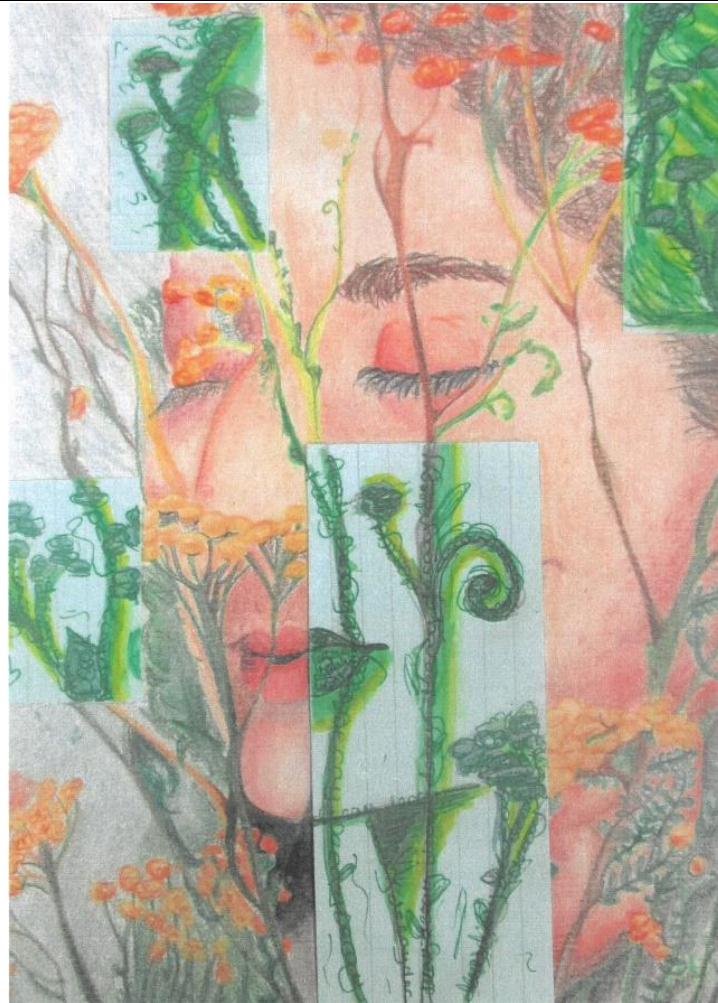


## Ethical Veganism in RE

### Unit 4 (ages 12 to 14)

### Who are vegans?

*Ethical Veganism as a Non-Religious and Religious Worldview*



### **'Personification of Nature'**

**Mathilda, Age 14**

**NATRE Art in Heaven, 2021**

Mathilda wrote:

"For my drawing, I used influences mainly from paganism, but I think it can be viewed via the lens of any religion, as personifications of nature are generally consistent in religion.

I made sure to use lined paper for the decay segments to represent mankind's effect on climate change. This is the same reason that I used highlighters instead of my preferred medium of coloured pencils."

## Aims of Religious Education

**The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.**

To help you to make the most of these units, please read and refer to the Teachers' Guide.

### About this unit:

This unit introduces learners to Ethical Veganism as a worldview. It is worth noting at the outset that Ethical Veganism is recognised and finds protection in law under the Equality Act 2010.

This unit is a sociological study, focussing on individual vegans, both religious and non-religious, expressing their views and priorities. Consider how this unit fits in with your RE syllabus and how it contributes to learners' understanding of the religions and worldviews you teach. These units are designed to be flexible! You may wish to adjust the content/activities to suit your syllabus, cohort and contexts for RE.

The activities enable deep thinking and discussion. Learners will make comparisons, ask questions, and discuss a range of viewpoints. Learners will recognise that veganism is a non-religious worldview, in the sense that it does not depend upon religious belief or doctrine, but also that veganism is a way of life practised by people with a wide variety of religious beliefs and those with no religious beliefs at all. For some religious people, being vegan is very much part of their commitment to their religion. For these people, veganism will be part of their religious worldview. Vegans who are religious may interpret the teachings of their religion as a calling to veganism. For instance, some religious believers see commitment to ethical veganism as a logical conclusion to fulfilling their religious and moral duty in regard to caring for God's creation. For them, veganism may be an important way to live out and express their religious faith. Conversely, some religious people may be motivated to be vegan by non-religious ethical reasons, unconnected with, but compatible with, the tenets of their religion. So, studying ethical veganism in the RE classroom is complex! Like many (perhaps all) worldviews, ethical veganism does not sit neatly inside or outside a box, so to speak. Studying this worldview will challenge learners and teachers. It will afford rich opportunities to explore a worldview which can stand independent of religion or can be part of it in many people's lives. The vegan worldview (or perhaps we should more accurately say 'vegan worldviews') sometimes challenges, sometimes supports, and sometimes finds inspiration in religious thought, practice and tradition. This makes it a fascinating area for study in RE. Exploring vegan perspectives can add much to learners' understanding of lived religion and living according to the principles of a seriously held philosophical conviction.

