

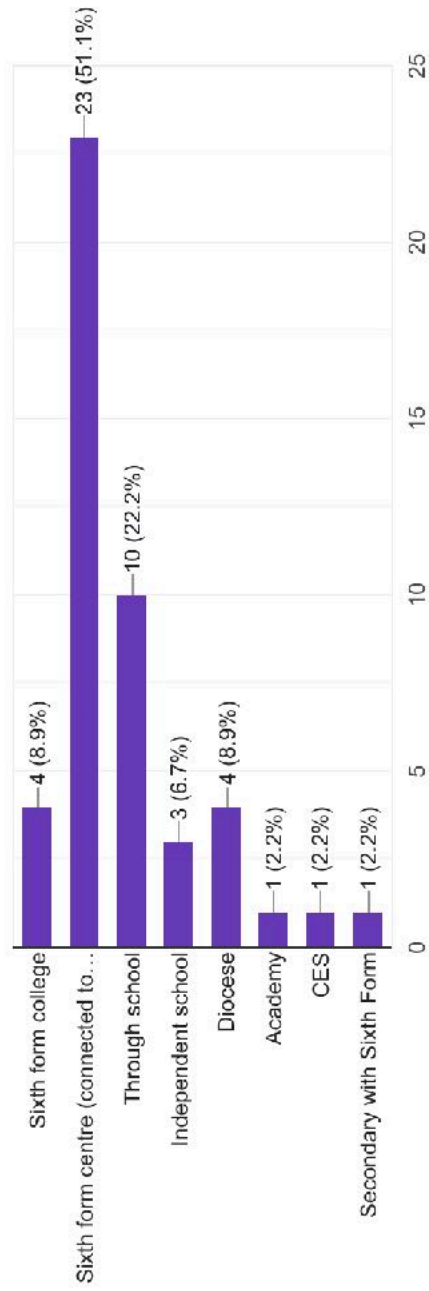
30th September 2022

# **Sixth Form RED Consultation Report and Recommendations**



### Please identify the type of educational setting you represent

45 responses



## Summary

The consultation took place in the spring term 2022 following the publication of draft proposals for reforms to religious education in Catholic post 16 settings. Forty five responses were received. The majority were from Catholic sixth form centres attached to schools. The majority of respondents were responsible for RE in sixth form and across secondary provision either in maintained, independent or academy settings. There were some responses from Dioceses and from sixth form colleges.

1. The consultation proposed that sixth form RE should be known as Core RE going forwards rather than general RE. The majority of respondents agreed with this and were prepared to make this change in their settings.
2. The consultation proposed that sixth form RE could opt in to the six branch structure proposed in the Religious Education Directory (RED) model curriculum. The majority of respondents were not in favour of this change.
3. The curriculum document shared a number of proposals about knowledge lenses, learning progress and exemplars of what an RE programme could look like in post 16 provision. The response to these elements were very mixed.

The core recommendation is that post 16 RE be revisited and consideration given to the diversity of learning settings and the wide mix of students that attend. These should be supported by examples of what good practice in teaching and learning look like for all post 16 provision.

## The term core religious education places RE at the centre of a Catholic sixth form

### Findings

Respondents were generally positive about using the term 'core RE' to describe the compulsory religious education curriculum time in post-16 settings.

Some replies highlighted that they felt the name change would be beneficial in raising the subject's profile with staff but would not change perceptions of the subject with students. One respondent suggested a way to do this would be through offering a Bishops of England and Wales certificate to students for RE. Several others felt that they gave the subject a high profile by linking it with the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), which they hoped would be maintained under any new proposals.

