

Sixth Form Core Religious Education (CRE)

In his encyclical 'Christus Vivit,' Pope Francis reminds us of the many complex challenges young people face today and how the previously acknowledged traditional sources of authority that help navigate these challenges are ignored or viewed with suspicion. Establishing a coherent identity and belief system can be a fraught and inconsistent process. Young people will make choices and decisions about their lives; however, the hope is that through religious education, they will not be presented with pre-packaged answers but offered the opportunity to develop the skills and outlook to ask the questions that will enable them to make informed decisions that help them make sense of the world in which they live.ⁱ

Classroom Religious Education in the sixth form aims to make this connection. It is a central part of Catholic sixth form education and should form the core of students' experience of the Catholic mission in education. All sixth form educators are asked to move away from using the term 'general' religious education and instead use the term core religious education (CRE) to signify its central role. Within religious education, students should be offered the opportunity to critically reflect on the past and present influences that shape life and culture today. Religious education in the sixth form should offer the space to explore, question, evaluate, reflect on, and apply their own beliefs while respecting the beliefs of others. A central aspect of this is a culture of dialogue.

Education, by its nature, requires both openness to other cultures, without the loss of one's own identity, and an acceptance of the other person, to avoid the risk of a limited culture, closed in on itself. Therefore, through their experience of school and study, young people must acquire theoretical and practical tools for amassing greater knowledge both of others and of themselves, as well as greater knowledge of the values both of their own culture and of other cultures.ⁱⁱ

Within the sixth form religious curriculum, therefore, although there is guidance, the element of prescription is kept to a minimum to enable schools and colleges to better respond to the needs of their students and explore topics relevant to their lived experience. The Catholic Schools Inspectorate framework contains a specific annexe regarding the sixth form provision of classroom religious education.

Guiding Principles in Planning Sixth Form Core Religious Education

1. Provision

All Catholic schools, academies and sixth form colleges are to provide a core religious education course for all students in Years 12 and 13 (and 14) ["the Sixth Form"] at a time that they can attend.

All students in the Sixth Form means

- all students on roll, including those who may spend some time at other locations such as schools, academies, colleges and work-place providers

- all students from other schools, academies, colleges or other education or training providers who attend a Catholic school, academy or sixth form college for part of their education and training
- all students on roll, irrespective of the number and nature of other courses that they are studying, including GCE A Level Religious Studies

2. Curriculum Allocation

The 2000 Bishops' Statement on Religious Education clearly stated an expectation that five per cent of Sixth Form curriculum time be devoted to core Religious Education. In school Sixth Forms and Catholic Sixth Form Colleges, the 5% will best be understood as a proportion of the total number of learning hours a Sixth Form student is expected to receive in an average sixth form offer. This will differ depending on the curriculum route individual students take through their sixth form studies. The 5% should be calculated as a proportion of the number of hours students attend curriculum lessons. This proportion should be distributed in such a way that they constitute a proportion of each repeating timetable cycle¹, as laid out above. Ordinarily, the requirement will best be understood as one period of religious education in each week that a student is on timetable, ending when the public examination season begins. After Easter of a student's final year of study, the standard timetable cycle may no longer be applicable, and core religious education may be complete by then.

Any collapsed timetable days would be in addition to this requirement and must not replace it. Adjusting the proportion of curriculum time in either year of sixth form, and off-setting in the other is not compliant with the Bishops' Conference curriculum requirements which require 5% curriculum time be devoted to religious education in each year of sixth form study.

For students who have more than two planned years of sixth form, it is expected that they have religious education in each of their years of sixth form that is designed in such a way as to ensure that their experience of the offered curriculum is not repetitive.

3. Developing a curriculum

Every curriculum must be planned according to any specific diocesan guidance and obtain diocesan approval before it is implemented. Sixth form colleges and schools should collaborate within their diocese and with the other Catholic sixth forms in their Trust or regional hub, as appropriate, to ensure that what is provided for the students is of consistently high quality, even though the content of topics may vary between settings.