Throughout this unit, learners will be encouraged to reflect on their own stances, and to formulate their own authentic responses to the issues raised.

The unit enables teachers to make choices between which religions to focus on and has enough variety in terms of learning and teaching activities to make study of all three interesting and engaging. Learners continue to engage with key questions which are golden threads running through the entire series of units, this time developing their understanding of vegan identity, including what motivates people to be vegan, and the benefits and challenges of living as vegan.

### Golden threads

How do humans treat animals and does this align with how they *should* treat them? Do animals have rights? Should we differentiate between different species of animals, giving more regard to some than to others, and if so, why? Has religion been good or bad for animals? Should we focus more on the similarities and connections between people and animals, rather than what sets us apart? What is ethical veganism and what does it mean to be vegan in today's world?

The enquiry questions set challenging standards for learners, encouraging them to think critically and creatively and to engage in thoughtful discussion. As with the teaching of all religious and non-religious worldviews, this unit does not seek to promote any worldview as correct, nor does it seek to alter the views or behaviours of the children/young people who engage with it.

**Where does this unit fit in?**

The unit will provide teachers with guidance in planning and delivering around 3 hours of RE lessons designed for pupils around the ages of 12 to 14 years old. Of course, these lessons can be adapted to suit children of other ages, and teachers might wish to make adaptations to the content to suit their particular cohorts. The lessons are designed to slot easily into RE schemes of learning.

Teachers are encouraged to think about where these lessons may fit in with their current RE syllabus. The lessons can be used to enrich currently taught themes/religions/worldviews. For instance, to enhance teaching about concern for the environment, as well as the more obvious placement within themes that deal with religious (and/or secular) views of animals. They may also be added to a systematic study of religion, offering a new dimension on belief and practice within a particular religious tradition. Alternatively, these lessons could be used within a stand-alone RE enrichment day.

**Estimated teaching time for this unit is 3–5 hours. Teach less, in depth, if you have less time – it is not recommended to skate over the surface of the important issues covered in these lessons. Invest more time if you can or teach fewer concepts well if time is limited.**

**This unit is designed to enable you to select and omit the content that you wish your learners to encounter. For instance, you may wish to focus on just one religion, two or all three. The unit can be split across year groups or taught as a complete package.**

**The unit will provide these opportunities**

- Students have opportunities to consider a diverse range of views about questions connected to ethical veganism as a religious and non-religious worldview.
- Students will be encouraged to apply their prior learning and understanding of religious and non-religious perspectives to the views expressed by real-life vegans
- Students will be introduced to a wide range of vegan perspectives and will be given opportunities to develop their understanding of what ethical veganism means in people's lives, including the benefits and challenges of living as vegan in today's world
- Students will be able to think about their own views, the influences upon them, and the reasons why they hold them in relation to questions about ethical veganism – this unit may help to address misconceptions and perhaps even prejudices held by some students in relation to ethical veganism.
- Experiences and opportunities provided by this unit include engaging with a range of views, and pupils will be encouraged to think critically and creatively, as well as to articulate their own views

**KEY THEMES ADDRESSED BY THIS UNIT****Beliefs and concepts:**

- How are animals used by humans? Are we right to use animals in these ways?
- Does everyone have a worldview on animals (exploring concepts of carnism and speciesism)?
- What is ethical veganism and why do some religious and non-religious people live as vegans?
- What matters most to ethical vegans?
- What are some of the challenges faced by ethical vegans and what are some of the benefits of living as an ethical vegan?

