



# Understanding Christianity

Understanding Christianity offers a coherent approach to teaching and learning about Christianity, in the wider RE curriculum.

*Understanding Christianity* has identified eight core concepts at the heart of mainstream Christian belief. It sets out some knowledge ‘building blocks’, to clarify what pupils should know and understand about these concepts at each school phase. It provides a teaching and learning approach to unpack these concepts and their impact in the lives of Christians in the UK and the world today, making connections with the world of the pupils and their wider understanding.

*Understanding Christianity’s* approach to teaching about Christianity builds up pupils’ encounters with these core concepts through biblical texts, placing the texts and concepts within the wider Bible story. Each unit addresses a concept, through some key questions, exploring core Bible texts, their impact for Christians, and possible implications for pupils. Each unit incorporates the three elements below:

- **Making sense of the text:** developing pupils’ skills of reading and interpretation; understanding how Christians interpret, handle and use biblical texts; making sense of the meanings of texts for Christians.
- **Understanding the impact:** examining ways in which Christians respond to biblical texts and teachings, and how they put their beliefs into action in diverse ways within the Christian community and in the world.
- **Making connections:** evaluating, reflecting on and connecting the texts and concepts studied, and discerning possible connections between these and pupils’ own lives and ways of understanding the world.

Pupils’ achievement can be assessed against the knowledge building blocks and against end-of-phase outcomes related to the elements above.

This approach offers coherence and progression in terms of pupils’ knowledge, skills and understanding. It supports pupils’ abilities to handle texts, as well as understanding how and why Christians interpret biblical texts differently. It takes seriously the role of the pupil as reader, bringing their own world to the text whilst giving them the opportunity to allow the text to enlarge their understanding of the world.

## What does Understanding Christianity Offer?

The *Understanding Christianity* materials are intended to support teachers in all schools (including Church of England schools, community schools, other denominational schools, academies and free schools) in teaching about Christianity in Religious Education. We offer a coherent and comprehensive (but not exhaustive) resource, including:

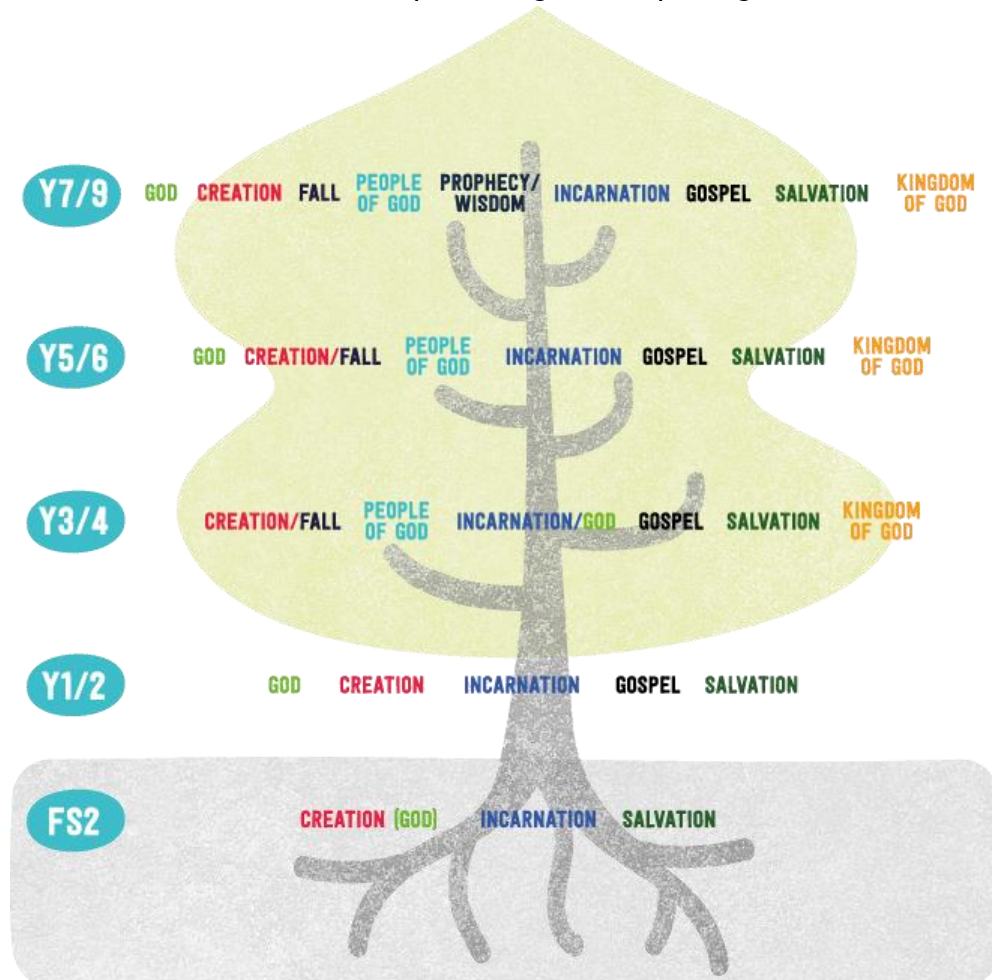
- a **theological and conceptual basis**, taking seriously Christian accounts of the ‘big story’ of salvation and the relationship of the reader/pupil to these texts
- a clear outline of **core knowledge ‘building blocks’** in relation to Christianity, to enable teachers to see what pupils should know, understand and be able to do



## Understanding Christianity

- support for teachers who have little or no theological training, through straightforward essential **background information** for the teacher about Christian concepts, theology and practice;
- a **teaching and learning approach** to enable pupils to move from an understanding of the biblical text and how to handle it, to an understanding of what this means for Christians within the Church and in Christian living, including opportunities for pupils to examine and evaluate connections between these ideas and the wider world
- flexible opportunities for **assessment**: these use both knowledge building blocks (suitable for 'mastery' models of assessment) and end of phase/key stage outcomes (which incorporate knowledge and the skills with which to handle, integrate and apply this knowledge). These allow pupils to make progress from surface learning to deeper learning at all ages.

*Understanding Christianity's* approach to teaching about Christianity builds up pupils' encounters with biblical concepts through texts, placing them within the wider Bible story.





# Understanding Christianity

## Teaching & Learning Approach

By addressing key questions, *Understanding Christianity* encourages pupils to explore core Bible texts, examine the impact for Christians and consider possible implications. Each unit incorporates the three elements:

- **Making sense of the text** - Developing skills of reading and interpretation; understanding how Christians interpret, handle and use biblical texts; making sense of the meanings of texts for Christians
- **Understanding the impact** - Examining ways in which Christians respond to biblical texts and teachings, and how they put their beliefs into action in diverse ways within the Christian community and in the world
- **Making connections** - Evaluating, reflecting on and connecting the texts and concepts studied, and discerning possible connections between these and pupils' own lives and ways of understanding the world.

Each unit begins with a 'way in' and then offers teaching and learning ideas for each element. The teacher chooses how to weave together the elements, from making sense of the text, through looking at the impact on the world of the Christian, and helping to make connections with the world of the pupil, in order to achieve the outcomes.



This model shows that the *Understanding Christianity* approach is not just getting pupils to learn what Christians think. Instead, it is about developing skills to help them 'think theologically' alongside learning lots of knowledge about the Bible, Christian belief and practice. It also shows that these three elements do not represent rigid, distinct steps, but that pupils can 'make connections' whilst 'making sense of the text', for example.