



GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES 2026

THE HEADLINE DATA

ENGLAND



218,602

GCSE RS ENTRIES IN ENGLAND

↑
+0.5%
ON 2025

↓
-4.1%
ON 2019



7th
MOST WIDELY
TAKEN GCSE
SUBJECT IN
ENGLAND

2 STRONG ATTAINMENT IN 2026

73.7%
ACHIEVED
GRADE 4+



32.3%
ACHIEVED
GRADE 7+



8.3%
ACHIEVED
GRADE 9



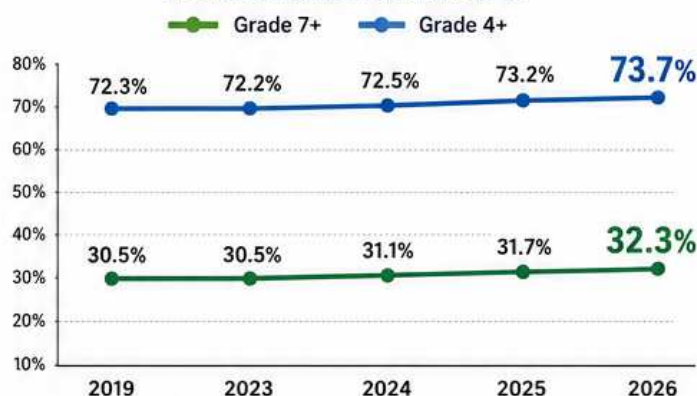
RS COMPARED WITH ALL GCSEs

	RS 2026	ALL GCSEs 2026
9 Grade 9	8.3%	~5.0%
7+ Grade 7+	32.3%	~21.8%
4+ Grade 4+	73.7%	~67.0%

RS outcomes are above the equivalent all-GCSE figures at every key threshold.

3 RESULTS HAVE STRENGTHENED GRADUALLY

GCSE RS ATTAINMENT: ENGLAND



Since 2019:

Grade 7+
↑ **1.8**
percentage points

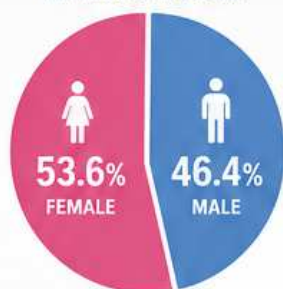
Grade 4+
↑ **1.4**
percentage points

A GRADUAL
UPWARD TREND,
NOT A SUDDEN
CHANGE IN 2026.

2020–22 excluded from trend comparisons due to exceptional assessment and grading arrangements.

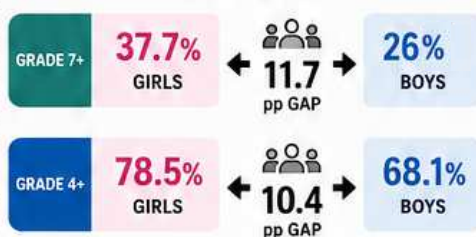
4 THE GENDER GAP: PARTICIPATION AND ATTAINMENT

MODEST DIFFERENCE
IN PARTICIPATION...



THE RS GRADE 7+ GENDER GAP (11.7pp)
IS MORE THAN TWICE THE OVERALL
GCSE GENDER GAP (4.8pp).

...BUT A MUCH LARGER DIFFERENCE
IN ATTAINMENT.



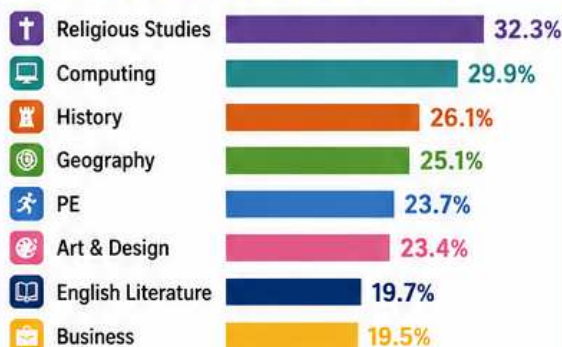
THE GAP IS NARROWING

Grade 7+ gap:
15.7pp in 2019 → 11.7pp in 2026

Grade 4+ gap:
14.8pp in 2019 → 10.4pp in 2026

5 RS COMPARES STRONGLY WITH OTHER GCSE SUBJECTS

GRADE 7+ IN SELECTED GCSEs – 2026



★ RS has one of the strongest Grade 7+ profiles
among major humanities and option subjects.

