

GATESHEAD
Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

ANNUAL REPORT
2024-25

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Chair's Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to write this foreword to Gateshead SACRE's Annual Report, reflecting on the work of the committee during my first full year as Chair. Gateshead SACRE is an active and engaged group, bringing together representatives of diverse faiths and world views, together with education professionals and County Councillors. SACRE thanks Gateshead Council for its hospitality in hosting our three meetings at the Gateshead Civic Centre, and we are honoured that Councillor Freda Geddes, a SACRE member, was elected Mayor of Gateshead.

A major piece of work that Gateshead SACRE has begun this year is the review of its Agreed Syllabus. Through its Agreed Syllabus, Gateshead SACRE seeks to offer a curriculum for Religious Education (RE) for schools at all stages of compulsory education; this syllabus reflects the diverse faith landscape of the Borough of Gateshead and is responsive to the needs of the communities we serve.

We have carried out a survey of teachers of RE in relation to the current Agreed Syllabus, and the results of this survey are summarised in this annual report. Key themes emerged from the survey. Teachers feel that the breadth and choice available in the Agreed Syllabus supports them well, together with clear opportunities for assessment. However, it is also apparent that some teachers feel the syllabus would benefit from the inclusion of non-religious world views, that they would prefer to teach less content in more depth, and that they would welcome more specific support with defined subject knowledge and assessment.

At the time of writing, we await the report of the national Curriculum and Assessment Review. There is an opportunity to move religious education forwards as an important curriculum subject in our schools, contributing not only subject knowledge but also to our children's personal development. Through its work in monitoring, reviewing and advising on religious education and collective worship in our schools, Gateshead SACRE is poised to take advantage of this opportunity.

Dr Andrew Fowler
Chair, Gateshead SACRE

1.0 SACRE Members 2024/25

The membership of the council was:

Name:	Representing:	Committee:
Ari Gluck	Judaism	A
Kirtida Richardson	Hinduism	A
Angela Kumar	Hinduism	A
Pandit Nayankumar Vyas	Hinduism	A
Les Milne (Vice-Chair)	Humanism	A
Rajwant Kaur Nibber	Sikhism	A
Yasmeen Akram	Islam	A

Name:	Representing:	Committee:
Andrew Fowler (Chair)	Church of England/HT Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy	B
Cheryl Lain	HT – St Aidan’s C of E Primary School	B

Name:	Representing:	Committee:
Jennifer Howliston	Teacher – Front Street Primary School	C
Rebecca Harle	NET - Thorp Academy (Secondary)	C
Joanne Whitehead	Teacher - Hill Top School	C
Kathleen Farrell	Teachers’ Union Rep	C
Emma Arrowsmith	Teacher – Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy (Secondary)	C

Name:	Representing:	Committee:
Councillor John McElroy	LA	D
Councillor Freda Geddes	LA	D
Councillor Tom Graham	LA	D

Name:	Representing:	Committee:
Andrea Ingram	RE Professional	
Lynne Greenup	SACRE Clerk	

We were pleased to welcome Emma Arrowsmith (Committee C) and Yasmeen Akram (Committee A) to the Gateshead SACRE committee. We also welcomed Lynne Greenup as the new clerk to SACRE.

The Gateshead SACRE met three times in the academic year 2024/25. All of these sessions were hybrid meetings using Microsoft Teams as well as a room at Gateshead Civic Centre so that members had the option to travel to the session or not.

27th November 2024:

- Annual report
- Discussion around Locally Agreed Syllabus
- Ofsted Update

19th Feb 2025

- Minutes of previous meeting and Matters Arising
- Karenza Passmore (NE RE Hubs)
- Feedback from Primary RE Network
- Secondary KS4 data

13th June 2025

- Annual Report (Final)
- Locally Agreed Survey results
- Agreement to enter ASC
- South Street Primary Eid celebrations
- Chair elections

2.0 Supporting RE Teaching

SACRE was supported by Steve Horne and Andrea Ingram as RE Professionals supporting the teaching of RE in Gateshead this year.

Good progress has been made with implementing the development plan to support the teaching of RE in Gateshead, which had three main aims:

- To support the teaching of RE in schools through active teacher networking and the sharing of expertise and effective practice.
- To ensure that SACRE has an accurate assessment of the quality of RE provision within Gateshead schools and uses this knowledge to celebrate success and direct support, when appropriate.
- To begin to prepare to produce the next Gateshead Agreed Syllabus for RE.