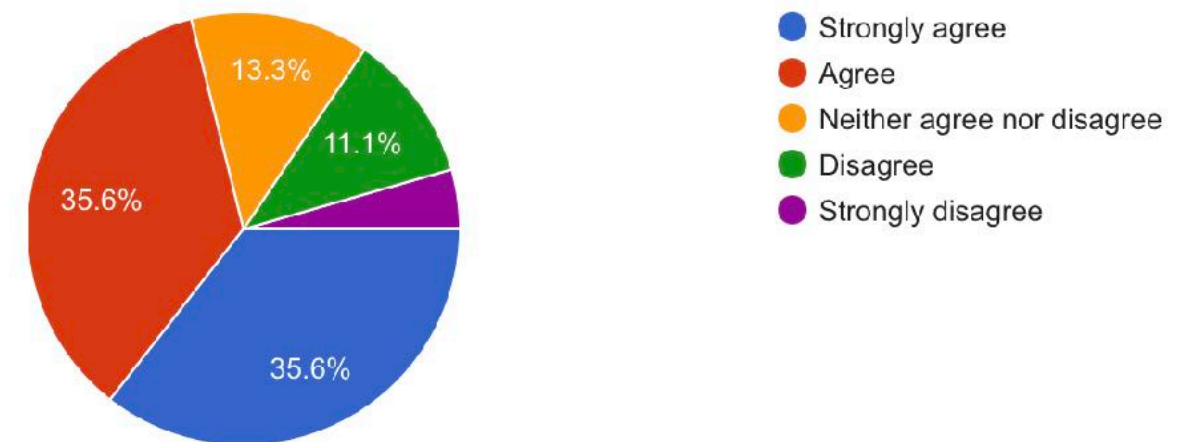
Two responses mentioned the importance of RSE (relationships and sex education) in sixth-form settings. Currently, the term general RE and flexibility of guidance allow RSE to be taught by RE teachers as part of the general RE curriculum.

Two respondents described core RE as a "nonsense term". They did not offer an alternative or say if they would prefer to keep the term 'general RE'.

### Recommendation

The majority of replies are content with a move to 'core RE' to describe sixth form curriculum RE. It is not compulsory at this stage but is a recommendation.

The term core religious education places RE at the centre of a Catholic sixth form



Agree/strongly agree	71.2%
Neutral	13.3%
Disagree/strongly disagree	15.5%
n=45	

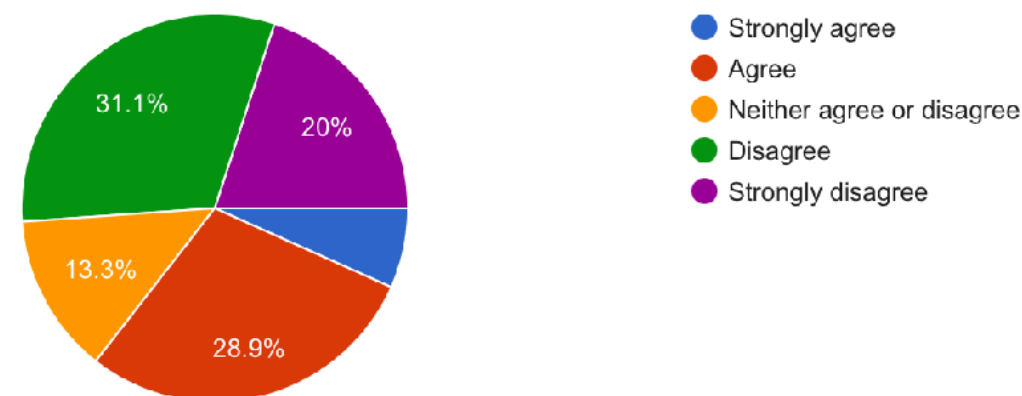
## Flexibility and the six branch structure

### Findings

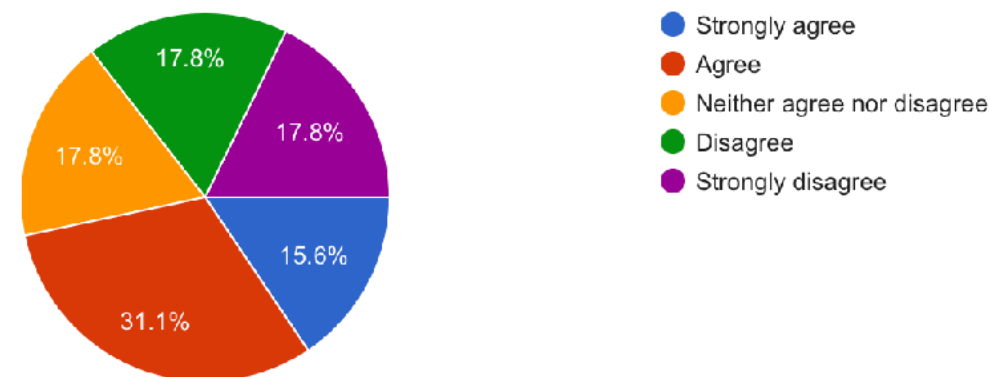
The proposed RED for sixth form included the *option* of using the liturgical year, six branch structure to shape RE curriculum plans. These would be explored through four 'knowledge lenses'.

