



**NATRE Spirited Arts 2022 WINNER Sebastian (4) Godstone Primary**  
*God's Good Earth: 'People are to keep care of the animals of the whole wide world.'*

# EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

## Some principles for RE in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)



**Starts from the child's experience & within the EYFS curriculum**



**A mix of planned & purposeful play**



**Adult-led & child-led activities**

**Exploration through six key questions:**



*Who am I and where do I belong?*



*Why do we have celebrations?*



*What makes a place special?*



*What can we learn from stories?*



*What makes something special?*



*What makes our world wonderful?*

# The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

The early years foundation stage describes the phase of a child’s education from the birth until the age of 5. The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (EYFS) is the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, which sets the standards for learning, development, and the care of children. **RE is a legal requirement for all pupils of the statutory school age, which must include children in Reception.** The statutory requirement to teach RE does not extend to nursery classes in maintained schools.

There is no requirement for RE to be delivered as discrete lessons in EYFS: how you choose to teach RE is a decision that should be made and justified at school level. There are seven areas of learning and development that shape the educational programmes in early years settings. All the areas of learning are interconnected. The table below shows the three prime areas and the four specific areas:

Prime areas	Specific areas
<b>Communication and Language</b> Physical Development <b>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</b>	<b>Literacy</b> Mathematics <b>Understanding the World</b> <b>Expressive Arts and Design</b>

## RE in the seven areas of learning

RE has the potential to make an active contribution to all the areas of learning in early years settings, but it makes a particularly important contribution to those highlighted above in **bold**. The [EYFS statutory framework \(September 2021\)](#) strengthens the place of RE through its explicit reference to religious communities (DfE, 2021, p.14) in the **Understanding the World** area of learning. This specific area involves exploration of the child’s world, helping them to make sense of their physical environment and the communities that they are a part of. The RE curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to widen their personal experiences through meeting people from different religions, cultures and beliefs, visiting places of worship, exploring stories and festivals and enriching their vocabulary with subject-specific words.

**Children at the expected level of development should know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class.**

*EYFS Framework Sept 2021, p14: ELG People, Culture and Communities*

# Characteristics of Effective Learning (CoEL)



The areas of learning and educational programmes that shape the curriculum in the early years foundation stage outlines *what* children should learn. The Characteristics of Effective Learning (CoEL) describes *how* children learn. Using the CoEL, it is possible to ascertain what kind of learner a child is and how practitioners can plan developmentally appropriate activities to extend their thinking. The CoEL should underpin all learning and development in the early years foundation stage, and indicates the ways that a child will engage with other people and their environment.

Children are powerful learners from birth. They can develop strong habits of mind and behaviours that will continue to support them to discover, think, create, solve problems, and self-regulate their learning. Children need consistent lived experiences of autonomy alongside support for their growing awareness and control of the processes of thinking and learning. Play, time, space, and freedom to follow their intentions, sustained shared thinking, and experiencing the satisfaction of meeting their own challenges and goals all contribute to development as curious, creative, resourceful, and resilient learners. ([Birth to 5 Matters: non-statutory guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2021, p. 52](#)).



**RE affords children the opportunity to engage with stories, people, and artefacts, relating them to their own personal experiences. Continuous provision in the EYFS gives children the chance to return to activities that interest them for sustained periods, and allows children to begin to think more deeply and make links in their learning. RE is all about engaging and exploring. The aspects within the Characteristics of Effective Learning are a helpful place to start when we consider what kind of RE enquirers we want our EYFS children to be.**

The table below shows the three aspects within the CoEL:



**Playing and exploring** – children investigate and experience things, and ‘have a go’



**Active learning** – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements



**Creating and thinking critically** – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things



RE in the early years foundation stage, by which we mostly mean the Reception year, should begin with children’s own experiences and be shaped by the educational programmes planned by the school as part of their curriculum. **This inevitably means that this will reflect a range of beliefs and ideas, reflecting both non-religious and religious worldviews, ensuring that all perspectives are valued and that the RE curriculum for EYFS is inclusive of all.**

This curriculum should lead children to the subject content that focuses on religious ideas and concepts. The majority of children’s learning in the early years foundation stage is through a mixture of child-initiated and adult-led activity. Through a combination of careful planning, purposeful play, and appropriately pitched adult-led activities, children will develop a secure knowledge of some beliefs, ideas and concepts. After exploring RE within the seven areas of learning, this document will outline the 6 key questions that should guide the RE learning in the reception year. The key questions do not need to be taught in their entirety in one go. In fact, it may be useful to be able to dip in and out as you follow the children’s interests. However, there are aspects within some that are better taught in line with the academic year, e.g. Christmas at the end of Autumn 2 term and Easter at the end of the Spring 2 term.