Throughout 2024-25, three RE Networks for local teachers were run by Andrea Ingram, our RE Professional. These were attended by Primary School RE Lead Teachers.

Topics covered at these sessions included:

- Diversity within the teaching of Primary RE. Using guidance from religion and worldviews toolkit, ideas were shared about how the RE curriculum should reflect the diversity both between and within religions and those with non-religious views.
- Presentation from Geoff Dawson (Life Church) highlighting diversity within Christianity.
- Resources from North East RE Hubs were shared with teachers specifically highlighting how these can be used to show the diversity within religions.
- A presentation by the RE Leader (who is also a member of our SACRE committee) of Kelvin Grove Primary School about their recent curriculum changes using the JIGSAW scheme and how this aligns with the Gateshead Locally Agreed Syllabus.

- Information was shared about how schools could approach Interfaith week and resources were made available to teachers. One primary school shared their approach to this week using the 'Golden rule' across religions.
- Assessment in Primary RE using guidance from Gillian Georgiou's work.
- Following the publication of the Oracy Commission Report in October 2024, information was shared about how to embed oracy into the RE curriculum.

Gateshead's Education, Schools and Inclusion Service launched a new website 'Services for Schools North East'. The curriculum hub, that sits within the website, was shared with school staff at network meetings and all resources relating to the teaching of RE will be accessible from this platform.

An RE curriculum newsletter was sent out to primary schools and primary RE leaders. This was to compliment the information shared at network meetings and to also reach a wider audience.

3.0 Monitoring of RE provision

Following analysis of GCSE data, it was pleasing to see that Heworth Grange is now offering RE as an examination subject. SACRE has been informed that Thorp Academy is now offering an RE GCSE. This will be reflected in GCSE data for 2025/26. Andrew Fowler (chair) has made contact with Kingsmeadow School, as data indicated they had no GCSE entries for this academic year.

The RE Professional looked at Ofsted reports from Oct 2024 to July 2025 and has extracted information about either the teaching of RE or comments on pupils' personal development - which can sometimes be indicative of the breadth of learning about 'other' cultures and viewpoints and may therefore be taken as a proxy view of RE teaching. This is leading to the development of a concise document which is building up a picture of the overall quality of children's experiences of RE in our schools.

4.0 Examination Data Analysis 2024/25 Outcomes

Gateshead Schools' GCSE Examination Data 2024/25

GCSE	2024				2025			
	Number on Roll	Total Entries	% entered	% grade 4+	Number on Roll	Total Entries	% entered	% grade 4+
National	627930	210770	34%	71%	624180	204870	33%	71%
All Gateshead	2030	858	35.8%	62.9%	2199	811	36.9%	77.2%

Gateshead Schools' GCSE Examination Data 2024/25

Establishment	Proportion entered in 2023	% grade 9 – 4 in 2023	Proportion entered in 2024	% grade 9 – 4 in 2024	Proportion entered in 2025	% grade 9 – 4 in 2025
National	35%	71%	34%	72.7%	33%	71%
Gateshead Local Authority	38.9%	79.6%	35.8%	62.9%	36.9%	77.2%
Cardinal Hume Catholic School	98.3%	72.9%	97.6%	83.3%	98.3%	72.7%
Emmanuel College	96.1%	80.8%	92.8%	84.9%	94.6%	81.6%
Grace College	5.2%	81.8%	11.0%	78.3%	15.2%	87.5%
Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy	18.9%	76.7%	19.2%	80.4%	11%	92.3%
St Thomas More Catholic School	98.0%	76.7%	97.5%	78.9%	96%	75.1%
Thorp Academy	0%	0%	0.5% (1)	0%	0%	0%
Whickham School	15.0%	81.6%	27.4%	72.6%	15%	80%
Heworth Grange School	0.5%	0%	12.0%	88.0%	7%	68.8%
Kingsmeadow School	0%		0%	0%	0.6% (1)	0%

Gateshead Schools' A Level Examination Data 2024/25

Establishment	Numbers entered	A*-A	A*-B	A*-E	Avg Pts
National	14170	26.2	56.5	97.9	36.0
Cardinal Hume Catholic School, Gateshead	15	13.3	20.0	100.0	28.0
Emmanuel College	11	45.5	90.9	100.0	42.7
St Thomas More Catholic School	27	33.3	51.9	96.3	34.8
Whickham School	8	-	25.0	100.0	30.0

The proportion of young people who took an RE GCSE and successfully attained at least grade 4 increased this year from 62.9% to 82%. This also exceeded the national figure of 71%

The entry proportion for students taking RE as a GCSE subject rose slightly from 35.8% in 2024 to 36.9%.