4. General Aims for Sixth Form Core Religious Educationⁱⁱⁱ

- To present engagingly, a comprehensive content which is the basis of knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.

¹ The phrase "repeating cycle" is here used to refer to the number of days in a single timetable cycle. For example, some schools have a ten working day cycle (a two-week timetable), while many have the historically more common five working day cycle (a one-week timetable).

- ii. To enable students continually to deepen their religious and theological understanding and be able to communicate this effectively.
- iii. To present an authentic vision of the Church’s moral and social teaching so that students can make a critique of the underlying trends in contemporary culture and society.
- iv. To give students an understanding of other religions and worldviews and to help them become skilled intercultural navigators.
- v. To develop the critical faculties, to bring clarity to the relationship between faith and life, and between faith and culture.
- vi. To stimulate students’ imagination and provoke a desire for personal meaning as revealed in the truth of the Catholic faith.
- vii. To enable students to relate the knowledge gained through religious education to their understanding of other subjects in the curriculum.

The outcome of excellent Religious Education is religiously literate and engaged young people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills – appropriate to their age and capacity – to reflect spiritually, and think ethically and theologically, and who are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

The 2022 Religious Education Curriculum Directory

In the RECD curriculum, students follow a six branched programme from the Early Years to the end of KS3. Five of the branches are based on the liturgical structure of the Church’s year, and the final branch offers the opportunity to explore other religions and worldviews. Within core religious education in the sixth form, the curriculum is formed from the first five branches and the sixth branch is integrated throughout as central part of the dialogical approach. The branches are:

1. Creation and Covenant
2. Prophecy and Promise
3. Galilee to Jerusalem
4. Desert to Garden
5. To the Ends of the Earth

The branches tell the story of salvation from a Christian outlook which ensures that learning is sequential and progressive. In a sixth form context, this structure may not be appropriate. When designing a programme of study, educators can change the order of topics or deconstruct how they are taught. However, the content should still reflect these RECD themes and address the core questions each asks of the students. As stated above, there must be a regular timetabled element and any programme must be planned under any specific diocesan guidance and obtain diocesan approval before implementing it.

Lenses for Core Religious Education

In each curriculum branch of the RECD from Early Years to the end of Key Stage Three, knowledge content is presented through a series of four lenses. The first lens looks at scripture (or magisterial

texts), the second at beliefs and doctrines, and the third at sacraments, liturgy, and prayer. The fourth explores how beliefs are lived out, involving ethical and dialogical questions. Students should still explore the chosen topics through four lenses in core religious education. The lenses will allow teachers and students to connect texts, beliefs, religious practices, and life. They are:

- i. Theology
- ii. Philosophy and Ethics
- iii. Sociology
- iv. Dialogical

Planning a curriculum

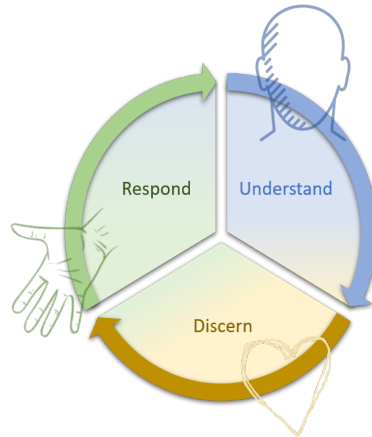
In each topic, educators may not wish to explore all four lenses, but they must explore the topic from the perspective of Christian theology. For many young people, there exists a disconnect between theology and life. By approaching any study through the lens of theology, it is hoped that its method and rigour will influence their own formation. At least fifty per cent of the curriculum time throughout the sixth form religious education programme overall will focus on Christian theology. It is expected that students have many opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue with the course content. The dialogical lens will facilitate perceptive discussion of the content of the course with their peers and consider a range of worldviews.

