

RE in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in EYFS should encounter religious and non-religious worldviews through special people, books, times, places and objects and by visiting places of worship. They should listen to and talk about stories. Children can be introduced to subject-specific words and use all their senses to explore beliefs, practices and forms of expression. They ask questions and reflect on their own feelings and experiences. They use their imagination and curiosity to develop their appreciation of, and wonder at, the world in which they live.

In line with the DfE's 2017 EYFS Profile, RE can provide many opportunities for pupils, through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity.

The ideas below are drawn from both the Early Years Outcomes and the Early Learning Goals.

Communication and language

- Children listen with enjoyment to stories, songs and poems from different communities and traditions and respond with relevant comments, questions or actions.
- They use talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events.
- Children answer 'who', 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences in response to stories, experiences or events from different sources.
- They talk about how they and others show feelings.
- They develop their own narratives in relation to stories they hear from different communities.

Personal, social and emotional development

- Children understand that they can expect others to treat their needs, views, cultures and beliefs with respect.
- They work as part of a group, taking turns and sharing fairly, understanding that groups of people need agreed values and codes of behaviour, including adults and children, to work together harmoniously.
- They talk about their own and others' behaviour and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable.
- Children think and talk about issues of right and wrong and why these questions matter.
- They respond to significant experiences showing a range of feelings when appropriate.

- They have a developing awareness of their own needs, views and feelings and can be sensitive to those of others.
- Children have a developing respect for their own cultures and beliefs, and those of other people.
- They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships.

Understanding the world

- Children talk about similarities and differences between themselves and others, among families, communities and traditions.
- They begin to know about their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people.
- They explore, observe and find out about places and objects that matter in different cultures and beliefs.

Expressive arts and design

- Children use their imaginations in art, music, dance, imaginative play, role play and stories to represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings.
- They respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and taste.

Literacy

- Children are given access to a wide range of books, poems and other written materials to ignite their interest.

Mathematics

- Children recognise, create and describe some patterns, sorting and ordering objects simply.

RE in the Reception year

Non-statutory guidance for RE for all 4–5s in the Reception year

The approach outlined for nursery will also serve Reception class teachers, especially in the earlier months of the Reception year. In addition to this, the following pages are suggestions of questions, outcomes and content that will ensure good provision for RE in Reception.

The questions, outcomes and content below are non-statutory but should be read by all schools and settings to ensure that their provision is effective. For teaching to be high quality the questions, learning outcomes and content need to be taught together. It is not sufficient simply to use the questions suggested.

Religions and worldviews

In Reception class, children should encounter Christianity and other faiths as part of their growing sense of self, their own community and their place within it.

Three units below focus on Christianity, and the others include opportunities to encounter Christians, Hindus, Jews and Muslims, as well as non-religious responses and ways of living.

Six units are provided. Schools should teach **at least four** of these.

F1 Why is the word 'God' so important to Christians?

F2 Why is Christmas special for Christians?

F3 Why is Easter special for Christians?

F4 Being special: where do we belong?

F5 Which places are special and why?

F6 Which stories are special and why?

Staggered entry: Clearly, for most children, entry to school will be staggered. This means that there needs to be flexibility about when units are done; so, for example, a unit supports around six hours of RE and can be fitted in to suit the needs of the children, rather than timetabled rigidly into each half-term.

Note: Unit F4 (*Being special: where do we belong?*) is suggested as a good introductory section to use in the first term or two. For all schools, this is a time of integrating the children into the new school environment. The themes of belonging and community are likely to be important elements of provision at this time, and practitioners should take the opportunity to include RE where appropriate. (See Guidance p.147 for a sample long-term plan to see where these units might fit during a school year.)

Unit F1: Why is the word ‘God’ special to Christians?

The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.