The questions asked if this suggested structure offered the flexibility sixth forms require to teach RE. Respondents felt that the proposed structure was not flexible, with less than fifty per cent agreeing with the statement 'the draft document provides sufficient flexibility to be adapted to the range of sixth form settings'. Similarly, the option of mapping curriculum content onto the liturgical year was considered irrelevant to a sixth form intake and, in some cases, a 'foreign concept'. Fifty-one per cent disagreed with the statement 'The curriculum branches mapping onto the liturgical year would fit a sixth form context'. Only thirty-six per cent agreed with this statement. Many comments highlighted that students' first encounter with Catholic education was in the sixth form and that the liturgical year was irrelevant to their lives. Comments suggested that RE should begin with where the students are and use lessons to show why religion is essential when considering political matters or looking at life's big questions. Others commented that focusing on the liturgical year in the brief period of the sixth form would not allow for teaching to build progressive skills. Over half of the comments expressed a negative view of the six branch structure in the sixth form. Some commented that though they felt the structure was helpful for EYFS to Year 9, it would be too repetitive or not resonate post 16.

Those who did agree used the comments to express that the liturgical year is a guide for the whole Church and should extend to sixth forms. Only ten per cent of the comments fell into this category. One more nuanced response stated that the liturgical year formed part of sixth form life through prayer and form time and gave structure to fundraising activities. However, they felt it would limit the scope of RE if the branches dictated the content of lessons.



The curriculum branches mapping onto the liturgical year would fit a sixth form context



The draft document provides sufficient flexibility to be adapted to the range of sixth form settings

### Recommendations

The six branch structure and close links with the liturgical year should be one option among others as a way to teach RE, recognising the diversity of settings the directory should support.

## Curriculum lenses

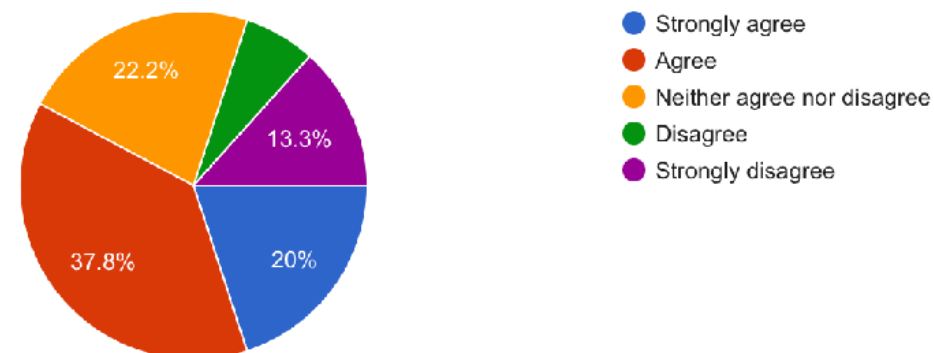
### Findings

The RED introduces curriculum lenses through which students should study different aspects of religious education. The curriculum lenses proposed for the sixth form are theology, philosophy, social sciences and dialogue. A majority of respondents felt the lenses offered a helpful structure. However, a significant number, approximately a fifth, had a neutral response, reflected in the comments.

Overall, comments about the curriculum lenses were positive. Comments noted that the lenses were flexible, balanced and fitted well with work already taking place in many sixth forms. Comments included that these lenses are at the core of good RE and would ensure students studied RE rather than lessons become extended tutorials. Respondents appreciated the 'dialogical' approach and felt that this would be useful in RE. Others commented that the lenses allowed creative approaches to teaching sixth form RE. Several comments expressed the need for more detail in line with the model curriculum for Key Stage 3. However, the absence of detail is what others welcomed.

Some comments expressed concern about the nature of RE post 16, which highlights the need for formation regarding the aims of RE in Catholic education and the statutory requirements for teaching RE that apply to all sixth form settings. The CSI handbooks provide much of this detail. However, a few comments noted that the lenses did not offer scope for "practical RE", and one statement said, "There is no meaningful benefit of this course to the learners". These comments suggest that RE's purpose in the sixth form is not primarily a knowledge-based subject. At the same time, RE in all settings will link closely with the Catholic life and mission of the education setting.

