

# Responding to OfSTED's Deep and Meaningful

## RE and Worldviews in our Diocese

- Deep in a few rather than a big puddle
- Disciplinary and Personal *through* Substantive
- The “Cal-orie count”: Theological, Sociological, Philosophical
- Christianity is Concepts
- Does it Spiral?
- Hermeneutical

### Two reports...

- “Deep and Meaningful”<sup>1</sup>
- “Making a Difference,”<sup>2</sup>

## Deep in a few rather than a big puddle

**Collectively enough** refers to a curriculum that covers substantive content and concepts collectively, rather than covering excessive amounts of content superficially. Content is sufficient for pupils to grasp a bigger picture about the place of religion and non-religion in the world.

OfSTED: Deep and Meaningful

*In most cases, where the curriculum tried to cover many religions, like equal slices of a pie, pupils generally remembered very little. In cases where the curriculum prioritised depth of study, pupils learned much more.*

OfSTED: Deep and Meaningful

*Where RE was weaker, the knowledge of traditions specified for pupils to learn was overly and uncritically compartmentalised. Sometimes, pupils were presented with over-simplistic assertions about religious traditions, which were often based on visible entities, such as places of worship.*

OfSTED: Deep and Meaningful

OfSTED's 2021 Research Review spoke of content that serves well as the basis for developing pupils' 'personal knowledge'.

*Some literature suggests that content like 'static features' of religious traditions, such as the features of religious buildings, provides more limited opportunities for developing 'personal knowledge'.*

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subject-report-series-religious-education/deep-and-meaningful-the-religious-education-subject-report>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/2014\\_making\\_a\\_difference\\_a\\_review\\_of\\_religious\\_education\\_in\\_church\\_of\\_england\\_schools\\_web\\_final.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/2014_making_a_difference_a_review_of_religious_education_in_church_of_england_schools_web_final.pdf)

*“...make sure that important content and concepts are clearly identified and sequenced. They should also make sure that curriculums do not contain oversimplifications of traditions”*

OfSTED: Deep and Meaningful

## **Disciplinary and Personal *through* Substantive**

### **Ways of Knowing**

*The RE curriculum rarely enabled pupils to systematically build disciplinary knowledge or personal knowledge.*

***“make sure that curriculums clearly identify how pupils will develop disciplinary and personal knowledge through the chosen substantive content”***

*Some curriculums contained questions that developed pupils' disciplinary knowledge through new substantive content.*

## **The “Cal-ories”: Theological, Sociological, Philosophical**

**Theologians** explore beliefs.

They do theology – God/gods/ultimates  
where they come from and how they change  
what believers make of them

Their method is to look at sources and how religious people have applied, and do apply them to life.

**Philosophers** explore thinking.

They look at how we know what we know.

they ask how meanings mean

they look at truth, right and wrong and ask about the validity of things people claim.

Their method is to analyse the nature of knowing things and meaning.

**Social Scientists** deal with living how people live.

They look at how religious people live and why they are the way they are.

they look at religious practice and groups

they explore how people express their beliefs and what they do.

Their method is to watch what religious people do in different ways and contexts.

### **Disciplinary is**

- my lens
- the type of question we ask
- the way we answer – the tools we use and skills to use them

and I develop and sharpen this on substantive knowledge

## **Sociological**

*using qualifying words such as 'some', 'many' or 'European' (instead of blanket phrases such as 'all Christians', 'Sikhs believe', 'Muslims practise') to add clarity. This can help avoid over-simplifying or stereotyping religion and prevent misconceptions about religion from developing*

OfSTED: Deep and Meaningful

## **Personal**

We all have a worldview

*Other questions gave pupils the opportunity to develop their personal knowledge once they had secured substantive knowledge.*

*..Approaches to teaching personal knowledge without considered connections to substantive concepts and content were problematic.*

*In high-quality RE curriculums, leaders are precise in how they select content to develop pupils' personal knowledge. For example, leaders may identify a specific concept such as 'searching', 'salvation' or 'rejoicing' when exploring Christian readings of 'The parable of the lost sheep'. Pupils can reflect on these specific concepts and consider how they might value them in similar or different ways – or may not value them at all.*

OfSTED: Deep and Meaningful

### **Select the things that will follow the thread Diocesan Common Commitment**

- *enquire into belief*
- *encounter Christianity*
- *engage with scripture*

*children's personal enquiry into faith will be cultivated, but their journey remains theirs*

## **Christianity is Concepts**

The why behind the what.

*"A type C concept has to be one that underpins the beliefs and practices of the religion in question, not one that describes the practice itself. What we are seeking to get at is the 'why' behind the 'what' of practice and behaviour. Thus, resurrection is a key concept in Christianity but prayer is not"*

Clive Erricker "Primary Religious Education – A New Approach" Routledge

## **Does it Spiral?**

Asking "How did what you do at Christmas differ?"

### **Coherent and growing content selection**

*14. Inspectors found very little evidence of how schools decided that curriculum content might build up over time to help pupils to learn bigger ideas, such as 'covenant', 'dharma' or 'prophethood', that form part of different religious traditions. In some schools, inspectors found that the curriculum emphasised specific and important vocabulary. Inspectors found that some of these schools made sure that pupils became familiar with these words in context. In others, pupils did not have the chance to use this vocabulary again and forgot how to use these words accurately.*

OfSTED: Deep and Meaningful

## The real Christian risk

OfSTED's 2021 Research Review raised *significant problems occur when leaders and teachers are imprecise in their selections of content. For example, selecting 'the parable of the lost sheep' instead of, for example, Christian concepts of 'searching', 'salvation' or 'rejoicing' (taken from the parable) would not be helpful.*

## Hermeneutical

*Standpoint to view - there is no neutral place*

*"Every aspect of classroom RE, including the teacher and the learners, should arguably be within the sightlines of pupils reflections. Thus, at different points in time, windows become lenses through which objects are viewed; windows become objects to be viewed; and windows become mirrors in which the pupils see themselves"*

Metacognition, Worldviews and Religious Education – Larkin, Freathy, Doney and Freathy (Routledge 2020)

Often we say 'here's the religion and what comes from it to you' – the 'learning from' bit

We don't say 'Here's you and how does that contribute to the way you see the religion' – exercising the worldview.

*In high-quality RE, substantive knowledge and ways of knowing are not separated. For example, leaders might plan for pupils to know how the meanings of a religious text might differ between followers in a particular tradition. Or they might plan for pupils to know different knowledge constructed in different ways, such as the results of national surveys and religious stories.*

OfSTED: Deep and Meaningful

**Diversity in the interpretation of stories:** Umberto Eco - a 'model reader.'

**Shift the way we do Bible** from "Me & Bible" facing "You & Response" to "Bible" received by "Me, You & Response."

The teacher gets to be a reader with other readers – albeit one who may know about Samaritans.

-----

Final thought: is it still pitched low because subject knowledge, resourcing and confidence is low?