

Learning and Teaching In Religious Education.

This guidance is founded on the premise that effective and empowering religious education is grounded in a set of skills and processes which empower the learner to interact with a range of beliefs, including their own.

These skills should form the spine for the planning of classroom learning, with the content being used as a vehicle to facilitate their development.

Primary Education

"Excellence and Enjoyment: A Strategy for Primary Schools", (DfES, 2003, p.29) sets out a set of key principles of good learning and teaching. These are:

- Ensure every child succeeds
- Build on what learners already know
- Make a learning vivid and real
- Make learning an enjoyable and challenging experience
- Enrich the learning experience
- Promote assessment for learning

Creativity

Pupils respond to creativity with enthusiasm at all levels of learning. RE lends itself well to creativity which is embedded in every major religion and culture. Creativity is sourced from the ability of human nature to respond to inspiration and discovery, to appreciate the value of cultural distinction and diversity and the ability to reflect on beauty, truth, goodness in creative and expressive arts. In the RE classroom pupils can be encouraged to express this creativity through music, poetry, art, story, drama and dance.

Emotional literacy

All students need to be emotionally literate by the time they leave school. In order to make progress, students should be encouraged to develop the skills of self-reflection & self-awareness. This can be done in a variety of ways e.g.

- Become more aware & confident using emotionally literate words e.g. anger, frustration, empathy, contentment, elation, pride
- Providing opportunities to self reflect through pupil evaluations on work completed
- Allow students time to think about key questions & to formulate their own line of enquiry

Independent learning

There is a shift in education that students should learn skills rather than just content. Independent learning promotes this by allowing students to explore and extend their own learning as they choose their own strategies and decide their own agenda.

Personalising Learning

Again, this is a shift in education that encourages students to take more responsibility for their learning. As teachers we need to find a way that allows every student to make progress. In order to do this students should know how best they learn and lessons should include opportunities for all styles of learning i.e. VAK, De Bono's 6 thinking hats e.g.

- Starting lessons with visual stimuli
- Opportunities for students to study topics in a non-written format e.g. create a piece of music, drama, movie making
- Students to be more active learners through kinaesthetic learners e.g. plasticine models, card sorts, games

Project based learning

Where possible students should making connections between RE and other subjects by putting their learning into a real-life context. This also promotes thinking skills, problem solving and creativity.

e.g. a cross-curricular unit of work on India could include RE looking at the religion & it's impact on Indian life, Technology could look at food, Geography could study patterns of development, English could look at cultural texts etc

Literacy and numeracy

By the time students leave school they should be able to communicate effectively through a variety of media and be numerically competent. Teachers in RE have a duty to promote this as much as possible.

- encourage the use of dictionaries when unsure of spelling or meaning of a word
- extended writing for a variety of purposes e.g. argue, persuade, evaluate,
- read a variety of different styles of writing e.g. fiction, non-fiction, poetry, newspapers, critical texts, sacred texts
- think about the financial implications when studying moral issues e.g. how much does it cost to smoke 10 cigarettes a day over a week, month, year etc
- researching & understanding statistical data & presenting it in a variety of ways including charts, percentages, graphs, proportions

Assessment for learning

Assessment for learning can be implemented in many ways and should move away from a single focus on traditional methods such as examinations and tests. Black et al (date) work stated that it is far more effective if assessment is integrated into the daily classroom routines and promote the use of;

- Peer assessment
- Self assessment
- Question and answer techniques
- Plenaries
- Formative and summative strategies
- Modelling
- Role play and drama

Work related learning

Where possible, it is important that links are made to the world of work. In a religious education context this might involve;

- young children participating in community charity events such as harvest festival
- the exploration of employment and ethical issues eg supermarkets selling fairtrade products
- promote equal opportunities, and avoid stereotypical and negative images of faith groups, communities and disability
- tensions between faith and professional responsibilities such eg a Muslim fasting whilst working in a restaurant

Community Links

Schools are increasingly the hub of local communities. The RE curriculum can help prepare pupils to participate in their communities through;

- studying a range of different cultures and religious traditions
- forming links with organisations in the community such as local places of worship, charities and global campaigns
- inviting speakers in to the school
- promoting international partnerships through developing email and exchange opportunities

Teaching World Faiths

Religious Education makes an important contribution to promoting and cultivating understanding of, respect for and harmony with fellow human beings in our multicultural, multiracial and multifaith society.