Suggested questions you could explore:	Learning outcomes:	Suggested content:
What does the word ‘God’ mean? Which people believe in God? Which people believe God is the Creator of everything? What is amazing about the world? What do Christians say about God as Creator? What is the story that Christians and Jews use to think about the Creator? What do Christians and other people (including non-religious) think about the world and how we should treat it?	Plan learning experiences that enable children to ... • Talk about things they find interesting, puzzling or wonderful and also about their own experiences and feelings about the world • Retell stories, talking about what they say about the world, God, human beings • Think about the wonders of the natural world, expressing ideas and feelings • Say how and when Christians like to thank their Creator • Talk about what people do to mess up the world and what they do to look after it. Colour key: Making sense Understanding impact Making connections	Suggested content: Teachers can select content from this column to help pupils achieve the learning outcomes in column 2. Teachers can use different content as appropriate. <i>‘Making connections’ is woven through this unit: as you explore the ideas and stories with children, talk about how they affect the way people live, making connections with the children’s own experiences.</i> One way into this unit might be to spend some time in the outside play area in various weathers, to experience the world as a way into talking about it. • Display a large picture of the globe and show some pictures of animals from around the world (e.g. elephant, camel, kangaroo, sheep, blue whale, tuna, albatross). Help children learn the names and talk about where they can be found in the world. Talk about beautiful things in nature. Add the sun and moon to the display. Draw/paint/collage some pictures of their favourite creatures. Talk about things they find interesting, puzzling and wonderful about the world. • Introduce the idea that quite a few people around the world think that the whole world was created by God. Read the creation story from a children’s version of the Bible. Get children to point out which parts of the world were made on which day in the story, including animals and humans. Give children a chance to put some of the display pictures in the order of the story as they talk. Talk about the idea of a Creator. Talk about what is different about the creations they made (their paintings, etc.) and the idea Christians, Jews and Muslims have about God as Creator: they believe God created life. Talk about how special the word ‘God’ is for Christians (and others) – because they believe he is the Creator. • Christians like to praise the Creator: talk about why they might like to do this. See if children have any ideas about what Christians might say to God in their prayers – thanking God for the world and for life. Show some clips of Christians singing praising songs (e.g. www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p044h89p) in church and outside. Talk about why they do it, and what they are saying. • Connect with idea of harvest celebrations as a way Christians thank their Creator. Find out what happens at a harvest service or take part in one, if the timing of this unit is right. Sing some harvest songs (e.g. Out of the Ark Music’s ‘Combined Harvest’ songs, Fischy Music, iSingPOP). Talk about how Christians like to bring food to the service, and then to share it with people who need it. • Make links between how Christians think God is amazing, and so are careful with how they use his name; and how they think the world is amazing, so try to treat it well, and all creatures too. Decide as a class if children also think the world is amazing, whether or not they believe in God. Decide some things that children could do to treat the world and other people well. Try and do those things!

These outcomes and activities are abridged from *Understanding Christianity*, published by RE Today © 2016. Used by permission.

Unit F2: Why is Christmas special for Christians?

The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.

Suggested questions you could explore:	Learning outcomes:	Suggested content:
What special stories about Jesus are in the Bible? Why do Christians perform Nativity plays at Christmas? Why do Christians celebrate Jesus' birthday? What special things do Christians do at Christmas to share God's love? What makes every single person unique and precious? How does the Christmas story tell Christians they are precious to God?	Plan learning experiences that enable children to ... • Talk about people who are special to them • Say what makes their family and friends special to them • Recall simply what happens at a traditional Christian festival (Christmas) • Begin to recognise the word 'incarnation' as describing the belief that God came to Earth as Jesus • Retell religious stories, making connections with personal experiences. Colour key: Making sense Understanding impact Making connections	Suggested content: Teachers can select content from this column to help pupils achieve the learning outcomes in column 2. Teachers can use different content as appropriate. <i>'Making connections' is woven through this unit: as you explore the ideas and stories with children, talk about how they affect the way people live, making connections with the children's own experiences.</i> A way into this section could be to ask children to use special bits and pieces to make a lovely picture for a special person, talk about the person they have created it for and why they are special; then take it and give it to them. • Show baby photos of known adults to the children. Can they match them to the adult photo? • Use a story sack to introduce a crib scene, beginning with the three figures, Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus, and including shepherds, wise men, donkey, angels, etc. Discuss the children's knowledge about the role of each key figure as it appears, as the crib scene grows. Place the figures in a line of value, starting with the figure that the children think is the most important to the least important. Read the story of Christmas from a children's Bible, matching the figures as you read. Redo the value line, including what Christians might say – most would say Jesus is the most important: that God came to Earth as Jesus (the term for this is incarnation). Act out the story. Set up a Bethlehem stable filled with costumes and/or props for the children to re-enact the story. • A parcel arrives in the classroom. Discover the contents with the children: birthday party props such as cake, candles, a banner, etc. Talk about children's own experiences of birthdays. Link to Jesus' birthday and Christmas celebrations with the next suggestion: • Bring out a Christmas box containing traditional Christmas artefacts, such as Nativity scene, cards, decorations, Father Christmas, special food, etc. Share some traditional carols with the children and discuss where and why Christians sing carols. • Talk about Christmas gifts and what the children would like. Connect with the story of the wise men who gave gifts to Jesus. Reinforce the most important gift to Christians would be Jesus. Mime passing a precious gift around a circle; discuss what children think it is. Link to how precious the Bible is to Christians. Christians believe God demonstrated his love for all people by sending Jesus to Earth – they say that shows how precious people are to God. • Provide follow-up activities to respond to the story as part of your continuous provision, e.g. playdough, Nativity figures, Christmas cards and songs, etc.