5.0 National links

Gateshead SACRE has been affiliated to NASACRE for many years, and we value the input we get from this body. Gateshead subscribes to the additional webinar training package which enables our SACRE committee to access training. Members of Gateshead SACRE have attended regional and national training and information meetings provided by NASACRE.

Lynne Greenup (clerk) has accessed the 'Being an effective clerk' training Parts 1-3. Andrea Ingram (RE Professional) has accessed the regional 'NASACRE in conversation' session.

6.0 Locally Agreed Syllabus (LAS)

In the spring term 2025, the RE professional surveyed RE subject leaders in primary, secondary and special schools to establish their views on the Agreed Syllabus. The purpose of this was to build a picture around the current impact of the syllabus as we approach a potential review period.

The survey was made available electronically and was shared in network meetings. Responses were received from 21 leaders. The majority of responses came from primary schools, which is reflective of the breakdown of primary, secondary and special schools across the authority.

Leaders were asked to give their confidence ratings regarding the Agreed Syllabus and reasons for this rating. Staffing, subject knowledge and access to CPD featured significantly in responses to this. Leaders were also asked about what they felt worked well and what could be improved with the syllabus and comments can be viewed in the separate report. The survey highlighted information that will be used as a discussion point to inform the review of the Agreed Syllabus. We need to be mindful of the number of schools that did not take part and ensure that we do not assume the views given are typical of all schools on this basis. However, with 21 responses from a range of phases, it was fair to draw the conclusion that the Agreed Syllabus 2018 needs to be updated.

The results of the survey were discussed (see appendix 2) at the summer term SACRE meeting (21/5/25) and the committee agreed that an Agreed Syllabus Conference would be established in 2025/26. A review will provide the opportunity to revisit the current content and coverage of religions and non-religious world views, to consider our guidance around assessment and decide on our approach to resourcing the syllabus.

7.0 Action plan for 2025-26

The RE Professional will be asked to continue the development of work started last year by developing 3 strands of work with SACRE, based on priorities:

1. To be a supportive and proactive SACRE enjoying full and well-informed membership
2. To support teachers of RE to continually improve RE learning in their schools
3. To support the ongoing development of a revised Gateshead Agreed Syllabus

Actions

To be a supportive and proactive SACRE enjoying full and well-informed membership

- Review and update the Gateshead SACRE Constitution
- Identify gaps in representation and fill membership vacancies
- Encourage SACRE members to attend termly SACRE meetings (3 per year) and relevant training events
- Produce annual SACRE Report and analyse secondary school data (summer 2025).

To support teachers of RE to continually improve RE learning in their schools

- Ensure that SACRE has an accurate evaluation of the quality of RE provision within Gateshead schools
- Support the Gateshead RE Network for teachers
- Support Gateshead RE Network with the Curriculum and Assessment Review
- Produce an RE and SACRE newsletter.

To support the ongoing development of a revised Gateshead Agreed Syllabus

- Convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference and hold an initial planning meeting
- Research resources to support the development of Gateshead Agreed Syllabus.

SACRE Action Plan 2025/26						
A. To be a supportive and proactive SACRE enjoying full and well-informed membership						
Action	By when	By whom	Intended outcome	Progress Monitoring		
				Autumn 2025	Spring 2026	Summer 2026
Review Constitution	July 2026	SACRE Chair SACRE members SACRE Clerk	Ensure constitution is up to date with relevant dates, staffing, venues etc			Share new constitution at SACRE meeting
1. Identify gaps in representation 2. Fill membership vacancies	Ongoing	SACRE Chair SACRE Clerk RE professional	Aim to have a well-represented SACRE committee.	Ongoing item and can be reviewed at each meeting.		
Encourage SACRE members to attend termly SACRE meetings (3 per year) and relevant training events	Termly SACRE meetings: Summer 2025 Autumn 2025 Spring 2026	SACRE Chair SACRE members SACRE Clerk	Hybrid meetings are well attended with representatives from each SACRE committee	Wednesday 22 nd October 2025 4-5pm	Wednesday 18 th February 2026 4-5pm	Wednesday 20 th May 2026 4-5pm
Produce annual SACRE Report	Draft produced Autumn	SACRE Adviser with	Report produced to inform SACRE	Draft report shared at Autumn	Add KS4/5 data when available and	