6 WHAT THE 2026 RESULTS TELL US



1 RS REMAINS A
MAJOR GCSE SUBJECT
218,602 entries and
7th largest GCSE.



2 ATTAINMENT
IS STRONG
73.7% Grade 4+ and
32.3% Grade 7+.



3 RESULTS ARE
IMPROVING GRADUALLY
Both major thresholds
are above their
2019 levels.



4 THE GENDER GAP
REMAINS THE KEY
CONCERN
11.7 percentage points
at Grade 7+.



5 RS COMPARES STRONGLY
WITH OTHER HUMANITIES
Its Grade 7+ rate exceeds
History, Geography and
English Literature.



6 NATIONAL FIGURES ARE
BENCHMARKS, NOT TARGETS
Interpret results alongside
cohort characteristics
and prior attainment.



Source: JCQ GCSE results data, England, 2026; Ofqual Analytics; NATRE analysis.
England, full-course GCSE Religious Studies. Short-course and other UK nations not shown.

NATRE

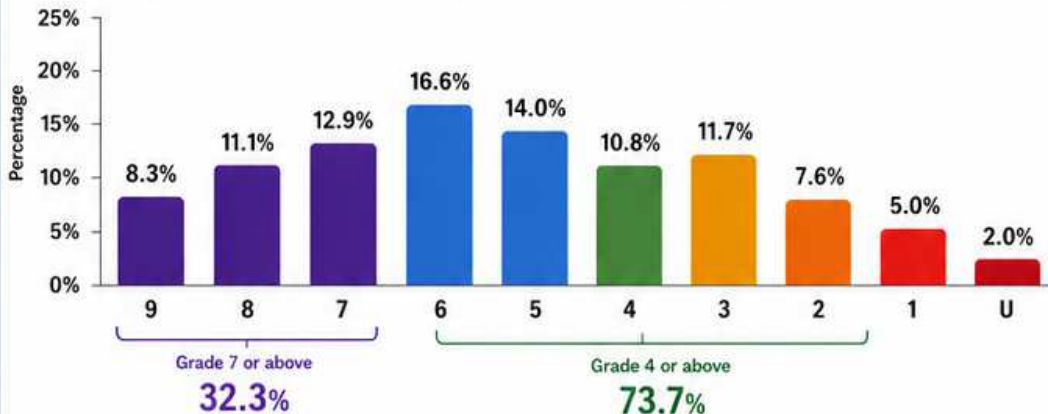
GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES 2026

EXPLORING THE FULL GRADE DISTRIBUTION

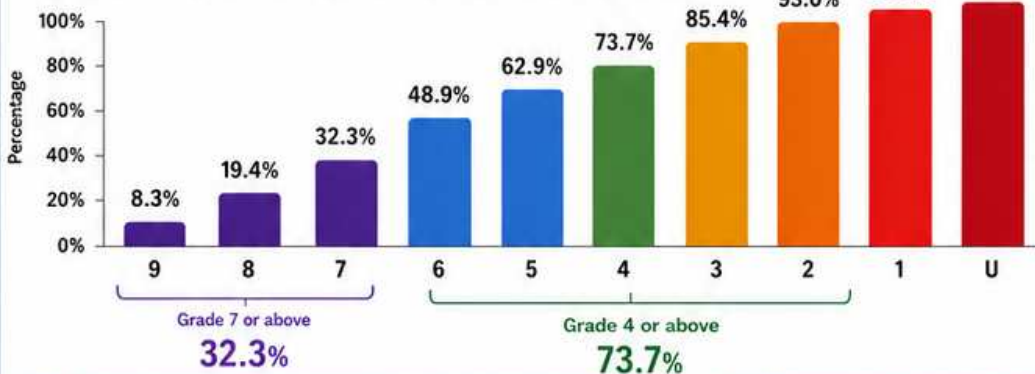
1 ENGLAND: FULL GRADE DISTRIBUTION – ALL PUPILS (ALL AGES)

Source: JCQ, GCSE results by main grades, subjects, age and gender, England, 2026 (Table 2)

NON-CUMULATIVE: PERCENTAGE ACHIEVING EACH GRADE IN 2026



CUMULATIVE: PERCENTAGE ACHIEVING THIS GRADE OR ABOVE



Over half (52.5%) of candidates achieved Grade 5 or above.



Nearly three quarters (73.7%) of candidates achieved the standard pass (Grade 4 or above).