These outcomes and activities are abridged from *Understanding Christianity* (Unit F2: Why do Christians perform nativity plays at Christmas?), published by RE Today © 2016. Used by permission.

Unit F3: Why is Easter special for Christians?

The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.

Suggested questions you could explore:	Learning outcomes:	Suggested content:
What happens at the end of winter and the beginning of spring? How do 'dead' plants and trees come alive again? What do Christians believe happened to Jesus? Why do Christians think this is such an important story? What do Christians do at Easter? Why do we have Easter eggs?	Plan learning experiences that enable children to ... - Recognise and retell stories connected with celebration of Easter - Say why Easter is a special time for Christians - Talk about ideas of new life in nature - Recognise some symbols Christians use during Holy Week, e.g. palm leaves, cross, eggs, etc., and make connections with signs of new life in nature - Talk about some ways Christians remember these stories at Easter. Colour key: Making sense Understanding impact Making connections	Suggested content: Teachers can select content from this column to help pupils achieve the learning outcomes in column 2. Teachers can use different content as appropriate. <i>'Making connections' is woven through this unit: as you explore the ideas and stories with children, talk about how they affect the way people live, making connections with the children's own experiences.</i> A way into this unit could be to bring some crocus or daffodil bulbs and tree buds into the classroom early in the term and keep an eye on how they grow over the weeks. - Recall any stories children have heard about Jesus in collective worship/assembly or in RE lessons. - Unpack a bag containing items related to Palm Sunday (e.g. Bible or storybook of Palm Sunday, donkey mask, white cloth or robe, cut-out palm leaves, flags, ribbons, percussion, the word 'Hosanna'). Ask children what they think they are for. - Tell the story of Palm Sunday. You could act it out, laying palm leaf cut-outs on the floor, etc., helping children to remember the story. Point out that people thought Jesus was going to come as a king and rescue them from the Romans – they wanted to be saved. Show some pictures of Palm Sunday celebrations (search 'Palm Sunday church'), and find out about how Christians celebrate it today. - Look at a palm cross – compare with the palm leaves from Palm Sunday. Compare with cross on hot cross buns. Talk about how the cross reminds Christians that the Bible says Jesus died on a cross, and then was buried in a cave tomb. Use a Story Bible or video clip (e.g. Channel 4's animated Bible stories) to tell the story. Use images and story cubes to get children to remember what happens in the story. (Note that with young children it is better not to focus too much on the death of Jesus, but to move on to Christian belief in resurrection.) - Create an Easter garden in the classroom (there are plenty of examples online) asking children what needs to be included – don't forget the cross. Help children to learn that most Christians believe Jesus did not stay dead, but came to life again. That's why Easter is a happy festival for Christians. It is also why eggs are linked to Easter – symbols of new life. Connect with the idea of new life by looking at the buds and bulbs growing in your classroom and outside. Why not do an Easter egg hunt and get children to tell each other why eggs are part of Easter celebrations? - Take photos of children's faces showing how Jesus' followers might feel at different stages of the story, and get them to put the faces alongside a timeline of photos from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. Watch the CBeebies 'Let's Celebrate Easter' clips and make a collage cross. - Talk to someone who celebrates Easter to find out what parts of the celebration are most special to them.

These outcomes and activities are abridged from *Understanding Christianity* (Unit F3: Why do Christians put a cross in an Easter garden?), published by RE Today © 2016. Used by permission.

