

Commission on Religious Education (CoRE)

A

RE and Worldviews-summary *nb this is a report produced in England so there are references that may not apply in Wales.*

Main points in bold

This report reaffirms the central importance of **learning about religious and non-religious worldviews for all pupils, regardless of their background, personal beliefs or the type of school they attend.** Knowledge of religious and non-religious worldviews is an essential part of all young people's entitlement to education. **See B**

Despite its central importance, Religious Education (RE) in too many schools is **not good enough to prepare pupils adequately** for the religious and belief diversity they will encounter, nor to support them to engage deeply with the questions raised by the study of worldviews.

Too many pupils are not currently receiving their entitlement to knowledge of religious and non-religious worldviews. This is an essential subject for all pupils, it is proposed that there should be a statutory **National Entitlement** to the study of Religion and Worldviews. **There will need to be sustained investment in developing knowledgeable teachers, as well as investment in high quality curriculum materials.**

The evidence gathered confirms the need identified in many previous reports for a change to the structures supporting Religious Education so that the subject is taught well across all schools.

A worldview is a person's way of understanding, experiencing and responding to the world. It can be described as a philosophy of life or an approach to life.

The term 'institutional worldview' is used to describe organised worldviews shared among particular groups. **These include what we describe as religions as well as non-religious worldviews such as Humanism, Secularism or Atheism.**

Studying religious and non-religious worldviews gives young people the opportunity to develop the knowledge, understanding and motivation they need to engage with important aspects of human experience including religious, spiritual, cultural and moral aspects.

Over time, subject experts came to recognise that **young people needed to understand both a wider range of religious and non-religious worldviews** This was reflected in the Education Reform Act of 1988, which also changed the name of the subject to Religious Education.

Study suggests that the distinction between religious and non-religious worldviews is not as clear-cut as might be thought. Individuals may draw on aspects of both religious and non-religious worldviews in their own personal worldviews.

The National Entitlement makes clear the central importance of understanding religious and non-religious worldviews as well as the conceptual categories which lead to this understanding.

Successive surveys of teachers, especially at primary level, have shown that teachers lack confidence to teach RE and to tackle the sensitive and controversial issues that are the lifeblood of the subject.

Reductions in funding have reduced local authority support for RE via Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) and professional advisers, to the point where such support is unsustainable in many areas. Urgent action needs to be taken to reform and strengthen the structures that support Religion and Worldviews in schools.

B THE NATIONAL ENTITLEMENT TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND WORLDVIEWS

All pupils are entitled to be taught Religion and Worldviews in every year up to and including year 11. Post-16 students, including those in Further Education should have the opportunity to study Religion and Worldviews during their post-16 course of study.

Schools must publish a detailed statement about how they meet the National Entitlement and ensure that every pupil has access to it through the curriculum, lessons and wider experiences they provide.

Pupils must be taught:

- about matters of central importance to the worldviews studied, how these can form coherent accounts, and how these matters are interpreted in different times, cultures and places.
- about key concepts including 'religion', 'secularity', 'spirituality' and 'worldview', and that worldviews are complex, diverse and plural.
- the ways in which patterns of belief, expression and belonging may change across and within worldviews, locally, nationally and globally, both historically and in contemporary times.
- the ways in which worldviews develop in interaction with each other, have some shared beliefs and practices as well as differences, and that people may draw upon more than one tradition.
- the role of religious and non-religious ritual and practices, foundational texts, and of the arts, in both the formation
- the role of religious and non-religious ritual and practices, foundational texts, and of the arts, in both the formation and communication of experience, beliefs, values, identities and commitments

- how worldviews may offer responses to fundamental questions of meaning and purpose raised by human experience, and the different roles that worldviews play in providing people with ways of making sense of their lives.
- the different roles played by worldviews in the lives of individuals and societies, including their influence on moral behaviour and social norms.
- how worldviews have power and influence in societies and cultures, appealing to various sources of authority, including foundational texts.
- the different ways in which religion and worldviews can be understood, interpreted and studied, including through academic disciplines and direct encounter and discussion with individuals and communities who hold these worldviews.

Programmes of study must reflect the complex, diverse and plural nature of worldviews. They may draw from a range of religious, philosophical, spiritual and other approaches to life including different traditions within Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, non-religious worldviews and concepts including Humanism, secularism, atheism and agnosticism, and other relevant worldviews within and beyond the traditions listed above, including worldviews of local significance.

Teaching must promote openness, respect for others, objectivity, scholarly accuracy and critical enquiry. Pupils are therefore entitled to be taught by teachers who:

- have secure subject knowledge.
- are capable of addressing misconceptions and misunderstandings and handling controversial issues.
- demonstrate a critical understanding of developments in the study of religion and worldviews.
- promote the value of scholarship.

In order 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 Religion and Worldviews as a core component of the curriculum.