**ATTITUDES FOCUS**

Students will explore attitudes of:

- **Self-awareness** by becoming more aware of the implications of behaviour and ideas about human uses of animals
- **Open mindedness** by distinguishing between opinions, viewpoints and beliefs with reference to ideas about ethical veganism
- **Empathy** by considering issues from the perspectives of other people, as well as being encouraged to think about and reflect upon the experiences of non-human animals
- **Compassion** by thinking about how their own actions and those of other humans impact on non-human animals and other people, and considering ways to have a positive impact on the lives of human and non-human animals

**CONCEPTS**

The core concepts from RE that this unit addresses are beliefs, values, meaning and purpose, commitments, and diversity. Teachers should plan to enable learners to see the significance of these core ideas at every point.

**Contributions to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students****Opportunities for spiritual development come from:**

- Engaging with profound questions about how religious and non-religious people understand the value of human and non-human animals and their relationships with each other, the natural world and, where applicable with God or a Supreme Being
- Reflecting on and developing and expressing their own views in relation to diverse philosophical ideas from different religious and secular sources and enabling pupils to think critically about these

**Opportunities for moral development come from:**

- Exploring and valuing a diversity of views and values on issues relating to veganism as a religious or non-religious worldview and/or identity
- Asking and answering moral questions: can adopting a vegan way of living help humanity reduce its contribution to suffering in the world? Do we have moral duties towards non-human animals, and if so what are these duties? Do the ways in which humans use animals in today's world – especially for food - make sense, morally?
- Reflecting and formulating ideas around duties, rights, responsibilities and our place and status in the world in relation to non-human animals and the environment

**Opportunities for social development come from:**

- Appreciating what is meant by ethical veganism and developing an awareness of the presence of veganism in our communities
- Understanding that veganism can mean different things to different people – it can be a central or peripheral worldview in the life of an individual, standing separate from or intertwined with religion or other worldviews
- Considering diverse religious and non-religious beliefs and understanding why some people – religious and non-religious - choose to lead a vegan life whilst others do not
- Appreciating some of the benefits and challenges that vegans may face, and responding with empathy and understanding
- Articulating their own ideas and those of others on a range of contemporary issues and debates around veganism

**Opportunities for cultural development come from:**

- Exploring the relationship between religious and cultural motivations for adopting a vegan lifestyle
- Thinking about veganism as a cultural identity/phenomenon
- Acquiring an understanding of veganism which promotes respect and combats prejudice and discrimination and enables pupils to explore individuals and communities with diverse, and even conflicting worldviews, coexisting and even cooperating with one another in pursuit of common goods
- Promoting inter-cultural understanding whereby learners are encouraged to reflect upon their own cultural pre-dispositions

<b>Expectations:</b> By the end of this unit, most learners should achieve the following outcomes:		
<p><b>Make sense of belief:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare and explain at least two religious and non-religious perspectives on ethical veganism</li> <li>• Explain a range of religious and non-religious beliefs which lead people to adopt a vegan worldview</li> </ul>	<p><b>Understand the impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think critically and with empathy about the motivations for becoming vegan</li> <li>• Understand and describe some of the challenges of living a vegan life</li> </ul>	<p><b>Make connections:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare and contrast religious and non-religious views on issues relating to veganism and human uses of animals</li> <li>• Evaluate questions relating to the choice of whether to become vegan</li> </ul>

Please feel free to adapt these to meet the requirements of your RE syllabus.

### ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE FOR PUPILS

This unit can be taught without any specific prior knowledge. A basic knowledge and understanding of the religions/worldviews chosen as the focus for the lessons, as would be expected from standard RE provision is sufficient. Although not essential, learners will benefit if they have had opportunities to study the first three units in this series. If they have not had this opportunity, it may be advisable to use the materials from Unit 3 to discuss whether the Golden Rule ought to apply to non-human animals and to introduce the term 'ethical vegan'.