Unit F4: Being special: where do we belong?

The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.

Suggested questions you could explore:	Learning outcomes:	Suggested content:
How do we show respect for one another? How do we show love/how do I know I am loved? Who do you care about? How do we show care/how do I know I am cared for? How do you know what people are feeling? How do we show people they are welcome? What things can we do better together rather than on our own? Where do you belong? How do you know you belong? What makes us feel special about being welcomed into a group of people?	Plan learning experiences that enable children to ... • Retell religious stories making connections with personal experiences • Share and record occasions when things have happened in their lives that made them feel special • Recall simply what happens at a traditional Christian infant baptism and dedication • Recall simply what happens when a baby is welcomed into a religion other than Christianity. Colour key: Making sense Understanding impact Making connections	Suggested content: Teachers can select content from this column to help pupils achieve the learning outcomes in column 2. Teachers can use different content as appropriate. <i>'Making connections' is woven through this unit: as you explore the ideas and stories with children, talk about how they affect the way people live, making connections with the children's own experiences.</i> One way of introducing this question is to ask a new mum to bring a new mum to the class and talk about how the baby was welcomed into their family. • Talk about the idea that each person is unique and valuable. Talk about occasions when things have happened in their lives that made them feel special, from everyday events (a hug from mum/dad/carer/friend) and special events (birthdays). • Introduce the idea that religions teach that each person is unique and valuable too, for example by considering religious beliefs about God loving each person. Explore the Jewish and Christian ideas that God loves people even from before they are born (Psalm 139), and their names are written on the palm of God's hand (Isaiah 49:16). Children could draw around their hands, write their names on the palm and decorate. Also reflect on Christian beliefs about Jesus believing children to be very special. Tell the story of Jesus wanting to see the children even though the disciples tried stopping them (Mark 10:13–16). • Explain how this belief that God loves children is shown in Christianity through infant baptism and dedication. • Consider signs and symbols used in the welcoming of children into the faith community e.g. water (pure and clean), baptismal candle. Look at photos, handle artefacts (robes, cards, etc.); use role play. • Talk about how children are welcomed into another faith or belief community e.g. the Islamic <i>Aqiqah</i> ceremony, whispering of <i>adhan</i> and cutting of hair; compare how non-religious families welcome new babies; some atheists (people who believe there is no God) might hold a Humanist naming ceremony. • Consider ways of showing that people are special from other religions e.g. Hinduism: stories about Hindus celebrating Raksha Bandhan – which celebrates the special bond between brothers and sisters. A sister ties a band (or <i>rakhi</i>) of gold and red threads around the right hand of her brother.

Unit F5: Which places are special and why?

The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.

Suggested questions you could explore:	Learning outcomes:	Suggested content:
Where do you feel safe? Why? Where do you feel happy? Why? Where is special to me? Where is a special place for believers to go? What makes this place special?	Plan learning experiences that enable children to ... • Talk about somewhere that is special to themselves, saying why • Recognise that some religious people have places which have special meaning for them • Talk about the things that are special and valued in a place of worship • Begin to recognise that for Christians, Muslims or Jews, these special things link to beliefs about God • Get to know and use appropriate words to talk about their thoughts and feelings when visiting a church • Express a personal response to the natural world. Colour key: Making sense Understanding impact Making connections	Suggested content: Teachers can select content from this column to help pupils achieve the learning outcomes in column 2. Teachers can use different content as appropriate. <i>'Making connections' is woven through this unit: as you explore the ideas and stories with children, talk about how they affect the way people live, making connections with the children's own experiences.</i> One way of introducing this question is to discuss places that are important to children, for example places to be happy, to have fun, to be quiet or to feel safe. When do they go to these places and what is it like being there? Use models to help children engage in small world play, to talk about what happens in a library, hospital, football ground etc., and why. • Invite visitors to talk about/show pictures of places that are spiritually significant to them and say why they are special (e.g. special holiday destinations, or a childhood home, or a place where something memorable happened such as a concert, or the local park where they take children to meet together and play. This should build learning towards understanding special places for religious people). Children share and record their own special places in a variety of ways, drawing on all their senses, in a way that is meaningful to them. • Use some pictures (e.g. a beach, a trampoline, a bedroom) to help children talk about why some places are special, what makes them significant and to whom. Talk about when people like to go there and what they like to do there. • Consider a church building as a special place for Christians and/or a mosque as a special place for Muslims, where they worship God. Look at some pictures of the features (e.g. church: font, cross, candle, Bible; mosque: washing area, prayer hall, prayer mats, minaret). Talk about what makes this a place of worship. Imagine what it would be like to be there. Find out what people do there. Ask children to choose the most interesting picture(s) and collect children's questions about the image(s). You might get them to create a small world model of something they find in a place of worship, such as a cross or a pulpit. • Consider a place of worship for members of another faith e.g. synagogue or temple. Find out what happens there. Show some pictures of all these different special places and help children to sort them into the right faiths/beliefs: a simple matching exercise using symbols of each faith, and putting two or three photos under each. • Visit a local church or other place of worship. Prepare lots of questions to ask; think about which parts of the building make them feel safe, happy, sad, special. Find out which parts are important for Christians/believers and why. • Create a special place in the inside/outside area or wider school grounds: a space for quiet reflection. Talk about how to use this well, so that everyone can enjoy it. • Go for a nature walk, handle and explore natural objects that inspire awe and wonder; talk about how special our world is, and about looking after it. Put some of their ideas into practice, e.g. planting flowers, recycling, etc.