KEY HEADLINE FIGURES (2026)



73.7%

Achieved Grade 4+



32.3%

Achieved Grade 7+



8.3%

Achieved Grade 9



7.0%

Achieved Grade 1 or below
(5.0% Grade 1 + 2.0% U)

RS COMPARED WITH ALL GCSE SUBJECTS – 2026

Source: JCQ Table 2

GRADE	RS 2026	ALL GCSEs 2026
9	8.3%	5.0%
8	11.1%	8.4%
7	12.9%	13.4%
6	16.6%	15.1%
5	14.0%	18.2%
4	10.8%	16.8%
3	11.7%	12.4%
2	7.6%	6.0%
1	5.0%	3.1%
U	2.0%	1.6%

2 CUMULATIVE GRADE DISTRIBUTION: BOYS vs GIRLS (ALL AGES)

Source: JCQ, GCSE results by main grades, subjects, age and gender, England, 2026 (Table 2)

BOYS (46.4% OF ENTRIES)

Percentage achieving this grade OR ABOVE

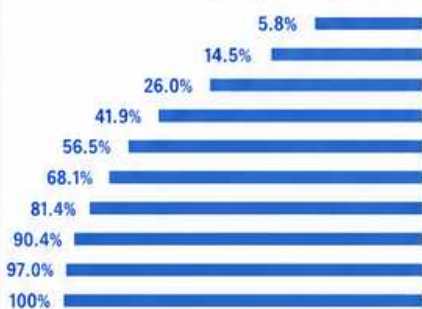
GRADE

BOYS SUMMARY

26.0%
achieved
Grade 7+

68.1%
achieved
Grade 4+

12.6%
achieved
Grade 1 or below
(10.5% Grade 1–2
+ 2.1% U)



GIRLS (53.6% OF ENTRIES)

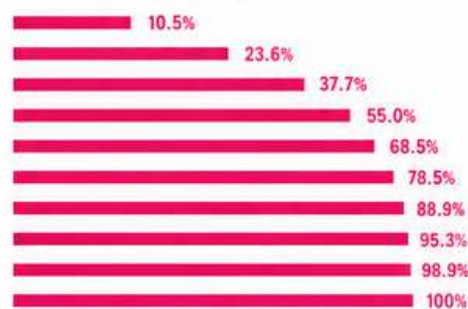
Percentage achieving this grade OR ABOVE

GIRLS SUMMARY

37.7%
achieved
Grade 7+

78.5%
achieved
Grade 4+

5.3%
achieved
Grade 1 or below
(4.0% Grade 1–2
+ 1.3% U)



Girls outperform boys at every grade from 4 to 9.

The largest gap is at Grade 9: 4.7 percentage points more girls achieve Grade 9.

Boys are more likely to achieve the lower grades (1–3): 28.9% of boys vs 20.4% of girls.



WHAT DOES THIS TELL US?

- ✓ Girls achieve higher grades across the board, particularly at the top end (Grades 7–9).
- ✓ Boys are more concentrated in the lower grades (1–3), with almost 3 in 10 boys in these grades compared with just over 2 in 10 girls.
- ✓ Understanding the reasons behind this gap can help departments target support and close the gap.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- 1 How does our school's full grade distribution compare with the national picture for RS, for both all pupils and for boys and girls? What patterns, strengths or concerns do we notice?
- 2 What might be contributing to the gender gap in our results? Which groups of boys are underachieving, and what strategies could help them achieve higher grades?



Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
Source: JCQ GCSE results data, England, 2026 (Table 2). Full-course GCSE Religious Studies.

