

Religious Education at KS4: what are the options

Data from the DfE's workforce survey shows that 28% of schools are failing to allocate any curriculum time for RE¹. Given that RE is a statutory subject throughout the whole of a child's formal schooling (in each year group from 5-18 years), what are the options for its teaching?

The table below sets out the options available for schools at KS4, giving recommendations about how schools can comply with their legal expectations to provide RE for all.

NATRE recommends any system of RE teaching where all students are being:

- given their entitlement to receive high quality RE
- taught by trained and experienced RE teachers
- given enough time to fulfil the legal expectations and/or the requirements set down by the examination awarding bodies

Pathway	Course title	Qualification	Teaching context	Advantages	Disadvantages
Pathway 1A Recommended by NATRE	RS full course	GCSE	Option groups	Gives students the option to study RS as a full GCSE. Helpful for those going on to A level RS.	
	RS short course	GCSE (short course)	Remainder of cohort	Provides a suitable level of RE input for all students leading to a relevant qualification Fulfils an entitlement to RE for all	Since the removal of the short course from school performance tables in 2014, schools have steadily turned away from its use as a means to offer core RE at KS4.
Pathway 1B Recommended by NATRE	RS full course	GCSE	Option groups	Gives students the option to study RS as a full GCSE. Helpful for those going on to A level RS.	
	RE core	none	Remainder of cohort	Provides a suitable level of RE input for all students	Requires careful curriculum construction and specialist RE teachers

¹ State of the Nation report

				Fulfils an entitlement to RE for all	Can be hard to teach, where students perceive that study does not lead to a qualification
Pathway 1C Not recommended by NATRE	RS full course	GCSE	Option groups	Gives students the option to study RS as a full GCSE. Helpful for those going on to A level RS.	
			No provision for other students		This arrangement does not comply with the law.
Pathway 2A Recommended by NATRE	RS full course	GCSE	Whole cohort 2 hours + per week	Provides RE for all	
Pathway 2B Not recommended by NATRE	RS full course	GCSE	Whole cohort 1 hours per week, often starting in Year 9	Provides RE for all	<p>There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that, in many schools, full course GCSE RS is being taught on too little curriculum time. Where the curriculum model is set to teach GCSE RS on one hour per week. This is of concern for the following reasons:</p> <p>1 It puts teachers and students alike under significant strain to cover the specification content in adequate depth and detail to gain a rounded understanding of the topics</p> <p>2 GCSE courses are designed to be studied by 14-16 year-olds. It is unethical for children younger than this to be exposed to some of the curriculum content.</p> <p>3 Danger of narrowing the KS3 curriculum.</p>

Pathway 3 NATRE has reservations about this model	Core RE for all	none		Fulfils the entitlement to RE for all	Requires careful curriculum construction and specialist RE teachers Can be hard to teach, where students perceive that study does not lead to a qualification
Pathway 4 NATRE has reservations about this model	Drop-down days	none		Offers an entitlement to RE for all	Likely to be non-compliant, because there will be insufficient time allocated to these days in total It may be considered to put an unacceptable stress on teachers, who are expected to teach a full timetable AND organise additional, high quality RE days
Pathway 5 Not recommended by NATRE	RE through PSHE or Personal Development	none	various		RE delivered by non-specialist teachers through tutor-time or PSHE lacks rigour and very easily gets 'lost'