

- applying different 'ways of knowing' (cf. Ofsted), which may include different methods or academic disciplines.

B5.1 Ways of knowing

ENGAGEMENT	
CORE STATEMENT	**EXPANDED STATEMENT**
g. Ways of knowing The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing.	The field of study of worldviews is to be explored using diverse ways of knowing. Questions and methods should be carefully chosen, recognising that there are different understandings of what knowledge is deemed reliable, valid, credible, truthful etc.

This allows for the application of methods, for example those from theology and philosophy, and from within the academic study of religion. Such disciplinary areas are valuable in helping pupils to understand how the study of religion and worldviews can be undertaken in different ways (Ofsted 2021).

For younger age groups, drawing on a variety of methods is sufficient, noting with pupils that different methods handle content in different ways and should be evaluated appropriately. The use of methods and disciplines helps pupils to learn how, for example:

- you can ask different questions about the same content

- answering these questions will require different kinds of methods

- the findings might be interpreted appropriately in different ways

- evaluation of the findings will require a set of tools appropriate to the methods and disciplines

- all the above are affected by the context of the learner/researcher and their personal worldview.

> **' Good curriculum planning entails being clear about the type of knowledge that is being generated within any given module or unit. '**

As pupils make progress through the school, they will understand that the kinds of questions you ask make a difference to how you would go about answering them. They should be taught how disciplines generate different types of knowledge. This means that there are particular assumptions behind the various disciplines, and different types of question being addressed within them.

To apply an RW approach is not a matter simply of selecting a method; good curriculum planning entails being clear about the type of knowledge that is being generated within any given module or unit. For example, how the theistic assumptions of theology and the naturalistic assumptions of sociology and anthropology affect how scholars practise the discipline, as well as the relationship of the knowledge generated in these disciplines to the worldviews of the adherents within traditions. Adherents may be unaware of some theological perspectives from within their tradition, or some external sociological descriptions of their lived reality.

Within an RW approach, pupils should, for example:

- be helped to recognise the different authoritative weight of a 'sacred' text for adherents in that tradition, and for those outside the tradition for whom it is not sacred, and some implications from this

- explore how and why such texts are interpreted and applied differently, looking at a range of perspectives and contexts

- examine how an RW approach questions some categories within 'religion', such as how far a focus on texts is appropriate in different traditions

- learn to recognise that a single voice from a tradition will not be representative, and consider whether and how a tradition could be represented

- learn that any adherent's perspective will indicate a relationship between 'orthodox' or mainstream teachings and individual practice; for example, a 'professional' or 'expert' religious person compared with a layperson or 'non-expert' (Ammerman 2007)

- consider whose voices are represented within lessons, why, and what implications there may be

- have opportunities to test whether, for example, survey data is reliable, such as by interrogating the questions asked, the sample size and range, who was asking whom and why, and how the data was presented

- be able to select and apply appropriate methods of evaluation, for example, to examine how far an argument is valid, or an interpretation of a text is legitimate, or a truth claim is credible, or theories are borne out by evidence.

▶ *See the Appendix for illustrations of what making progress in ways of knowing, including disciplinary knowledge, might look like.*

B5.2 Lived experience

ENGAGEMENT	
CORE STATEMENT	**EXPANDED STATEMENT**
h. Lived experience The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people.	The field of study of worldviews is to include a focus on the lived experience of people (e.g. religious, non-religious, embodied, diverse, fluid, material, experiential) in relation to local and global contexts, recognising the complex reality of worldviews as they are held, shared and expressed by people in real life.

In an RW approach, the study of organised worldviews, their doctrines, teachings, texts, rituals and practices is balanced with the ordinary experiences and commitments of 'everyday religion', in Ammerman's term (2007). RE has tended to emphasise the theological orthodoxy and orthopraxy of organised religions. The RW approach does not want to lose an understanding of those orthodoxies, but wants them to be placed in context and also to illuminate the ways in which those teachings and practices are lived and experienced by 'non-experts' (Ammerman). 'At the level of the individual, religion is not fixed, unitary, or even coherent' (McGuire 2008). Such an approach requires some engagement with the messy lifeworlds of individuals, families and communities that 'flow beyond ordered categories of doctrine and the spaces of religious institutions' (Strhan et al. 2024). These in themselves can shed a light on the nature of the institutions that might be examined in NSE strand f, influence and power.

The emphasis on lived experience is also to help teachers and pupils to extend their understanding of what it means to have a worldview beyond the cognitive; it is not just about beliefs – it incorporates the actions a person carries out, how they view and live in their physical body, the material objects that they use to express what matters most, such as in daily life or in rituals, the buildings in which they choose to act, the art they use to decorate their walls etc.

This strand also encourages schools to enable direct encounter with people from the different worldviews studied, always weighing up how representative an encounter can be, how far one can make generalisations about the wider community, and how the worldview of the person encountered shapes their thinking and being.

B5.3 Dialogue/interpretation

ENGAGEMENT	
CORE STATEMENT	**EXPANDED STATEMENT**
i. Dialogue/interpretation The field of study of worldviews is to be shown as a dynamic area of debate.	The field of study of worldviews is to be encountered as a dynamic area of dialogue and debate, and one which engages pupils with practices of interpretation and critical judgement.

This strand emphasises that religion and worldviews are dynamic rather than static. Even those organised worldviews who believe their central texts to be revelations of divine origin engage in lively and often centuries-old debates about, for example, the nature of the revelation, its status (e.g. revealed in a specific context or a copy of a pre-existing heavenly book), how to understand and apply its message etc.

A hermeneutical approach draws attention to the role that interpretation plays in how we make sense of the world. An RW approach is hermeneutical; it reminds teachers and pupils that texts (and rituals, actions, art and other forms of creative expression etc.) all have contexts, and that to understand them involves a hermeneutical process of interpretation. This means trying to understand the context of the text and the context of the reader – two horizons. 'The pedagogy embedded in the Statement of Entitlement is hermeneutical in seeking to create a dialogical experience between the horizon of the content studied and the horizon of the pupil in a way that equips pupils to make informed, reasoned, scholarly and reflective judgements and to develop the scholarly virtues that are integral to an academically rigorous approach.' (Cooling 2024)

In the classroom this will mean, for example:

- introducing pupils to some of the debates within organised worldviews, such as those that have caused contention through the centuries (e.g. developing understandings of life after death or salvation within Abrahamic traditions, or karma in Dharmic traditions), or are particularly challenging today (e.g. issues of climate justice or identity politics)

- acknowledging that debate is not always as harmonious as we might like to model in the classroom, and equipping pupils with the tools for coherent dialogue

- equipping pupils with interpretive skills as they encounter texts and other examples of religious or non-religious content (art, material culture, ritual actions, activism etc)

- drawing their attention to questions behind, within and in front of texts (Gooder 2008, Ipgrave 2013, Pett and Cooling 2018, Bowie 2018), and how these might apply to other content beyond texts

- noting how the pupils' personal worldviews play a role in their encounter with the text/content ('in front of the text' questions)

- supporting pupils to recognise generalisations that are made in introducing some organised worldviews and the kinds of evidence and examples needed to test and validate those generalisations.

B6 The NSE position element: developing personal worldviews

POSITION	
CORE STATEMENTS	**EXPANDED STATEMENTS**
j. Personal worldviews: reflexivity Pupils will reflect on and potentially develop their personal worldviews in the light of their study.	Pupils will come to understand their own worldview in greater depth, and how it relates to the worldviews of others, becoming more reflective and reflexive. As they develop this awareness of their positionality in relation to that of others, they will be equipped to make informed, justifiable judgements on how (far) this understanding prepares them for life in a diverse world.
k. Personal worldviews: impact Pupils will reflect on how their worldviews affect their learning.	Pupils will develop their understanding of how their encounters with the subject content of RE are affected and shaped by their worldviews, whether conscious or not, and that this is also true for everyone else. They will reflect on how (far) their learning may have an impact on their worldview.

The position element of the NSE emphasises the active role of the pupil in engaging in their learning. It highlights that the development of pupils' personal worldviews is integral to a scholarly RW approach. It involves:

- enabling pupils to reflect on and articulate their worldviews and the sources of these, so that they can engage in well-informed dialogue in relation to religion and worldviews (while recognising they might also do this in relation to English literature, geography, science or PE, for example)

- drawing pupils' attention to their worldviews and bringing them into well-informed dialogue with the worldviews of others

- developing their reflexivity – their reflection on and self-awareness about the learning process

- using this reflexivity to understand and explain how their personal worldviews both affect their encounter and engagement with the content of religion and worldviews, and also how these encounters may influence their worldviews

- recognising and reflecting on how other people are also influenced by their personal worldviews in how they respond to the world
- developing their understanding of the role of interpretation in their own knowledge growth
- interpreting art and drawing on creativity as a form of expressing their ideas, and as a means of deepening understanding of others' position and their own.

Developing pupils' personal worldviews may also include the following:

- the ability to apply disciplinary, dialogical and hermeneutical skills
- the creation of personal knowledge, arising through the interpretive action of engaging with the content of religion and worldviews
- the development of academic virtues, such as curiosity, intellectual humility, willingness to learn from others, and careful listening before coming to judgement.

Note that the subject will provide experiences, opportunities and encounters with diverse people and content exemplifying something of the richness of worldviews, wisdom, lived religion/non-religion, artistic expression, human creativity and ingenuity, culture, philosophy, ethics, etc.

The encounter with the diversity of human experience gives pupils space and tools for reflecting on their own worldviews, and for recognising how their worldview affects their interpretation of, and engagement with, the world. Pupils can reflect on how this applies to everyone else too, and what that might mean for listening to, and living with, others.

Not all effects and impacts of this on pupils can be known or examined, and for some school contexts (such as those with a religious foundation) syllabus writers may look to identify aspects of moral and spiritual development more closely.

B7 How to develop pupils' personal worldviews

It is important to note that the *position* element of the NSE (strands j—k) indicates that pupils are always encountering the content and processes of the subject from the position of their own worldview. This means that developing personal worldviews is not simply a matter of getting to the end of a unit of work and reflecting on their own ideas (see illustration on p. 31). Instead, pupils should have their attention drawn to their position in relation to their studies at different times within a unit of work. There is no set requirement for this – and it should not become a box-ticking exercise. Depending on the content, it might be appropriate to reflect on pupils' worldviews at the beginning, middle and end of a unit, asking pupils whether and/or how their ideas are changing or have changed.

One research project on metacognition and worldviews from Exeter University has developed a Worldview Question Framework (see Larkin et al. 2020). This works as a place for personal reflection for pupils on their own worldview. Pupils respond to a variety of questions on themes including personal identity, ultimate and existential questions, ontological and epistemological questions (i.e. about the nature of existence and of knowledge). Pupils respond to questions in the light of their learning, and reflect on how their answers might change as they learn more. The research project highlights opportunities for development of this approach. It also notes that there is a danger of overdoing reflective methods at the expense of substantive content, so it is important to find suitable strategies that integrate understanding religion and worldviews *and* pupil reflection. Suitable strategies for this include:

FREE-LISTING[8]

This is an ethnographic method from cognitive anthropology. When run with 30 people in a population, it can reveal the most shared and salient associations people have with particular concepts. For example, ask pupils or interviewees to list the first words that come to mind when they think about the term 'religion' or 'non-religion' or 'God' or 'truth'; then gather the lists and analyse for salience – that is, for rank and frequency. This can indicate personal worldview perspectives before studying religion, non-religion, God, truth etc. (Note that a class of 30 will only represent the classroom microculture rather than a wider population.)

MIXING-DESK ANALOGY[9]

This involves drawing up a diagram showing that elements of a person's worldview will have different relevance or importance in different contexts, such as when facing challenges, or at different times in life; see p. 34 for an example of a mixing desk applied to planning.

SNOWFLAKE[10]

This is a diagram that allows pupils to respond to different statements according to how far they agree or disagree; this visual presentation allows them to see immediately where they agree or disagree with another pupil's responses. Pupils apply philosophical thinking, clarifying the meanings of terms and offering reasons for their responses, applying their learning. The statements can indicate aspects of a pupil's worldview and be revisited at different stages of a unit or units of work to note any changes and continuities.

EXPRESSING IDEAS

Pupils might be asked to respond to stimulus material in different ways, expressing ideas through art, poetry, reflective writing, or even through taking action. These can indicate the nature and impact of pupils' personal worldview, with opportunities to revisit and reflect at different points later in the unit of work or a subsequent one.

PERSONAL WORLDVIEW TOOLS

Dawn Cox[11] has been working to develop a teacher personal worldview tool, to support teachers in identifying the influences on their positionality. There is scope for adapting this for use with pupils. James Sire's and Anne Taves' worldview questions can also be used directly with students.[12]

Note that these approaches focus on developing pupils' awareness of their own worldview, bringing to the surface what can be hidden in the lives of many people.

Note that the SACRE/Diocese-led Framework includes a pupil Worldview Passport to support and encourage self-reflection, building on the work of Larkin et al (2020).

B8 Using the NSE to develop a syllabus/curriculum

A syllabus construction process requires a philosophy before it requires a checklist process or set of planning steps. The NSE shapes the philosophy, setting out the nature of the engagement between pupils and the content in an education in religion and worldviews. Below are some guidelines for developing a curriculum with an RW approach.

B8.1 Principles to bear in mind when developing a syllabus/curriculum

Using the NSE

1 The NSE maps out the knowledge and understanding of how worldviews work in human life that students need to gain if they are to know how to study this academic subject and to understand the relationship between religion and worldviews.

2 The NSE provides a structure and criteria for content selection, to avoid content overload.

3 The NSE is not a list, nor is it a checklist. While the statements relate to each other, the boundaries are not fixed. It is a pedagogical tool to assist in curriculum building.

4 The RW approach is not about studying a list of religious and non-religious worldviews in separate containers. The focus is on the human experience of interacting with the religious and non-religious domain.

5

Syllabuses and schools should not simply assume that they are already implementing an RW approach as set out in this Handbook. Many teachers have been examining diversity and applying different disciplines – however, in a religion and worldviews *curriculum*, by facilitating their interaction with the content as set out in the NSE, pupils develop their understanding of the worldviews of others while developing and generating pupils' personal knowledge.