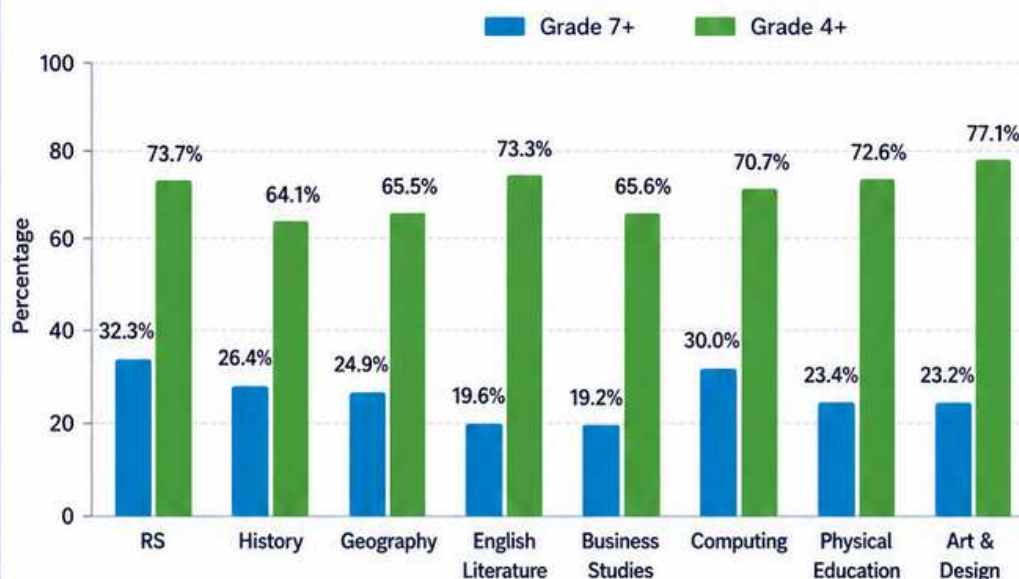
HOW DOES RS GCSE COMPARE WITH OTHER SUBJECTS?

ENGLAND 2026

1 RS ACHIEVEMENT COMPARED WITH OTHER SUBJECTS

Source: JCQ GCSE results by main grades, subjects, age and gender, England, 2026 (Table 2)

Percentage of candidates achieving Grade 7+ and Grade 4+ in each subject



KEY FACTS ABOUT RS (2026)

32.3%
Achieved Grade 7+
(Above the GCSE average of 21.5%)

73.7%
Achieved Grade 4+
(Above the GCSE average of 68.0%)

218 thousand +
RS entries
(4th largest GCSE subject)

One of the most popular and successful GCSE subjects in England



RS is above the average for Grade 7+ (21.5%) and for Grade 4+ (68.0%) across all GCSE subjects.



RS has the second highest proportion of Grade 7+ results, just behind English Literature (19.6%).

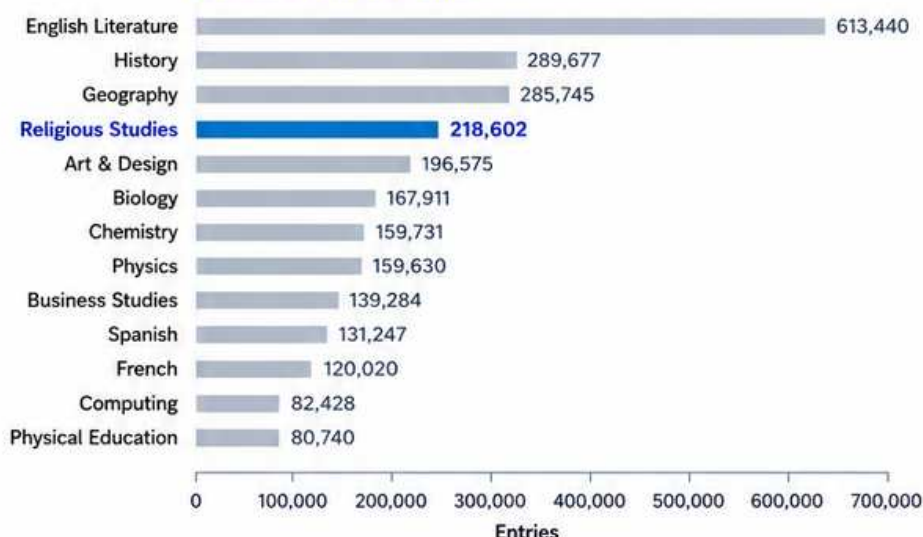


RS is in the top three subjects for Grade 4+ results, showing strong overall achievement.

2 RS ENTRY NUMBERS COMPARED WITH OTHER SUBJECTS

Source: JCQ GCSE subject entry data, England, 2026

Number of entries in 2026



HOW DOES RS RANK?



7th (out of 58)

largest GCSE subject by number of entries



218 thousand +

students took RS GCSE in 2026



More entries than Art & Design, Business Studies, Spanish, French, Computing and Physical Education

RS CONTINUES TO BE...

- ✓ A popular choice for students
- ✓ A high-achieving subject
- ✓ One of the top subjects for both attainment and participation



WHAT DOES THIS TELL US?

