

Discovery RE and the Commission on Religious Education (CoRE)

In its own words the Commission on RE explains that,

‘We are a high-profile independent Commission with a remit to make recommendations designed to improve the quality and rigour of religious education, and its capacity to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain’

The Commission was launched on Friday 8th July 2016 by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC)

It comprised of 14 commissioners chaired by the Very Rev Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster and former Chief Education Officer of the Church of England.

The majority of the commissioners have a background in education. The ultimate aim of the commission was to improve the quality and rigour of Religious Education.

The Process took two years and a final report was released in September 2018, titled **‘Religion and Worldviews: the way forward, a national plan for RE’**

The report can be downloaded in full (104 pages) from

[www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/
Final-Report-of-the-Commission-on-RE.pdf](http://www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Final-Report-of-the-Commission-on-RE.pdf)

An executive summary can be downloaded (20 pages) from

[www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/
Final-Report-Exec-Summary-of-the-Commission-on-RE.pdf](http://www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Final-Report-Exec-Summary-of-the-Commission-on-RE.pdf)



The final report set out a National plan with 3 key parts.

These are:

- A new and richer vision of the subject including changing the name to **Religion and Worldviews**
- **A commitment to ensuring pupils receive their entitlement to RE (R&W)**. A statutory national entitlement statement to the subject should be developed.
- **Proper and significant investment into providing subject specialism** - including initial teacher training (ITT) and continuing professional development (CPD). Local Authority support structures would be revised and strengthened by increased funding and accountability.

The Commission makes 11 recommendations:

1. RE should change its name to Religion and Worldviews.
2. There should be a national statement of entitlement which should become statutory for all publicly funded schools eventually.
3. A national body of professionals (9 maximum) should approve a non-statutory programme of study for Religion and Worldviews.
4. The requirement on local authorities to create agreed syllabuses should be removed.
5. The next reforms of GCSE and A level Religious Studies should be based on the national statement of entitlement.
6. All primary teacher trainees should receive a minimum of 12 hours on Religion and Worldviews. Secondary bursaries should be the same as with other humanities subjects. There should be DfE funding for a subject knowledge enhancement course.
7. CPD should enable teachers to teach the national entitlement. This should be funded by the DfE for 5 years
8. SACREs should be changed to become Local Advisory Networks for Religion and Worldviews. These would be responsible for implementing the national entitlement in LA schools and academies. The composition of the LANRW would be more appropriate than current SACREs.
9. Ofsted and faith-based inspections should report on whether a school is meeting the national entitlement. There should also be a one-off OFSTED review of the impact of the national entitlement.
10. DfE performance measures which 'allow' schools to marginalise RE or drop it completely should be reconsidered.
11. The right to withdraw should be reviewed and clear guidance should be provided for Heads by the DfE.



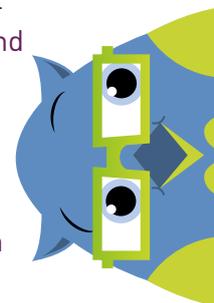
National entitlement

Recommendation 2 states that there should be a national entitlement for Religion and Worldviews.

The Commission included 9 parts to this entitlement:

Pupils must be taught:

1. about matters of central importance to the worldviews studied, how these can form coherent accounts for adherents, and how these matters are interpreted in different times, cultures and places
2. about key concepts including 'religion', 'secularity', 'spirituality' and 'worldview', and that worldviews are complex, diverse and plural
3. 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
4. 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
5. 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
6. 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
7. the different roles played by worldviews in the lives of individuals and societies, including their influence on moral behaviour and social norms
8. how worldviews have power and influence in societies and cultures, appealing to various sources of authority, including foundational texts
9. the different ways in which religion and worldviews can be understood, interpreted and studied, including through a wide range of academic disciplines and through direct encounter and discussion with individuals and communities who hold these worldviews.



To summarise, these 9 can be viewed as:

- 1: Central matters and their interpretation
- 2: Key concepts of Religion and Worldview studies
- 3: Change in Religion and Worldviews
- 4: Interaction and interconnectedness
- 5: Structures of belief and expression
- 6: Worldviews and fundamental questions
- 7: Worldviews, ethics and society
- 8: Worldviews, power and influence
- 9: Understanding Worldviews in many ways including through direct contact



This 'National Entitlement' is not statutory yet – it is a recommendation and as such may undergo changes and discussions amongst many people in the RE world. However, the Commission's recommendations and the suggested national entitlement is becoming a unifying force in RE as it shines a light on some of the issues that RE has faced for many years.

Discovery RE welcomes the Commission on RE final report. The report highlights the need for a raise in status for the subject, greater investment in training and the need for a national entitlement. Discovery RE can help schools embrace the commission's recommendations and the suggested national entitlement.