6

A syllabus should make judgements about the balance between the different elements of the NSE, according to the context. All units need to include something from each of the three elements of the NSE (content, engagement, position), balanced appropriately. Often this will mean a significant emphasis on the content element. The engagement element outlines the means of engaging with the content, and so it does not delineate a separate amount of content. Sometimes a unit will introduce some methods, and perhaps a discipline, in order to enable pupils to address a question and think of how best to answer it. As pupils become more familiar with a range of methods, less time is needed to introduce them. As mentioned in Section B7, pupils' personal worldviews are the lens through which they encounter every part of the curriculum, and attention can be drawn to them at any moment. Appropriate time should be spent on pupil self-reflection.

7

The NSE statements are not intended to be covered separately by unit/term. The bigger picture needs to emerge across topics and across school phases, so that the curriculum develops for pupils aged 4—19.

8

The different statements can be broken down and units can focus on a part of one. For example, NSE a could be used as the basis for a unit that explores how creativity and art express and help to form worldviews, with questions such as:

> *How does art express and influence people's worldviews? How do images of Jesus reflect global Christianity? How do Muslims use artistic forms in different ways to communicate ideas about God?*

NSE d could be broken down to ask ontological questions about existence or origins, such as:

> *Is there a God? Is this life it, or is there life after death? What exists and what does not exist? What is real and unreal?*

Similarly, a unit could use NSE d, and focus on epistemological questions of knowledge and truth, addressing questions such as:

> *What is true and false? How do you know? What source(s) do you use to decide? What is knowledge? What is belief? What is opinion? What is faith?*

NSE b opens up the possibility of examining the nature of religion and non-religion, raising questions for older pupils, which also touch on NSE f, such as:

> *What is the nature of the relationship between institutional and individual forms of religion and belief? What criteria might be used to classify someone as religious or non-religious? Are those valid distinctions? Who is doing the classifying, and why? Where do people get the standards that are used to judge whether something is religious or not?*

B8.2 Organising syllabus/curriculum content

9 Systematic study of an organised worldview (a religion, for example) can be undertaken, and constructed in such a way as to illustrate and explore the elements of the NSE.

10 Organised worldviews can be examined through case studies which illuminate the elements of the NSE as well as the worldview itself. Such case studies should ideally be microcosms, where focusing on the particular reveals key characteristics or qualities of the wider worldview.[13]

11 A syllabus should support teachers to select engaging material that is appropriate to the pupils in their own RE classrooms (but note point 17 below). This should make good use of creative expressions, lived experience and material religion as well as texts and teachings.

12 As pupils make progress in the subject, it is helpful to build their expertise in a variety of disciplines (NSE g), but it is not necessary to place equal emphasis on each. (See Making good progress Illustration II, Appendix below.)

B8.3 Questions and contexts

13 Enquiry questions are powerful ways to drive the use of the approach. Setting rich questions is one way of addressing the challenge of content overload – the questions can identify a route through the content, and different kinds of questions indicate the best methods and/or disciplines, and appropriate evaluative processes.

14 Contexts can influence choices of questions. These might include how a question will contribute to future learning. This might be preparing pupils to be able to welcome some visitors or to go on some visits; or to give them a nuanced awareness of diversity in a particular worldview in preparation for GCSE, along with the critical skills to handle varied questions.

15 The local context can help to shape or give a flavour to a syllabus; take, for example, the diversity of Tower Hamlets, within the wider diversity of London and compare that with Norfolk and the East of England, where 2011 census data identified Norwich as the most non-religious city (although it lost its crown to Brighton in 2021), and history indicates East Anglia as a place of occasional rebellion, with notable challengers of the status quo (see, for example, 1075 and 1549 CE; and see the MAT-led Framework for more on this). Compare also Cornwall/Kernow, with its Celtic Christian influence, Cornish language (Kernewek) and a local desire for political independence. This means that context is not just about relative size of different religions/worldviews but about the pulse of the local community.

16 Comparison with national and global contexts is also important. The high proportion of non-religious worldviews within Britain and Western Europe is not typical in global terms, where religious worldviews predominate.

17 Note how the syllabus writer or curriculum developer's own worldview will influence the choices made. It is important to ensure that you are just as aware of your own position as you are expecting your pupils to be! Be reflexive about your choices. You might ask questions such as: Are you developing a curriculum in your own image? Have you overemphasised critical or uncritical perspectives? Are all your questions or case studies from your comfort zone, or are you stretching and challenging your own perspectives? Are there spaces for scholars from within and outside different worldviews? Are your sociologists or theologians or philosophers all white European men? If so, make some changes! See the Teacher-led Framework for questions to consider on this.

B8.4 Steps for devising your syllabus/curriculum

This section includes some advisory steps for planning and some principles to bear in mind. Note that the framework teams took elements of the guidance that suited their particular contexts. For example:

- although the SACRE/Diocese-led Framework had a syllabus in place, they wanted one that reflected their context more closely. They began from scratch but, influenced by the Big Ideas project (Wintersgill 2017), identified a set of concepts as the building blocks, and then shaped how they approached these concepts using the NSE.

- the teacher-led team was dealing with teachers in schools across a variety of contexts and was seeking to develop an approach that could be applied to existing syllabuses and curriculums. They developed their own set of questions for 'retrofitting' an RW approach. You can see the processes they followed in the frameworks below.

STEPS TO CONSIDER:

1. Any curriculum needs to consider the school's/MAT's values and aims, so the wider context is understood. For example, the MAT-led Framework team was particularly focused on the notion of a knowledge-rich curriculum which is central to that Trust's curriculum philosophy.

2. Decide what is understood by the terms 'religion', 'religions', 'worldview' and 'worldviews', using the Handbook and other resources (e.g. Adam Dinham, Kevin O'Grady) and how studying these can put the school's/MAT's values and curricular aims into practice. Include SLT, governors, school community members and pupils in your discussions.

3. Whether starting a syllabus from scratch, or building on one already in place, **start with the NSE.**

4. You might want to put it in the centre of a large piece of paper/interactive whiteboard screen.

5. It would be useful to annotate the NSE to show some connections that you see across elements and statements/strands. Note how some statements can be broken down into smaller parts. Note how some might be used to add a dimension to another (e.g. NSE b could add a dimension of comparison between organised and individual worldviews to another statement).

6. Your annotations could include examples of content/concepts from religious and non-religious worldviews that you might use to enable pupils to grasp the statements – to understand how worldviews work.

7. As you annotate, you might use concentric circles around the NSE – indicating your initial thoughts about how to go deeper into a statement/strand, giving a sense of progression across the age range, and allowing pupils to revisit content. It is important to reflect on local contexts: where do these offer fruitful opportunities for exploring elements of the NSE?

8. Note the gaps; what areas are left out, or are covered in less detail? Might this be because they are not part of your current RE practice, or maybe cover an unfamiliar area of subject knowledge? How might you address those?

9. It would be helpful to break down the content component of your annotated overview into segments (four or five, perhaps). These could be vertical segments – showing a way that understanding of an NSE statement or statements might be developed as pupils move up through the school. This is to ensure that earlier learning prepares for later learning, and later learning builds on earlier learning. It is also to create a structure for the syllabus, to enable breadth and balance.

10. Some segments may work across all age groups, and some may be more suited to older pupils: consider when these segments might be phased in as pupils move through the school.

11. You could devise exemplar questions that could be used for different age groups to unlock the content – or adapt examples from your current syllabus. Note that an RW approach will shape questions differently from a world religions approach: don't just assume questions can transfer straight from one to the other.

12. Reflect on the balance of the *engagement* strands from the NSE across your questions, making use of the mixing desk image (see p. 34) to help. How well do your questions indicate the kind of methods (disciplines with older pupils) that are needed to find out suitable answers? How often do pupils get an opportunity for a direct encounter? Where are opportunities to develop interpretive skills?

13. It is important to draft a key stage outline or long-term plan, populated by your example questions. Check for clarity in terms of how the plan deepens pupils' engagement with the strands of the NSE, via your chosen segments, balanced across the school year and across age groups. The SACRE/Diocese-led Framework did this by drafting a detailed description of each unit's intention at each phase within each concept, to check it was 'building'.

14. You might like to test your syllabus design by choosing a sample of key questions from different phases and drafting some units of work to see how the questions open up the elements of *content*, *engagement* and *position*. Consider a range of case studies that give pupils an insight into the way worldviews work in different contexts.

B9 Using the NSE to develop questions and construct units of work

Enquiry questions are powerful ways to drive the use of the RW approach. Setting rich questions as a focus for units can address the challenge of content overload – the questions can identify a route through the content, and different kinds of questions indicate suitable methods and/or disciplines, and appropriate evaluative processes. Such questions will increase in complexity and sophistication as pupils move through the school.

Here are some examples of common questions explored in RE, in 'world religions paradigm' mode. Below are some reflections about the features of these kinds of questions, along with some suggestions for how a question might reflect an RW approach.

EYFS	• What happens at a wedding or when a baby is born? • What happens at a festival? • What can we learn from stories from different religions?
KS1	• Why are some stories/places sacred? • What festivals are important in Judaism and Islam?
LKS2	• What do different religions teach about God? • What is the sacred text in Islam, and how is it used? • What do religious codes say about right and wrong?
UKS2	• What do Christians believe about Jesus? • Why do people go on pilgrimage, and what impact does it have? • What are the key beliefs and values of Sikhism and how are these expressed in the Gurdwara?
KS3	• What does Islam/Hinduism teach about life after death? • Is there a God? What and why do people believe? • Are religions sources of peace or causes of conflict?

> **An RW approach is looking more for questions that include an evaluative element, recognising that different answers may be acceptable in different contexts.**

Note some key features of 'world religions' questions:

- the focus tends to be on the communication of information, transmitting a form of settled knowledge ('textbook' information)

- they tend to be abstract and context-free, as if there are answers that might apply universally

- the answers may contain diversity, but the implication is that there is a form of correct answer.

An RW approach is looking more for questions that:

- include an interpretive element (e.g. how do these people understand and apply this?)

- offer a clear context (e.g. how do these two people/groups respond at an identified time and place, and why?)

- recognise that there are different answers that are valid (e.g. different individuals, groups, or traditions may have different responses, and that these may change across time and place)

- include an evaluative element, recognising that different answers may be acceptable in different contexts.

You might consider how in Maths, pupils learn *how* to answer questions – the emphasis is on the methods used, the working, not just the answer. For example, pupils learn to become more systematic, they choose ever more concise written methods, and they learn reasoning skills to unpick questions. The same applies in an RW approach: for example, pupils learn *how* to make judgements in RE – they show the process they go through in order to find some answers, and they choose appropriate methods to evaluate the reliability, validity, truth or credibility of those answers.

Acknowledging that a question cannot do everything, some RW approach questions might look like the following, for example:

EYFS	• How do different people welcome a new baby into the world? • How do different people celebrate Christmas/Easter in our community? Around the world? • What stories are important in our school community?
KS1	• Why is the story of Rama and Sita special or sacred to Hindus in Britain and India, and what do they learn from it? • How do Jews/ Muslims in our area celebrate Hanukkah/Eid, and why are they special times?
LKS2	• Where do Muslims/Christians find out about God, and do they all agree what God is like? • What role does the Qur'an play in the lives of at least three Muslims, and why? • What is the 'golden rule', where is it from, and how is it put into practice by people from different religious and non-religious worldviews?
UKS2	• How and why does the life and teaching of Jesus influence the lives of Christians and their communities in different ways today? • What is the role and impact of the Gurdwara on the lives of Sikhs and on local communities in our area/Britain? • How far does Humanism function as an organised non-religious worldview?
KS3	• Who believes in life after death, who doesn't, and what difference does it make to how they live? • How have different Christians understood the idea of Jesus as God? How is Jesus viewed in other worldviews? • How and why have Christians, Muslims and/or Buddhists played a role in conflict and peace in the 21st century?

Note that the framework teams have developed a whole range of questions for units of study. Two of the frameworks show progression across the year groups.

Note that there is some value in the kinds of answers given to the 'world religion paradigm' questions set out above. There are often mainstream or 'orthodox' responses that often represent an organised or institutional worldview's position, and many people's individual worldviews align with those mainstream positions.

However, an RW approach does not stop there; it explores how worldviews work in people's lives, which may include how individuals' worldviews relate to the 'orthodox' views. As pupils progress through their schooling, they should also have opportunities to explore how and why these views become 'orthodox', and the implications in terms of power. For example, there may be an assumption that the literate and theological presentation of a worldview takes precedence over the everyday practice of individuals and communities. This is an assumption to explore in lessons.

B9.1 Disciplinary questions

Enquiry questions can also indicate the kind of methods or disciplines that might appropriately be used to work out answers. Young children do not need to know about theology or sociology as academic disciplines, but they can be introduced to some of the methods and approaches from different disciplines to indicate different kinds of questions, different ways of answering questions and different kinds of answers formulated.

For example:

What difference does it make to Christians to believe that God is both holy and loving?

This theological question allows pupils (even if they do not learn the term 'theology' at this stage) to examine Christian understandings that balance biblical ideas of God as a holy, transcendent, just judge who hates sin, while also being seen as an immanent loving father (or mother). A unit could involve interpreting biblical texts and examining voices from Christian tradition, talking with Christians to find out how far they balance these contrasting views and what impact believing in this kind of God has on their lives, and reflecting on how far pupils' own personal worldviews tend towards love and/or justice in how they respond to people.

What is the role and impact of the Gurdwara on the lives of Sikhs and on local communities in your area/Britain?

This question might draw on sociological survey data on how many Gurdwaras there are in Britain, where, when and why they were built, and how Sikhs use and value the Gurdwara; it might examine case studies from specific local or regional Gurdwaras, with interviews with Sikhs and people who live near the Gurdwaras; it might draw on some texts from the Adi Granth as to the early importance of the *langar*. Pupils draw on the range of data to come up with conclusions in response to the questions, evaluating the sources and methods as they do so.[14]

For a suggested illustration of how pupils might make progress in ways of knowing, see the Appendix.

B9.2 Constructing units of work

Below is a sample process (see the first column in each table) that might be used to shape a unit using the RW approach. The process is illustrated with four examples from different school phases.