Analyse secondary school data (summer 2025)	Term 2024 End of spring term (or within 4 weeks of data becoming available)	foreword by SACRE Chair (input welcome from members) LA data officer to share data when available	of key information from 2024/25 To support teachers of RE to continually improve RE learning in their schools.	SACRE meeting	send report to NASACRE/DfE	
B. To support teachers of RE to continually improve RE learning in their schools.						
Action	By when	By whom	Intended outcome	Progress Monitoring		
				Autumn 2025	Spring 2026	Summer 2026
Ensure that SACRE has an accurate evaluation of the quality of RE provision within Gateshead schools	On going	RE Professional, ESI staff, SACRE members	Share relevant changes to OFSTED inspection to SACRE members Use this knowledge to celebrate success and direct support, when appropriate.	Item on SACRE agenda		
Support the Gateshead RE Network for teachers	On going	RE Professional, SACRE members	3 meetings per year. Teachers offer mutual support in raising the quality of RE education. SACRE finds out the issues facing schools regarding teaching RE and about items of interest to include in the newsletter.	Autumn RE Network meeting 23/10/25 Inclusion Disciplinary Knowledge	Spring RE Network Meeting 5/3/26 Curriculum Review Implications OFSTED Framework	Summer RE Network Meeting 4/6/26 Assessment

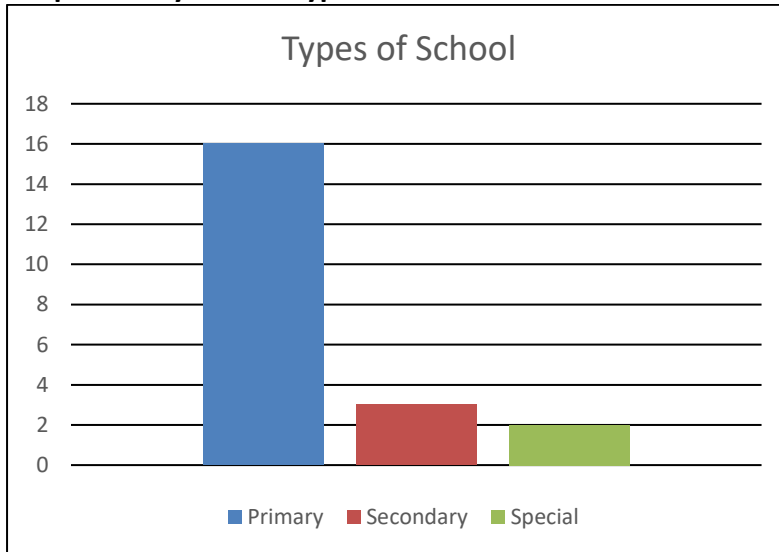
Support Gateshead RE Network with the Curriculum and Assessment Review	Ongoing	RE Professional, school staff, SACRE members	Ensure staff and SACRE members have the most up to date information regarding curriculum and assessment changes	Share updates through networks and SACRE meetings.		
Produce an RE and SACRE newsletter	Ongoing	RE professional Input from school staff	Share information, events and good practice from schools	October '25	Feb '26	May '26
C. To support the ongoing development of a revised Gateshead Agreed Syllabus						
Action	By when	By whom	Intended outcome	Progress Monitoring		
				Autumn 2025	Spring 2026	Summer 2026
Convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference and hold an initial planning meeting	March 2026	RE Professional, school staff, SACRE members	Invite staff/SACRE members to join ASC Hold initial meeting to share vision and agree actions forward.		Item on Spring SACRE agenda to share planned approach	Feedback on progress in Summer SACRE meeting
Research resources to support the development of Gateshead Agreed Syllabus.	June 2026	RE Professional, School staff, SACRE members	Share outcomes of research			Feedback evaluation of resources to SACRE in May .