Discovery RE and the Commission on RE

Discovery RE welcomes the Commission on RE final report. The report highlights the need for a raise in status for the subject, greater investment in training and the need for a national entitlement. Discovery RE can help schools embrace the commission's recommendations and the suggested national entitlement in the following ways:

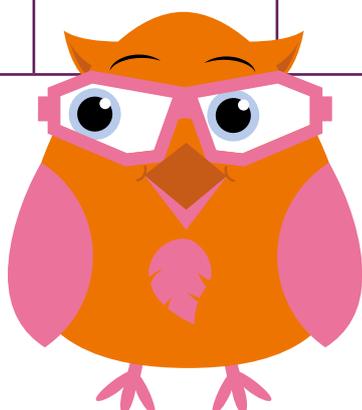
Commission on RE recommendations		Discovery RE comments
1	RE should change its name to Religion and Worldviews.	Discovery RE has always included the 6 principal religions and the most recent version signposts teachers to include Humanism and to encourage children to express their own beliefs and opinions.
2	There should be a national statement of entitlement which should become statutory for all publicly funded schools eventually.	Discovery RE was designed to provide a whole-school structure to deliver high quality enquiry-based RE. A national entitlement would help schools cover matters of central importance. These form the majority of the Discovery RE enquiries
3	A national body of professionals (9 maximum) should approve a non-statutory programme of study for Religion and Worldviews.	Discovery RE has engaged with faiths and worldviews in designing the enquiry-based units including a recent collaboration with the Sikh Education Trust to provide amazing new resources. This will surely continue in the light of any new programmes of study.
4	The requirement on local authorities to create agreed syllabuses should be removed.	Discovery RE provides a mapping document to local syllabi when requested. If locally-agreed syllabi are removed, Discovery RE's flexible approach would still help schools deliver high quality RE/R&W
5	The next reforms of GCSE and A level Religious Studies should be based on the national statement of entitlement.	'Discovery RE would still help provide the core Key Stage 1 and 2 content needed to lay the foundations for GCSE and A level studies as well as help to develop crucial critical thinking skills and spiritual development.
6	All primary teacher trainees should receive a minimum of 12 hours on Religion and Worldviews. Secondary bursaries should be the same as with other humanities subjects. There should be DfE funding for a subject knowledge enhancement course.	Discovery RE welcomes this as greater subject knowledge will enable better teaching. The Discovery RE enquiries are designed for people with little background in RE as well as those with subject specialism. The Discovery RE consultants, all with much RE teaching experience, deliver RE training across the UK, so would welcome being part of this process.
7	CPD should enable teachers to teach the national entitlement. This should be funded by the DfE for 5 years	
8	SACREs should be changed to become Local Advisory Networks for Religion and Worldviews. These would be responsible for implementing the national entitlement in LA schools and academies. The composition of the LANRW would be more appropriate than current SACREs.	Establishing greater links with faith communities locally would help better RE delivery. Discovery RE has worked with faiths and worldviews in developing enquiry units and always recommends engagement with local communities.
9	Ofsted and faith-based inspections should report on whether a school is meeting the national entitlement. There should also be a one-off OFSTED review of the impact of the national entitlement.	Schools using Discovery RE are frequently mentioned positively by OFSTED and SIAMS. Using Discovery RE is helping schools to meet the existing statutory requirement to deliver RE.
10	DfE performance measures which 'allow' schools to marginalise RE or drop it completely should be reconsidered.	Raising the status of KS4 and 5 RE nationally would help build on the foundations laid in many schools by using Discovery RE. Skills in RE are transformative and transitional. They are skills for life, to waste these is a missed opportunity.
11	The right to withdraw should be reviewed and clear guidance should be provided for Heads by the DfE.	Schools using Discovery RE engage with parents wishing to withdraw as Discovery RE looks to educate and build relationships and respect between people, those of religious belief or no religious belief.

Discovery RE and the National Entitlement

The Commission on RE recommendation 2 states that there should be a national entitlement for Religion and Worldviews.

This national entitlement consists of 9 areas which must be taught – these are reflected in the table below with suggested links to Discovery RE.

