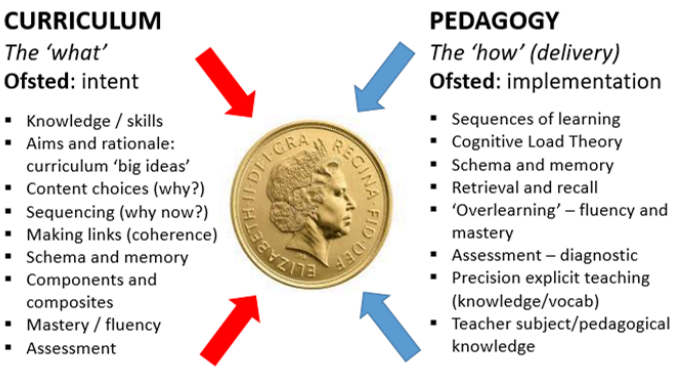
RE Curriculum Handbook 25/26

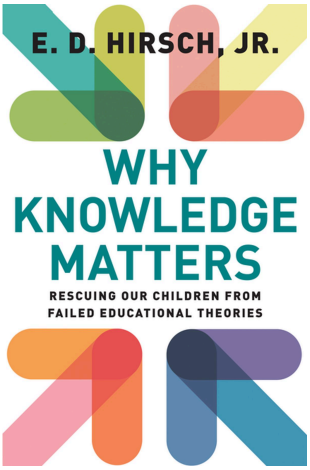


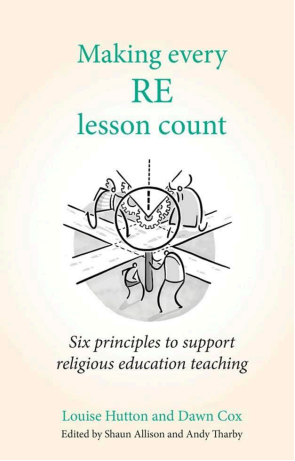
"One who knows more, loves more." St. Catherine of Sienna

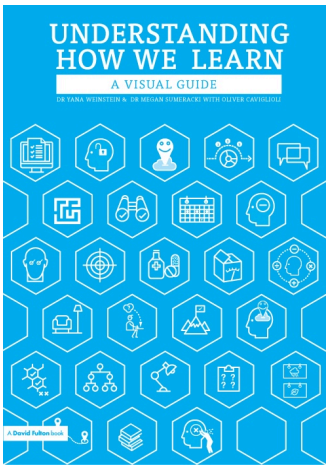
Building a Professional Learning Community

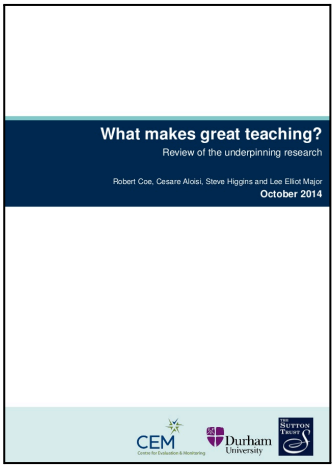
"Educational practice does not, for the most part, rely on research findings. Instead, there's a preference for relying on our intuitions about what's best for learning. But relying on intuition may be a bad idea for teachers and learners alike." (from Understanding How We Learn)

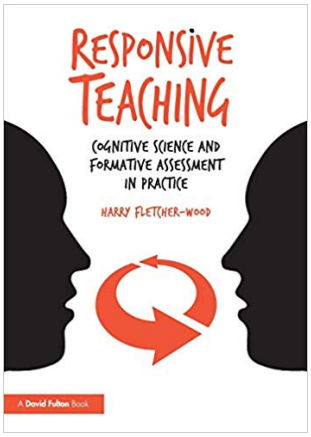
At Cardinal Wiseman we are committed to using the findings of research in our work. This is a key element of building a professional learning community. Our curriculum thinking is influenced by the work of several key educational authors who are invested in the use of research findings in education - their publications are available in our teacher section of the school library. It is an expectation that all teachers at Cardinal Wiseman engage with these texts, amongst other sources of inspiration, as part of a commitment to our own development and the building of a professional learning community.

