

What changes will Ofsted's  
'Renewed Education Inspection'  
Framework and toolkit bring to  
the inspection of Religious  
Education and related areas?

## Ofsted's new 2025 inspection framework and toolkit: what it means for RE?

NATRE has produced a brief powerpoint presentation comparing Ofsted's [current School inspection handbook \(September 2024\)](#) with the new [State-funded school inspection toolkit \(2025\)](#) due for implementation **from November 2025**—focused specifically on **Religious Education (RE), religion and belief, equalities, and SMSC.**

The presentation highlights what continues and what's new for RE, including: RE's place in the **basic curriculum**, the strengthened framing of the curriculum as an “**entitlement for every pupil**” (including pupils with **SEND**), the re-framed **Personal development and well-being** area (with explicit references to **faiths and beliefs** and **British values**), a clearer emphasis on **Inclusion** and **protected characteristics**, explicit recognition of **prejudice-motivated bullying** (including on grounds of **religion or belief**), and expectations to **track participation** so all pupils including those with SEND, access RE and related opportunities.

You may want to use the slides in staff briefings, with governors/SACRE, and when planning curriculum and enrichment for 2025/26. They include **verbatim extracts** from both documents to support accurate messaging and practical next steps for subject leaders.

# 1) RE in the curriculum & inspection in different types of school

2025 clarifies the place of RE in inspection by referring to the subject as part of the basic curriculum, mentioning statute and framing it as **an entitlement for every pupil.**

As in previous frameworks, Ofsted does not inspect denominational RE, but does inspect RE in foundation and voluntary-controlled schools with a religious character

*2025 “the curriculum ... covers the statutory requirements set out in the basic curriculum which includes the national curriculum, and relationships and sex and health education **and religious education**” page 19*

*2025 ...this curriculum is an entitlement for every pupil.” page 19*

*2025: “The curriculum ... is at least as ambitious in breadth and depth as the National Curriculum” page 19*

**Note: the *draft* report cards only referenced the National Curriculum, but after NATRE and REC feedback, Ofsted changed the final version to include the basic curriculum and therefore RE**

## 2) SMSC & British values remain central (faiths/beliefs explicit)

There is continuity with previous frameworks about the importance of SMSC and British values. The 2025 toolkit makes with explicit reference to different faiths and beliefs. This includes:

- Reflection on one's own beliefs (religious or otherwise)
- Both knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths
- mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

*2024: 344. Inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This is a broad concept that can be seen across the school's activities*

*2025 this evaluation area [personal development] considers ...pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development, which can be seen across the school's activities" page 44*

*2025:" "Inspectors focus on... ensuring that **the curriculum contributes to** pupils' personal development and **their SMSC development...**" page 44*

*2024: 345 "Provision for the spiritual development of pupils includes developing their ... ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life ..."*

*2025: "pupils develop their ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life, **including developing their knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths, feelings and values**" page 47*

*2025 "... developing and deepening pupils' understanding of the **fundamental British values** of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and **mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.**" page 44*

# 3) Religion, equalities (protected characteristics)

A focus on equality remains from previous frameworks. It is, in places, made more explicit.

**Inclusion** becomes a defined evaluation area

The toolkits contain explicit references to the Equality Act 2010 and protected characteristics (including religion or belief).

The toolkits say that Ofsted will evaluate inclusive environments that respect difference and commonality across communities.

*2024: 338 “Promotes equality of opportunity so all pupils can thrive together... This includes, but is not limited to, **pupils’ understanding** of the protected characteristics and how equality and diversity are promoted”*

*2025: “**Promoting equality of opportunity** so that all pupils can thrive together... includes, but is not limited to, **an age-appropriate understanding** of the **protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010.**” page 44*

## 4) Bullying & prejudice (including religion/belief)

The 2025 framework and toolkit names prejudice-motivated bullying explicitly, including on grounds of religion or belief.

It contains an expectation that bullying is not tolerated and is addressed swiftly (this was also in the 2019 previous framework).

It refers to prejudice-based motivations, explicitly including religion or belief.

*2024: 334 “Leaders, staff and pupils create a positive environment in which bullying is not tolerated.”*

*2025: “Leaders recognise that bullying takes various forms, and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, **for example on grounds of ... religion or belief ...**”*  
page 38

## 5) Participation & tracking – make RE entitlement visible for all

The 2025 toolkit makes it **clearer and more operational** that RE is for **every** pupil, including those with SEND.

It does this in two ways that go beyond the previous framework:

- (1) it frames the *whole basic curriculum (which includes RE)* as an **“entitlement for every pupil,”** and
- (2) it requires leaders to **ensure and track participation** (with reasonable adjustments) for **SEND** pupils.

2024: 230 **“All pupils in maintained mainstream and special schools are expected to study the basic curriculum, which includes ... religious education.”**

2025: *“The personal development programme is an entitlement for every pupil. Leaders track participation. They take steps to ensure that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils [and] those with SEND ... can participate appropriately.”* page 51

2025: **“When inspectors evaluate curriculum for pupils with SEND ... they consider whether pupils have access to a suitable curriculum and is adapted to their needs.”** page 18

## 6) Social and community cohesion

Social and community cohesion, is not a standalone section but receives greater attention in, and is woven throughout the 2025 toolkit

Made explicit across Personal Development & Well-Being, Inclusion, Leadership & Governance, and Pastoral Support).

Dialogue skills matter: pupils should discuss and debate differing views constructively (high relevance to RE).

Leaders are expected to work with parents, local authorities and partners and consult the school community to strengthen culture and outcomes.

[NATRE note: many subject leaders of RE work hard to develop relationships with communities of religion and belief]

*2024: 474 Pupils **engage with views, beliefs and opinions that are different from their own** in considered ways. (Grade descriptor for Good personal development)*

*2025 “Pupils **know how to discuss and debate issues and ideas** in a considered way and how to **engage with views, beliefs and opinions that differ from their own.**”*

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*2025 “Pupils understand, appreciate and respect differences... they **celebrate what we have in common across cultural, religious, ethnic and socioeconomic communities**... Pupils **respect the different protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010.**” page 49*