# The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)



At the end of EYFS, there is a certain level of development that all children are expected to attain; these are set out in the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). The ELGs are used to make holistic, best-fit judgements about a child’s overall development and readiness for Year 1.

**It is against the ELGs that pupils’ progress in EYFS must be measured.**

There are no separate assessment statements for RE in the early years. The RE curriculum in this syllabus will provide plenty of opportunities for evidencing the ELGs at the end of the key stage: over the next few pages, we demonstrate what this might look like across the six key questions and how these in turn may help EYFS practitioners to gather evidence for the ELGs.

	Children at the expected level of development will...
<b>ELG: Past and Present</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society;</li> <li>- Know some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;</li> <li>- Understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling.</li> </ul>
<b>ELG: People, Culture and Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe their immediate environment using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps;</li> <li>- Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;</li> <li>- Explain some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries, drawing on knowledge from stories, non-fiction texts and when appropriate – maps.</li> </ul>
<b>ELG: The Natural World</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants;</li> <li>- Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;</li> <li>- Understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter.</li> </ul>

# How does RE in EYFS contribute to the ELGs?



RE has the potential to make an active contribution to all the areas of learning in early years settings, but it makes a particularly important contribution to **Understanding the World (DfE, 2021, p14-15)**

This area of learning presents significant opportunities for evidencing the three ELGs in this area through the RE elements of learning in our six key questions. We choose here to exemplify how this might be achieved and expect that early years' practitioners will be able to find similar evidence in RE for the other areas of learning.

	Children at the expected level of development will...
<b>ELG: Past and Present</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society;</li> <li>- Know some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;</li> <li>- Understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Key questions in RE: we might find evidence in...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>talking about their own families and exploring similarities / differences to others' families</i></li> <li>• <i>meeting members of local faith and belief communities or visiting places of worship</i></li> <li>• <i>investigating and enjoying stories associated with religious events, activities &amp; teaching e.g. from the Bible, Torah or Qur'an etc., exploring how people lived 'then' and what might be different to 'now' or how families celebrate in different ways; hearing stories about other people (past and present) who have had an impact on people's lives today, including religious leaders &amp; non-religious thinkers.</i></li> </ul>
<b>ELG: People, Culture and Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe their immediate environment using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps;</li> <li>- Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;</li> <li>- Explain some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries, drawing on knowledge from stories, non-fiction texts and when appropriate – maps.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Key questions in RE: we might find evidence in...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>investigating how different people believe different things or celebrate special times in different ways e.g. Christmas, Eid, Diwali, Chinese New Year etc.</i></li> <li>• <i>visiting places of worship, real or virtually; building a sukkah</i></li> <li>• <i>experience different cultures through the way that people live; explore resources from different parts of the world</i></li> <li>• <i>use books / videos that feature the real lives of different children and families e.g. Belonging &amp; Believing series or CBeebies 'Let's Celebrate!'</i></li> <li>• <i>exploring special objects / artefacts from a range of cultures / religions e.g. cross, hijab, turban, prayer beads, divas etc.</i></li> </ul>
<b>ELG: The Natural World</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants;</li> <li>- Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;</li> <li>- Understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Key questions in RE: we might find evidence in...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>exploring stories about our world, including creation, or how different people show they care for it, and why they think this is important</i></li> <li>• <i>experiencing the wonder of the natural world at different times of year / weather or on school visits</i></li> <li>• <i>looking after their own school environment, including classroom, school garden or similar; looking after pets / plants (school / home)</i></li> <li>• <i>expressing curiosity about the natural world e.g. looking for minibeasts, asking questions in response to exploration</i></li> <li>• <i>appreciating the resources that the natural world provides, showing responsibility in the way that they treat the environment</i></li> </ul>

# RE in the seven areas of learning

The recommendation in this Agreed Syllabus is that for pupils in the early years, learning in RE should always start from a child’s own experience and from within the EYFS curriculum. From this, the RE ‘key questions’ will lead children to the RE subject content, which focuses more on religious ideas and concepts. The EYFS curriculum will provide plenty of opportunities for RE-related learning. Much of pupils’ learning in RE within Reception will be through planned, purposeful play, with perhaps a mix of adult-led and child-led activities. Below, we show five of the seven areas of learning and highlight examples of RE-related experiences and opportunities. The text relating to each area of learning is taken from the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2021; pp.8-10).