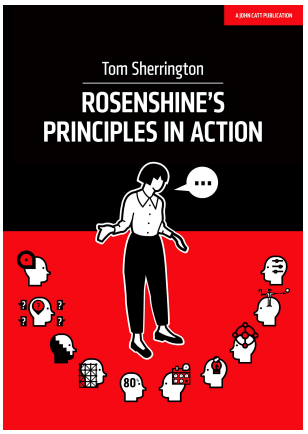


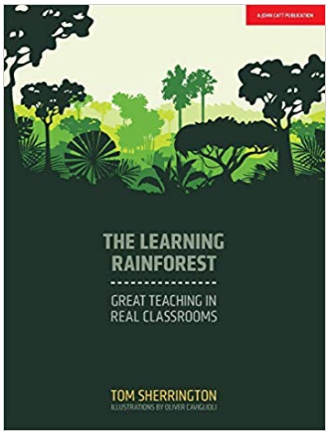


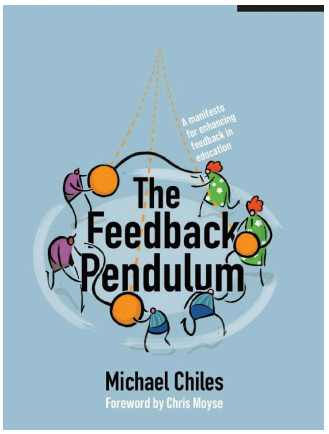












1. <u>What is curriculum?</u>
    a. Aims/rationale
    b. Local context
    c. Principles of a knowledge engaged curriculum.

2. <u>What is knowledge?</u>
    a. Content knowledge
    b. Pedagogical knowledge
    c. Pedagogical content knowledge
    d. Cultural capital

3. <u>How is our curriculum developed?</u>
    a. Subject leadership
    b. CPD
    c. Non-specialist/early careers teachers
    d. SEND

4. <u>How do we know the impact of our curriculum?</u>
    a. CIA
    b. IRIS
    c. Curriculum reviews
    d. Learning walks

1. What is the curriculum?

"The curriculum defines the purpose of a school and the journey it wants its pupils to take." (Knowledge and the Future School)

The **Religious Education curriculum** is the plan for what students learn, how they learn it, and why it matters. Students at Cardinal Wiseman get the directed 10% of curriculum time with 3 RE lessons a week at KS3 and 3 lessons and one 25 minute 'RE revision session' weekly at KS4.

At **Key Stage 3**, our RE curriculum is rooted in the new Religious Education Directory, *To Know You More Clearly*. This document provides the foundation for what we teach, ensuring our curriculum is **faithful to Catholic teaching**, clearly structured, and centred on the life and message of Jesus Christ. By following the Directory and drawing on the **Model Curriculum**, we ensure students receive a **deep and accurate understanding of the Catholic faith**, taught in a way that builds knowledge and understanding **step by step** over time. RE is not just about learning facts — it shapes how pupils **think, reflect, live, and relate to others**. The curriculum encourages students to **ask big questions**, connect faith with real life, and engage respectfully with different worldviews. In this way, RE supports the formation of young people who are both **theologically literate and personally reflective**, prepared to live with faith, integrity, and compassion in today's world. At KS4, the Eduqas route B specification is taught.

Aims/Rationale

At Cardinal Wiseman, our Religious Education is rooted in our motto *Omnia Pro Christo — All for Christ* — and seeks to form young people who live out the Gospel in all they do.

1. **To explore the mystery of God** through a structured study of Jesus Christ's life and teachings, the beliefs of the Catholic Church, and how faith connects with everyday life.
2. **To help pupils deepen their understanding of faith and theology**, and to communicate their learning clearly and confidently.
3. **To present the Church's moral and social teachings** in a way that gives pupils guidance for life and helps them think critically about the world around them.
4. **To build understanding of other religions and worldviews**, and to develop the skills needed for respectful and meaningful dialogue with people of different beliefs.
5. **To sharpen pupils' thinking**, helping them see clearly how faith connects with both personal life and wider culture.
6. **To inspire imagination and a search for meaning**, encouraging pupils to explore the deep truths of the Catholic faith.
7. **To support pupils in applying their knowledge**, making connections between what they learn and their own experiences, values, and choices.