EXAMPLE 1: KS1	
Age range: look at what pupils already know, and where you want them to go next	Pupils have encountered the idea that many religious adherents express their worldview through prayer and ritual (NSE a); this unit focuses on Muslims. They will later explore the relationship between individual and organised Muslim worldviews (NSE b).
Choose the particular focus from the NSE, balancing the three elements (content; engagement; position) appropriately	**NSE a: nature, formation, expression** **NSE h: lived experience** **NSE k: personal worldviews: impact** Note: these are the key statements for the unit, but NSE c (how mosques do not all look the same) and NSE d (how mosques indicate the idea of submission to God) are also part of this unit.
Identify an appropriate topic from the syllabus	The mosque for Muslims.
Design a question to examine the topic and open up the NSE focus	How is a local mosque important for some Muslims? Why?
Choose the best method(s) or discipline to answer the question	Methods: use photographs of a variety of mosques; visiting a mosque; talking with some Muslims at the mosque and in the classroom.
Identify moments for bringing pupils' personal worldviews into focus, to examine the interaction with the content, its impact on pupils' worldviews and the impact of pupils' worldviews on their study	Impact of pupils' worldview explored through looking at their expectations before the visit. Talking about what they think will be important about the mosque, and then comparing their ideas after the visit and their conversations.
Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities	Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities.[15]

EXAMPLE 2: LOWER KS2

Age range: look at what pupils already know, and where you want them to go next	Pupils have encountered a number of religious worldviews (NSE b), and many pupils will have recognised that their own worldviews are different – that they are non-religious. This unit focuses on a non-religious worldview, as an example. Pupils will later investigate some of the blurred boundaries across non-religious worldviews.
Choose the particular focus from the NSE, balancing the three elements (content; engagement; position) appropriately	**NSE a: nature, formation, expression** **NSE g: ways of knowing** **NSE j: personal worldviews: reflexivity** Note: these are the key statements for the unit but NSE d (meaning and purpose) and NSE e (values, commitments and morality) also feature.
Identify an appropriate topic from the syllabus	Humanism as an example of a non-religious worldview.
Design a question to examine the topic and open up the NSE focus	How does a Humanist understand and respond to the world?
Choose the best method(s) or discipline to answer the question	Methods: demographic data on people who say they have no religion; talking with some Humanists about beliefs and actions; some features of a Humanist worldview, such as the significance of humanity, using reason and scientific method, rejecting ideas of the supernatural; researching the roles some Humanists perform e.g. celebrants.
Identify moments for bringing pupils' personal worldviews into focus, to examine the interaction with the content, its impact on pupils' worldviews and the impact of pupils' worldviews on their study	Identification of pupils' worldviews in relation to their (non-religious) beliefs and ways of living; this unit gives opportunities to explore what being non-religious can look like. How far do some pupils' worldviews reflect a humanist worldview (sharing some beliefs and values), if not a Humanist worldview (connecting to explicit Humanist tradition)?
Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities	Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities.[16]

EXAMPLE 3: UPPER KS2

Age range: look at what pupils already know, and where you want them to go next	Pupils have explored how a Christian worldview may be influenced by seeing a 'big story' of God's involvement with humanity (NSE f); this unit reflects on what that might mean in specific examples. They will later explore NSE c in other contexts, e.g. Christian majority/ minority countries.
Choose the particular focus from the NSE, balancing the three elements (content; engagement; position) appropriately	**NSE c: contexts** (focus on change and continuity) **NSE h: lived experience** **NSE j: personal worldviews: reflexivity** Note: these are the key statements for the unit, but NSE a (how ritual may shape and express worldviews) and NSE g (using a historical lens) are also part of this unit.
Identify an appropriate topic from the syllabus	Christian pilgrimage: Walsingham as England's Nazareth.
Design a question to examine the topic and open up the NSE focus	Why might Christians have made pilgrimage to Walsingham in Medieval times, and why might they make a pilgrimage today?
Choose the best method(s) or discipline to answer the question	Discipline: history Method: sources and interviews.
Identify moments for bringing pupils' personal worldviews into focus, to examine the interaction with the content, its impact on pupils' worldviews and the impact of pupils' worldviews on their study	Reflexivity explored through reflections on testimonies. How do Medieval and contemporary voices affect/challenge their personal worldviews? How do pupils' own worldviews affect how they encounter these voices? Reflect on any equivalent place for 'pilgrimage' in their lives, including non-religious lives.
Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities	Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities.[17]

EXAMPLE 4: KS3

Age range: look at what pupils already know, and where you want them to go next	Y7—8. Pupils have examined some features of religion and their influence in people's lives. They are going on to explore the relationship between religion, spirituality and secularity in the UK and India.
Choose the particular focus from the NSE, balancing the three elements (content; engagement; position) appropriately	**NSE a: nature** **NSE i: dialogue/interpretation** **NSE j: personal worldviews: reflexivity** Note: NSE b (organised/individual) and NSE c (contexts) are also part of this unit.
Identify an appropriate topic from the syllabus	The nature of religion and worldviews.
Design a question to examine the topic and open up the NSE focus	In what ways might a worldview be religious and/or non-religious?
Choose the best method(s) or discipline to answer the question	Discipline: religious studies/study of religion. Methods: data from surveys and interviews; analysis of definitions of religion and their applicability and interpretation in varied countries/cultures.
Identify moments for bringing pupils' personal worldviews into focus, to examine the interaction with the content, its impact on pupils' worldviews and the impact of pupils' worldviews on their study	Reflexivity explored through pupils' accounts of the sources and influences on their personal worldviews. How clear/blurred are the lines between religious and non-religious worldviews in data, in studies and in their own lives?
Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities	Identify sources, examples, case studies and learning activities.[18]

B10 Making progress

Enabling pupils to make progress through the curriculum is a key part of teaching and learning, and this obviously applies to the RW approach in RE. Note that the Teacher-led Framework team points out that one challenge for progression in RE is the application of an 'epistemic ascent' model, whereby pupils acquire more and more substantive knowledge. This model supports the idea that there is necessarily some content that must precede other content. RE, however, might be said to fit a horizontal model of knowledge better, in that progress lies in deepening learning and understanding to grasp more complexity and nuance.

Clearly, progress needs to relate to the curriculum being taught. Curriculum writers will need to draw up an assessment model that reflects the content. The SACRE-led Framework offers an example of this kind of approach, connecting disciplinary knowledge and skills with substantive content.

The Appendix to this Handbook includes two illustrations to show different kinds of progress. Illustration 1 describes the way the curriculum content gets more complex and nuanced as pupils proceed through the year groups. Some content is revisited in different contexts, to build on prior learning. However, the illustration only offers a single example of a unit per phase, thus providing only a snapshot of what progress looks like with an RW approach.

The second illustration takes the *engagement* element of the NSE and offers an outline of how pupils develop diverse and increasingly precise academic skills. It is not a complete model, as curriculum writers will need to show how pupils' understanding of the content is enriched and deepened through the processes of engagement.

B11 Relating to GCSE and beyond

GCSE remains the major defined vision for a 14–16 RS/RE curriculum: nearly 300,000 candidates, around half the cohort of 16-year-olds, take these courses. While short course numbers have declined since 2011, full course numbers have increased since 2010 and have remained robust. Current GCSE Religious Studies specifications, which date from first examinations in 2016, allow for diversity: students study two different religions and learn extensively about the internal diversities of the religions on the syllabus (e.g. a Catholic Christianity paper states: "Catholic Christianity should be studied in the context of Christianity as a whole, and common and divergent views within Catholic Christianity").

While there is still a difference in approach between the current exam specifications, which work largely from a world religions paradigm, and the RW approach elucidated in this Handbook, we argue here that following an RW approach is an excellent foundation for examination success. If pupils have had an education in religion and worldviews up to age 14, they would be able to examine critically the particular, contextual presentation of religion(s) within the specification, and offer nuanced responses to questions. In fact, a strong RE 4–14 curriculum following an RW approach should equip pupils with an understanding that is much broader and richer than the relatively narrow domain of GCSE RS specifications, providing opportunities for more scholarly responses to exam questions.

Here are some illustrations of how the different strands of the NSE, central to the RW approach, lay foundations for exam study:

NSE a Nature/formation/expression:

Pupils up to age 14 will have encountered and understood a variety of ways in which people develop and express their worldviews, such as through ritual, celebrations, stories, community engagement. This will prepare them to explain different interpretations of, for example, beliefs, texts, rituals and actions as they are shown within the lived experience of members of the community, as required at GCSE. At A level this will allow pupils to explore the theological underpinning of the lived experience, for example, in using Hadith studies to account for different ritual actions relating to the festival of Ashura.

NSE b Organised/individual:

By the time pupils begin GCSE and some go on to A level they will already be familiar with some examples of organised worldviews and how these generally include teachings, doctrines and practices regarded as orthodox. Pupils will already understand that individuals within these communities may hold views that differ from the orthodox, or may not put much of the religion into practice in their own lives. So, they will already be aware of the diversity of lived religion, standing them in good stead for understanding the variety of Catholic practice in relation to birth control and abortion compared with Church teachings. At A level they will have an idea of how there can be a range of academic and insider responses to the question of the nature of the Qur'an, for example how the Uthmanic codex has served as a unifying factor within at least one organised Islamic worldview but has also served as a contentious issue with some other Islamic worldviews in light of its authority and interpretation.

NSE c Contexts:

Pupils will be able to explore the historical background to the expression of religious belief. For example, for GCSE study of Buddhism, having looked at contexts already in earlier years, pupils will understand the difference between scholarly differentiation of Buddhist traditions as northern, southern, eastern and western rather than using the non-equivalent terms Theravada and Mahayana.

NSE d Meaning and purpose:

Questions of existence, meaning, purpose and truth underpin the study of arguments for and against the existence of God. Pupils following an RW approach will encounter these kinds of questions and their impact before they begin examination studies. This means that they will have a suitable preparation for understanding the nature of God for GCSE in Abrahamic traditions. This will enable them to draw on a rich understanding of non-religious responses to these questions, including Humanist ones, to apply to the GCSE 'themes' papers. They will serve as good foundations for engagement with philosophers, theologians and ethicists at A level.

NSE e Values, commitments and morality:

If pupils have the opportunity to explore how both religious and non-religious worldviews can offer people a vision of a good life and guidance in how to pursue it, it helps them to have a more rounded understanding of how and why people act in the way they do, and how and why they decide what is good, right, wrong, true, beautiful etc. This wider understanding prepares them to apply moral and ethical codes to specific, challenging issues at exam level, avoiding a mechanistic application of principles. Many people develop their ethical responses through their living, so their worldview influences their responses to a challenge in life, rather than them getting out a checklist.

NSE f Influence and power:

Giving pupils the opportunity to raise questions about the nature and category of religion opens up questions of power and influence. They might ask questions about the nature of the language used to describe the divine, such as whether it is all masculine – and, if so, why this might be. They might look at how translations of texts can bring influence to bear, such as the King James Version of the Bible never using the term 'tyrant' for a king, despite the Wycliffe translation using the term, or English translations of the Guru Granth Sahib that draw on Christian terminology such as 'Lord' and 'soul', and debates around the use of 'Sanatana Dharma' instead of 'Hinduism', or 'Sikhi' instead of 'Sikhism'. This critical awareness can be brought to their examination studies, so that they understand how the specification structures the content the way it does, within the 'world religions paradigm', and how far this reflects lived religion.

NSE g Ways of knowing:

By age 14 pupils will be familiar with a range of methods and some disciplines, so that they understand the source of key theological concepts in the teachings and traditions of the organised worldviews they have studied, and they are able to weigh up survey data for reliability or critique the presentation of survey results for interpretive accuracy. They will be aware of the value and limitations of small-scale case studies and of large-scale demography in painting a picture of what it means to be part of an organised religious worldview. This means that at GCSE and beyond they are able to balance insider and outsider perspectives on believing, belonging and behaving.

NSE h Lived experience:

The NSE encourages pupils to encounter religious and non-religious worldviews through the lived experience of adherents, in case studies for example. This supports their grasp of the relationship between the mainstream teachings and practices of organised worldviews and the practice of individuals and communities within them. For example, Jewish communities range across the Haredi, Orthodox, Reform, Liberal and 'Just Jewish', and include those who identify as Jewish through parentage, heritage, religion, culture, upbringing and/or ethnicity, those for whom belief in God is central and those for whom it is peripheral or irrelevant, those who attend Passover Seder each year or celebrate Shabbat each week, and those who don't. Encountering this diversity through ages 4–14 prepares pupils for GCSE and A level, studying Judaism but also other religions, as it increases their awareness of the diversity of lived experience.

NSE i Dialogue/interpretation:

Through their experience of an RW approach, exam students will already be aware that religious and non-religious worldviews do not arrive fully formed, but develop over time, through dialogue and debate, often a result of striving for agreement on matters of interpretation. For example, meanings of jihad or debates around the leadership of the Muslim community after the death of Prophet Muhammad; or the concept of 'messiah' within and between Jewish and Christian communities. This prepares them for more advanced debates at exam level, such as over the 'filioque' clause in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox creeds, or the nature of the Divine in Hindu philosophy – whether knowable or unknowable, with properties or without, the monism of Shankara, the dualism of Madhva or the qualified non-dualism of Ramanuja. Supporting pupils to develop hermeneutical skills helps them to appreciate the challenges as well as to participate in some of these on-going debates.

NSE j Personal worldviews – reflexivity; NSE k Personal worldviews – impact:

Helping pupils to recognise their own position contributes to their developing the intellectual virtues of curiosity, intellectual humility, willingness to learn from others, and careful responses to challenges to their view. These intellectual skills put them in a good position to explore and explain controversies at exam level, without oversimplifying or reproducing binary thinking: pupils will be accustomed to nuance and fuzzy boundaries instead of black and white responses to theological or ethical questions, for example. They will be increasingly adept at expressing and articulating their own developing position, however provisional.

It has been the practice of the Department for Education (DfE) and, under its influence, the Examination Awarding Bodies, to use contemporary academic and professional thinking in setting the specifications for RS qualifications. For example, the 2013 REC's National Curriculum Framework for the subject, which followed the National Curriculum orders for other subjects, was central in determining the Assessment Objectives in the 2016 GCSE specifications. These specifications emphasise the acquisition of knowledge of two religions, and the processes of critical thinking. Candidates learn about the internal diversity of religions, and develop reasoned responses from their own perspectives to evaluation questions.

In the light of this, it seems wise for those writing an RW-approach curriculum to balance an alertness to current structures and requirements with ambitious attention to the future possibilities of a 14–16 RS specification which uses the NSE as its starting point. In the meantime, there appears to be some scope within the subject content from the DfE[19] for developing a specification or updating an existing one, that is more in keeping with the RW approach. In addition, Ofqual might be encouraged to revise the assessment objectives, again in a manner that would facilitate closer alignment with this approach.

