

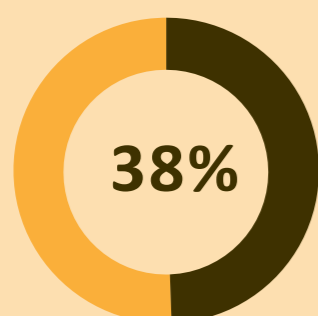
# A REVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



## VALUE

OF THE QUALIFICATION

SINCE 2010 THE NUMBER OF PUPILS IN ENGLAND ENTERING A FULL GCSE RS COURSE INCREASED BY **28%**<sup>1</sup>



INCREASE IN A-LEVEL ENTRIES FOR RS

SINCE 2003 TWICE THE AVERAGE AND MORE THAN GEOGRAPHY, LAW AND HISTORY<sup>2</sup>



The scope of religious education (RE) is vast. Through RE, pupils encounter ancient and living traditions that have shaped the world.



They explore foundational texts and the way that individuals and groups live in the world, as well as the values, beliefs and ideas that bind people together<sup>3</sup>



OFSTED RE subject report 2024



HIGHER ATTAINMENT **8 SCORES ON AVERAGE** IN SCHOOLS WITH HIGHER RATES OF ENTRY FOR GCSE RS

Disadvantaged pupils score 9 points on average than their peers when they are entered for GCSE RS. Non-disadvantaged, 5 points higher<sup>6</sup>



95% of teachers say that the subject is more or equally relevant than ten years ago

ACADEMICALLY RIGOROUS AND CHALLENGING, RE STUDENTS GO ON TO STUDY AT THE UK'S TOP UNIVERSITIES AND ENTER CAREERS IN LAW, MEDICINE, POLITICS AND JOURNALISM<sup>5</sup>



<sup>1</sup> <https://analytics.ofqual.gov.uk/apps/GCSE/Outcomes/session/4dd5fc8f04b00b773c17e5616589bdc6/download/universalDownload?w=>

<sup>2</sup> Growing interest in life's big questions driving interest in A level Religious Studies – REC

<sup>3</sup> Deep and meaningful? The religious education subject report - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/how-satisfied-are-re-teachers/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/08/04/encourage-students-with-a-humanities-background-to-become-doctors/>

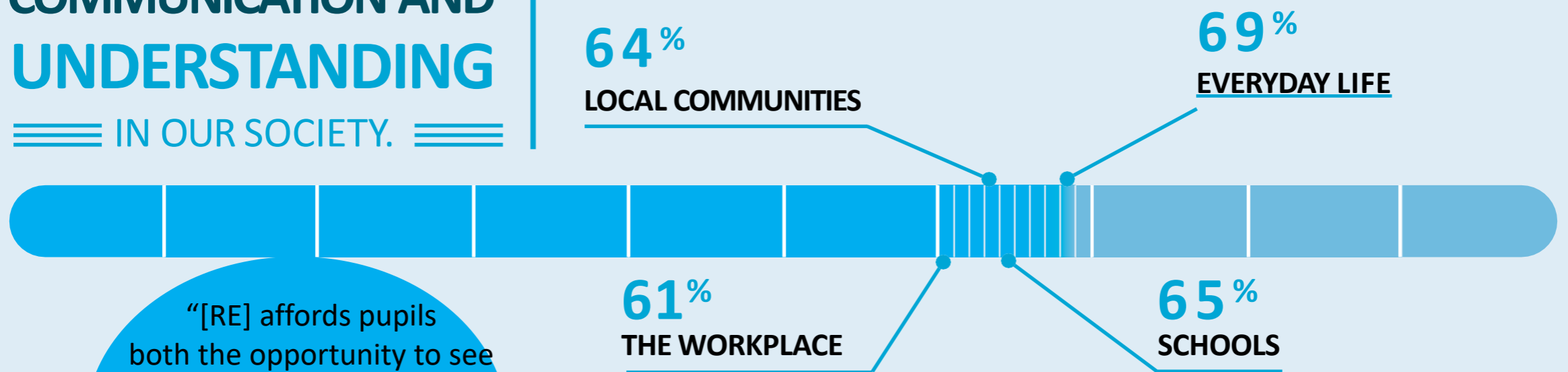
<sup>6</sup> Written Answer to a question from Tan Dhesi MP - Department for Education: Religion: GCSE