Local Context

Our pupils have specific needs that are addressed through our curriculum:

- The majority of pupils enter Year 7 with reading ages below their chronological age.
- The majority of pupils are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- Our students arrive from 40+ different feeder primary schools with a wide range of previous RE experience. Some students from Catholic backgrounds have a secure foundation, whilst their peers arrive having had very little RE teaching.
- Our SEND cohort?

Core Principles of our knowledge-engaged curriculum.
Our curriculum is best described as 'knowledge-engaged'.There are a number of guiding principles that help to define our view of knowledge and the relationship between knowledge and the curriculum:

1. All people are made Imago Dei and therefore are of equal value and have the same educational rights; knowledge is the "entitlement for all" (Young, 2014). The Matthew Effect – new knowledge sticks to old knowledge – "to those who have more, more will be given…".
2. Powerful theological knowledge, informed by scripture, tradition and Church teaching, can enhance and change students' understanding of the world around them and broaden their horizons to meet their full potential. "Be who you were created to be and you will set the world on fire" (St. Catherine of Sienna).
3. We place great value on the subject knowledge and expertise of RE teachers who have created a curriculum that encourages students to understand, discern, respond and evaluate.
4. The knowledge-engaged curriculum in RE encourages students (and their parents) to discern their unique God-given vocation and place in the world.

"Knowledge…it is an acquired illumination, it is a habit, it is a personal possession…"

St John Henry Newman (1852)

2. What do we mean by 'knowledge'?
In our school, we use the term knowledge to mean everything that is learned. Our view of knowledge is that there is an integrated relation between conceptual knowledge (concepts and content, or 'knowledge-that') and procedural knowledge (competencies, techniques and skills, or 'knowledge-how').

Daniel T. Willingham states that **"Factual knowledge must precede skill,"** highlighting that a solid foundation of conceptual knowledge ("knowledge-that") is essential before procedural knowledge ("knowledge-how") can

be developed. This reflects our belief that effective learning integrates both understanding and the ability to apply that understanding in practice.

Religious Education develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of beliefs, languages, traditions and practices of the main religious and non-religious traditions in Britain today. It encourages pupils to consider and respond to important questions related to their meaning and purpose in life. RE is a multidisciplinary subject which focuses on the disciplines of theology, philosophy and social sciences. The study of theology focuses on questions around belief and faith, philosophy looks at the nature of reality, existence and knowledge, whereas social sciences are concerned with the impact of religion and belief on individuals, communities and societies.

Content Knowledge- *Knowing your subject deeply and accurately—the facts, concepts, and ideas you need to teach.*
All teachers need to have expert knowledge, and it is our responsibility to continually develop our subject understanding as the world around us evolves. Staff are given time and resources to engage in ongoing professional development, attend workshops, collaborate with colleagues, and access up-to-date research and pedagogical materials to ensure their knowledge remains current and impactful for students.

Pedagogical Knowledge- *Understanding how to teach effectively in general.*
Whole-school CPD is designed to enhance classroom pedagogy and is tailored to the specific needs of staff as a whole cohort and led by staff and externals with expertise in the identified areas of need. Previous whole school CPD has been led by Adam Boxer, Michael Chiles and Harry Fletcher Wood.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge- *Knowing how to teach specific subject content in the most effective way.*
Delivered primarily at subject level by the Head of Department, pedagogical content knowledge outlines the most effective ways to teach specific subject content. This includes strategies for sequencing learning, addressing common misconceptions, and using subject-specific resources effectively.

Cultural capital refers to the knowledge, skills, experiences, and behaviours that help pupils succeed in life and participate fully in society. In education, it includes understanding cultural references, traditions, history, and ways of life beyond a pupil's immediate background.