Appendix 1:

Gateshead Agreed Syllabus Review

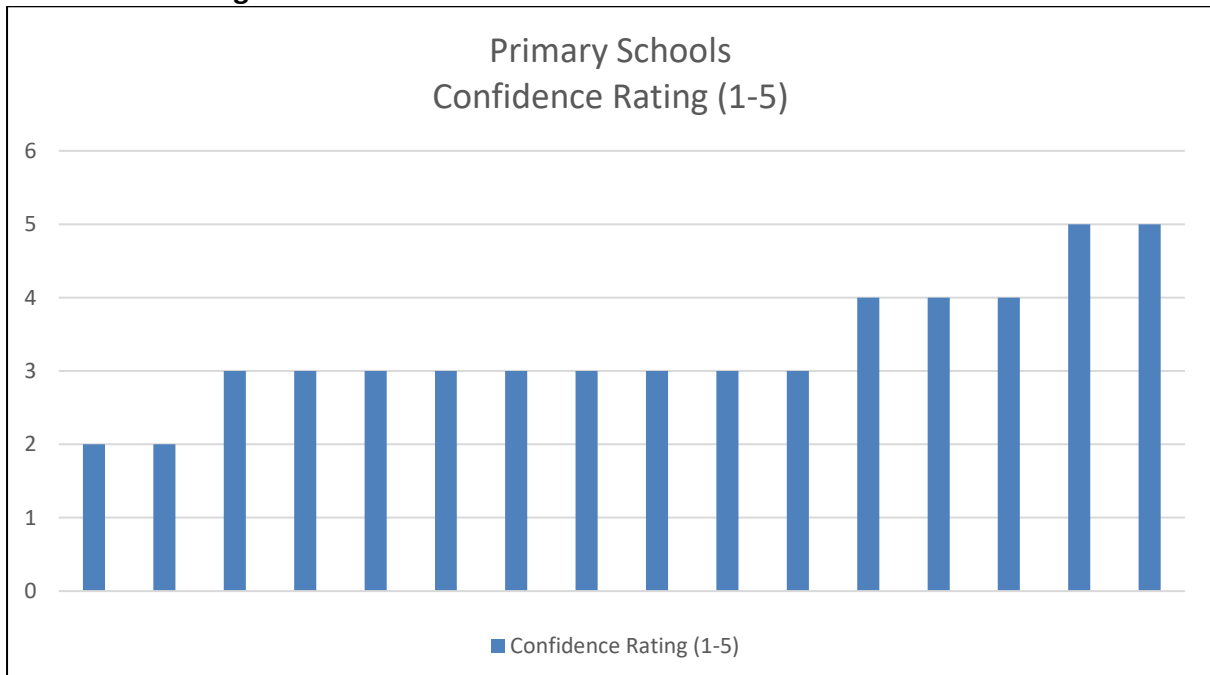
In the spring term 2025, we surveyed RE subject leaders in primary, secondary and special schools to establish their views on the Agreed Syllabus. The purpose of this was to build a picture around the current impact of the syllabus as we approach a potential review period. The survey was made available electronically and was shared in network meetings. The following pages outline the responses received from the 21 leaders that shared their views.

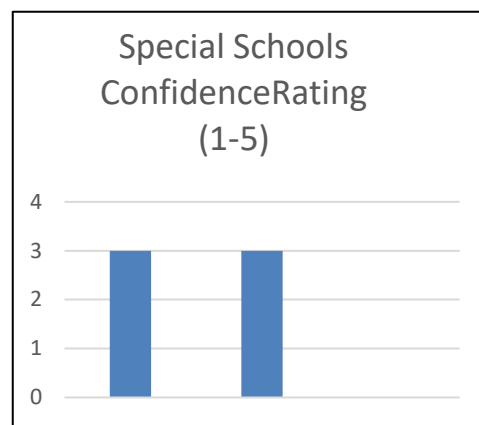
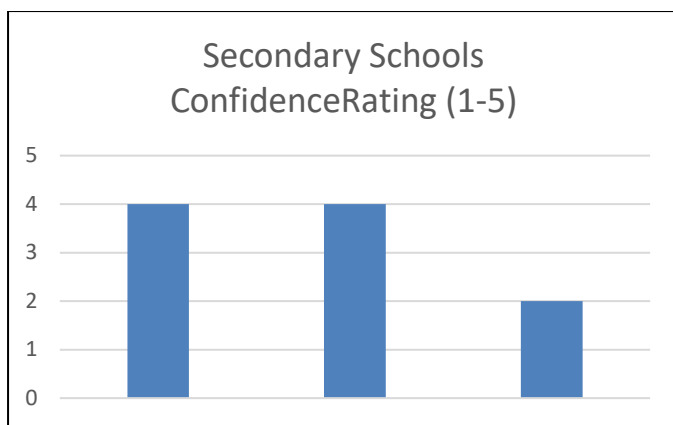
Responses by School Type



The majority of responses came from primary schools, which is reflective of the breakdown of primary, secondary and special schools across the authority.