The branches of the RECD offer broad themes that will allow sixth form core religious education to provide a creative and diverse curriculum appropriate to the many different settings in which it is taught. The following exemplar offers guidance to support RE educators in developing a curriculum. The exemplar takes a 'big question' approach to each branch. Sixth form religious education subject leaders can adopt this approach or devise an alternative. Whatever format is adopted, it is essential that existing good practice is not lost but retained and woven into the five branches where appropriate. However, core religious education is structured; the curriculum must have a progressive learning sequence and offer a challenge at a level suitable for the students and align with the intellectual rigour they experience in other subjects. Teaching should engage the students with a range of content, offer the opportunity to revisit content at a greater depth or from a different perspective and in ways of knowing at a higher level than previously studied which the school or sixth form college will determine. Pedagogical approaches should be developed that meet the needs of students in each institution and use a range of diverse resources, including works of art, literature, or music, to enrich students' reflective learning.

Ways of knowing

The religious education curriculum should be designed to ensure that learning is progressive. Through studying core religious education students should know more about Catholic beliefs and practices, other religious traditions, and non-religious beliefs, and develop disciplinary skills by understanding how theologians, philosophers or social scientists frame 'the big questions'^{iv}. They should have the opportunity to reflect on their own presuppositions and values about the religious and non-religious worldviews they study. In the past, progress in religious education has been measured against attainment targets; in the 2022 RECD, the attainment targets have been replaced by 'Ways of Knowing'.

The 'ways of knowing' are simply framed as understand 'head knowledge', discern 'heart felt reflection' and respond 'actions and feelings'. All students will progress through these ways of knowing at a level commensurate with their level of study in the sixth form setting. The table sets out the aims, skills and some exemplar outcome statements appropriate to a sixth form setting.



	Understand	Discern	Respond
AIM	In this way of knowing, we are aiming to help students to be able to understand deeply the meaning of sacred texts, religious beliefs, sacred rites and the lives of individuals and communities who are shaped by these texts, beliefs and rites.	In this way of knowing, we are aiming to help students to be able to judge wisely in response to different interpretations of the meaning, significance and implications of texts, beliefs, rites, and ways of life so that they can arrive at justified conclusions about what is true and good.	In this way of knowing, we are aiming to help students reflect personally and with integrity on what they have learned and consider the implications for action these may have for their own lives and the world in which they live.

	Understand	Discern	Respond
SKILLS	<p>In this way of knowing, students will deepen their understanding by developing the skills to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember and apply the meanings of key texts, beliefs and concepts. Provide explanations by making links between religious texts, beliefs, and practices. Interpret and analyse the meaning of texts, practices and rituals and their historical and cultural connections. 	<p>In this way of knowing, students will increase in wisdom, through dialogue with others, by developing the skills to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test ideas by comparing different interpretations, different ways of celebrating rites and different ways of life. Explain differences within and between religions and worldviews. Critically evaluate differences to arrive at wise judgements about disputed questions. 	<p>In this way of knowing, students will be invited to respond personally and with integrity by developing the skills to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on the meaning of what they have learned for their own lives. Dialogue with others to understand themselves and others better. Imagine how their own lives and the future of the communities to which they belong could be transformed by what they have learned.
DRIVER WORDS & PHRASES	<p>The following list gives an indication of the ways in which these skills develop through the use of 'driver words and phrases' that are applied progressively as students move through their core religious education curriculum content:</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise texts, beliefs, rites, ways of life. Name... Remember... Make links... Explain... Show understanding... Interpret within a historical context... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express a point of view or a preference. Listen to contrary viewpoints. Construct arguments. Weigh strengths and weaknesses. Arrive at justified conclusions. Recognise complexity with reference to different interpretations and historical context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond personally to questions that are difficult to answer. Show understanding of how beliefs and values inform personal decisions and ways of life. Explain differences of belief and ways of life with reference to religious commitments. Critically reflect on their own beliefs and ways of life in response to dialogue with others. Respond with integrity to personal conclusions about questions of value and meaning.