<p><b>Communication and Language</b></p>	<p>The development of children’s spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children’s back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children’s language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.</p>
<p><b>Examples of RE-related experiences and opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In response to memorable experiences, give children the opportunities to respond creatively, imaginatively and meaningfully</li> <li>- Religious events, such as Christmas and Easter, can act as a stimulus to help children to think of different special events that are associated with different celebrations</li> <li>- Children are regularly given the opportunity to listen to one another’s points of view</li> <li>- Stories, music, and artefacts give children the opportunity to learn about different important religious celebrations</li> <li>- Visiting places of worship and listening to visitors from different cultures and ethnic groups will expose children to new language. Children will then be able to use new words that are associated with this new learning, showing respect</li> </ul>
<p><b>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</b></p>	<p>Children’s personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.</p>
<p><b>Examples of RE-related experiences and opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children have regular opportunities to use stories from different cultures and traditions as a stimulus to reflect on their own feelings and experiences, exploring them in different ways</li> <li>- Through the use of role-play, children can explore the ways that people show concern and love for others and talk about why this is important</li> <li>- Discussions can help children to think about issues of right and wrong (justice) and how humans can help each other</li> <li>- By thinking about children in the class being individuals, children are able to explore what makes everyone unique, special, and, most importantly, valued</li> </ul>

# RE in the seven areas of learning

<b>Literacy</b>	<p>It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).</p>
<b>Examples of RE-related experiences and opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stories can be used as stimuli, providing children with the opportunities to reflect on what different characters do and say and decide what children would have done in similar situations.</li> <li>- Activities and play can provide children with the opportunities to explore a story’s meaning</li> </ul>
<b>Understanding the World</b>	<p>Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children’s personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children’s vocabulary will support later reading comprehension.</p>
<b>Examples of RE-related experiences and opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Through everyday experiences, children have the opportunity to ask and answer questions about diversity, religion and culture</li> <li>- Visiting places of worship, or listening to visitors or members of the school community from different religions, beliefs and ethnic groups</li> <li>- The opportunity to handle real artefacts can allow children to be more curious, respectful and interested</li> </ul>
<b>Expressive Arts and Design</b>	<p>The development of children’s artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.</p>
<b>Examples of RE-related experiences and opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Religious artefacts can act as a stimulus to allow children to think deeply about and express meanings associated with the artefacts</li> <li>- Children are provided with regular opportunities to share their own experiences and feelings, and can be supported with reflecting on them</li> <li>- Art, music, dance, stories, imaginative play, and role-play are all activities that can be used by children to represent their own ideas, thoughts, and feelings</li> <li>- Allow children to respond to things that they see, hear, smell, touch, and taste in their own way</li> </ul>



# The RE Curriculum for EYFS: 3 'Golden Threads'



This curriculum has been restructured from the previous Surrey Agreed Syllabus. There are 3 **'Golden Threads'** that enable links to be made across and within different religions and beliefs: ideas about 'God', 'Community' and 'Identity', explored through the substantive content, and encouraging pupils to view this content through the disciplinary (subject) lenses of theology, philosophy, and sociology. It is important to recognise here that the EYFS syllabus is likely to be structured very differently from learning in other key stages, in the way that the learning is approached through continuous provision, although schools may also choose to teach RE as a discrete subject.

The RE curriculum for EYFS is presented as six topics, with each exploring one key question. These key questions can be unpicked throughout the EYFS year, or taught as 'discrete' learning: this is a school-led decision. Through exploring the six key questions, children are able to explore the three golden threads, starting from the child's prior understanding and experiences and then widening to include other worldview points of views from this. They will broadly cover the following areas, helping children to understand:

## Philosophical ideas about 'Identity'

Existential questions



### *In RE, we think about the mystery of what it means to be human, and 'me'*

- We are all special and unique and have our own identity
- There are people who are special to us, e.g., family, friends and teachers
- Personal celebrations such as birthdays, weddings and baptisms and how they shape how we see ourselves
- 'Welcoming' celebrations, e.g., starting schools and new life
- Celebrating is a way of 'belonging'
- Belonging in a class and home family
- School-based celebrations

What are you curious about?  
What questions do you have?  
Do you think this is real?  
What is right? What is wrong? What does 'good' mean?  
What do you think we mean by 'true'?