Commission on RE National Entitlement		Discovery RE comments	Discovery RE example enquiries
1	Central matters and their interpretation	Discovery RE enquiries focus on matters of central importance – like core beliefs and their impact on daily life.	KS1 - Why do Christians believe God gave Jesus to the world? KS1 - How special is the relationship Jews have with God? KS2 - Is forgiveness always possible for Christians?
2	Key concepts of Religion and Worldview studies	Key concepts are embedded within the Discovery RE enquiries as well as the recognition that there is diversity within traditions	KS2 - Do Sikhs think it is important to share? KS2 - How can Brahman be everywhere and in everything? KS2 - Can the Buddha's teachings make the world a better place? KS2 - Does belief in Akhirah (life after death) help Muslims lead good lives?
3	Change in Religion and Worldviews	Discovery RE includes enquiries which centre on the question 'What is the best way for a believer to show commitment' – this can include the way beliefs and commitments have changed and adapted over the years locally, nationally and globally. This could lead to an examination of interfaith issues and ways interaction happens and can be developed.	What is the best way for a Jew to show commitment to God? This enquiry question is also used to discuss aspects of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. The Buddhist enquiry centres on the question 'What is the best way for a Buddhist to lead a good life?'
4	Interaction and interconnectedness		
5	Structures of belief and expression, including rituals, practices, texts and the arts	Discovery RE includes enquiries which involve key practices including different aspects of worship. These units encourage a look at the arts and also a need to link practices to key texts	EYFS - What makes places special? EYFS - What can we learn from stories? KS1 - Is Shabbat important to Jewish children? KS1 - Does praying at regular intervals help a Muslim in his/ her everyday life? KS2 - Would celebrating Divali at home and in the community bring a feeling of belonging to a Hindu child? KS2 - Does joining the Khalsa make a person a better Sikh? KS2 - Do people need to go to church to show they are Christians?
6	Worldviews and fundamental questions of meaning	Discovery RE enquiries are all centred on key questions, many of which include or could easily house ultimate or fundamental questions of meaning	KS1 - Does God want Christians to look after the world? KS2 - How can Brahman be everywhere and in everything? KS2 - Is anything ever eternal? KS2 - Do beliefs in Karma, Samsara and Moksha help Hindus lead good lives? KS2 - Does belief in Akhirah (life after death) help Muslims lead good lives?



7	Worldviews, ethics and society	Discovery RE includes within the key enquiries many opportunities to examine how beliefs impact on morality and daily life.	<p>EYFS - What makes people special?</p> <p>KS1 - Was it always easy for Jesus to show friendship?</p> <p>KS1 - Is it possible to be kind to everyone all of the time?</p> <p>KS2 - Do Sikhs think it is important to share?</p> <p>KS2 - What is the best way for a Buddhist to lead a good life?</p> <p>KS2 - What is the best way for a Muslim to show commitment to God?</p>
8	Worldviews, power and influence	Discovery RE offers the opportunity to explore differences based on culture or a particular religious group. Discovery RE tries to avoid making generalisations and encourages looking at the enquiries from different perspectives reflecting local, national and global contexts.	<p>EYFS - What can we learn from stories?</p> <p>KS1 - What gifts might Christians in my town have given Jesus if he had been born here rather than Bethlehem?</p> <p>KS1 - Does completing Hajj make a person a better Muslim?</p> <p>KS2 - Does joining the Khalsa make a person a better Sikh?</p> <p>KS2 - Can the Buddha's teachings make the world a better place?</p> <p>KS2 - Does belief in Akhirah (life after death) help Muslims lead good lives?</p>
9	Understanding Worldviews in many ways including through direct contact	Discovery RE encourages schools to make connections with faith and worldview communities, particularly in the local area. Each enquiry suggests inviting a quality-assured speaker to give pupils the chance to hear directly how faith impacts on life. Discovery RE also recommends visiting places of worship to meet believers. Enquiry units are often titled to be like a question you could ask a believer.	<p>EYFS - How do people celebrate?</p> <p>EYFS - What makes places special?</p> <p>KS1 - How important is it for Jewish people to do what God asks them to do?</p> <p>KS1 - Does going to a Mosque give Muslims a sense of belonging</p> <p>KS2 - Does joining the Khalsa make a person a better Sikh?</p> <p>KS2 - Do people need to go to church to show they are Christians?</p> <p>KS2 - What is the best way for a Muslim to show commitment to God?</p> <p>KS2 - Would celebrating Divali at home and in the community bring a feeling of belonging to a Hindu child?</p>
		In 2018-2019 Discovery RE worked with the Sikh Education Trust to produce wonderful new audio and visual resources to accompany Discovery RE Sikh enquiries. This is an example of the sort of direct contact Discovery RE encourages as working together helps bring schools and faith communities closer together to increase understanding, depth of knowledge and relationship.	<p>Sikhism enquiries</p> <p>KS2 - Does joining the Khalsa make a person a better Sikh?</p> <p>KS2 - Do Sikhs think it is important to share?</p> <p>KS2 - What is the best way for a Sikh to show commitment to God?</p> <p>KS2 - How far would a Sikh go for his/ her religion?</p> <p>KS2 - Are Sikh stories important today?</p>

