

**Legislation**

All school pupils are required to study RE from 4 to 16 years (unless their parents ask for them to be withdrawn from classes)  
All schools must provide a daily act of collective Christian worship.

**RE Syllabus**

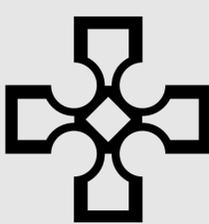
The RE syllabus is drawn up by four Christian churches in NI:



Catholic



Presbyterian



Church of Ireland



Methodist

**Religion in Northern Ireland (Census 2011)**



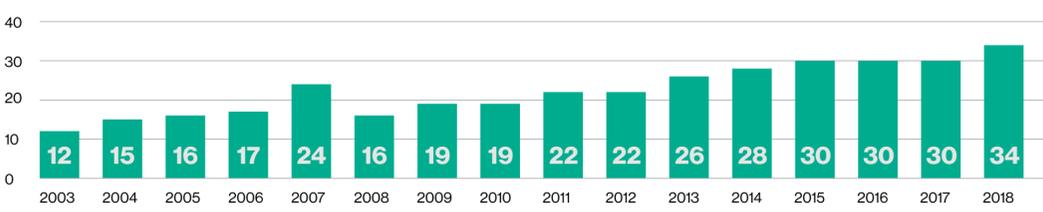
- 41% - Catholic
- 19% - Presbyterian
- 14% - Church of Ireland
- 3% - Methodist
- 23% - Other Christian, Non Christian & None

**In the 2011 census:**

- 77% identified themselves as belonging to one of the four denominations that draw up the syllabus
- 23% of the population were not associated with any of these faiths
  - 5.8% belonged to an 'other' Christian denomination
  - 0.8% had a non-Christian faith
  - 16.9% followed no religion or did not state their religion

There has been a steady increase in the number of young people who do not regard themselves as belonging to any religion – currently 1/3

**Q. Do you regard yourself as belonging to any religion?  
A. No religion (YLT, 2003-2015)**



The RE syllabus assumes a Christian perspective and places Bible teaching at its core

Study of 'world religions' is only introduced at Key Stage 3 – for secondary school pupils

Exploring the differences in Catholic and Protestant beliefs and practices is reserved until Key Stage 4

Schools may choose to teach aspects of religion outside of the syllabus to reflect their ethos

The Education and Training Inspectorate do not inspect RE (unless called upon to do so) but clergy are entitled to inspect RE classes in school

In the absence of inspection, there is no consistent quality control mechanism for RE

**Other Considerations**

The four denominations influence the management and governance of schools with reserved places on:

- Boards of Governors
- The Education Authority
- Catholic Council for Maintained Schools
- Controlled Schools Support Council

There are indications that there has been a decrease in the population affiliated to the four denominations since 2011.

There is evidence of growth in the population following non-Christian faiths.

Parents have a right to withdraw their children from collective worship and/or RE classes – it has been identified that the 'alternative provision' currently offered to these pupils may be inadequate.

The ethos of Maintained schools is underpinned by the practice of Catholic faith.

Christian beliefs frame the culture of Controlled schools, although religion is generally less prominent.

Integrated schools are essentially Christian in character and consciously navigate denominational sensitivities.