## Sociological ideas about 'Community'

Ways of living & impact



### *In RE, we think about what it means to be part of a community*

- Festivals and celebrations that might be important for other children in the class/school, e.g., Eid-ul-Fitr, Diwali, Sukkot, Hanukkah, Naw-Ruz (Irani New Year), Guru Nanak's birthday etc. (as appropriate)
- Belonging in a school community (and, if part of a church school, the wider 'church family')
- It is important to respect things that are special
- Celebrating is often a way of expressing belonging
- Recognising where people belong, e.g. by special clothing or objects

How do different people celebrate?  
How do you think people might use this artefact?  
Are there any special celebrations or festivals that you have celebrated?  
What could/do these symbols mean?  
What happens here? Why is this place important?

## Theological ideas about 'God'

Beliefs & Teaching



### *In RE, we think about what it means to believe certain things*

- That 'God' is an important idea for some people
- There are special religious figures, e.g., Jesus as a special person for Christians, maybe through exploring Christmas and Easter, or Jesus' parables
- There are special places, special times, special objects and special books/stories – specifically the Bible as the special book for Christians, which contain the stories about Jesus
- The natural world is a place of wonder and is something that should be looked after; and the world is something that some people believe God created and others that it came about naturally

What does this *religious* word mean?  
How do we pronounce it?  
What is this story about? Why might people keep retelling it?  
Who is God?  
What does belief mean?  
Why are special religious books important?

# EYFS: 6 key questions that support children's learning through the EYFS

Whilst there are six units, EYFS teachers have the option to decide whether they would like to keep the subject content within the overall theme of the key question, or whether they would like to explore the RE content as it naturally arises out of children's interests and prior learning, e.g., in a topic about 'growing', subject content from 'What makes our world wonderful?', 'What makes something special?', and 'Who am I, and where do I belong?' might be suitable to draw upon for the RE learning within this topic. As is common within EYFS, there are naturally many places where concepts, ideas and questions overlap.

<p><b>Who am I, and where do I belong?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every person is special and unique</li> <li>• Some people believe that God made them this way</li> <li>• How new babies are welcomed</li> <li>• People belong together in different ways</li> <li>• People have different ways of showing they 'belong' together (religious and non-religious)</li> <li>• Special people in different religions (e.g., Jesus/Prophet Muhammad/Moses)</li> </ul> 	<p><b>Why do we have celebrations?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrations are joyful times</li> <li>• Celebrations are often a time to say 'thank you'</li> <li>• Each person has a 'birth-day', and this is celebrated on the day he/she was born</li> <li>• Christians celebrate special times e.g., Harvest, Christmas, Easter</li> <li>• Other religions have different festivals</li> <li>• School-based celebrations</li> </ul> 
<p><b>What makes a place special?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people have spaces that are special to them</li> <li>• There are special buildings where some people go to think and learn about God</li> <li>• Some people feel close to God anywhere or in their own special places</li> </ul> 	<p><b>What can we learn from stories?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People can have favourite stories</li> <li>• Through stories people share ideas and values about how to live</li> <li>• Some books are special to religious groups, e.g., Bible (Christians), Torah (Jews), Qur'an (Muslims)</li> <li>• Some stories are about special people e.g., Jesus, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), Moses</li> </ul> 
<p><b>What makes something special?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different things are special to people for different reasons</li> <li>• How to look after and respect things that are special to others</li> <li>• People can use objects to help them remember special times and places</li> <li>• Some objects are 'religious' objects and help people to think about God</li> <li>• Memories can be special</li> </ul> 	<p><b>What makes our world wonderful?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our world is a place of wonder &amp; we should look after it</li> <li>• People are naturally 'creative'</li> <li>• Some people believe our world was created by God and that this is an important story in their special books</li> <li>• Others believe that our amazing world came about naturally and is best explained by scientists, making observations and measurements (link to Science curriculum)</li> </ul> 