- ✓ RS students achieve well: RS is above average for both Grade 7+ and Grade 4+ compared with all GCSE subjects.
- ✓ RS is one of the most successful subjects at the upper end, ranking joint 2nd for Grade 7+ results.
- ✓ RS is a popular subject choice, ranking 4th for entry numbers with more students than a range of EBacc and optional subjects.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- 1 Why do you think RS performs so well compared with many other GCSE subjects?
- 2 What makes RS a popular choice for so many students? How can we build on this continued success?



Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: JCQ GCSE results data, England, 2026 (Table 2). Full-course GCSE Religious Studies.

TOP TIPS FOR RS LEADS: ANALYSING YOUR SCHOOL DATA

MAKING DATA WORK FOR IMPROVEMENT



THIS DATA IS FOR ALL EXAM BOARDS

The national data in this report combines results from all GCSE exam boards.

When analysing your own school data, use the question level analysis tools provided by your exam board. These give you the most accurate insight into your candidates' performance.



1 TOP TIPS FOR ANALYSING YOUR SCHOOL'S RS GCSE DATA



1. START WITH THE BIG PICTURE

Look at overall outcomes:
% achieving Grade 9–7,
% achieving Grade 4+
and % below Grade 4.
How do these compare with
national figures?



2. EXPLORE DIFFERENCES

Look for patterns between
groups: boys vs girls,
disadvantaged vs non-
disadvantaged, SEND vs
non-SEND, EAL, PP and
other key groups.



3. ANALYSE THE GRADE PROFILE

Examine your full grade
distribution. Where are
your strengths? Where
are your gaps? Are there
bottlenecks at specific
grade boundaries?



4. LOOK AT PROGRESS, NOT JUST ATTAINMENT

Use progress measures
to understand how much
value students are making
from their starting points
compared with national
expectations.



5. USE QUESTION LEVEL ANALYSIS

Use your exam board's
tools to identify:

- Strong topics and skills
- Weaker topics and skills
- Questions with low success rates



6. IDENTIFY COMMON ERRORS

Look at the types of
mistakes students
are making. Are they
knowledge gaps,
exam technique, or
misunderstanding
command words?



7. COMPARE OVER TIME

Track trends across
multiple years. Is
performance improving,
stable, or declining?
What actions have
made a difference?



8. TRIANGULATE YOUR DATA

Use a range of evidence
including mock exams,
class assessments,
book looks and student
voice to build a full
picture.



9. TURN INSIGHT INTO ACTION

Use what you learn
to adapt teaching,
target support and
focus CPD on
areas of need.

2 KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



ABOUT OVERALL PERFORMANCE

- How do our Grade 9–7 and Grade 4+ outcomes compare with national averages?
- What are our strengths and priorities for improvement?



ABOUT CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

- Which topics or skills are our students finding most challenging?
- How can we strengthen teaching and learning in these areas?



ABOUT STUDENT GROUPS

- Are there any groups underperforming compared to others or to national data?
- What barriers might be affecting these groups and how can we remove them?



ABOUT ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

- Are we providing students with consistent, high-quality feedback?
- How are we using assessment information to inform next steps?



ABOUT PROGRESS AND POTENTIAL

- How much progress are our students making from their starting points?
- Are more students reaching higher grades than in previous years?



ABOUT STRATEGIC PLANNING

- What actions will have the biggest impact on outcomes?
- How will we measure the impact of our actions next year?



USE DATA TO DRIVE IMPROVEMENT

Effective use of data helps you understand your students, celebrate success and target support where it is needed most. Regular, reflective analysis leads to better outcomes for all.



Source: JCQ GCSE results data, England, 2026 (Table 2). Full-course GCSE Religious Studies.
For question level analysis, use the tools provided by your exam board.

GCSE RS IN WALES 2026

THE KEY FINDINGS AND WHAT THEY TELL US



PARTICIPATION IS FALLING

Full-course entries have fallen to

8,550
in 2026

↓ **6.1%** compared with 2025

↓ **14%** fewer entries than in 2019

RS was the **9th** most widely taken GCSE subject in Wales.



2026 IS A TRANSITION YEAR

Results are from the legacy GCSE qualification.