C. A religion and worldviews approach:

rationale and explanations

Intended audience
Curriculum leaders and syllabus developers, members of SACREs and ASCs, academics and other commentators, inspectors and advisers, examination awarding bodies and resource developers.

Content
This section offers some of the background to the move to an RW approach, offering a more detailed rationale, expanded definitions and explanations, and some engagement with academic responses.

C1 Outline and rationale: why do we need a religion and worldviews (RW) approach?

The final report from the Commission on RE has set out a vision for a new approach in RE, as part of a wider set of recommendations, to support the subject and encourage those involved in developing and teaching it, and to meet the needs of pupils and young people in our schools. There has been a great deal of debate since then, with robust disagreement from some quarters, but also, it must be said, a growing interest and welcome for the changes. The University of Nottingham's research project *Foregrounding Teachers' Voices*[20] indicates the interest among teachers, and offers some helpful videos about the approach, including how it prepares students for Higher Education and employment.

▶ *This section reprises and extends some of the reasons for the approach given in Sections A and B.*

The move towards an education in religion and worldviews (RW) is not about a change of name. It encompasses an adjustment in the way that content is selected and how it is approached and handled within the subject, with the outcomes for pupils the first priority.

> Some of this section repeats and expands elements of Section B.

There are different elements in play here, including:

Scholarly understandings

For the last few decades a view of religions has dominated RE, namely, the so-called 'world religions paradigm'[21] – the idea that there are six major world religions, and lots of minor ones, and that they have a set of core beliefs and practices that we can neatly package up and present in lessons. Academic study of religion in universities has long challenged this view. Scholars point out the contested nature of the term 'religion'. They study both lived and doctrinal/formal aspects of religion as well as the interplay between them. As part of gaining a rounded education in RE, pupils should understand the complex reality of lived religion, which is less neat and tidy than formal religion, more fluid, and always tied to particular contexts. It is time for pupils to have a more realistic encounter with the world of religious and non-religious worldviews.

Demographics: the rise of non-religiousness

In terms of Census data, in 2001, 15.5 per cent of England and Wales said they had no religion. By 2011 this increased to 25 per cent and by 2021 to 37.2 per cent. British Social Attitudes Surveys from 2016 on have regularly indicated that this is just over 50 per cent. The European Social Survey shows that among young people in the UK (aged 16–29) 70 per cent say they have no religion, and this will be the experience of many teachers of pupils under age 16. The picture is not simple, of course; while many are outright materialists, many young people see themselves as 'spiritual but not religious'; for some, their non-religious worldviews embrace beliefs in supernatural phenomena and spiritual practices (Bullivant et al. 2019); for some it is the organised nature of religious worldviews that they are rejecting. Despite the wider global picture of the rise of religion, in contrast with the picture in the UK, Europe and North America, the study of 'non-religion' is an increasingly important scholarly field and it needs to be part of the school study of worldviews.

Content selection

The increased complexity and scope of the field of study, as set out in the above paragraphs, also increase the challenge of content overload. It is simply not possible to study everything, and so decisions have to be made on content selection. Making such decisions on the basis of numerical or cultural dominance is problematic, and a new rationale needs to be provided.

Preparation for life

A fourth dimension is the educational benefit for pupils from studying RE with an RW approach. This includes introducing pupils to the rich diversity of religion and non-religion as part of understanding how the world works and what it means to be human; enabling them to understand the complex ways in which worldviews work in human life, including their own; inducting them into scholarly processes, virtues and methods with which we can study religious and non-religious worldviews; including pupils in an exploration of the influences on their own worldviews so that they can better understand and contribute to their community, to society and to the world.

Equality of provision

Across the UK, there are many examples of excellent RE provision and practice, but also evidence of too many schools neither meeting their statutory requirement nor providing all pupils with their entitlement to high quality RE. In part, the shift to an RW approach is to reinvigorate the subject, to reinforce its importance as part of children and young people's education in a diverse religious and non-religious world, and to reinspire those schools currently neglecting the subject.

C1.1 How does an RW approach address these developments?

The concept of worldviews offers an approach that revitalises the subject, taking account of scholarly developments around the understanding and study of religion and non-religion.

An RW approach recognises the importance of being up to date with academic insights into the nature of religion and worldviews, including the critiques of the concept of religion (Masuzawa 2005, Cotter and Robinson 2016), the increase of non-religiousness in the west (Lee 2015) and the rise of non-religion as a focus of study (Cotter 2020). It acknowledges the rise of the non-religious in the European demographic context that pupils inhabit, with an awareness of some of the research on the factors that influence non-religiousness. This includes secularisation theories (e.g. Taylor 2007), ideas of existential security (Willard and Cingl 2017) and how religion and non-religion are entangled in some people's lives (Herbert and Bullock 2020).

In line with such academic research, an RW approach accommodates the study of the fluidity within and between organised religious traditions, the diversity of identities and ways of living and thinking among non-religious people, and the relationship between religious and non-religious worldviews.

RE, like all education, has transformational intentions. Learning changes the learner. The approaches to the subject which are developed here, drawing on the long-standing debates about the ways in which RE may legitimately be transformational, reinforce the value of studying religion and worldviews for all children and young people.

The history of the subject includes varying emphases on, for example: edification; learning from religion; personal development, including spiritual, moral, social, cultural development (SMSCD); the deconstruction and reconstruction of worldviews; and the human search for personal meaning (Grimmitt 2000). An RW approach carries this debate forward, and can provide pupils with vital opportunities to develop reasoned accounts of their own worldviews and to make scholarly judgements on challenging issues.

It places the development of pupils' own position and assumptions within the academic processes of the subject. Their perspectives matter: they affect pupils' encounters and engagement with the content of the subject; they might reasonably expect their education to help them develop healthy, scholarly perspectives so that they can better understand and contribute to their community, to society and to the world. Pupils need opportunities to recognise, reflect on and develop their personal worldview, and to understand how their own worldview operates as a lens through which they encounter those of others.

This approach means enabling all pupils to become open-minded, well-informed, critical participants in public discourse and society. They will be experienced in positive dialogue and equipped to make academically informed judgements about important matters in relation to religion and worldviews which shape the global landscape. They have opportunities to consider how they might also shape that landscape. The approach sets out a subject for all pupils, whatever their own family background and personal worldviews. It supports them in understanding and responding to the world in which they find themselves but also in considering the world as they would like it to be. It supports them in learning to live well together in a diverse society.

C2 Defining religion and worldview

C2.1 What do we mean by 'religion'?

On the one hand, the term 'religion' functions quite easily – we generally think we know what we mean when we talk about religions, or when we say something or someone is religious. On the other hand, the term is actually contested, with much debate and many theories about its meaning. Criteria used in definitions include:

- focusing on beliefs, such as belief in a deity and a supernatural dimension to existence

- focusing on the ways of thinking and living of adherents

- looking at the function religions play within communities and societies

- allowing for a divine origin of religion and the reality of a transcendent Being and realm

- seeing religion as a human construct, inextricably linked with culture.

So we are not able to pin 'religion' down to a single understanding – nor do we want to. Any account of religion is inevitably tied to a context, and any definition of religion is likewise going to arise from a context or a school of thought with its own assumptions. As with many other contested terms (such as democracy, politics, culture) the term 'religion' cannot simply be taken as a neutral description of the way the world is.[22] Its definition is actually part of what pupils will need to grapple with as they progress through their school career.

Part of the argument for seeing 'religion' as the focus of study for our subject is because it draws attention to the contested nature of the subject content. Instead of studying only examples of 'religions', the subject includes studying the nature and implications of the term itself. This brings into focus some of the

challenges raised by scholars involved in studying religion, such as:

- the role of the European context – specifically applying a Protestant Christian worldview – in the development and categorisation of the term 'religion', such that it was seen as the norm against which all other 'religions' were classified, setting up a kind of hierarchy

- how this is embedded in the 'world religions paradigm', where religions are seen as separate entities, with a core set of common and comparable characteristics (reflecting the characteristics of Protestant Christianity)

- how the 'world religions paradigm' privileges organised or institutional religions and, in particular, those with established orthodoxies and doctrines, hierarchies and power

- how developments in (post-)secularity (the decline in Christian participation, its ongoing significance in public institutions, and the increasing diversity of religious, spiritual and non-religious worldviews, (Strhan et al. 2023)) increasingly blur the boundaries between religion and non-religion, where 'religious' people may believe, belong or behave in 'non-religious' ways, and 'non-religious' people accommodate 'religious' aspects in their worldviews and ways of living.

The RW approach takes account of the significant religious traditions in their changing contexts, and balances organised expressions alongside lived experiences of individuals and communities. A simple illustration might be a shift in language from a study of Islam, Buddhism and Christianity to a study of Muslims, Buddhists and Christians. This still requires rich encounters with traditions, such as their ancient

> '**Fundamental to the RW approach advocated in this Handbook is the idea that everyone has a worldview – or at least, the idea that 'no one stands nowhere'.**'

roots and contemporary expressions, their core beliefs and teachings, and their great works of literary and artistic achievement alongside their adherents' acts of service, justice, courage and resistance, and the varied impact they make on individuals, societies and the world – including some of their darker legacies. The RW approach allows these encounters to be selected to illuminate and illustrate how ideas, beliefs and practices arise, recognising how they are all shaped and reshaped by their contexts – including historical, geographical, social, cultural, political, and theological, for example.

C2.2 What do we mean by worldview?

There are many definitions of 'worldview'. Alongside religion, 'worldview' is another term that sparks debate. Fundamental to the RW approach advocated in this Handbook is the idea that **everyone has a worldview** – or at least, the idea that 'no one stands nowhere': everyone experiences the world from their own context, experience and position.

This does **not** mean:

- that everyone has a ready set of coherent, consciously held responses to a set of ultimate questions about life, the universe and everything. A person's worldview may be unconsidered and even unconscious, drawing on a wide variety of influences and implicit assumptions, and containing contradictions. The philosopher Michael Polanyi called this the tacit dimension of knowledge (Polanyi 1962).

- that only people with a religious worldview have a worldview. As part of a religious community's nurture, religious people may have consciously learnt about and practised their tradition, and may have a considered worldview that reflects this. Alternatively, they may have unconsciously absorbed ideas and ways of living and being that have shaped and coloured their worldview, so that it is recognisably a religious worldview, even as they may well have absorbed non-religious influences too. Non-religious people – sometimes in transparent and deliberate ways, such as through membership of an organisation such as Humanists UK, and sometimes unconsciously – will also have absorbed ideas and ways of living and being from their own context, which may have had non-religious or religious influences, to different degrees. These will shape the way non-religious people encounter, view, and live in the world.

The RW approach balances what the CoRE report called personal and organised worldviews.

C2.3 Personal worldviews

This Handbook's entry-point definition is:

> A personal 'worldview' describes the way in which a person encounters, interprets, understands and engages with the world.

- This encompasses a person's beliefs, attitudes, identities, assumptions, intentions, convictions, values, hopes and ways of being in the world.

- It will affect, and be affected by, a person's thoughts, emotions, experiences, encounters, desires, commitments, actions and reactions; much of this is individual, but much will be shared too – people are not islands.

- A person's worldview will be influenced by their context, in terms of time, place, language, sex, gender, the communities that surround them, ethnicity, nationality, economics, history, class, access to political power etc. (Some contextual influences will be obvious and recognised; some will not.)

- It will change as a person grows and faces new experiences, encounters new people and situations, and engages in learning new knowledge. (Some changes may be conscious and deliberate, some may not.)

- This means a person's worldview may be visible or invisible to the individual, but it will show up through their words, attitudes and actions.

- A person's worldview affects how they interpret the world around them, as they try to make sense of the world they encounter.

- A person's worldview is about more than religion, even if they are an adherent.

- It might be better to say that a person *inhabits* a worldview rather than *has* one.

- A person may or may not have considered the kind of existential, epistemological and ethical questions addressed by organised worldviews (see below). The RE classroom is an ideal place to encounter such questions, of course, and to learn how to respond in a reflective and informed way.

- Increasing emphasis is being given in academic circles to the importance of reflecting on one's positioning in relation to the subject matter being studied and the scholarly methods being utilised. This is an integral element of an RW approach.

C2.4 Organised and institutional worldviews

The CoRE report also identified 'organised' worldviews as 'shared among particular groups and sometimes embedded in institutions', adopting the term 'institutional' worldviews for the latter.

There are many definitions offered of organised worldviews. For example, Jacomijn C. van der Kooij et al. (2013) offer this definition:

> An organised worldview is 'a view on life that has developed over time as a more or less coherent and established system with certain (written and unwritten) sources, traditions, values, rituals, ideals, or dogmas … [it] has a group of believers who adhere to this view on life'.

Some scholars set out worldviews around a set of questions (Sire 1976, 2004, 2020, Taves 2020, Aerts et al. 1984) to which organised worldviews have differing responses, embracing existential, ontological, epistemological, ethical questions for example.

The ways a worldview might be seen as 'organised' or 'institutional' will differ. There are global institutions such as the Roman Catholic Church, whose teachings and practices might present a Roman Catholic 'institutional worldview'. The teachings of the Ismailis might be another example of an 'institutional worldview', with the central authority of the Imamate manifested in institutional structures across different nations. Other Muslim groups, while still 'organised', might have less tight structures, with variation in practice across cultures or even within a single local community.

Tim Hutchings, University of Nottingham, points out that 'a religion, an institution and an institutional/ organised worldview are not necessarily the same thing. The Church of England, for example, is part of a religion and it is an institution, but it is not an organised or institutional worldview. What unites

Note that when this Handbook refers to **personal worldviews**, it refers to *pupils*' personal worldviews.

When pupils are studying the worldviews of people within an organised worldview, the Handbook uses the term '**individual worldviews**'.

Use of the term 'individual' is not intended to imply that anyone's worldview is entirely unique or someone is completely isolated – we are communal beings, and we grow and develop in relation to others. However, 'individual' here functions as a scholarly tool focusing attention on the exploration of the relationship between an individual person and the communities to which they belong, including those of organised or institutional worldviews.

The term is also not intended to set up a simple binary between individuals and institutions. The relationships may be fluid and complex and are worth examination. With one element of an RW approach being that of examining lived religion, individuals' accounts of their worldview will be a key way of exploring these relationships.