To understand society and many world events and situations requires a recognition of religious issues which often exert a strong influence on people's thinking and action. It is therefore essential that children have opportunities to explore religion in a personal, social and global sense, so that their understanding of people, society, culture and their world is deepened and their thinking and opinions well informed.

Many teachers, whilst acknowledging the contribution RE has to make in this area, express concern that their own lack of detailed knowledge may result in misinformation or cause offence. By way of reassurance, it is widely accepted by faith communities that it is impossible for teachers to be expert in all of the world faiths to be studied.

This guidance is offered to support teachers in the difficult task of exploring 'faith' with the utmost integrity. We hope that the guidance will support a more confident, secure and professional approach to RE. Good teaching about world faiths will encourage children to new depths of questioning and openness and contribute to the breaking down of barriers of racism, religious prejudice and discrimination, nationalism and xenophobia.

Our media so often reports religious issues negatively, using crude stereotyping and categorisation, therefore it is important in the classroom to present, as nearly as possible the authentic beliefs, experiences and expressions of faith of believers. To achieve this end teachers will find it helpful to consider the following when teaching about world faiths:

- use the words 'many', 'most', 'some' or 'one' rather than 'all'. It is very unlikely than any statement beginning 'all Christians' or 'all Muslims' will be true
- use 'distancing' as a technique to describe religion and religious beliefs eg. 'Christians believe' rather than 'we believe'
- accept and reflect the differences and conflicts between religions as well as highlighting commonality and harmony, so that a more accurate and balanced view which does not distort the nature of religious experience and reality is presented
- reflect the internal diversity of each religion. There is difference and sometimes conflict within as well as between religions. Fundamentalists, conservatives, liberals and radicals are generally to be found in all religions. Diversity is to be welcomed, respected and celebrated rather than merely tolerated
- use 'primary sources' eg. visitors, visits, artefacts and resources from within a religion wherever possible so that an internal perspective is conveyed
- encourage children to consider religion in its local and contemporary forms ie. the 'here and now' rather than something remote and from long ago
- present the faith as adherents understand it through teaching the beliefs, values and practices identified by faith communities using their particular terminology

It is important to maintain balance within the RE curriculum and the integrity of faiths studied. Beliefs and practices need to be treated seriously and in increasing depth, hence the recommendations about which and when world faiths are to be studied and the progression enshrined within the Programmes of Study. The content has been agreed with each faith community; they have identified the most important elements of their faith that they wish to be conveyed to children at that particular age.

Some recommended Do's and Don'ts' when teaching Christianity

Do:	Do not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure pupils understand that Christians believe Jesus to be not only 'special' but fully God and fully man, i.e. God in a human form, hence the term 'Incarnation' meaning God 'taking flesh' • Ensure pupils are aware of the rich diversity in Christianity. It is diverse not only in that there are many denominations but it is also expressed differently in different cultures • Remember that not all Christians read the Bible every day • Most Christians do not understand the Bible in a literal way but believe that its truth is expressed in different ways through different types of language such as law, poetry and legend. Christians disagree about how much history is to be found in the Bible. • Select Bible stories and other passages carefully so they are accessible and appropriate for the age and ability of pupils • Use local resources to the full, e.g. local churches, both clergy and lay people • Ensure that there are visits to and visitors from different churches and denominations • Use a variety of stories about Christians who display both 'tough and tender virtues' such as courage and perseverance, love and kindness • Ensure that pupils understand that both Protestants and Roman Catholics are Christians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglect or undervalue the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus when teaching about Easter as it is so central to Christianity • Teach only one Christian view about the meaning of the death of Jesus on the cross, (the doctrine of the atonement) as if it were the only view of the matter. Some books mistakenly suggest that the only correct view is that Jesus' death was a sacrifice to God for human sin and that Jesus was punished instead of us. This view is only one amongst a number of ways Christians explain its meaning. It should not be seen as the only or main view. It is recommended, especially with younger pupils, that the emphasis be on the Christian belief that the death of Jesus reveals the depth of his love, and so God's love, for humankind. • Use the older term the Holy Ghost, rather use the term Holy Spirit • Suggest some e.g. Roman Catholics, worship Mary and the Saints. Veneration is not the same as worship.