When the RE department takes pupils to **Catholic Churches**, **other faith schools**, **synagogues**, **mosques**, **Islamic exhibition** and **Harvington Hall**, it builds cultural capital by:

- Giving pupils first-hand experiences of different faiths, traditions, and places of worship, deepening their understanding of religious diversity.
- Allowing them to appreciate the history, symbolism, and practices of communities they may not have encountered before.
- Developing respect, empathy, and curiosity—social skills that help them interact positively in a multicultural society.
- Linking classroom learning to real-world contexts, making abstract concepts tangible and memorable.

In short, these visits equip pupils with both **knowledge** and **social awareness**, helping them to navigate and contribute to a diverse world with confidence and understanding.

Powerful knowledge in RE is distinct from what most of our students would encounter in their everyday lives, yet is chosen based on the necessity of knowledge to participate in the conversations of life and help our students understand the world around them. Powerful knowledge enables students to make connections between different concepts across religious and non-religious traditions. As RE is a vast and multi-disciplinary subject, the powerful knowledge has been carefully selected on the premise that it is better to teach less content in greater depth than to attempt the breadth of religions at a superficial level.

The study of RE requires a multitude of 'lenses' to allow students to create meaningful conclusions about religion, faith and belief. By avoiding a single narrative, RE encourages students to think deeply about their own faith and beliefs; to criticise, evaluate, formulate coherent arguments and disagree respectfully in a safe environment. The use of educational visits, external speakers, storytelling and artefacts all help students view RE as a 'real world' subject and make the connections between their learning in the classroom, and the lived experience of people of faith.

3. How was our curriculum developed?

Our knowledge-engaged curriculum was implemented in 2 phases: 2019-20 - Year 7 & Year 8, 2020-21 - Year 9, Year 10 & Year 11. Our KS3 curriculum was disbanded in September 2023 with the introduction of the RED. Year 7 RED was introduced in 2023, with Year 8 following in 2024 and Year 9 in 2025.

The teaching of RE is both systematic and thematic. The systematic approach involves teaching one religion in depth, for example our studies of Islam and Judaism. The thematic approach involves studying a concept from a range of religions and beliefs, such as looking at the theme of the origins of evil from a Christian, Jewish and atheist position. As the GCSE specification is both systematic (a study of Judaism) and thematic (four other themes) the KS3 curriculum replicates this model.

In designing our Religious Education curriculum, we began by engaging closely with the new **Religious Education Directory (RED)**, ensuring our approach reflects its vision, structure, and key principles. We used the Model Curriculum as a foundation to **identify and sequence the most powerful and relevant knowledge**—prioritising content that would be the most meaningful and transformative for our students, both theologically and educationally.

A central focus of our planning was the development of **"discern** questions"—carefully crafted, challenging questions designed to promote deep thinking, reflection, and application. These questions guide students to not only understand what they have learned but to wrestle with its significance, make connections, and form well-reasoned responses rooted in theological and philosophical understanding. This approach ensures that our students are not just acquiring knowledge, but are learning to think rigorously, engage critically, and apply their learning to real and meaningful questions about life, faith, and the world around them.

Example SOW

Year 8 Religious Education Curriculum
Aut 1: Creation and covenant
Big Question: How do Catholics fulfil their covenant with God?

Lesson	RED			Small question:	Word rich	Assessment
1	U8.1.1, U8.1.2	D8.1.1,		What is original sin and where does it come from?	The Fall **Original sin** **(Literacy word of the Week)** Concupiscence Free Will	Newspaper Article - Fall of Adam and Eve
2	U8.1.5	D8.1.3		What is the sacrament of Baptism?	Baptism Original sin Sacrament vows	*'Babies don't need to be baptised as they are not guilty of sin'*
3	U8.1.3, D8.1.4	D8.1.2 D81.4	R8.1.1 , R81.2	How is the Decalogue a covenant with God?	**Covenant** **(Literacy word of the Week)** Sinai Covenant Decalogue Freedom	*'Rules are a necessary part of freedom'*
4	U8.1.3,			How does loving our neighbour fulfil the Catholics covenant with God today?	Fratelli Tutti Greatest Commandment	*'You must love your neighbour in order to love God'*
	Mid-topic Knowledge Quiz					
5	U8.1.4			How does following our conscience help Catholics to fulfil their covenant with God?	**Conscience** **(Literacy word of**	*'A Catholic should always use their conscience to*