There were some negative comments (16%). These regarded the curriculum lenses as inflexible and a means of removing creativity. One respondent described them as an "artifice" imposing what should be taught rather than responding to the needs of the students. Again, some of these were negative



The four curriculum lenses offer a helpful structure

because of a lack of focus on "lived faith". One respondent felt that all of the proposed RED is "very poor", and another, that it is vague and unhelpful.

### Recommendations

- i. While most respondents received the curriculum lenses favourably, they need further clarification and development to become a practical tool for teaching and learning in post-16 contexts.
- ii. The lenses need to indicate what content each would contain and be accompanied by exemplars of how these would work in curriculum plans. The lens descriptions as theological, dialogical, and philosophical need to be explained for the different sixth form contexts and link with learning outcomes.
- iii. The purpose of RE in sixth-form settings needs to be clearly stated and linked with the aims of RE in the RED. The Bishops of England and Wales agree these to ensure consistency in the nature and purpose of curriculum RE in all educational settings.

## Did you find the exemplars useful?

### Findings

Yes 51% No 20% Maybe 28.9%

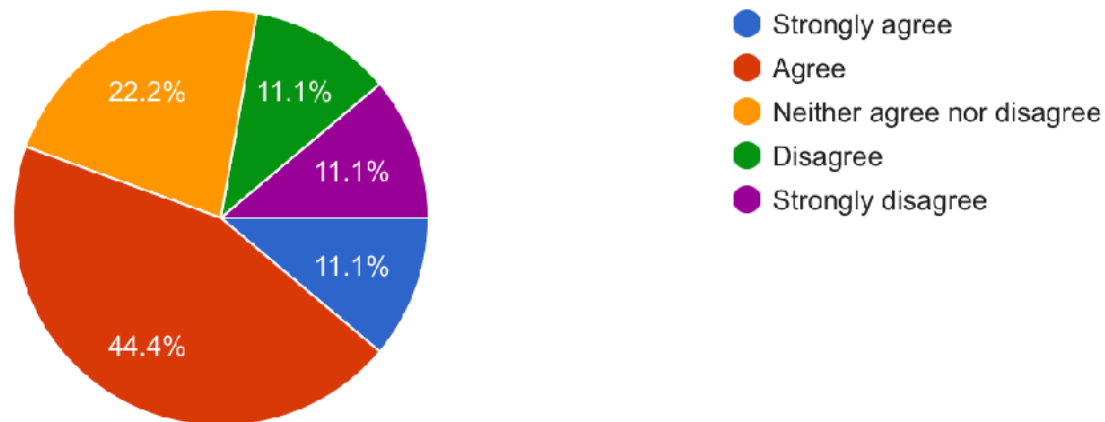
Respondents who liked the exemplars liked their flexibility, felt they gave a clear indication of what good core RE would look like and found them useful examples to share with teachers.

Those who disliked them felt they were out of touch, would not engage students or didn't give "sufficient emphasis to the true Faith".

Though the majority of comments were positive, many asked for more detail and worked examples of how to apply these to different contexts. Again, a disconnect with the branches was expressed.

### Recommendations

More work needs to be done to produce concrete examples to illustrate good practice in all sixth-form settings.



*The Ways of Knowing replace Attainment Targets. In RE they are, Understand, Discern and Respond.*

## The Ways of Knowing provide a helpful structure for mapping students' progressive learning through core RE

**Findings** - A majority of respondents thought the Ways of Knowing were useful. Comments described the examples as useful tools to plan and identify key skills and that they were useful statements for recording progress. Others said that they were clear, simple and informative. Some expressed a continuity with existing practice and recognised the continuum of learning from EYFS. Respondents also noted that the ways of knowing helped students relate their learning to "practical implications for their lives" or "head, heart and actions". However, those who were positive about the ways of knowing often made additional comments about improvements that could be made. had a point of view about how they could be improved. Several comments noted that something additional may be needed for annual progress checks as the ways of knowing would be most useful for assessing in a unit of work. Others commented that students are goal centred and it is difficult to engage them with assessment for a subject that does not carry any qualification. On the other hand, there were comments that hoped the ways of knowing would not evolve into levels or lead to essay writing. The importance of the EPQ was mentioned in some comments.