Some Muslim sensitivities

The use and storage of the Qur'an. Schools need to decide whether to implement the following recommendations often given about the use of the Qur'an. It is often recommended that it is necessary to:

- store the book carefully wrapped up and place it on a high shelf
- wash hands before handling the book
- place the book on a clean surface
- do not leave it open when not being read.

The teacher should also consider:

- concerns about pupils acting out the prayer positions on a prayer mat
- respect shown by Muslims for the prophet Muhammad by the use the term 'peace be upon him', (pbuh), after the prophet's name and that of other prophets.

Some recommended 'Do's and Don'ts' when teaching about Islam

Do	Do not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoid stereotypes which regularly link Islam with terrorism, harsh punishments and extreme strictness • avoid interpreting 'jihad' simply as a 'holy war' as it also means a spiritual struggle • if possible, use a Qur'an stand to hold the book • be careful about art work any Muslim pupils are asked to undertake, e.g. avoid asking them to depict or draw Muhammad and the other prophets of Islam • seek to show the way that culture and religion are often blended in Islam and indicate that some customs and practices may be more to do with culture than religion • be aware that Muslims do interpret parts of the Bible in ways that are not accepted by Jews and Christians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe Islam as 'Muhammadism' for it can imply the worship of Muhammad • describe Muhammad as the founder of Islam. He is believed by Muslims to be the last prophet. The first prophet in Islam was Adam and the founder is believed to be Abraham • ask someone to role play or act as Muhammad in a drama • compare wudu (washing before prayers), to Christian baptism as they do not have the same meaning • imply that the killing of an animal at Id-ul-Adha is a sacrifice to a bloodthirsty God. It is not. It is a reminder of the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) and Isma'il (Ishmael) • call Muslim prayer beads (subhah), a 'Muslim rosary'

Some recommended 'Do's and Don'ts' when teaching about Judaism

Do	Do not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to the Jewish Bible as the Jewish Bible or the Tenakh • Ensure pupils are aware of the diversity of Judaism, e.g. Orthodox and Reform. Not all Jews are as strict as Hasidic Jews • Ensure pupils understand that the Jewish people do not see obedience to the Torah as a burden but as a privilege • Take care with the use of the dating system of BC and AD. Today many use instead BCE, (before the Common era) and CE, (Common era) • Ensure pupils understand that traditional Jews believe that Moses received 613 laws (mitzvah), from God on Mount Sinai. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the term Old Testament when talking about the Bible in a Jewish context. Make it clear that this is a Christian term • Use the term Jehovah for God. Jewish people consider the name of God to be sacred and often use the terms 'the Lord' or 'the Holy One' and spell God as G-d • Use the term 'Wailing Wall' but instead the 'Western Wall' for the surviving temple wall in Jerusalem.

Some recommended 'Do's and Don'ts' when teaching about Buddhism

Do	Do not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that the translation of <i>Dukkha</i> as suffering is not entirely accurate. It can also be translated as unsatisfactory. Buddhists do not claim that all life is painful • Make it clear that Siddhatta Gotama should not be considered to be the Buddha until after his enlightenment • Ensure pupils understand that meditation practices differ not only in practice but also in intention. The aim of Christian meditation is very different from that of the Buddhist • Ensure pupils understand that karma for Buddhists is not exactly the same as for Hindus • Ensure that pupils understand that the Noble Eightfold path is not a path in the sense that you take one step at a time. It is more like a single path with eight aspects to it • Ensure pupils understand that Buddhists do not worship the Buddha when bowing before a statue or image of him. It is more a matter of showing respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call Buddhist atheists. They do have ideas about 'a realm of the gods' but do not have a concept of God as in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Better described as 'non-theistic'. • Imply that all Buddhists are celibate monks or nuns wearing yellow robes. Monks and nuns wear different coloured robes, e.g. Tibetans wear wine or gold, Zen wear black or brown • Use the term 'begging bowl.' It suggests monks are parasitic. Use the term 'alms bowl' instead • Use the word reincarnation (unless carefully qualified), for it strictly speaking indicates that a soul is reborn. Buddhists do not believe in a permanent soul or self and prefer the term rebirth • Equate the 5 and 10 precepts with commandments. They are more like guidelines or 'a training manual.'