	Understand	Discern	Respond
Core RE Outcome Statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand - Students should critically reflect and interpret the meaning and significance of various sacred texts and sources of wisdom • Students should examine different legitimate interpretations of sacred texts and sources of wisdom. • They should develop their knowledge and understanding of doctrine, belief, forms of worship and theological concepts, questions of meaning and purpose, philosophy and ethics and the significance of the answers for personal choices and commitments. • Students should demonstrate some understanding of the historical and cultural development of knowledge in each area studied. • Recognise the importance of historical and cultural context, and draw on the work of relevant theologians, philosophers, and scholars. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students should have the opportunity to perceptively discuss different views, leading to developing arguments that are coherent, relevant, and logically structured. • Through these discussions, they form cohesive and reasoned judgements of their own. • They should demonstrate an understanding of the significance and influence of commonality and diversity within and between religions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically evaluate their response to questions of meaning and purpose in light of religious and non-religious views and beliefs, leading to an independent, fully informed, well-argued account of their own and others' perspectives.

Exemplar curriculum structure

The exemplar reflects the core questions that could form the basis of a curriculum in a sixth form college where a number of students are not from Catholic secondary schools and does not presume extensive prior learning in religious education. In a sixth form setting where many students have studied religious studies to GCSE level, curriculum plans can assume prior knowledge.

Branch	Core questions <i>could</i> include
Creation and Covenant	<p>What is the meaning and purpose of life?</p> <p>What is true happiness?</p> <p>What does stewardship mean? What are the implications of good and bad stewardship? Is the concept of stewardship strong enough to meet the challenges of the modern world?</p> <p>What does the creation story (Genesis 1-2) have to say today to a world in which so many consider that science provides the truth?</p>
Prophecy and Promise	<p>What is 'revelation' in the Christian tradition?</p> <p>Is scientific knowledge the ultimate source of all revelation?</p> <p>'What is truth?' asked Pilate (Jn18:38). Is there 'truth' and if so, how can it be known with certainty? What are the implications if it does not exist?</p>
Galilee to Jerusalem	<p>Who is Jesus? Why is he important today?</p> <p>What is the 'Kingdom of God'?</p>
Desert to Garden	<p>Why is there suffering in the world? What does Christianity and other religious pathways say about human suffering? What do non-religious worldviews say?</p> <p>Why should Christians 'forgive those who trespass against us'?</p>
To the Ends of the earth	<p>What do Catholics mean by 'the Church'?</p> <p>What is the point of the Catholic Church in the modern world?</p> <p>Why do religious worldviews matter?</p> <p>What is interreligious dialogue?</p>

Exemplar 'big question' plan from 'Desert to Garden'

The outline below focuses on one part of this whole branch, it does not go on to look at forgiveness. It presumes that many students have not studied GCSE religious studies.

Core question: Why do people suffer?

Why is there suffering in the world, types of suffering, is it compatible with belief, how do faith groups respond?

Where is hope? (What brings us hope, responses to suffering, working for change, etc.)

Knowledge Lenses	Lent half- term: Desert to Garden
Theology	<p>What is suffering? Explore different types of human suffering, for example, through illness, natural disaster, conflict, and discrimination. Discuss the causes of suffering. Does suffering ever give rise to hope?</p> <p>Towards a Christian understanding of suffering If God is good, why is there suffering? In Christianity, this question is called the theodicy question. Theodicy is derived from the Greek words <i>theós</i> = God and <i>díkē</i> = justice and signifies the point where God's authority seems to clash with God's goodness.</p> <p>What does the Bible say? Is suffering a punishment? Sometimes, bad things happen to those who do not follow God's ways depicted in the Hebrew Scriptures. However, the question of theodicy connects with the Books of Wisdom, particularly with the figure of Job. (Summary of the Book of Job, e.g. The Bible Project https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GswSg2ohqmA) The conviction emerges that we accept good things from God; should we not take the bad things? (Job 2:10) The question of suffering is not solved theoretically in the Book of Job but rather through the story of Job's life. God is there with Job amid human existence as a compassionate God. (Additional texts James 5:11). Though we may not understand why we suffer, in Jesus, we realise that God is with us in our suffering (John 3:17-18). Jesus is innocent but is prepared to experience human suffering (Luke 22:42). "The cross is indeed the place where God's perfect compassion for our world becomes visible" (Pope Benedict XVI).</p>