The Handbook is making this distinction between **individual worldviews as case studies and objects of study and personal worldviews as the position of pupils** (also open to reflective consideration by the pupils). It is making this distinction in order to ensure that when we suggest that the study of *individual* worldviews of adherents in relation to organised/institutional worldviews can contribute to the development of pupils' personal worldviews, pupils are not expected to resemble the people they study, nor aspire to do so, nor to shape their worldviews in line with those under study.

the Church of England is certain points of shared history, texts, rituals and an institutional structure, designed to allow for a diversity of interpretation and worldviews.' (Hutchings 2023)

A world religions approach to RE has tended to see institutions representative of each religion as the focus of study. The RW approach, in contrast, explores how communities and individuals *interact* with these organised or institutional worldviews – how people experience them, and their impact on people's lives.

For some:

- the scope and riches of their tradition are not captured in the austerity of the term 'institutional worldview' – instead they experience it as spiritual, dynamic, creative and life-enhancing, for example

- the institution gives them a sense of community and identity, without their necessarily subscribing to the institution's beliefs and practices

- in addition to the positive benefits derived from belonging, an organised or institutional worldview may have negative effects, oppressing and limiting their identity and personhood.

This kind of interaction is what is being explored through examination of *community* or *individual* worldviews.

C2.5 Extending the conversation around worldviews

There are many definitions of the term 'worldview'.[23] For example, Benoit et al. (2020) explore the use of worldview in disciplinary discourses, including philosophy, anthropology, sociology, theology and religious education.

Psychologist Koltko-Rivera (2004) sees worldviews as 'a set of assumptions about physical and social reality that may have powerful effects on cognition and behaviour'. Van der Kooij et al. (2017) suggest that personal worldviews address questions of ultimate concern, contain moral values, result in people experiencing meaning in life, and influence their thinking and acting.

The research of van Mulukom et al. (2022) introduces worldview clusters of non-religious people, and has a focus on extending this beyond those who are actively non-religious (i.e. those who engage in Humanist or secularist groups) in her 2024 research.

The approach of James Sire (1976, 2004, 2020), one-time professor of English literature, philosophy and theology, is built around a set of questions about ontology, epistemology, human nature, morality, meaning and commitments. The answers to these delineate a person's worldview. Originally developed for a literature class where he wanted students to distinguish between Milton's theism and Hardy's naturalism, Sire writes from within a Christian worldview as an apologist – defending a Christian worldview alongside a diverse range of other competing worldviews. Following on from Sire's definition of a worldview to include a person's 'heart-orientation', and also writing within the Christian tradition, Wilkens and Sanford (2009) focus less on examining worldviews in terms of propositional systems, adopting the metaphor of worldview as story, as the influences on people's lives arise more along a kind of (messy) narrative as they encounter life, rather than a series of propositions.
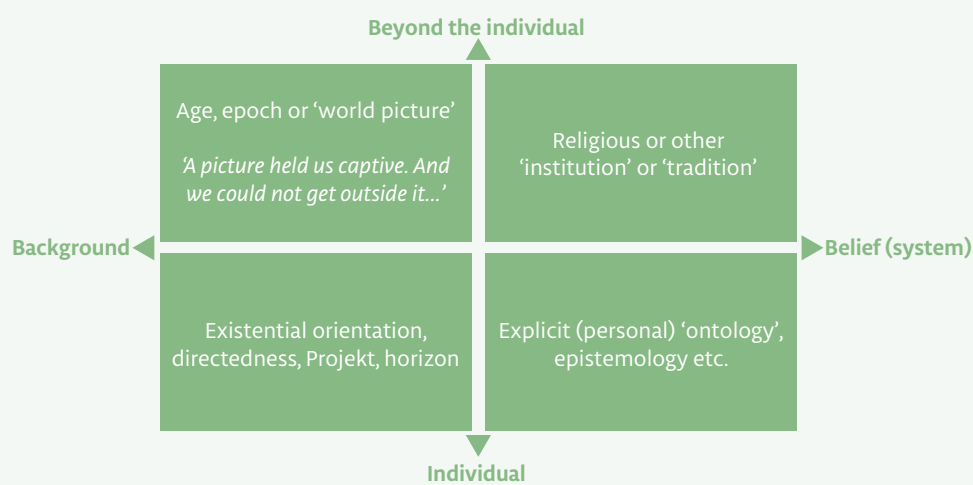
Ann Taves (2020) approaches worldviews with a set of questions similar to Sire's (about ontology, cosmology, epistemology, axiology and praxeology), but from a non-religious, naturalistic position. She sees worldviews in evolutionary terms – we should start with the individual and personal, the implicit and lived worldviews, rather than the complex, systematised and rationalised worldviews. Ultimately, for Taves, these explicit, systematised or 'organised' worldviews grow out of the implicit, lived experience of individuals.

Kevin O'Grady's considered response to the CoRE report makes a significant contribution to the idea of an RW approach (O'Grady 2023). He draws on worldview approach discussions in other countries, endorses the place of complexity rather than prescriptive definitions of religion(s) and worldview(s) in the classroom, and reflects on the use of disciplines, the importance of reflexivity and the power of worldviews in teachers' lives. Noting the roots of CoRE's vision in the work of Jackson, Grimmitt and Wright (see Section 6.1), he argues that such an approach should promote democratic citizenship.

The Catholic Education Service has drawn on the RW approach in its RE Directory,[24] the RE curriculum for Catholic schools for use from 2025. In their study of Catholic Christianity and other worldviews (including non-religious worldviews) they apply a range of 'ways of knowing' under the headings 'understand, discern and respond', reflecting to a certain extent the elements of the NSE.

One helpful stimulus in reflecting on the nature of worldviews has come from David Aldridge in his presentation to the Association of University Lecturers in RE in May 2023. He suggests 'two axes of worldview', from *background* to *belief (system)* on the X-axis, and from *beyond the individual* to the *individual* on the Y-axis. This extends the understanding of organised and individual worldviews beyond a binary. On the X-axis it differentiates between the general cultural or societal background influences in someone's worldview and the explicit belief systems which may be a more direct influence. On the Y-axis it also shows that a worldview may be individual (or personal) in that someone may develop their own idiosyncratic personal worldview, or it may reflect wider influences beyond the individual – organised religion, for example. The quadrant model also allows for someone to have a personal worldview that is hidden to them, in that it is not an explicit adoption of or assent to an organised worldview – instead it is their orientation or position. Aldridge points out that this background position is difficult to bring to view.

Beyond the individual

Age, epoch or 'world picture' *'A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it...'*	Religious or other 'institution' or 'tradition'
Existential orientation, directedness, Projekt, horizon	Explicit (personal) 'ontology', epistemology etc.

Background ◄ ▶ **Belief (system)**

Individual

Aldridge's proposal is closer to this Handbook's view of 'worldview' than some of the more tightly defined sets of questions (Sire, Taves etc), in that it allows for a person's worldview to be a non-reflective, background position rather than a deliberate and reflective response to foundational beliefs.

C3 The value of worldviews for the classroom

An RW approach focuses on how religion(s) and worldviews (religious and non-religious) work, and how we can best go about studying them. It includes all pupils in the enterprise of interrogating the sources of their own developing worldviews, and how they may benefit from exploring and engaging critically with the profound and complex heritage of humanity.

The RW approach encourages an engagement with some of the scholarly concerns outlined in Section C2.5 above. It self-consciously explores the relationship between the teachings and doctrines of organised worldviews and the beliefs, practice and experience of adherents – what is sometimes called 'lived religion'.

Of course, any presentation of religion is going to be a limited representation – particularly within the constraints of the classroom time available for the subject. But given the impossibility of teaching the totality of six major 'world religions' in their diversity, alongside the many other living traditions, plus Humanism and the complex web of other non-religious worldviews, this approach offers a way of inducting pupils into the study of religion and worldviews, to empower them to be able to handle questions around religion and worldviews for themselves within, then beyond, the confines of the classroom. The National Statement of Entitlement (NSE, see Sections A6 and B2) helps in this by providing some criteria for the selection of content.

This approach explores the real religious landscape (Shaw and Dinham 2015). It is an educational project – an attempt not to stand outside the worldviews of others but to understand what being inside is all about, recognising that we do this from a particular position or worldview ourselves.

This approach draws on hermeneutical understandings (Pett and Cooling 2018, Bowie 2018, 2020), recognising that the encounter between every individual pupil and the subject content takes place in a context, and that is affected by the worldview of the learner. The approach therefore draws on pupils' interpretive skills and awareness of how their worldview affects these encounters. At the heart of an RW approach is the notion that every human being is an interpreter, and that this subject is teaching them to be 'wise interpreters' of life. As pupils grow in self-awareness of their assumptions, they are better able to identify, interpret and understand the worldviews of others.

'**It is inclusive, in that it is based on the idea that everyone has or inhabits a worldview.**'

C3.1 Advantages of an RW approach

- It takes account of the contemporary place of religion, belief and practice locally, nationally and globally.

- It draws on developments in, for example, academic theology, philosophy, history, education, and the study of religion.

- It addresses the increasing influence of non-religious worldviews in the west, within the wider context of the global growth of religion.

- It takes account of sociological categories, such as the spiritual but not religious, and people 'believing without belonging' (Davie 1990) or 'believing in belonging' (Day 2011), and of the questioning of the category of 'religion' across many disciplines.

- It allows for sensitivity around diversity, identity, and legacies of power, for example, while equipping pupils to be able to take part in dialogue with better understanding of the worldviews of others.

- It is inclusive, in that it is based on the idea that everyone has or inhabits a worldview – so learning about any organised or individual worldview offers scope for learning about one's own.

- It equips pupils for reflecting on, and making choices about, the development of their personal worldview in the context of a complex world.

C4 Potential misunderstandings

This Handbook is advocating an RW approach. We are not, however, suggesting that it is a panacea. We are arguing that it offers a rich opportunity to reinvigorate the subject now and for the coming years. Following comments from David Lewin, University of Strathclyde, in his unpublished review of the NSE, we recognise that, given the emphasis on the RW approach being hermeneutical, the approach itself is also a lens – it does not just describe the lens. As such the RW approach shows some things well (as C3.1 above suggests) but simultaneously generates a set of associated issues which we want to be open about (Lewin 2023). For example:

1 The use of the phrase 'religion and worldviews' has led some to see this as an attempt to take the world religions paradigm and extend it by adding worldviews – whether smaller religious traditions such as the Bahá'í Faith or Paganism, or indigenous traditions, or a range of non-religious worldviews treated as 'religions'. In this Handbook, however, the approach is centred around the NSE. Pupils are entitled to understand worldviews as set out in the NSE, and the selection of content needs to enable that. The NSE attempts to reduce the challenge of content overload by clearly specifying the scope of the subject.

2 Following on from the above claim, the RW approach is clear that the place of religion is not being reduced within the subject. The dynamic relationship between religion and worldviews cannot be explored without examining religion and religions.

3 Some see a risk that the claim that everyone has a worldview might lead to relativism, with all worldviews being treated as having equal value or as purely human constructions. The worry is that the idea of truth is lost. However, the RW approach advocated here emphasises supporting pupils to be able to make critical judgements on questions of truth, meaning and ultimate reality, giving reasons for their responses.

4 Incorporating pupils' personal worldviews is not about pupils just expressing opinions (of course they will have opinions, and these can become informed opinions). Instead, the substantive content includes the relationship between organised and individual worldviews. This allows for a focus on the beliefs, teachings and practices of religions – mainstream or orthodoxy – as well as individual responses within these broader traditions. The personal worldview of the pupil is always the position from which the learning is done; how this affects learning is brought into focus within the classroom. The subject aims to support pupils in making sensitive and informed judgements based on reliable evidence and sound argument, in relation to religion and worldviews. In other words, they are being taught to be scholarly.

5

The statement 'everyone has a worldview' does not mean that everyone identifies with an organised worldview. Some people may, of course – and globally, statistics suggest that most have some sort of identification with an organised worldview of one or more kinds. However, someone's rejection of, or indifference towards, such organised worldviews is part of their own worldview.

6

There are ways of understanding worldviews as totalising systems of thought, where to have a worldview is to be able to offer coherent answers to a set of questions that indicate a view on existence, knowledge, meaning, purpose, ethics and behaviour. Some scholars present organised worldviews as being able to offer such a set of answers to 'worldview-framing' questions, and these are legitimate areas of study.[25] The RW approach advocated here has a wider understanding of 'worldview', such that it indicates the way in which everyone experiences the world from within their own context and experience, shaped by narratives and practices as well as ideas. As mentioned before, religion may or may not be influential in this way of experiencing the world for any given individual, but is influential in wider society.

7

The reframing of RE as an education in religion and worldviews does not imply that religious and non-religious worldviews are studied in equal measure. 'Worldviews' here does not function as solely representing non-religious worldviews – 'worldviews' incorporates both religious and non-religious worldviews.

8

Where it is taken to imply something organised, there is a risk that the concept of worldview may privilege conventional religious categories. This is because non-religious worldviews are often not as organised as religions. However, the purpose of the RW approach is to open up just such questions, and to examine how worldviews – religious and non-religious – work. Some might argue that Humanists UK, for example, present Humanism as an organised non-religious worldview.

9

The field of worldviews does not have a single disciplinary foundation. Benoit et al. (2020) explore its place in the discourse of a variety of disciplines (e.g. religious studies, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, theology). 'Religion' similarly is explored across a wide range of disciplines in academia. This adds to the challenge of RE in an RW approach, but does not seem to undermine it.

10

The term 'worldviews' has been explored above. The fact that it is contested, that some people think it is not a clear enough term, and that it has limitations, such as the implication for some that it is limited to sight and perspectives, should not mean that it cannot be used. Many important concepts are understood in different ways – the term 'religion' is rejected by some scholars but is accepted as a polysemous term by many other scholars and non-experts. As 'religion' is not pinned down, so 'worldviews' can retain its complexity. Tharani (2021) notes its value as a 'can-opener' term – one that helps us to look inside the content. In the RW approach it is used as a pedagogical tool (Wright and Wright 2023, Cooling 2024).

C5 Subject knowledge in school and community contexts

While it seeks to set a standard across all types of schools, the NSE is flexible in its application, allowing for local creativity and local agreed syllabuses, and including guidelines for dioceses and other religious foundation settings, and curricula for MATs and other academy trusts. The three frameworks in this Handbook illustrate how different contexts can lead to different interpretations and applications of the NSE.