Subject Leadership and collaboration

Effective leadership is essential to the success of a **knowledge-engaged curriculum**. The subject leader plays a central role in ensuring that the curriculum is both **ambitious and accessible**, providing a **high-quality education for all students**. This includes overseeing the **coherent planning and sequencing** of content, ensuring that **knowledge acquisition** is a clear priority.

A key responsibility of the subject leader is to support classroom teachers in delivering the curriculum with **expertise and clarity**. They must also ensure that all staff understand, and can clearly articulate, the **rationale** behind curriculum choices and pedagogical decisions.

In our department, leadership has remained **stable and collaborative** over several years. The current Head of Department was mentored by their predecessor, who continues to teach within the team. This continuity has fostered a **strong, shared vision** for RE, where **every team member contributes meaningfully** to curriculum development and ongoing refinement.

CPD

Effective 'continuing professional development' (CPD) is essential in ensuring the success of our school curriculum. An annual CPD plan is created and shared, the focus is primarily department-led CPD as opposed to whole-school. This is to ensure that adequate time is provided for subject development to enhance our overall curriculum offer.

The understanding and acquisition of research is a fundamental aspect of our CPD. The research that underpins our curriculum is shared and there is an expectation that staff engage with it. A fully resourced library provides access to a variety of curriculum and pedagogical literature which staff are encouraged to read.

Autumn term

Week beginning	CPD	Suggested agenda items for departmental time	Implementation period
01/09/25	Safeguarding **(All staff)**	Year 11 results	C4L: Class charts Seating plans Establishing routines & expectations
08/09/25	Pedagogy theme:- year 11 - Belonging - Lemov	New year 11 data Year 11 dept/class plans	
15/09/25	Subject pedagogy	DDP	
22/09/25	Subject pedagogy		Talk in the classroom
29/09/25	Subject knowledge enhancement	Year 11 Progress Evening	
06/10/25	PSHE / Personal development		
13/10/25	SEND	Reading of examiner reports	
20/10/25	Subject pedagogy - SEND		Reflection

The research for EIF (Education Inspection Framework) stated that *"If curriculum lies at the heart of education, and subject lies at the heart of curriculum, then it follows that teachers need solid knowledge and understanding of the subject(s) they teach. As well as this, they need to know how to teach that subject, and, more generally, how to teach. These three types of essential knowledge are known as* ***content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge.***

In dedicated RE CPD, this time has been used effectively to research and create knowledge booklets, plan lessons on topics such as the Lindisfarne Gospels, Les Miserables, My sisters keeper, Sophie Scholl, Old Testament prophets, typology. Outside of directed time, the RE staff have seized opportunities to learn and develop within their subject expertise such as attending the 'We believe' festival, visits to places of worship, Westminster cathedral, Sycamore course, Corrymeela, El Salvador - Oscar Romero

Early Career/ Non-Specialists

We have a very limited number of non-specialists and fundamentally believe that the subject expertise possessed by the class teacher is essential in ensuring the success of our knowledge-engaged curriculum. In the instances whereby non-subject specialists are delivering lessons, support is provided through the HOD and additionally **knowledge booklets.**

RE lessons are collaboratively planned to ensure consistency and support non-specialists to feel confident in the subject knowledge. The HOD will work closely with the non-specialist to ensure that the knowledge is clearly defined within the knowledge booklets and that the learning outcomes are explicit.