# RE IN SOCIETY

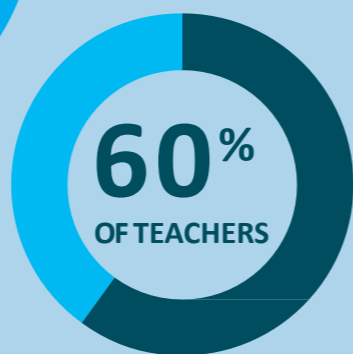
**64%** of the **UK adult population** think an education in **religion and worldviews** (or RE) is an important part of the **school curriculum**.<sup>6</sup>

**HIGH-QUALITY RE IS THE BACKBONE OF COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING IN OUR SOCIETY.**

**AROUND TWO-THIRDS OF UK ADULTS SAY IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE BELIEFS OF OTHERS IN:**



"[RE] affords pupils both the opportunity to see the religion and non-religion in the world, and the opportunity to make sense of their own place in that world."<sup>7</sup>



**DRAW INSPIRATION FROM DISCUSSING TOPICS IN THE NEWS**

The public also recognises RE's positive impact on society. In a 2021 survey a majority believed RE can:

- 69%** Help young people gain a better understanding of their own beliefs
- 71%** Foster mutual understanding of different beliefs among young people
- 65%** Provide young people with the opportunity to learn more about other people


**GOOD RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CREATES INDEPENDENT AND CRITICAL THINKERS, PREPARED FOR THE DIVERSITY OF BELIEF IN MODERN BRITAIN AND THE WIDER WORLD.**



<sup>6</sup> Religion & Worldview survey by Savanta on behalf of Culham St Gabriel's Trust, June 2021


<sup>7</sup> Research review series: religious education - GOV.UK Ofsted 2021

# SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

 Time spent on the subject is **improving in some areas:**  
**OVER 94%** of primary teachers report time spent on teaching RE has increased or stayed the same<sup>8</sup>  
**14.4%** (16.4% in 2023) of schools and academies without a religious character reported zero hours of RE in Y11<sup>8</sup>



The 2021 Ofsted Research Review identified barriers to high-quality RE teaching in schools including:

**Insufficient time** to teach an ambitious RE curriculum 

**A lack of a 'scholarly approach'**

**Insufficient professional development** for teachers of RE

Some teachers embedding **unhelpful misconceptions**



**Gaps in teacher subject knowledge**



However, **too many schools are breaking the law** by not teaching RE

**More than 42%** of schools offer less than 3% of curriculum time for RE<sup>9</sup>



**Just under 1 in 6** secondary schools still report **zero hours** of RE provision in Year 11<sup>10</sup>

RE also continues to be neglected on the school timetable in favour of EBacc subjects: **On average 5 hours** of RE are allocated to each 'teacher of RE' at **Key Stage 3** as opposed to **7 for history**<sup>11</sup>



**SCHOOLS MUST DO MORE TO ENSURE THEY PROVIDE THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF HIGH-QUALITY RE PROVISION FOR ALL STUDENTS ACROSS YEAR GROUPS**



<sup>8</sup> [Primary NATRE Survey 2024](#)

<sup>9</sup> [NATRE School Workforce Report 2024.pdf](#)

<sup>10</sup> [NATRE School Workforce Report 2024.pdf](#)

<sup>11</sup> [www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/288/theology-religious-studies.pdf](http://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/288/theology-religious-studies.pdf)



# GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

“ RE is an important subject that should provide pupils with an opportunity to learn about a wide range of religious and non-religious beliefs.



”

MINISTER OF STATE FOR SCHOOL STANDARDS, Catherine McKinnell MP <sup>16</sup>



## YET DESPITE THIS...

The recommendations of two major OFSTED reports on RE have not been addressed

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential implications for her policies of the recommendations of Ofsted’s subject report on religious education, published in April 2024.



Jim Shannon  
MP 19 Feb 2025 <sup>14</sup>



Catherine McKinnell MP  
Minister for School Standards

The government notes the findings of the Ofsted subject report on religious education (RE) and is committed to ensuring high-quality provision of RE in schools in England.