C5.1 School knowledge about religion and worldviews

Teachers and other educationalists[26] acknowledge the difference between the kind of knowledge used and created by academics and professionals (e.g. laboratory researchers at the CERN Large Hadron Collider) and the knowledge transmitted and examined in the classroom (e.g. school physics). For example, while 9–11-year-olds learn that gravity is a force, 14–16-year-olds learn that gravity is not in fact a force but a force field. Then at university, they learn that it is a force field *theory*. This has implications for an education in religion and worldviews, for example:

- school knowledge about religion and worldviews is not the same as university knowledge; school knowledge necessarily involves simplification and selection, which may include teaching some ideas about religion and worldviews that are not wholly accurate but are sufficient at the stage of pupils' learning. That means teaching some ideas about religion and worldviews which are appropriate for the stage of pupils' learning and will become more complex and accurate as they mature in their thinking.

For example, primary pupils might learn that karma means 'you reap what you sow': good actions earn good karma, bad actions earn bad karma. Secondary pupils might learn that understanding of karma differs significantly by tradition, such as the Bhagavad Gita's teaching that rather than balancing positive and negative karma, only 'desireless actions' that do not result in karma will cut the ties from the wheel of life, death and rebirth (samsara). At university, students might learn that karma may not refer to personal moral consequences, rather to a more generalised ontology of causal connections.

- an additional layer of complexity is that school knowledge about religion and worldviews is not necessarily identical with faith/worldview community knowledge either. It should connect with it, of course, as people are entitled to fair and accurate representations of their traditions.

C5.2 The relationships between the school subject and worldview communities

While it is essential that the substantive content about religious and non-religious worldviews is accurate and fair, this is not the same as the way worldview communities would present it in their nurturing community.

The school subject of RE is not nurture into or advocacy for any particular worldview. Rather, it equips pupils for an educational endeavour that enables them to understand worldviews – to understand how people engage with the content of religious and non-religious traditions, aware of a range of responses from those inside and outside the traditions themselves, including lived realities and scholarly perspectives, and how this study illuminates their own worldviews – and how their own worldviews, in turn, illuminate their studies. That is very different from simply presenting pupils with information about traditions.

Having said that, this approach will include understanding some of the mainstream teachings or 'orthodoxies' of different traditions, and their varying impact on people within these traditions; it will welcome input and information from faith and worldview communities as essential for this. However, in addition, the subject will also include examination of: the nature of religion itself; different ways in which it is understood; the implications of privileged voices within these structures; and the findings of scholars within and outside these traditions. For example, adherents within religious traditions may be unaware of critical scholarly material on their traditions (such as biblical scholars questioning the authorship of letters said in the text to be by the apostle Paul; or proposed analyses of Meccan and Medinan surahs by scholars in Islamic studies).

The selection of such material is an educational decision, which needs to be transparent, justified and age-appropriate. The NSE offers a set of criteria upon which to base selection, for a syllabus or curriculum. A school's context gives an additional set of criteria. In the language of Ofsted in England, schools need to think about the appropriate intent behind their curriculum when selecting content, as fitting their school situation. And, of course, statutory requirements should be followed.

Part of the educational purpose of an RW approach is for pupils to be able to consider who might legitimately represent mainstream and minority voices of a tradition, and why. Pupils will examine the relationship between a range of voices representing the tradition or community and the individual voice of the adherent. Care will need to be taken with the sensitivities of children from families whose traditions are being studied. Research shows the dissonance experienced by pupils who encounter a mismatch between the characterisations of the organised worldview presented at their school and their own lived experience (Moulin 2011).

Part of the role of the worldview communities is to be able to support this educational project, such as by providing a range of voices, with an acknowledgement of where the voices sit within the communities.

> **The relationship between worldviews community knowledge, the academic community and the RE community reflects the different constituencies they serve.**

C5.3 Implications

The relationship between worldviews community knowledge, the academic community and the RE community reflects the different constituencies they serve. Bearing this in mind, along with the history, tradition and modern expressions of different worldview, this Handbook proposes that the priority of content selection and curriculum construction must be around the NSE.

The Handbook recognises the need for a partnership between the school subject communities and the faith/worldview communities, not least for the accurate and fair presentation of variety within traditions. However, communities' aspirations for representation, even advocacy, must be in the service of the curriculum subject, rather than the curriculum serving the communities.[27]

There is a robust debate among scholars of religion, such as Tim Fitzgerald, Bruce Lincoln and Russell McCutcheon, about how religion should be handled in academic study. McCutcheon captures his view in the title of his revised essay collection, *Critics not Caretakers: Redescribing the public study of religion* (2023).

C5.4 Schools with a religious character

The NSE offers a benchmark for a high-quality education in religion and worldviews. The REC project offers this to those responsible for RE in schools with a religious character, to guide on the teaching of religion and worldviews. It does not prevent such schools from teaching their own worldview traditions in other ways, in addition to this approach. The work of the Catholic Education Service and its 2023 RE Directory shows how the RW approach can be applied within a religious character school context.

C6 Connecting the RW approach and the NSE to past and current practice

C6.1 Roots of the approach

The RW approach is not entirely new. It emerges from within the rich history of religious education in the UK. These brief references to the work of some of RE's most significant recent scholars are simply designed to remind readers that the current turn to an education in religion and worldviews has its roots in the intellectual traditions of the subject.

Interpretive RE approach

From the **interpretive RE approach** of Robert Jackson (1997), for example, it draws on the idea of ethnography and lived experience, identifying contextual individual and communal worldviews within wider organised/institutional worldviews, and the importance of interpretation for all learners – adherents in understanding their own tradition(s) and for outsiders looking into the tradition. The skills of attentive listening to other voices, dialogue and reflexivity in responding to the worldviews encountered are vital for the success of RW approaches in education.

Human development RE model

From the **human development RE model** of Michael Grimmitt (1987), for example, it emphasises the importance of the interaction between the 'life-worlds' of the pupil and the 'life-worlds' of the religious (or non-religious) adherent. The RW approach recognises the power and significance of learners identifying their own positionality in relation to the worldviews they study. An RW approach accepts and embraces the idea that 'everyone stands somewhere' and pupils' studies of worldviews will be deepened where they are able to learn from the worldviews they encounter.

Critical realist RE model

From the **critical realist RE model** of Andrew Wright (e.g. 2015), for example, RW approaches connect to the emphasis on the importance of a clear understanding of the epistemic assumptions of worldviews and of learners. The critical realist emphasis on truth-seeking and on philosophical considerations about the nature of truth, knowledge, belief and evidence, draw attention to the ways in which different worldviews claim to describe the reality of the human condition. Members of different communities (including religions) may see their worldview as a shared vision of the truth about humanity.

C6.2 The current context of the NSE

The NSE sets out an RW approach to the selection of content and of teaching and learning approaches. There are resonances between this approach and current models of RE. For example:

C6.2.1 Freathy et al., Exeter

The RE-searcher's model (2015) sets out three elements of RE:

- Representation: the object of study; what is to be known about religion(s) and worldview(s)

- Research: learning about and applying methods and interpretations

- Reflect: the learner evaluates their own worldviews, in the context of the study of religion(s) and worldview(s).

As with the OFSTED model below, the NSE statements connect with these elements.

The work at Exeter University has included involvement in the 'Big Ideas' project (see Section C6.2.4 below), as well as expanding on the RE-searchers model as applied to worldviews, big ideas *in* and *about* religion(s) and worldview(s), and metacognition (Freathy et al. 2015, 2017; Freathy and John 2019a and 2019b). There are strong resonances with the RW approach in this Handbook.

C6.2.2 OFSTED

In England, the OFSTED religious education research review (2021[28]) similarly sets out three types of knowledge:

- 'substantive' knowledge: knowledge about various religious and non-religious traditions

- 'ways of knowing': pupils learn 'how to know' about religion and non-religion

- 'personal knowledge': pupils build an awareness of their own presuppositions and values about the religious and nonreligious traditions they study.

The NSE approach reflects these three dimensions:

- Statements a–f (Content) fit with the category of substantive knowledge

- Statements g–i (Engagement) fit with the category of ways of knowing

- Statements j–k (Position) fit with the category of personal knowledge.

There is an ongoing debate on the nature of personal knowledge, as well as on the relationship between personal knowledge and personal worldviews.

Note that key to the NSE is how its three elements intertwine. It is not a list, but a process of engagement between the pupil and the world via the subject content.

> ❛ **There is an ongoing debate on the nature of personal knowledge, as well as on the relationship between personal knowledge and personal worldviews.** ❜

C6.2.3 Big Questions in Classrooms

A research project on multidisciplinary approaches in religious education was undertaken by RE Today Services (2019–2022) as part of the Templeton World Charity Foundation *Big Questions in Classrooms* programme.

In their research project, *Challenging Knowledge in Religious Education*[29], RE Today created a series of resources for teachers to introduce and embed disciplinary approaches in upper primary and secondary school RE.

They built on the work of Freathy et al. (see Section C6.2.1 above), and base their resources on three elements that connect with the NSE:

- object of study: the substantive content of religion(s)/worldviews; factual, conceptual and theoretical knowledge

- methods of study: learning about and applying the intellectual tools and methods used to establish that knowledge

- subject: the learners recognise their worldviews and how these affect their understanding about religion(s)/worldviews.

C6.2.4 Big Ideas

The 'Big Ideas' approach developed by Barbara Wintersgill and colleagues establishes six 'big ideas' as criteria for the selection of content for RE (Wintersgill 2017, Wintersgill et al. 2019). It was influential in the direction of the CoRE final report, and that document's original Statement of Entitlement (2018). The Big Ideas themselves do not include the element of personal worldviews set out in the CoRE report and this Handbook, but while statements a–f in the revised NSE in this document are not the same as the Big Ideas, the influence of the Big Ideas project sits behind the NSE.

C6.2.5 Hermeneutical approaches

The Understanding Christianity resource from RE Today[30] takes a hermeneutical approach to text. It draws attention to 'behind the text' questions (around authorship, sources, context, reliability etc.), 'within the text' questions (meanings and interpretations) and 'in front of the text' questions (around the relationship between the text and the reader). This last category introduces pupils to the hermeneutical concepts of the horizons of the text and the reader, and supports pupils in participating in an interpretive cycle for themselves. This hermeneutical approach influences the RW approach advocated in this Handbook, with a particular connection between pupils' horizons and personal worldviews. (Pett and Cooling 2018; Bowie 2018, 2020, Bowie and Coles 2018, Bowie 2020, Bowie et al. 2022)

C7 References

Aerts, D., L. Apostel, B. De Moor, E. Maex, H. Van Belle and J. Van Der Verken (1984) *World Views*. Brussels: Vubpress

Aldridge, David (2023) 'Two Axes of Worldview', Paper presented at annual conference of Association of University Lecturers in RE, May

Ammerman, Nancy T. (ed) (2007) *Everyday Religion: Observing modern religious lives*. OUP

Benoit, Céline, Timothy Hutchings and Rachael Shillitoe (2020) *Worldview: a multidisciplinary report*. London: Religious Education Council

Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (2023) *To know You more clearly: The Religious Education Directory for Catholic schools, colleges and academies in England and Wales*. London: Catholic Education Service

Bowie, R.A. (2018)' 'Interpreting texts more wisely: A review of research and the case for change in English religious education', *Christian Faith, Formation and Education*, 211–228

Bowie, R.A. and Coles, R. (2018) 'We Reap What We Sew: Perpetuating biblical illiteracy in new English religious studies exams and the proof text binary question', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 40(3) 277–287

Bowie, R.A. (2020) *Texts and Teachers: The findings report*. Canterbury: Christ Church University

Bowie, R.A., Panjwani, F., and Clemmey, K. (2022) 'A Meta Approach to Texts in Religious Education: Researching teachers' engagement with sacred text scholarship in English secondary schools', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 44(3) 271–280

Bullivant, Stephen, Miguel Farias, Jonathan Lanman, Lois Lee (2019) *Understanding Unbelief: Atheists and agnostics around the world*. London: St Mary's University Twickenham

Commission on Religious Education (CoRE) (2018) *Religion and Worldviews: The way forward*. London: Religious Education Council

Cooling, Trevor (2024) 'Knowledge in a religion and worldviews approach in English schools'. *British Journal of Religious Education*

Cotter, Christopher R. (2020) *The Critical Study of Non-Religion: Discourse, identification and locality*. London: Bloomsbury Academic

Cotter, Christopher and David Robinson (eds) (2016) *After World Religions: Reconstructing religious studies*. Routledge

Davie, Grace (1990) 'Believing without Belonging: Is this the future of religion in Britain?' *Social Compass* 37.4, 455-469

Day, Abby (2011) *Believing in belonging: Belief and social identity in the modern world*, Oxford, OUP

Flanagan, Ruth (2021) 'Teachers' Personal Worldviews and RE in England: A way forward?', *British Journal of Religious Education* 43:3

Freathy, G., R. Freathy, J. Doney, K. Walshe and G. Teece (2015) *The RE-searchers: A new approach to primary religious education*. Exeter: University of Exeter

Freathy, R., J. Doney, G. Freathy, K. Walshe and G. Teece (2017) 'Pedagogical Bricoleurs and Bricolage Researchers: The case of religious education', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 65(4): 425–443

Freathy, Rob and Helen C. John (2019a) 'Religious Education, Big Ideas and the Study of Religion(s) and Worldview(s)', *British Journal of Religious Education* 41(1): 27–40

Freathy, Rob and Helen C. John (2019b) 'Worldviews and Big Ideas: A way forward for religious education?', *Nordidactica*

Gooder, Paula (2008) *Searching for Meaning*. London: SPCK

Grimmitt, M. (1987) *Religious Education and Human Development*. McCrimmon Publishing Co. Ltd

Grimmitt, M. (2000). *Pedagogies of Religious Education*. McCrimmon Publishing Co. Ltd

Hancock, Chris (2024) *Teenage Worldviews and Religious Education: The worldviews of students aged fourteen to eighteen in four schools in the Southwest of England*. Unpublished PhD thesis

Hedges, Paul (2021) *Understanding Religion: Theories and methods for studying religiously diverse societies*. University of California Press