SUB-QUESTION: Do we all have a worldview on animal issues?	
<p><b>Ideas and some content for learning:</b> Teachers can select content from these examples and add more of their own to enable students to achieve the outcomes.</p>	<p><b>Learning outcomes</b> (applying this content to the RE end of key stage outcomes):</p>
<p><b>Animals: What is your worldview?</b> Tell the class that you are going to start with exploring their own views on animals. Ask them to write a sentence or two, summing up their stance on animals – what they believe, think, do in relation to animals.</p> <p>Now use Resource 1 from the supplementary resource. Ask learners to respond to the 10 statements, shading the boxes which correspond to how far they agree or disagree. In the speech bubbles on the right, ask them to briefly write an explanation of their response. Do their responses match up with their original written statement? Would they alter this statement, having thought about some of the issues in the statements? Allow time for a walking discussion. Ask learners to find a partner whose boxes are shaded similarly to discuss ideas with. Then ask them to find someone whose boxes are shaded quite differently? Ask the pairs to join with another pair to make a group of four for further discussion. Discuss as a class some issues that were important when they talked in small groups. Where did people agree or disagree with one another? Give learners the opportunity to alter any of their responses should they wish to, following discussion with their peers. They might want to re-adjust their statement from the start of the lesson, too.</p> <p>Introduce the idea that everyone has a worldview when it comes animals. You may want to show them the Theos animation, <i>Nobody Stands Nowhere</i>: <a href="https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/comment/2021/05/12/worldviews-film">https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/comment/2021/05/12/worldviews-film</a>. This deals more generally with the concept of worldview, especially if learners are not familiar with the concept of ‘worldview’. What do learners think of this idea? Do they think that just vegetarians, vegans, conservationists, etc have a worldview on animals? Show them slide 2 of the PowerPoint resource. Introduce the two poles, carnism and ethical veganism. Ask them to use their responses to the statements to work out where they are on the spectrum. Do they have a carnist worldview – one which finds acceptable the use of animals, especially for meat, or are they leaning towards an ethical vegan stance, where any use of animals is regarded as immoral? Of course, many will be somewhere in between.</p> <p>The discussion point on slide 2 asks learners to consider whether we live in a carnist world. Exchange ideas, encouraging them to give examples and to respectfully challenge one another. There is lots of evidence to support the view that we do in fact live in a carnist world, e.g., advertising of meat and products derived from animals, most restaurants serve meat and animal foods, hospital food and school lunches are very meat-based. Shoes are mostly made of leather, animals are used for entertainment and sport; hunting for pleasure, including fishing, is a socially acceptable pastime, etc.</p> <p>Slide 3 introduces two important connected worldviews: human exceptionalism (anthropocentrism) and speciesism. These were touched on in the previous unit, so learners may be familiar with them. Ask learners to think of examples of these and for their thoughts on whether these are dominant worldviews in our society. Also, ask them to reflect on whether their responses to the statements showed that they held these worldviews themselves? Page 3 of the supplementary resource can be used to record their ideas in writing. Encourage learners to give reasons and examples and allow time to discuss as a class. Extend critical thinking and engagement by asking learners to consider whether or not these dominant worldviews: carnism, human exceptionalism and speciesism could be seen as beneficial/good or harmful/bad.</p> <p>Homework task: Ask learners to be observant and to spot examples that support and challenge the view that we live in a carnist world. Take snapshots from their surroundings to share with the class or write down their ideas. Can they find examples of speciesism and human exceptionalism at play as well?</p>	<p>Teachers will enable students to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can:</p> <p><b>Make sense of belief:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Know and understand the meaning of key concepts of carnism, speciesism, human exceptionalism, anthropocentrism and ethical veganism</li> </ul> <p><b>Understand the impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give reasons and examples to explain why people may argue for or against the view that we live in a carnist world</li> </ul> <p><b>Make connections:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin to think about how everyone stands somewhere – how we all have worldviews but sometimes don’t notice them.</li> </ul>