Unit F6: Which stories are special and why?

The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.

Suggested questions you could explore:	Learning outcomes:	Suggested content:
What is your favourite story? What do you like about it, and why? What stories do you know about Jesus? What do you think Jesus was (is) like? Do you know any Bible stories? What stories do you know that are special to Christians (or other faiths)? Who are the stories about? What happens in the story? Does the story tell you about God? What do you learn? What stories do you know that tell you how you should behave towards other people? What are the similarities and differences between different people's special stories?	Plan learning experiences that enable pupils to ... • Talk about some religious stories • Recognise some religious words, e.g. about God • Identify some of their own feelings in the stories they hear • Identify a sacred text e.g. Bible, Torah • Talk about some of the things these stories teach believers (for example, what Jesus teaches about being friends with the friendless in the story of Zacchaeus; what Jesus' story about the ten lepers teaches about saying 'thank you', and why it is good to thank and be thanked; what the Chanukah story teaches Jews about standing up for what is right), etc. Colour key: Making sense Understanding impact Making connections	Teachers can select content from this column to help pupils achieve the learning outcomes in column 2. Teachers can use different content as appropriate. <i>'Making sense' and 'Understanding the impact' are woven through this unit: as you explore the stories with children, talk about what they teach people about how to live:</i> One way of introducing this question is to ask children to bring favourite books and stories from home, choose the favourite story in the class, or the teacher could share her favourite childhood story and explain why she liked it so much. • Explore stories pupils like, retelling stories to others and sharing features of the story they like. Explore stories suggested below through play, role play, freeze-framing, model-making, puppets and shadow puppets, art, dance, music, etc. • Talk about the Bible being the holy book for Christians that helps them to understand more about God and people. Look at a range of children's Bibles to see how they are similar/different. Share a Bible story from a suitable children's Bible, e.g. Butterworth and Inkpen series; Scripture Union's <i>The Big Bible Storybook</i>. Hear and explore some stories from major faith traditions: choose from the following: • Jews and Christians share these stories (the Jewish scriptures are included in what Christians call the 'Old Testament'): e.g. David the Shepherd Boy (1 Samuel 17) and the story of Ruth (book of Ruth in the Bible). • Jews read the story of <i>Chanukah</i> (found in the books of Maccabees, not included in the Christian Old Testament) • Christians use stories Jesus told and stories from the life of Jesus: e.g. Jesus as friend to the friendless (Zacchaeus, Luke 19); saying 'thank you' (Ten Lepers, Luke 17:11–19); etc. • Muslims use stories about the Prophet Muhammad* e.g. Prophet Muhammad and the night of power, Muhammad and the cats, Muhammad and the boy who threw stones at trees, Bilal the first muezzin. • Hindus enjoy the story of Rama and Sita; the story of Ganesha; stories about Krishna; Reinforce this learning through follow-up activities: • Read and share the books in own time, on own or with friends. • Role-play some of the stories using costumes and props.

*Note: Many Muslims say the words 'peace be upon him' after saying the name of the Prophet Muhammad. This is sometimes abbreviated to 'pbuh' when written down.