✓ First teaching of the new Curriculum for Wales GCSE: September 2025

✓ First awards of the new GCSE: 2027



ATTAINMENT REMAINS STRONG AT THE TOP END

RS students continue to achieve highly:

14.4% achieved A*

31.8% achieved A or above

52.0% achieved B or above

69.3% achieved C or above*

*Headline figure (see box 3)



GENDER GAP REMAINS IMPORTANT



57.7%
Female entries



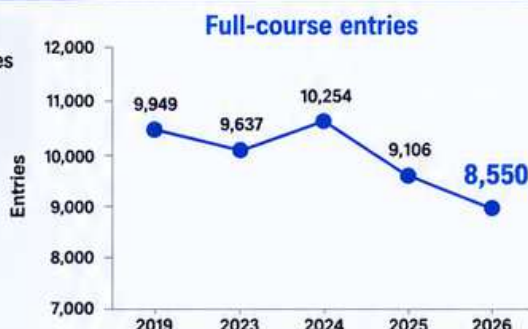
42.3%
Male entries

Latest detailed gender attainment data available are from 2025 (see box 4).

1 PARTICIPATION: FULL-COURSE RS ENTRIES OVER TIME

Source: JCQ entries data

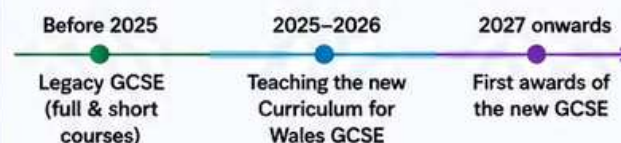
Full-course RS entries in Wales have been declining overall since 2019.



i The legacy short course has contracted sharply. The new Curriculum for Wales GCSE does not reproduce the old short-course route. The decline in short-course entries should not be interpreted as pupils losing interest in RS. However, the fall in full-course entries is significant and should be monitored carefully.

2 2026 IS A TRANSITION YEAR: WHAT THIS MEANS

Understanding the change in Wales



Keep your data separate:

- ✓ Legacy full course
- ✓ Legacy short course
- ✓ New GCSE

Do not merge these into one continuous trend. This ensures accurate analysis and meaningful comparisons over time.

3 ATTAINMENT: HOW RS PERFORMS COMPARED WITH OTHER HUMANITIES (2026)

Source: JCQ results data (Tables 1, 2 & 3)

RS KEY GRADE OUTCOMES (Full-course legacy GCSE)



14.4%
achieved A*



31.8%
achieved A or above



52.0%
achieved B or above



69.8%
achieved C or above*

*Headline JCQ key-grade figure (69.8% C or above) is used for reporting. JCQ Table 3 reports 69.3% because it uses a different main-grade population. Figures should not be averaged or combined.

How RS compares at A or above (%)



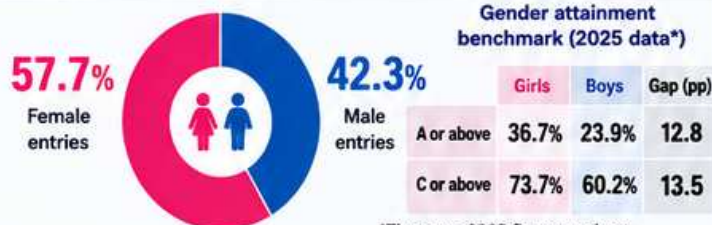
★ RS is almost level with History and above Geography at the A or above threshold.

How RS compares at C or above (%)



★ RS has a lower C or above rate than both History and Geography.

4 GENDER: ENTRIES AND ATTAINMENT CONTEXT



*These are 2025 figures and not comparable to 2026.

👥 The 2026 entry profile is more female-skewed than England (57.7% female vs 53.6% in England).

5 WHAT DO THESE FINDINGS TELL US?



Participation needs attention

Why are full-course entries falling in Wales? What can our school do to sustain and grow interest in RS?



Strong at the top, but work at C and below

Why do we have a lower C or above rate than History and Geography? Who are our pupils below C?



Use question-level analysis

What do our exam board tools tell us about strengths, weaknesses and the barriers students face?



Plan for the future

Put in place strong systems and assessment practices now to build a meaningful baseline for the new GCSE in 2027.

? KEY QUESTIONS FOR RS LEADS IN WALES

- 1 Why has full-course RS participation fallen, and what can our school learn from local patterns?
- 2 Why does RS perform strongly at A or above, but have a lower C or above rate than History and Geography?
- 3 Who are the pupils not yet achieving C, and what do question-level insights tell us about their needs?
- 4 What do we need to establish now so our 2027 results give us a meaningful baseline?
- 5 Given the female-skewed entry profile, what do our own gender attainment data show?



Source: JCQ GCSE results/entries data, Wales, 2026 (Tables 1, 2 & 3). Full-course GCSE Religious Studies. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.