Herbert, David and Josh Bullock (2020) 'Reaching for a new sense of connection: Soft atheism and "patch and make do" spirituality amongst nonreligious European millennials', *Culture and Religion*, 21:2, 157–177

Hutchings, Tim (2023) *Review of the National Statement of Entitlement*. Unpublished paper for Religion and Worldviews Project

Ipgrave, J. (2013). 'From Storybooks to Bullet Points: Books and the Bible in primary and secondary RE', *British Journal of Religious Education* 35 (3): 264–281

Jackson, R. (1997) *Religious Education: An Interpretive Approach*. London: Hodder & Stoughton

Koltko-Rivera, Mark E. (2004) 'The Psychology of Worldviews', *Review of General Psychology*, Vol. 8:1, 3–58

Larkin, S., R. Freathy, J. Doney and G. Freathy (2020) *Metacognition, Worldviews and Religious Education: A practical guide for teachers*. Routledge

Lee, Lois (2015) *Recognizing the Non-Religious*. Oxford: OUP

Lewin, David (2020) 'Religion, Reductionism and Pedagogical Reduction' in G. Biesta and P. Hannam (eds), *Religion and Education: The forgotten dimensions of religious education?* Brill

Lewin, David, Janet Orchard, Kate Christopher and Alexandra Brown (2023) 'Reframing Curriculum for Religious Education', *Journal of Curriculum Studies,* 55:4, 369–387

Masuzawa, T. (2005) *The Invention of World Religions; Or, how European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

McCutcheon, Russell T. (2023) *Critics not Caretakers: Redescribing the public study of religion*. London: Routledge

McGuire, Meredith B. (2008) *Lived Religion: Faith and practice in everyday life*. Oxford: OUP

Moulin, Daniel (2011) 'Giving Voice to "the Silent Minority": The experience of religious students in secondary school religious education lessons', *British Journal of Religious Education* 33 (3), 313–326

Ofsted (2021) Research review series: religious education www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education/research-review-series-religious-education

O'Grady, Kevin (2023) *Conceptualising Religion and Worldviews for the School: Opportunities, challenges and complexities of a transition from religious education in England and beyond*. London: Routledge

Pett, Stephen (2022) *Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom: Developing a worldviews approach. A Draft Resource for curriculum developers,* Religious Education Council, London 2022. Available at https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/rec/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/REC-Religion-and-Worldviews-Project-single-pages-Revised-cover-v1.2.pdf

Pett, Stephen and Trevor Cooling (2018) 'Understanding Christianity: Exploring a hermeneutical pedagogy for teaching Christianity', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 40:3, 257–267

Plater, Mark (2023) 'Personal Worldviews: Lessons from James Fowler', *Journal of Religious Education*, 71: 257–268

Polanyi, Michael (1962) *Personal Knowledge: Towards a post-critical philosophy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Quack, J. (2014) 'Outline of a Relational Approach to "Nonreligion"'. *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 26 (4–5): 439–69

RE Council (2023) National Content Standard for RE in England, https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resource/national-content-standard-1st-edition-2023/

Shaw, M. and A. Dinham (2015) *RE for REal: The Future of Teaching and Learning about Religion and Belief*. Project report. University of London: Goldsmiths

Sire, J.W. (1976) *The Universe Next Door: A basic worldview catalogue*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic

Sire, J.W. (2004) *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a concept*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic

Sire, J.W. (2020) *The Universe Next Door: A basic worldview catalogue* (6th edition) Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic

Strhan, Anna, Joanna Malone, Peter Hemming, and Sarah Neal (2023) 'Mapping the Contours of Citizenship, Religion and Education in "Postsecular" Britain,' American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia

Strhan, Anna, Rachael Shillitoe and Lois Lee (2024) 'Becoming Humanist: Worldview formation and the emergence of atheist Britain', *Sociology of Religion*

Strhan, Anna and Rachael Shillitoe (forthcoming) *Growing Up Godless: Nonreligious childhoods in contemporary England*. Princeton University Press

Taves, Ann (2020) 'From religious studies to worldview studies', *Religion*, 50:1, 138

Taylor, Charles (2007) *A Secular Age*. Harvard UP

Tharani, Amira (2022) *The Worldview Project: Discussion papers*. London: Religious Education Council

van der Kooij, Jacomijn C., Doret J. de Ruyter and Siebren Miedema (2013) ' "Worldview": the meaning of the concept and the impact on religious education', *Religious Education*, 108 (2): 210–228

van der Kooij, Jacomijn C., Doret J. de Ruyter and Siebren Miedema (2017) 'The Merits of Using "Worldview" in Religious Education', *Religious Education*, 112(2), pp. 172–184

van Mulukom, Valerie, H. Turpin, R. Haimila, B.G. Purzycki, T. Bendixen, E. Kundtová Klocová, D. Řezníček, T.J. Coleman III, K. Sevinç, E. Maraldi, U. Schjoedt, B.T. Rutjens, and M. Farias (2022) 'What Do Nonreligious Nonbelievers Believe in? Secular Worldviews Around the World', *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. Advance online publication. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/rel0000480

Walsh, B.J. and J.R. Middleton (1984) *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian worldview*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press

Wilkens, S. and M.L. Sanford (2009) *Hidden Worldviews: Eight cultural stories that shape our lives*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic

Willard, A.K. and L. Cingl (2017) 'Testing Theories of Secularization and Religious Belief in the Czech Republic and Slovakia', *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 38(5), 604–615

Wintersgill, B. (ed.) (2017) *Big Ideas for Religious Education*. University of Exeter

Wintersgill, B. with Cush, D. and Francis, D. (2019) *Putting Big Ideas into Practice in Religious Education in Practice*. Culham St Gabriel's Trust

Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1967) *Philosophical Investigations* (3rd Edition). Oxford: Blackwell

Wright, Andrew (2015) *Religious Education and Critical Realism: Knowledge, Reality and Religious Literacy*. London: Routledge

Wright, Andrew and Elina (2023) 'Religious Education and Worldview Theory', *British Journal of Religious Education*, Online First, pp. 1–10

Wright, Andrew and Elina (2024) *The Worldviews of the So-Called 'Nones'*, REOnline www.reonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Wright-Wright-Research-of-the-Month.pdf <Accessed 16/1/2024>

D. Religion and Worldviews project:

The three frameworks

Content
Three frameworks based on the NSE and the draft resource (2022), exemplifying three ways of applying an RW approach to the development of a curriculum in three specific contexts.

Intended audience
These are intended to be of interest to all parties, particularly syllabus developers, curriculum writers, teachers, inspectors, advisers and resource developers.

In 2022, after an open tendering process, three framework teams were selected by the REC to participate in this project. Their task was for each to develop a framework for an RW curriculum, based on the National Statement of Entitlement (NSE) and the guidance offered in the Draft Resource (REC, 2022), accompanied by sample units of work and examples of pupil responses. The purpose was to test the NSE and the guidance, and to demonstrate ways in which these could be interpreted and applied in different contexts.

The three frameworks are exemplars but not templates. They all reflect specific contexts and have applied the NSE accordingly. As such, they exemplify a process that other ASCs, MATs or schools might follow to apply the NSE and accompanying guidance when developing a curriculum for their own contexts.

SACRE/Diocese-led Framework

This team, led by adviser Jen Jenkins, worked to create a framework for a locally agreed syllabus for two SACREs, Coventry and Warwickshire. Working with the Diocese of Coventry and the members of the two SACREs, the team took account of the contrasting nature of diverse, urban Coventry and predominantly monocultural, suburban and rural Warwickshire. This draws on the particular connection between Coventry and other parts of the world in relation to reconciliation and peace-making. The selected units of work show the progression along one of the framework's key concepts from 4 to 14.

Coventry and Warwickshire
SACRE/Diocese-led Framework
An exemplification of a Religion
and Worldviews Approach in RE
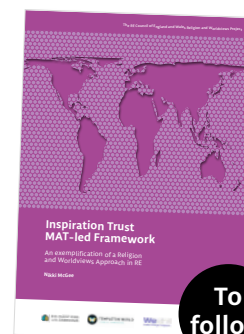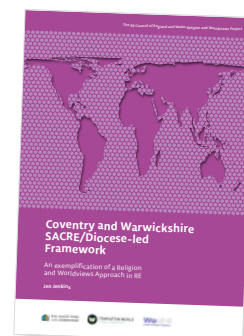Jen Jenkins

MAT-led Framework

This team, led by Subject Specialist Lead Nikki McGee, worked within the Inspiration Trust MAT, seventeen academies in Norfolk and north Suffolk. Their particular context includes the application of a particular approach to knowledge in their curriculum, and their framework reflects that, as well as the geographical, historical and religious/non-religious context of East Anglia. The RE context includes the Norfolk 2019 agreed syllabus's use of the disciplines of theology, philosophy and human and social sciences. These disciplinary strands are embedded in the Trust's RE curriculum, and can be seen in, for example, the emphasis of philosophical questions and methods in their framework. The selection of units shows progression along one strand of the curriculum from 4 to 14.

Inspiration Trust
MAT-led Framework
An exemplification of a Religion
and Worldviews Approach in RE
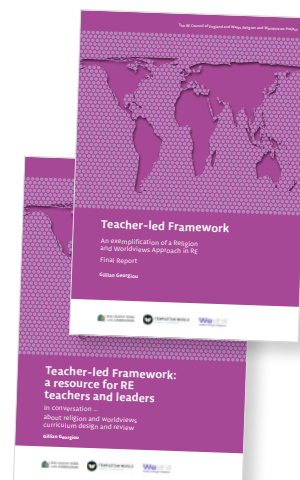Nikki McGee

To follow

Teacher-led Framework

This team, led by Gillian Georgiou, comprised teachers across the country, in different contexts: primary and secondary, community, Church of England, academy, urban, suburban and rural. It addressed the challenge: what do you do to introduce an RW approach when you already have a syllabus or curriculum in place? In response, its framework is set up to allow the curriculum leader or teacher to address a series of questions about the unit they are teaching, so as to apply an RW approach to existing units. The framework is in two forms – one at the curriculum level and one at the unit level. The units of work are selected to show how the framework can be applied in a range of school and curriculum contexts.

Teacher-led Framework
An exemplification of a Religion
and Worldviews Approach in RE
Final Report
Gillian Georgiou

Teacher-led Framework:
a resource for RE
teachers and leaders
In conversation
about religion and worldviews
curriculum design and review
Gillian Georgiou

Note:
Both the SACRE-led and Teacher-led Frameworks are written to offer examples for those in community schools, foundation schools, schools with a religious character, academies and free schools.

Appendix
# Making progress:
two illustrations

Illustration I: outlining units

This illustration offers some snapshots of the kinds of curriculum and classroom experiences that would reflect the requirements, showing how pupils can engage with religion and worldviews, and an indicator of what progression can look like using the NSE. They are thumbnail sketches of units rather than detailed planning outlines (for examples of those, see the frameworks). The advantage of these snapshots is that they reflect a deepening engagement with content; the limitation is that this presentation does not set out what happens across each year group, in order to clarify where pupils go next, and what they build upon in their learning (for more on that, see the MAT-led and SACRE/Diocese-led Frameworks).
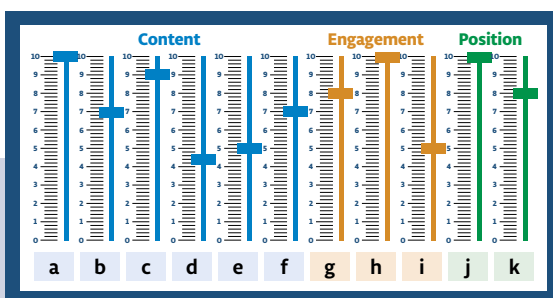
4–5-year-olds use photographs to observe home lives of some people from a religious tradition, from at least two different contexts, and can see that not everyone is the same. (Add a non-religious example if this is not present among pupils.)

a, c, g, **h**, j[31]

5–7-year-olds look at some religious artwork from a diverse range of contexts (such as pictures of Jesus from around the world) and connect them with some stories or texts that help to interpret the artwork (e.g. related gospel accounts). They notice how the different ways of expressing the stories in art are more or less familiar and think about why (e.g. according to their own contexts). They are introduced to a selection of voices to help them find out that such stories may be important in some people's lives as part of organised worldviews, and find out why (e.g. they may include important people, and ideas about how to live). They find out that all kinds of different people may see the stories as important, but not everyone, and that sometimes this is to do with belief in God.

a, b, **c**, **g**, j
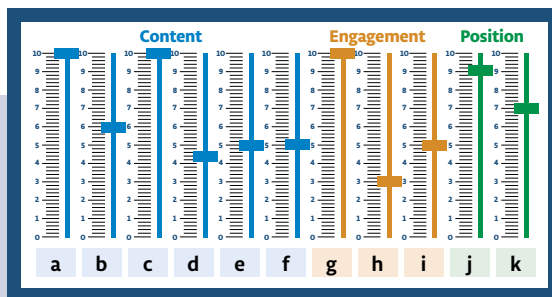
7–9-year-olds ask questions about meaning and purpose in life, expressing their own ideas and saying where these ideas come from. They explore how religious worldviews help some people make sense of life and affect how they live day to day. For example, they talk to adherents about what it means to believe there is a God, or to believe in salvation, or submission, or karma and *samsara* – how these ideas can transform a person's life. They examine some texts and stories that illustrate these big concepts and find out ways in which they are interpreted. They reflect on the difference it makes to these interpretations if someone is an adherent or not, including pupils' own perspectives.