## AMIDST A DECADE LONG CRISIS IN

### ATTRACTING NEW TALENT:

There was no training bursary for RE for four years despite RE teacher recruitment targets not being met for twelve of the previous thirteen years. The bursary for 2024/5 was just £10,000 when it is more than twice as much for other subjects and no subject knowledge enhancement grant is offered <sup>15</sup>



## AND A LACK OF RE SPECIALISM IN SCHOOLS:

51% of lessons of RE in secondary schools is taught by teachers who mainly teach another subject. Compared to 13% of English teachers).<sup>12</sup>



AND A 44% FALL IN the number of pupils leaving schools with a qualification in RS since 2010

# WORDS NEED TO BE BACKED UP WITH ACTION



<sup>12</sup> Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament /

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/GCSE%20results%20media%20release%20FINAL%2012-08-21.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament

<sup>15</sup> A PQ on RE recruitment July 2025.pdf

<sup>16</sup> Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament

# THE FUTURE OF RE




WE WANT A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION IN RELIGION AND WORLDVIEWS FOR ALL PUPILS IN ALL SCHOOLS, TAUGHT BY WELL-QUALIFIED AND TRAINED TEACHERS

## WE CAN ACHIEVE THIS BY:

**1** GOVERNMENT ADOPTING A NATIONAL PLAN FOR RE and endorsing the RE Council's National Content Standard for RE in England



**2** INCREASING THE VALUE OF TEACHER TRAINING BURSARY FOR RE AND RESTORING SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

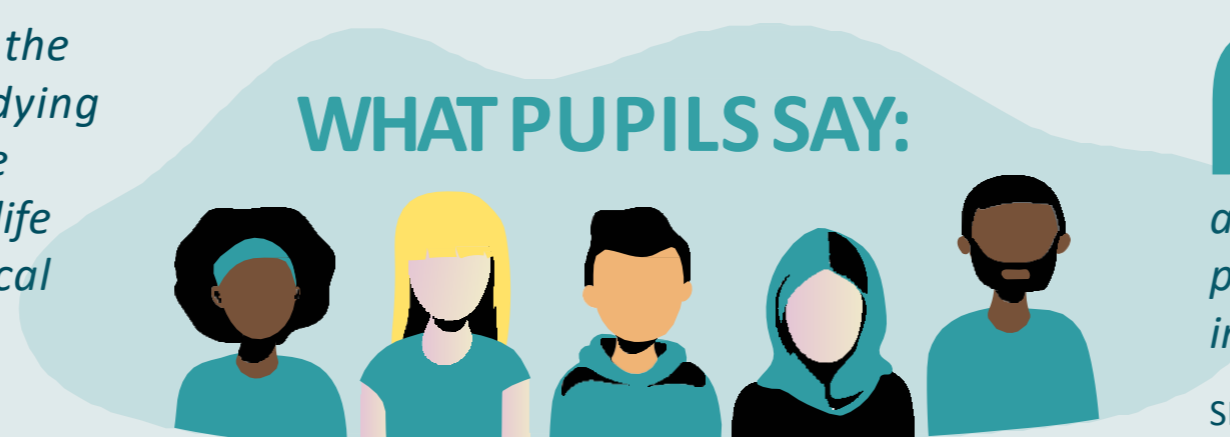


**3** OFSTED WORKING WITH THOSE SCHOOLS NOT CURRENTLY PROVIDING HIGH QUALITY RE, TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO FOLLOW THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE SUBJECT REPORT: Deep and Meaningful TO RAISE STANDARDS:

**4** GOVERNMENT RECOGNISING PUBLIC, PARENT AND PUPIL SUPPORT FOR THE SUBJECT BY PROPERLY FUNDING IT IN LINE WITH THE REST OF THE CURRICULUM

*I've really enjoyed the last two years studying RE, for not only the deeper understanding of life it intends, but the analytical mind it encourages.*

NAT, YEAR 9



*RE is the one time in school where you can talk, listen and try to make sense of people, events and beliefs in the world.*

SHREYA, YEAR 10

**THE FINAL WORD:**

The RE curriculum often lacked sufficient substance to prepare pupils to live in a complex world. The RE content selected rarely was collectively enough to ensure that pupils were well prepared to engage in a multi-religious and multi-secular society.<sup>17</sup>

Deep and Meaningful: The Ofsted subject report on Religious Education 2024