Confidence Ratings





Leaders had the opportunity to share their reasons for their confidence ratings. Looking at the lowest and the highest (1-3, 4-5), comments are outlined below.

<p>Lower Confidence Rating (1-3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contradicting information about how to teach RE. • Fear of saying something wrong that offends religions • Bought in schemes to support the teaching of RE • Newer members of staff are less confident and have had less training • More confident teaching Christianity than other world religions • Some areas are more difficult to teach for non-specialist staff • Struggle with assessment in RE • Lack of subject knowledge • Often left as a PPA subject • Too much to cover in the curriculum • The syllabus is vague • Unsure of where to get good resources from to aid teaching • No specific training on teaching of RE • Inadvertently teaching misconceptions • Not specialist in the subject • Lack of appropriate resources for special schools • Difficulty in recruiting RE specialist
<p>Higher Confidence Rating (4-5)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported by RE network meetings • Support from resources on Service for Schools website • In house CPD on how to deliver the scheme and the content • Familiarity with schemes and its aims • Use a scheme which includes lesson plans, teaching slides and worksheets so teachers are confident to teach using the scheme • RE delivered by the same teacher meaning they have an excellent understanding of what comes before and after • Discovery RE aligned with agreed syllabus helps teachers to deliver lessons more effectively • Collaborative approach allows experienced RS teacher and RS trust subject lead to work with non-specialist teachers

Staffing, subject knowledge and access to CPD feature in both lists, suggesting these significantly impact upon the confidence levels of leaders and staff delivering RE.

What is working well with the Gateshead Agreed Syllabus?

We asked leaders to share what they feel is working well with the Agreed Syllabus.

Primary Schools

- Clear guidelines
- Christmas and Easter specific booklets
- Choice of religions to be covered x 4
- The themes of exploring, engaging and reflecting that run through the syllabus
- Breadth and coverage
- Revisiting religions x 4
- Definite list of things to be taught
- 4 schools felt the GAS was not working well and needed to be reviewed
- Three strands of assessment

Secondary Schools

- Clearly defined path of progress
- Variety of world religions taught
- Allows for flexibility to support cohorts
- Assessment opportunities are clear

Special Schools

- Choice of what to teach

What could be changed/included to improve the Gateshead Agreed Syllabus?

Primary Schools

- Inclusion of other non-religious world views x 4
- Consideration given to schools being able to cover more of the religions present in their school/local area x 2
- Reduce content/ Prefer to teach less better x 2
- Further guidance with assessment x 2
- Break the key skills and knowledge down into steps
- Give examples of what teaching should look like
- More prescriptive showing which topics to teach in which year group
- Have specific aims (like in other NC subjects) so it is clear what the children are expected to know
- Focus on key facts which build up to a link between all religions covered allowing pupils to easily see similarities and differences
- Specific and sensitive study of the Jewish community and traditions

- Make it easier to follow and have linked resources
- Include learning on Sikhism and Buddhism as children are interested in these religions The syllabus can be difficult to resource without a scheme which impacts on teacher workload.

Secondary Schools

- Resource pack
- More focus on worldviews
- Breadth vs depth
- More flexibility in what to teach

Special Schools

- Teach religions that are common to our pupils in Gateshead
- Reduce content to cover
- Further guidance on assessment
- Adaptive teaching ideas

Core Religions

We asked leaders to share which core religions should be included in each key stage. Many leaders were keen to continue with coverage of Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism.

26schools felt it was important for Islam to be included in KS1. Six responses indicated that non-religious worldviews should be included in the primary guidance.

Responses at KS3 generally reflected the current Agreed Syllabus, with all but 1 respondent mentioning Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and non-religious worldviews. One respondent chose not to include Sikhi and Hinduism. Special schools said that they would prefer to deliver Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Summary and Next Steps

This survey has highlighted some useful information that can be used as a discussion point to inform the review of the Agreed Syllabus. We need to be mindful of the number of schools that haven't taken part and ensure that we don't arrive at conclusions that we assume are characteristic of all schools on this basis. However, with 21 responses from a range of phases, it is fair to draw the conclusion, from the range of feedback we now have, that the Agreed Syllabus 2018 needs to be updated. A review would provide the opportunity to revisit the current content and coverage of religions and non-religious world views, to consider our guidance around assessment and decide on our approach to resourcing the syllabus.