a, c, **d**, g, **h**, **j**

9–11-year-olds ask a question about the difference that context makes to one's worldview. For example, after thinking about their own context, they use and interrogate data, interviews and visual images to examine the differences it makes to be a Muslim in a Muslim-majority country (e.g. Indonesia) and a Muslim-minority country (e.g. UK), including opportunities and challenges, and how these shape their lived experience – not just intellectual ideas. They reflect on whether it is similar if someone is non-religious in a secular society or a religious society. They reflect on their own context again, and consider how it influences their own worldviews.
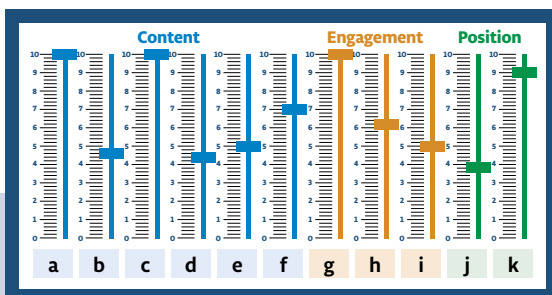
a, **c**, e, g, **h**, **j**, k
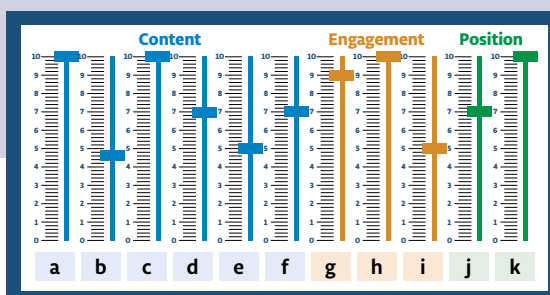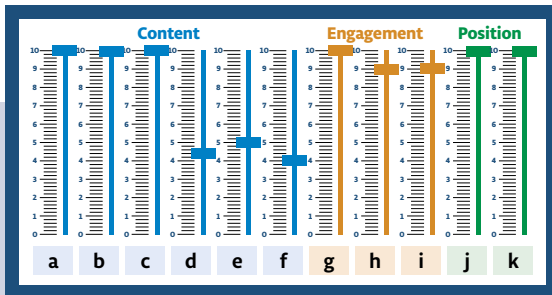
11–12-year-olds ask a question such as 'What is religion?' They examine a range of common features of religion and carry out some research into their importance in the lives of members of the school and local community, and reflect on the role any of these features play in their own lives – whether they are religious or not. By analysing these, they get an insight into the flexible role religion can play in people's lives and worldviews, including their own responses. Having looked at the diversity of expression of religion in people's lives, they can then analyse and evaluate a range of contested academic definitions of religion, reflecting on the impact of a person's worldview on their understanding of 'religion'.[32]

a, **b**, c, **g**, h, i, **j**, **k**

12–13-year-olds ask questions about the diversity and complexity of non-religious worldviews. They look at data that shows how some people who are non-religious incorporate some spiritual or supernatural beliefs and what might be termed religious practices into their lives and worldviews. They recognise that for most non-religious people, however, these things do not matter. Pupils consider Humanism as an example of a naturalist, materialist non-religious worldview, with responses to questions about the nature of ultimate reality, how we know anything, ideas of meaning and purpose, and a vision of the good life. Through talking with Humanists, they reflect on the impact of being Humanist on a person's believing, belonging and behaving. They weigh up the idea that Humanism might be presented as a form of organised non-religious worldview, whether it is legitimate to differentiate between Humanism and humanism (see Section B3.4 above), and the extent to which their own personal worldview overlaps with Humanism or humanism.[33]

a, b, **d**, **e**, **g**, **j**

13–14-year-olds ask questions about how religions change over time. They explore how significant concepts developed through the ages (e.g. usin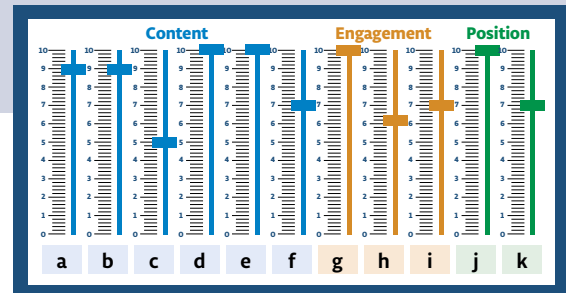g theological methods to understand Trinity as expressed in art, or theories of atonement in Christian traditions; or the miraculous nature of the Qur'an in Islamic traditions) and how practices develop in place (e.g. RS methods to explore how the Buddha's teaching was adapted as it spread to, for example, Sri Lanka, China, Tibet and the West, exploring how the importance of the story of the life of the Buddha varies across these contexts). They use these studies to inform their understanding of how such ideas shape cultures and worldviews, and enable them to examine questions of power and influence. They reflect on which methods were most effective in getting to the heart of the matter, and examining why they think so, reflecting on the impact of their personal worldviews on their choices and responses.

a, **c**, **f**, **g**, j, **k**
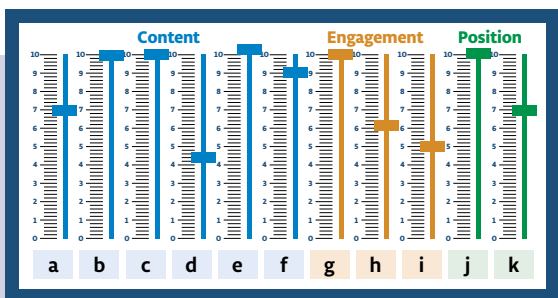
14–16-year-olds examine the relationship between institutional and individual worldviews by exploring ethical issues (e.g. Roman Catholic doctrines on sanctity of life and data on Catholic people's attitudes to birth control), or by considering how religion/non-religion is presented in RE in comparison with lived realities (e.g. textbook presentations of religions alongside sociological data on the diverse adherence and practice of religions in India; data on the permeable boundary between religion and non-religion in the UK). They suggest different explanations for these relationships, reflecting on questions of tradition, continuity, change, power and culture. They select and apply appropriate disciplinary tools to evaluate the explanations, recognising the impact of context. Throughout the unit, they reflect on the sources of their own worldviews in the light of their learning.

b, **c**, **e**, f, **g**, **j**
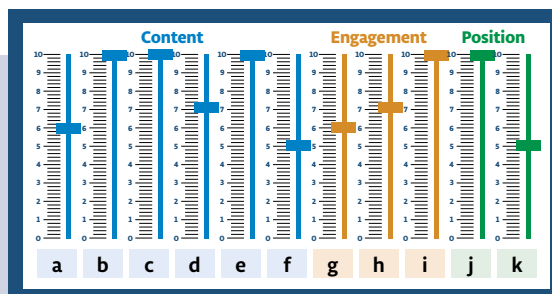
16–19-year-olds reflect on the legal and political dimensions of worldviews, in relation to religious, ethical and social concerns. They examine the influence of religious and non-religious traditions on attitudes to the environment, to medical advances, to justice and equality in relation to gender, sex and race,

and account for the changes across different contexts, using theological and philosophical methods and applying ethical theories (e.g. changing interpretation and application of ancient texts/teachings to accommodate technological advances and societal changes; contrasting responses between secular and religious contexts to the growth of Pentecostalism in, for example, the USA, Britain, Latin America, Africa or East Asia). Students examine their own worldview assumptions and how they affect their responses to these issues, with a growing awareness of the impact of context on their own and others' worldviews.

b, **c**, d, **e**, f, g, h, **i**, **j**

Illustration 2: focusing on the engagement element

This offers an example of what progress might look like using the NSE. The focus here is on making progress in terms of the process of engagement (NSE strands g–i, how pupils examine and engage with the content – incorporating 'ways of knowing'). Syllabuses themselves will need to develop their own outcomes, dependent upon the kinds of questions and content they set out.

5–7s

- Ask questions; find things out using e.g. observation, interviews, interpreting stories, texts and art, using data and recognising where it comes from; recognise that sometimes people give different answers to questions.

7–9s

As above, also

- ask questions and consider the best ways to find answers
- use the methods above with awareness of (for example) organised teachings and individual lived experiences; historical/ contemporary contexts; ritual or artistic forms of expression
- weigh up how sufficient sources are (e.g. one interview or six; one quote or an extended passage; one example or several)
- recognise that people disagree, and some answers leave space for mystery and wonder.

7–9s

As above, but also

- recognise that different questions can fit with subject disciplines, including (for example) theology, philosophy, a social science, creative arts
- become aware of basic assumptions of these (e.g. 'insider/ outsider' perspectives)
- examine beliefs, teachings, ways of living with a range of methods (e.g. experiment, interview, qualitative and quantitative data)
- basic evaluative methods (e.g. reliable methods/ sources/ findings; generalisable conclusions; coherence with tradition etc.)
- recognise that some important questions leave space for mystery and paradox.

11–14s

As above but also

- reflect on different ways that disciplines generate knowledge, aware of assumptions
- use content from different methods, or apply these appropriately to investigations, examine beliefs, teachings and lived experience (e.g. using hermeneutical approaches to texts; interpreting artistic forms of expression; case study, discourse analysis, experimental method, ethnography, surveys)
- become aware of the place of dialogue, debate and disagreement in construction of knowledge
- apply specific evaluative tools
- become aware of non-western ways of knowing
- become aware that 'even if all possible scientific questions be answered the problems of life have not been touched at all' (Wittgenstein).

14–19s

As above, but also

- select and apply these disciplinary ways of thinking to increasingly challenging issues, both contemporary and in the past
  - *within religious communities* (e.g. how theology responds to changes in prevailing cultures, such as questions around gender and sexuality; the impact of critical realism and non-realism on debates about God in Christianity)
  - *between communities* (e.g. relationships between atheist, secularist, and/or Humanist thought; between non-religion and religion; compare religion in India or China with religion in UK)
  - *and beyond religious communities* (e.g. dialogues and debates about the nature of religion, its place in societies and cultures, its roles in relation to prejudice, equality and justice, in politics, in colonialism and national identities etc.)
  - recognise the roots of such debates and the range of ways of handling them
- appreciate that many questions remain unresolved, and will themselves reflect different worldviews.

Endnotes

1   https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resource/national-content-standard-1st-edition-2023/

2   See the animation, Nobody Stands Nowhere [www.theosthinktank.co.uk/comment/2021/05/12/worldviews-film]

3   https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resource/national-content-standard-1st-edition-2023/

4   See, for example, David Voas and Abby Day (2010) Recognizing secular Christians: Toward an unexcluded middle in the study of religion, (ARDA Guiding Paper Series). State College, PA: The Association of Religion Data Archives at The Pennsylvania State University, from www.thearda.com/research/guiding-papers; *Faith Matters*, 2013 (YouGov/University of Lancaster), for Westminster Faith Debates. For infographics on these data and other relevant surveys, see RE Today's Investigating Worldviews Series , www.natre.org.uk/resources/termly-mailing/secondary-investigating-worldviews/ and www.natre.org.uk/resources/termly-mailing/bqic-secondary-challenging-knowledge-in-re/.

5   www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2023/1261.html

6   www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/r-fox-v-ssfe.pdf

7   https://www.afterre.org/

8   This is a method used in social science research. I encountered it in the Understanding Unbelief project, and have used it in resources supporting that project (https://research.kent.ac.uk/understandingunbelief/research/public-engagement-projects/understanding-unbelief-in-the-re-classroom/); also in resources developed for the Challenging Knowledge in RE research project from RE Today: e.g. *Investigating God* (2021) ed. Fiona Moss for primary and *Studying God* (2021) ed. S Pett for secondary.

9   See also the examples using the mixing desk analogy for pupils' personal worldviews developed in *Investigating Worldviews* (2021) ed. F Moss (for primary) and *Studying Worldviews* (2021) ed. S Pett (for secondary), also part of the Challenging Knowledge in RE research project from RE Today. (See note 8 for links)

10   This strategy was originally developed by Sarah Northall, formerly Head of RE at Chipping Norton Secondary School. See it in basic form in *More than 101 Great Ideas* ed. Rosemary Rivett, and applied to ideas of God using the discipline of psychology in *Investigating God*, ed. Fiona Moss for primary and *Studying God* for secondary. (See note 8 above for links)

11   Dawn Cox, papers produced as part of the 2023 Edge Hill Summer School www.edgehill.ac.uk/event/religious-education-summer-school-2023/

12   See *Studying Worldviews*, ed. Stephen Pett, RE Today 2021.

13   See David Lewin, as above, note 7.

14   One way of addressing this question, using this approach as outlined, can be seen in *Investigating How We Live*, ed. Fiona Moss, RE Today 2022 and *Investigating Sikh Worldviews*, ed. S. Pett, RE Today 2024

15   For example, *Picturing Islam, Picturing Muslims* (2019) S. Pett and L. Blaylock, RE Today

16   For example, Understanding Humanism https://understandinghumanism.org.uk/

17   See Adam Robertson (2022) "A journey to 'England's Nazareth'" in REtoday, 39:2, 26–27

18   See, for example, *Studying Religion* (2022) ed. S. Pett, RE Today

19   https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a80f307e5274a2e87dbcba1/GCSE_RS_final_120215.pdf

20   Nottingham University project led by Tim Hutchings, Céline Benoit and Rachael Shillitoe, https://mediaspace.nottingham.ac.uk/playlist/dedicated/1_naafl56b/1_qdl2vxca

21   See, for example, Christopher R. Cotter and David G. Robertson (2016) *After World Religions: reconstructing religious studies*, Routledge.

22   See p. 31 in Hedges, P (2021) *Understanding Religion: theories and methods for studying religiously diverse societies*, University of California Press.

23 See Dawn Cox's bibliography for a more complete list of contributing scholars https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resource/bibliography/

24 https://catholiceducation.org.uk/schools/religious-education/item/1000034-religious-education-curriculum-directory

25 See, for example, the work of James Sire (*The Universe Next Door* (IVP 2020)) and Anne Taves ('From religious studies to worldview studies', *Religion*, 50(1), 138 (2020)), offering worldview questions from religious and non-religious perspectives.

26 See, for example, Christine Counsell's blog https://thedignityofthethingblog.wordpress.com/2018/03/27/in-search-of-senior-curriculum-leadership-introduction-a-dangerous-absence/ and Rosalind Walker on school science knowledge: https://rosalindwalker.wordpress.com/2018/01/14/the-nature-of-school-science-knowledge/#more-357

27 This is a controversial point and will need further discussion and reflection. The relative role of educationalists and members of faith communities in the selection of content for RE has oscillated over the decades.

28 OFSTED Research review series: religious education (2021) www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education/research-review-series-religious-education

29 See project publications for primary schools: www.natre.org.uk/resources/termly-mailing/bqic-primary-big-questions-big-answers/ and for secondary schools: www.natre.org.uk/resources/termly-mailing/bqic-secondary-challenging-knowledge-in-re/

30 For more information, see www.retoday.org.uk/school-support/understanding-christianity/

31 Note that the NSE statement letters here show the main focus of the units (in bold) and the background statements, reflecting the mixing desk metaphor from page 34

32 For resources to support this unit outline, see *Studying Religion*, (2022) ed S. Pett. RE Today.

33 For resources to support this unit outline, see *Investigating Non-religious Worldviews* (2023) ed. S Pett, RE Today.

ENDNOTES