	<p>Signs of hope? YOUCAT 101 "Christ, our Redeemer, chose the Cross so as to bear the guilt of the world and to suffer the pain of the world. So, he brought the world back home to God by his perfect love." For Christians, Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection show that God understands our suffering and is with us when we experience hard times. Christians believe that when the joys and grief of our earthly lives end, we will be with God. Scriptural texts: God is with us in our suffering (Matthew 11:30), Following the example of Christ (Philippians 2).</p>
Philosophy	<p>Nietzsche and the problem of suffering. Explore Nietzsche's belief that the world is filled with suffering which lacks any profound purpose or meaning. He believed that the ability to deal with this suffering, endure hardships, and overcome them is a valuable practice of a person's power and character. According to Nietzsche, in finding the strength to overcome suffering, people find a way to overcome its meaninglessness.</p>
Social Sciences	<p>The problem of suffering and the 'politics of compassion.'</p> <p>"If compassion is to realise its political potential as a sentiment that can inspire citizens to take responsibility to protect others from undeserved suffering and injustice, then we must identify ways and means of ensuring that it does not confine itself to those nearest at the exclusion of the distant or motivate paternalistic intrusive political institutions that strip others of their dignity and agency." (The Politics of Compassion Edited by Michael Ure and Mervyn Frost 2014)</p> <p>In light of the quote, explore two different responses to human suffering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) on a global scale, for example, responses to the Shoah, war, famine, or natural disasters. ii) on a local scale through the work of a Catholic charity <p>Consider the question, is charity an appropriate response to the suffering of others? Consider the statement 'charity begins at home?' Which is more needed, charity or justice?</p>

	<p>What does the parable of the Good Samaritan have to teach us about responding to human suffering?</p> <p>How does the work of the charity studied reflect the teachings of the parable?</p>
<p>Dialogical</p>	<p>What might Buddhists say about suffering?</p> <p>The Four Noble Truths</p> <p>The First Noble Truth (dukkha) is the concept of universal suffering, and that suffering is part of the world. Buddhists believe in the cycle of samsara, which is the cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. Therefore, everyone will experience suffering many times over. Buddhists want to work to reduce suffering. However, the first step is to acknowledge that there is suffering. The Second Noble Truth (samudaya) is the concept that something causes suffering to happen. The Buddha taught that people need to understand the cause of suffering to move forward and leave it behind. Buddhism teaches that people can suffer through being dissatisfied with their lives and craving things. Explore the Wheel of Life and what the animals represent. The Third Noble Truth (nirodha) is knowing that suffering can end. Buddhists recognise that there is a way to move away from suffering because by doing this, they can get closer to reaching enlightenment. Buddhism teaches that people should not be too focused on wanting many different things as the enjoyment won't last. Buddhists must try to stop craving as much as possible and work to end suffering. The Fourth Noble Truth (maggā) is that there is a way to end suffering. Buddhists can do many things to alleviate suffering, such as following the Buddha's teachings and meditating. Explore the steps on the Noble Eightfold Path and discuss how moderation of desires could change the experience of suffering. For Buddhists, is this a sign of hope?</p> <p>What challenges might this present to people who are not Buddhist?</p>
<p>Ways of Knowing:</p> <p>i. Understand - Students should critically reflect and interpret the meaning and significance of the sacred texts and sources of wisdom discussed. They should develop their knowledge and understanding of beliefs about suffering and responses to suffering. They should identify the</p>	

theological, philosophical, and sociological concepts studied and relate these to their personal choices and commitments.