Those who did not find the ways of knowing as helpful commented that they were too vague, had too much structure that could lead to a tick box approach and were artificial. One respondent commented they were "deeply worried" by them and another that they were based on an assumption of student engagement which would not be present in something compulsory when students are free to choose other areas of study.

**Recommendations-** The Ways of Knowing would benefit from more detail and links with curriculum lenses to show progression. The usefulness of end of phase statements should be explored.



## The branched structure for sixth form religious education is optional. Do you feel that it has enough flexibility to retain existing good practice in your present setting?

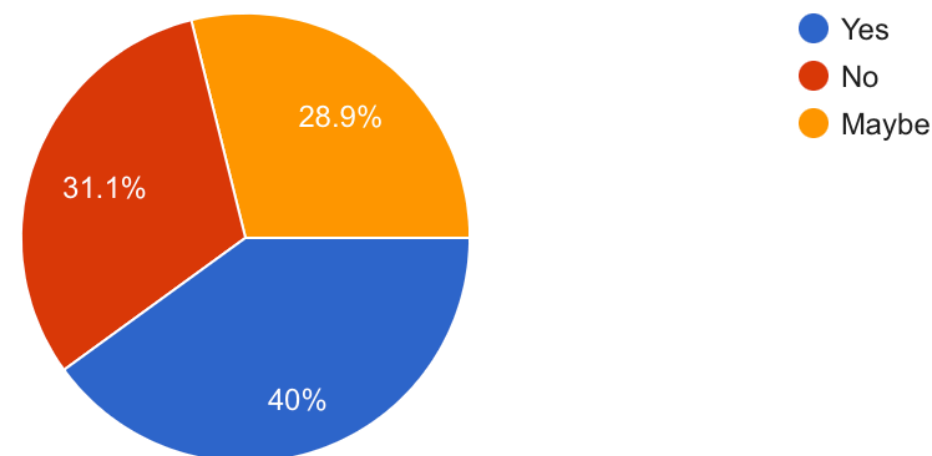
### Findings

Most respondents were not confident that the branched, liturgical year structure had enough flexibility to retain good practice. Comments reflected this, suggesting that the liturgical year focus would make schemes of work narrow and prescriptive. They also expressed an opinion that the continuation of the branched structure into key stage five is too repetitive and would disengage students with RE.

One comment suggested that natural links with the liturgical year would emerge if teachers had the autonomy to plan a scheme of work.

Autonomy emerged as a theme across the comments, as did the diversity of intakes across the sector. Many respondents felt that schemes of work needed to begin with where the students were when they started at sixth form. Comments covered a range of reflections on how to meet the needs of students. Some felt that the sixth form should focus on Catholic life and mission, and RE should look at faith in action; others that the curriculum should focus on theology, developing what students have covered in KS4 religious studies. These comments reflect the challenges in planning a curriculum where some students have been in Catholic education, and others are encountering Catholic education for the first time. One statement said that having a central model could lead to a "mismatch" between students' needs and the RED's requirements. Other respondents echoed these concerns referencing the CSI framework and concerns that these documents could make RE focus on meeting requirements rather than the needs of the students.

Other emerging themes included the need for exemplars of best practices in core RE. Many comments included references to ways of sharing schemes of work, assessment methods and the need to focus on an "understanding and enquiring" pedagogy rather than a knowledge-heavy



curriculum. Many respondents also said that core RE should offer some form of certification to encourage students to "attend and participate" the importance of retaining the EPQ was another theme, as was the need to consider students who spend three years in KS5.

Some respondents commented on the role of the Bishops and the CES. One felt that the need for diocesan approval was vital as it allowed Bishops to "exercise their teaching mandate from Christ in shaping the content of the curriculum". Another suggested it was a "power grab", and another that might lead to the diocese mandating textbooks. One commented that the request for "constructive comments" proved that it was not genuine consultation.

There were some very positive comments from people who felt the curriculum offered "real scope to create a thorough, ongoing and meaningful core RE programme". Others thought they could retain existing best practice and fit it with the liturgical year structure. However, these were not in the majority.

### Recommendations

The responses suggest that the proposal to opt into the branch structure needs further work to be a viable option for many sixth-form settings.