Special Educational Needs (SEND)
Our SEND department consists of a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and a number of teaching assistants who fulfil a number of roles including supporting students' social, emotional and mental health needs and cognitive needs. The department is fully resourced and based in the SEN Hub. In conjunction with students, parents and staff the SEN staff produce Pupil Passport for each child with special educational needs. These are one-page profiles outline the support each child needs to enable them to access the curriculum in lessons and give detail on their specific SEN.

The RE curriculum for SEND students is primarily offered through teaching within the classroom. Students identified as SEND study the full curriculum and we have the same expectations for these students as we do for all. Through **scaffolding** the learning within lessons and making reasonable adjustments students are able to access the curriculum and make academic progress. Such adjustments can include access arrangements, and are often informed by consultation with external specialists. All students sit the same assessments (which have been adapted to make questions accessible to students with SEND) but instead of being given a numerical result it is reported that a student is secure, developing or emerging.

Teaching assistants work one to one or with a small number of students in RE lessons to support students with SEND. Alongside this, students with complex needs may have the opportunity for pre-teaching of vocabulary and key concepts before the lesson itself.

How do we know the impact of our curriculum?

Curriculum Impact Analysis (CIA)
The curriculum is systematically monitored to ensure that it is effective in meeting the intended aims. RE staff complete CIA (Curriculum Impact Analysis) documents for each year group which provides an oversight of each unit and the strengths and areas for improvement for each. After teaching a lesson, teachers are encouraged to jot down any observations or thoughts about the resources and the pedagogy for discussion during department time at the end of term. These notes then form the basis of any edits for the next academic year.

	Lesson	Exam Question/task	Action points- Y10 Knowledge booklet -Aut 2 Jewish practices.		
			First edits -for Spring 22 LMC/ET/ADE/DK	Second edits- for Spring 23 NOL/LMC/ET/ADE/DK	Edits for spring/summer 24 NOL/LMC/ET/ADE/DK
1	Food laws	Label pictures as trefar/kosher 'The Jewish food laws are no longer relevant in modern society	Class task-D question needs an appendix.	-Add think pair share/ is parev the same as vegan? Do they need to know about birds/insects? Is it most powerful knowledge? -	Appendix agree/disagree boxes are the wrong way around. Clearer picture of deers hooves (they don't know if it fits the criteria) or - would a sheep be better?
2	Synagogue	Label synagogue Venn diagram	No need for first appendix Appendix 2c - info and venn diagram on the same page - number in Venn diagram instead of writing	Add link to the interactive synagogue webpage. https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/inside-the-synagogue-what-do-you-need-to-know/zb3f2sg Could we find a real virtual tour of the synagogue? Add space in the table on pg 12 for students to draw an icon for each purpose of the synagogue. -Agree	Edit appendix to match success criteria structure. Model answer on PP is too long, rewrite to fit success criteria.
3	shabbat	Annotate images of Shabbat Mark D answer	Take out 'group task.' MOVE after Passover lesson 'Shabbat is the most important festival in Judaism' Change independent work before knowledge check to say Task Could they try a 5 marker before the independent class task? 'Describe how Jews celebrate Shabbat at home' - teacher feedback	Strictly kosher have a good part about Shabbat in the modern context - could add the video after like 19? There is a lot of information about how Shabbat is celebrated in the home. Artefacts might make this lesson more memorable? My students struggled with remembering Kiddush and Havdalah in particular. The reading on the synagogue services could be split into 3 boxes with what happens at each service to make it more chunked. PPT needs to focus on exactly what the students need to know. Focus on key terms	Edit appendix to match success criteria structure. Model answer on PP is too long, rewrite to fit success criteria.

IRIS Connect is a teacher development platform that allows educators to record, review, and share their own teaching practice to improve performance. It is used for professional development, coaching, and self-reflection. Teachers use the platform to record their lessons which can then be used for personal reflection or shared for good practice or targeted feedback. The AI Insights feature is able to analyse a lesson based on your selected development focus (examples are below) and highlight areas to explore further.

Curriculum Reviews

Curriculum reviews are conducted by senior leaders every two years. The RE curriculum reviews took place in September 22 and September 24.