SUB-QUESTION: What is 'veganism'?	
<p><b>Ideas and some content for learning:</b> Teachers can select content from these examples and add more of their own to enable students to achieve the outcomes.</p>	<p><b>Learning outcomes</b> (applying this content to the RE end of key stage outcomes):</p>
<p><b>Spot the link</b> Show between five and 10 pictures of famous vegans past and present to pupils. Use Resource 2 in the Supplementary Resources for this. You might wish to use only examples that learners are likely to know at first and perhaps introduce some less familiar examples later on. Of course, feel free to use your own examples. Ask learners to identify what they all have in common – we are looking for 'being vegan' as an answer, but learners might offer other correct answers as well, of course. By the end of this activity, learners should understand that vegans come from lots of different walks of life. They may be religious or not. They should also recognise that veganism is not a new phenomenon but has a long history – historical figures have been included to this end. Ask learners if they are surprised by anyone used as an example? Why/why not? Can they offer their own examples of famous vegans? Does it seem that veganism is becoming more popular/mainstream? If they engaged with the previous homework, they may have some good local examples to bring to this question. At this point, learners may wish to discuss their own experiences of veganism or that of friends, family members or other people they may know.</p> <p>You may also wish to discuss/debate whether historical figures like Pythagoras and St David can really be called vegan. The evidence is not strong. In the case of St David and other saints, they may have avoided eating animal flesh, and possibly eggs and dairy too, or spiritual reasons. Can we really claim this is veganism as we understand it today? You may wish to have these discussions before or after learners consider the definition of 'vegan'.</p> <p><b>Definitions</b> Following their discussions, ask learners to write a definition of 'veganism' in no more than two sentences. If learners have studied the previous unit, this will be a recall activity. Share ideas in groups of around four. Ask learners to consider the ideas of others and refine them into a more accurate definition. Write the group ideas onto the board and try to come up with a solid co-constructed definition as a class. Now compare. Share the 'official' Vegan Society definition: 'Veganism is a way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose.'</p> <p>How does this align with their own definitions? Do these need adjusting or amending? Or does the Vegan Society definition need to be modified? Is there anything missing (e.g. some say that you need to be an activist promoting veganism to be truly vegan, but that is not part of this definition). What do they notice about this definition? Try to draw out from their responses that the Vegan Society definition acknowledges that being vegan is not perfect – we all have an impact on other living beings. This is articulated in the words 'as far as is possible and practicable'. So, living according to the vegan worldview, a person commits to doing the very best they can to avoid choices that involve harming or exploiting animals. Researching different definitions of veganism may be a useful activity.</p> <p>Explain that ethical veganism is a worldview that is protected under the law in the UK. Ethical vegans should not be discriminated against because of their views. How does veganism differ from vegetarianism? From eating plant-based or being flexitarian or pescatarian? Set a homework task for learners to research the differences and similarities. Test understanding with a quiz next lesson. Definitions can be found in the Teachers' Guide. Practical examples are good, to illustrate difference and similarities. Ask learners to include some practical examples to discuss with the class.</p> <p><b>Is it vegan?</b> Use Resource 3 to test understanding of veganism with everyday scenarios. Discuss the issues that arise. Encourage learners to apply terms such as 'plant-based', 'vegetarian', 'pescatarian' in their written and verbal responses. This activity can be done individually, or in pairs or small groups.</p>	<p>Teachers will enable students to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can:</p> <p><b>Make sense of belief:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Know and understand the meaning of ethical veganism, as well as other key terms, e.g. vegetarian, flexitarian, pescatarian</li> </ul> <p><b>Understand the impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand some of the practical implications of adhering to living a vegan way of life, as an ethics-based practical belief system</li> </ul> <p><b>Make connections:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appreciate that vegans can differ on a range of issues and that living according to a system of ethical beliefs can be complex and sometimes challenging</li> </ul>

