

Teaching of Christianity in schools is set to be transformed by a new resource from the Church of England, launched today. Understanding Christianity is a set of comprehensive materials and training which will enable pupils from age 4 to 14 to develop their understanding of Christianity, as a contribution to making sense of the world and their own experience within it.

Available to all schools across the country the resource was written by a team of RE advisers from [RE Today Services](#), in collaboration with more than 30 expert teachers and academics, and has been trialled in over 50 schools.

Understanding Christianity was commissioned by the Church of England Education Office with the generous support of Culham St Gabriels, The Sir Halley Stewart Trust, the Jerusalem Trust and an anonymous donor.

The Revd Nigel Genders, Chief Education Officer for The Church of England, said: 'RE is primarily about teaching religious literacy. The ability for young people to have informed conversation and dialogue about belief and faith is key to building a peaceful society and helps combat ignorance and extremism. We recognise that within the rich Christian heritage of Britain, a particular responsibility of the Church of England is to ensure Christianity is well taught in our schools. This large-scale resource promotes theological literacy and a deep understanding of the whole Christian narrative for children and young people.'

Understanding Christianity will not be available in the shops. Accredited trainers will train teachers to use the resource in their own setting. The project also comes with up to 15 hours of professional development support.

Over 800 teachers and staff have signed up for training in Understanding Christianity in one diocese alone. Jane Chipperton, Adviser for RE and Worship at the Diocese of St Albans which covers Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and part of north London said: 'Our teachers are hugely excited about this resource. Over 100 schools have signed up for training, mostly on inset days. Some schools have sent their whole staff to be trained. I have never had such a positive response to one initiative.'

David Ford, Regius Professor of Divinity Emeritus at Cambridge University and consultant on the project said: 'This resource manages to interconnect the text of the Bible, the beliefs and practices of Christians, and the world of the pupils - a remarkable achievement. It is demanding on teachers and pupils, yet both are also given rich materials to resource them, with pointers to much more. The promise is of a richer, deeper, wiser understanding of Christianity for both Christians and non-Christians, and an attractive mode of exploration and learning for both pupils and teachers.'

Diocesan Education Officer for Exeter Diocese, Tatiana Wilson, who trialled the resource in four schools said: 'As an RE specialist I am convinced that this resource will have a significant impact on the quality of RE taught in church and community schools. We are working in partnership with Learn Teach Lead RE to help roll the resource out across our region in the coming year in collaboration with our other partners.'

Stephen Pett, RE Today Adviser and editor of Understanding Christianity, said: 'The intention of these resources is to support and equip teachers of RE in their lessons. The resources offer an approach that can be applied in any RE classroom, with a wide range of classroom ideas and materials to help develop pupils' understanding of Christian belief and practice, as part of their wider studies in RE.'

ENDS

Notes for editors

The aims of the resource are:

- To enable pupils to know about and understand Christianity as a living world faith, by exploring core theological concepts.
- To enable pupils to develop knowledge and skills in making sense of biblical texts and understanding their impact in the lives of Christians.
- To develop pupils' abilities to connect, critically reflect upon, evaluate and apply their learning to their own growing understanding of Christianity, of religion and belief more widely, of themselves, the world and human experience.

The resource comprises:

- Understanding Christianity teaching resources and training including a teacher's handbook, 29 units of work from Foundation Stage 2 to Year 9, the 'Big Frieze' illustration and guide book (artwork by [Emma Yarlett](#)).
- Understanding Christianity website: www.understandingchristianity.org.uk

Background:

The National Society's 2014 report ['Making a difference? A review of RE in Church of England Schools'](#) recommended a more intellectual coherent and challenging resource for teaching Christianity; that develops pupils' ability to think theologically and engage in theological enquiry.

About Church of England schools:

There are 4700 Church of England Schools in England, educating at any one time 1 million pupils. Church of England schools are established primarily for the communities they are located in. They are inclusive and serve those who are of the Christian faith, those of other faiths and those with no faith.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/theological-literacy-boosted-new-christianity-resource-schools>