At Cardinal Wiseman we ensure full triangulation as part of our quality assurance process. Judgements are made by taking into account learning walk findings alongside pupil voice, meetings with HoD and class teachers as well as through studying pupil work.

September 22 Curriculum overview
Strengths: • **Student voice:** Students understand the importance of RE and many students explained how RE lessons are preparing them for when they leave school (debate, acceptance etc.) Most students articulated prior learning well. Clear evidence of effective retrieval practice. • **Lesson observations:** Some excellent examples of direct instruction (e.g. domino effect) and responsive teaching were seen. When pre-planned, mini whiteboards were used very well to ascertain student understanding. Students recalled prior learning from knowledge books when quizzed.Teachers were seen to be subject experts • **Leadership:** HOD accurately identifies strengths and areas for development when observing colleagues and has a clear vision for the department. HOD is committed to teacher development

through departmental CPD.

Areas for development:

- **Leadership:** Ensure that teachers of RE share the vision/intent of the subject and understand the importance of curriculum development and pedagogical principles. Develop depth of understanding over time through involvement in exam marking training, visits to other schools etc. Observe lessons within the department more frequently to ensure clear picture of how the pedagogical principles are translating in each classroom
- **Student voice:**Students in KS4 expressed that they do not feel as though they do enough extended writing and subsequently feel under-prepared for GCSEs.Some students suggested more engaging ways of learning rather than reading and suggested that images and videos would be useful.
- **Lesson observations:** Some teachers require development in effective strategies for responsive teaching and direct instruction. Some new learning was seen being taught through reading, where other strategies may have been more beneficial. RE pedagogical principles require embedding across the department

September 24 Curriculum overview

Strengths:

- Subject CPD is impactful and teachers value the time spent on this. The subject knowledge of teachers is excellent and there is a clear passion amongst teachers for the subject.
- HOD leads the department well and supports teachers effectively.
- The direct instruction element of the lesson has improved considerably over time and the 'story telling' element was particularly impressive to see.
- Support for SEND students was excellent and TAs were seen to be deployed well in class.
- Students articulate their knowledge in RE very well.

Areas for development:

- Continue to develop strategies for effective feedback.
- Consider the purpose of independent writing, particularly in KS3. Students were seen, for example, writing diary entries in order to evidence their understanding of "Sophie" but this task may not have been the most purposeful. Students had a good understanding - the diary activity felt disjointed. Extended writing should have purpose if being used.
- There needs to be greater consistency in pedagogical approaches across the department.
- Teachers should address low level disruption more quickly

Learning Walks

Classes are observed frequently and timely feedback is provided in line with guidance from 'Trust Based Observations' by Craig Randall.

We use the following criteria for learning walks, focusing on our agreed principle of teaching for memory, subject expertise and responsive teaching.

Department		HOD	
Date		Completed by	

Teaching for Memory

- Students embed key concepts in their long-term memory and apply them fluently, using strategies which may include spaced retrieval practice, dual coding, scaffolding, knowledge organisers and 'chunking.'
- Spaced retrieval practice is a feature of every lesson, and effective sequencing of the curriculum allows students to apply prior knowledge regularly. Students can be seen to connect new knowledge with existing knowledge.
- Students learn appropriate knowledge and do not memorise disconnected facts.

Subject expertise

- Teachers have expert content knowledge in the subject(s) that they are teaching. They also have a solid pedagogical knowledge and use appropriate strategies to support learning.
- Teachers enable students to understand key concepts, presenting information clearly to encourage appropriate discussion. Consideration is given to how students will remember their learning. Teachers provide effective explanations, demonstrations and concrete examples. Teachers pre-empt obstacles and misconceptions through careful planning.
- Effective support is provided for those teaching outside of specialism.

Responsive teaching

- Teachers set clear goals and plan the learning carefully for all learners including PP/SEND/HAP.
- Teachers identify what students have understood and where they are struggling. Teachers routinely respond and adapt their teaching to support students to do better based on formative/summative assessment and continually dispel misconceptions.
- Students are regularly provided with bespoke feedback.