**SUB-QUESTION: What can we learn from ‘meeting’ some real-life vegans?**

<p><b>Ideas and some content for learning:</b> Teachers can select content from these examples, and add more of their own to enable students to achieve the outcomes.</p>	<p><b>Learning outcomes</b> (applying this content to the RE end of key stage outcomes):</p>
<p><b>Quick Quiz</b> Use slide 4 of the PowerPoint resource to encourage thinking and discussion. Discuss responses: What surprised them? New facts?</p> <p><b>Vegan Voices Survey</b> Resource 4, pp,8 and 9 summarises some of the findings from the Vegan Voices survey (2021–2022). Divide the class into groups of around four to read the summary. What conclusions or reflections can they offer on this? Ask them to sum up in three to five bullet points. Discuss the thoughts on these data as a class. What does the survey tell us about veganism as a worldview? Is veganism really a non-religious worldview?</p> <p>The ‘Vegan Voices’ resources are a compilation of 47 statements from the survey, arranged broadly by religion/worldview. It is up to teachers to choose a suitable set of statements for learners to consider. You might wish to focus on the religions you are currently teaching, or you may wish to use statements from across the whole range of religions. We recommend including statements from people of two or more of the world religions, as well as statements drawn from the ‘other’ category and ‘non-religious’ people too. A good way to present the statements is to cut them into separate cards (laminates them and use them again and again!). Each learner should ‘be introduced to’ least 12 of the vegans on the cards.</p> <p>Give groups of around four a set of at least 12 statement cards, making sure they are varied. Within the group, each learner will have at least three cards. Ask them to read their cards and, for each one, note down points they agree with, points they would challenge, anything they found surprising and a question they’d like to ask the person on the card. The next stage is to introduce their vegans to the rest of the group, using their notes to open up discussions. After all the introductions have been made and discussed, ask groups to select which three would be most likely to get along with one another. Which two would be most likely to disagree with one another. After the discussions, ask learners as individuals to bullet point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 main things they learnt from looking at these statements</li> <li>• 2 points that they most agreed with in the statements</li> <li>• 2 points that they most disagreed with from the statements</li> <li>• 1 example of a person who is influenced by their religion to be vegan</li> <li>• 1 thing that challenged how they think about vegans</li> <li>• Which person they would they most like to have a conversation with and why?</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges and benefits of being vegan</b> Ask learners to discuss what they found out from the statements about the benefits people saw from being vegan and some of the challenges. Were there any common themes? One of the challenges that was repeatedly mentioned in the survey was the issue of vegans sometimes feeling excluded, teased, or bullied for their beliefs and how they choose to live. A recent survey of over 200 vegan children conducted by Vegan Inclusive Education (VIE) found that over 70% of them had experienced bullying based on their vegan beliefs or way of life. Shockingly, this was sometimes from school staff, including teachers. Read about this with the class here: <a href="https://plantbasednews.org/culture/ethics/vegan-pupils-teased-due-to-their-beliefs-survey-finds/">https://plantbasednews.org/culture/ethics/vegan-pupils-teased-due-to-their-beliefs-survey-finds/</a>. The VIE has testimonials from pupils about the challenges they have faced as vegans at school: <a href="https://vieducation.co.uk/schools/">https://vieducation.co.uk/schools/</a>. Discuss some of these with learners, considering whether individuals and institutions like schools should try to be more understanding and accommodating of vegans. Would this be positive? How might it work.</p>	<p>Teachers will enable students to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can:</p> <p><b>Make sense of belief:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain and discuss ethical vegan beliefs, showing awareness of diversity</li> </ul> <p><b>Understand the impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show how some religious and non-religious beliefs and teachings may connect with and influence vegans’ worldview</li> <li>• Understand and discuss the benefits and challenges around living as an ethical vegan</li> </ul> <p><b>Make connections:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate and further explore the points of unity and diversity within ethical veganism as a worldview</li> </ul>



## SUB-QUESTION: What matters most to vegans?

<p><b>Ideas and some content for learning:</b> Teachers can select content from these examples, and add more of their own to enable students to achieve the outcomes.</p>	<p><b>Learning outcomes</b> (applying this content to the RE end of key stage outcomes):</p>
<p><b>Target Board Group Activity</b> This activity is found in Resource 5 of the supplementary resources. Use a printed A3 version of the target board on p. 12. Cut out the items on the grid on page 11. See page 11 for instructions for this task, which is designed to enable some summative thinking based around the learning in this unit. There are no definitive answers here, and as learners should know by now, veganism is a diverse worldview with vegans often having different priorities – they would have seen this in the ‘Vegan Voices’ statements. Give learners plenty of opportunity to think and discuss the issues. Ask groups to feed back to the rest of the class, and further compare the different ideas learners express. Extend this task by inviting learners to come up with three extra items that were not included on the cards, which might be priorities for some vegans. Where might these be placed on the target board?</p> <p><b>A Very Vegan Poem</b> Slide 5 of the PowerPoint resource has starter lines to invite learners to write a positive vegan poem. Often vegans are thought about in the negative, e.g., what they can’t eat or drink or participate in. This poem is intended to draw out learning about the affirmative aspects of being vegan.</p> <p><b>Summative Task: Who are the new vegans?</b> To extend and stretch learners, invite them to research the rise in the number of people going vegan and the availability of vegan products. Who are these new vegans? Are there particular groups of people going vegan? What might be the reasons for this? Does religion and belief play a part? To answer this question, the film, <i>A Prayer For Compassion</i>, is highly recommended. Learners might create a vlog or a blog to comment on their findings.</p>	<p>Teachers will enable students to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can:</p> <p><b>Make sense of belief:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand and be able to discuss which factors matter most to ethical vegans</li> </ul> <p><b>Understand the impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand that veganism is diverse, and priorities will differ</li> <li>Explain and be able to discuss the affirmative aspects of being vegan (not just what vegans don’t eat, drink, or do)</li> </ul> <p><b>Make connections:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research and suggest reasons for the rise in the numbers of vegans as well as the availability of vegan goods</li> </ul> <p>Discuss how far religion and belief is a factor in this</p>