Some recommended 'Do and Don'ts' when teaching about Hinduism

Do	Do not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure pupils grasp the idea of one God Brahman held by many Hindus • take care when using photographs of holy men and ascetics as some e.g. men caked in mud or looking very thin and emaciated may give a bad impression of Hinduism • Take care when speaking about those classed as outcastes or dalits as their treatment is a is a very sensitive area for Hindus • Use the spelling Rama for one of the avatars of the god Vishnu. Although the term Ram is sometimes found 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest that all Hindus are polytheists (those who believe in many gods) • Use the term 'idol' for the images (murtis), of the gods and goddesses as this suggest that Hindus worship them rather than what they represent • Refer to the three gods Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu (the Trimurti), as a Trinity • Oversimplify and so distort and trivialise the idea of reincarnation by suggesting that a person may become a fly in their next life. For Hindus, any change of species is a very long process over many different lives.

Some recommended 'Do's and Don'ts' when teaching about Sikhism

Do	Do not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take care when displaying shorts (kacchera), to avoid amusement. If pupils see a martial arts outfit (a gi), first of all they may come to appreciate the significance of the shorts for earlier Sikhs as loose fitting garments, useful in battle • When visiting a gurdwara, pupils should know that they will may be offered kara parshad to eat and that it would be viewed as impolite to throw it away • Ensure pupils understand that the Gurus are not seen as gods or as divine • When showing images of Guru Nanak, use pictures rather than small statues as for some Sikhs, they are too similar to Hindu murtis, (statues of the gods) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to the Amrit ceremony as a 'Sikh baptism' • Refer to the kirpan as a dagger, rather call it a sword • Draw the kirpan fully out of its sheath as Sikhs believe it should only be withdrawn if it is to be used • Refer to the chauri as a fly whisk • Refer to the kara as a simply bracelet or bangle as it could suggest that it is merely a decorative or an item of fashion. Use the term 'steel band' • Suggest that Sikhs worship Guru Nanak or any of the Gurus.

Pupils should study all the principal religions by the end of key stage 3 and at least one principal religion of eastern origin by the end of the primary phase. **It is important that schools take account of the faith profile of their pupils when planning their Religious Education programme.** However, it is also important that schools teach the religion(s) recommended at each key stage to maintain balance of provision and promote respect and understanding among pupils of all faiths and none. The recommendations secure within them flexibility and choice so that schools can take account of all the various factors and provide a relevant and appropriate Religious Education programme customised to their particular context.

Key Stage 1: Christianity and **at least one other** principal religion (Hinduism is recommended as the principal religion, Judaism as a subsidiary)
 A religious community with a significant presence locally, where appropriate
 A secular world view, where appropriate

Key Stage 2: Christianity and **at least two other** principal religions (Judaism and Islam are recommended, Sikhism is introduced at a subsidiary level to provide a 'bridging unit' for transition to year 7.)
 A religious community with a significant locally, where appropriate
 A secular world view, where appropriate

Key Stage 3: Christianity and **at least two other** principal religions (Sikhism and Buddhism are recommended).
 In addition **at least one other** principal religion studied in the primary phase should be revisited (Hinduism **OR** Islam)
 A religious community with a significant presence locally, where appropriate
 A secular world view, where appropriate

Ages 14-19: Religious Education should be taught through accredited qualifications and syllabuses for these will determine the faiths to be studied

The above are minimum requirements for each key stage. Schools may teach aspects of additional principal religions or world views should they so wish, for example for comparative purposes.