- ii. **Respond** - Critically evaluate their response to questions about why people suffer considering the religious and non-religious views and beliefs studied. Articulate their personal perspective and respect the views of others’.
- iii. **Discern** - Discuss the different worldviews studied. Through these discussions, form cohesive and reasoned judgements of their own. Show some understanding of the significance and influence of commonality and diversity between religious and non-religious worldviews regarding suffering and responses

Exemplar programme outline developed by the Archdiocese of Birmingham based on the RECD model curriculum

Underpinning the idea of a programme built around ‘Big Questions’ is an understanding that sixth form students are moving definitively away from accepting beliefs ‘given’ to them and towards developing and integrating their understanding of the world around them and their relationship with God. In becoming an adult, they are taking on the responsibility for their own beliefs.

Branch 1: Creation and Covenant

- ***‘I have come that you may have life.’*** The pursuit of Happiness. (*What makes us happy, how do we know, what do we mean by happiness, interacting with others*)
- ***Faith and Science.*** (*The relationship between them, AI and its implications, algorithms, and structural bias, etc.*)
- ***Taking Care of the Planet*** - Environmental Ethics (*Stewardship, the environment and responsibility, social action, the role of religion*)
- ***Making Ethical Choices*** (*How do we make ethical choices, ethical theories, role of conscience and faith, exploration of specific issues*)

Branch 2: Prophecy and Promise

- ***The nature and existence of God*** (*Why do people believe, arguments for and against—do people try to make God in their own image?*)
- ***Revealed Religion.*** (*The use of sources and their relevance, how they affect behaviour*)
- ***Religious Experience*** (*Types of experience, can it be evaluated is it real?*)

Branch 3: Galilee to Jerusalem

- ***Who is Jesus?*** (*Historical figure, evidence, an exploration of his role in different faith groups*)
- ***The Kingdom of God*** (*How faith groups envisage God’s reign, is it desirable or possible in today’s world?*)

- **Miracles** (*What is a miracle- past and present, purpose, the need to believe, sickness and healing*)

Branch 4: Desert to Garden (Lent and Easter)

- **Suffering and Response** (*Why do people suffer, types of suffering, is it compatible with belief, how do faith groups respond?*)
- **Reconciliation.** (*An exploration of forgiveness, and the need for reconciliation- this could also include theories of punishment, peace, and Justice*)
- **Temptation.** (*How religions portray this, in today's world, the role of advertising, structural temptation*)
- **Relationships,** Gender, sex, and science (*forming good relationships, what does gender mean today, marriage, the input of faith, the link between procreation and sex*)

Branch 5: To the Ends of the Earth

- **The role of religion in today's world.** (*A force for good or evil? Should religions become involved in politics? Can missionary activity be justified? Different versions of what a secular society means, for example, explore constitutional relationship with religion in a country such as France, Botswana, Japan, United States, England and Wales*)
- **Life, death and what comes next?** (*An exploration of concepts of life after death, as portrayed by religion and a secular society (This might include heaven and hell, reward, and punishment, downloading consciousness, interactive holographs of the dead)*)
- **Salvation** (*Do we need to be saved- from what, for what, differing views*)
- **Living in Hope** (*What brings us hope, the doomsday clock, working for change, community versus individualism, one world*)

Branch 6: Encounter and Search

Religions and worldviews, shared search for meaning taught across all five branches through the dialogical lens.

ⁱ 'The identity of the Catholic School for a culture of dialogue' Congregation for Catholic Education (29) 2022

ⁱⁱ 'Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love' (Intro) Congregation for Catholic Education 2013

ⁱⁱⁱ 'The Religious Education Curriculum Directory' The Department of Catholic Education and Formation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales p6

^{iv} 'Big ideas for Religious Education' Ed. Barbara Wintersgill 2017