

## Combating Racism and Promoting Respect through Religious Education

Part of the contribution that religious education (RE) makes to the whole area of pupils' personal development is nurturing the development of positive attitudes towards other people. This includes encouraging respect for the rights of others to hold beliefs different from one's own and encouraging a positive and open approach to living in a plural society which contains many diverse religious groups.

The Macpherson Report into the death of Stephen Lawrence highlighted the need for education to play a leading part in combating and reducing prejudice and racism in society. Schools, along with other public services and agencies are required to have an anti-racism policy, many of which set out the contributions that various subjects of the curriculum can make.

RE has a significant part to play through promoting attitudes of open enquiry, respect for diversity, appreciation of cultural richness and pursuit of such ideals as justice, truth and equality for all people. The local, national and global context of RE means that learning to live in communities that are both ethnically and religiously plural is a necessary life skill to teach and nurture in pupils. Building a society in which all are treated fairly, whatever their beliefs or ethnic heritage, is a goal which finds support from members of all religions and those of no religion.

In the UK, there are approximately 3 million people who belong to minority ethnic groups and a similar number are members of religions other than Christianity. Therefore, preparation for adult life as a citizen of the UK is preparation to live in pluralist communities within a diverse society. Religions themselves are ethnically plural; Christians or Muslims or Buddhists may also be identified with many different ethnic groups in the UK and globally.

This guidance is to support teachers in making a significant contribution to pupils' personal development in this area and support the school's anti-racist policy. RE can:

- draw attention to the pluralist nature of society locally, nationally and globally and teach about the cultural richness of diversity
- secure opportunities for pupils to consider how racism damages individuals, communities and society
- raise pupils awareness of issues of race, prejudice, discrimination and equality
- enable pupils to reflect on their own attitudes to the above issues
- teach pupils about the lives and impact of opponents of racism from different religions and consider what can be learned from them

- enable pupils to develop skills for living in ethnically and religiously plural communities
- provide opportunities for pupils to develop attitudes of commitment to fairness and awareness of the needs of individuals and communities
- offer positive role models from many religious, ethnic and cultural groups

Since the events of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, and 7<sup>th</sup> July 2004, it is imperative that RE ensures that it actively addresses a key aim of the subject, that of fostering respect for all faiths and their adherents. RE teaching should promote and encourage desirable attitudes in pupils in this area by helping them to:

- respect the right of other people to hold views different from their own
- understand other people's beliefs, including those of Christians and the impact of these beliefs on people's values, identity and culture
- take an open view to other people's beliefs and where there are disagreements, conduct discussion and debate in a respectful and courteous manner
- recognise the potential dangers of some traditions such as the occult
- question prejudice and ridicule against specific adherents eg. Jehovah's Witnesses

If 'teaching for respect or tolerance' is to be effective then encounter, engagement and evaluation are critical elements in pupils' learning about faith and faiths. The following approaches will support the development in pupils of the points identified above:

- ensure that resources, particularly visual resources, do not portray a stereotypical view of a religion. Resources often define a religion in terms of its most traditional denomination, giving the impression that traditions upheld by a few represent universal practices. Equally, ensure that visual resources do not substantiate existing prejudices by portraying people of faith in activities that pupils might find amusing
- build on existing good practice by making connections between pupils' experiences and the experiences of believers as a path to understanding eg. a simple parallel with a pilgrimage might be visiting the grave of a family member on their anniversary
- make ideas rather than practices the focus of the curriculum. Most pupils in non-religious schools do not adhere to a faith, thus practices such as pilgrimages, rites of passage, sacred texts etc. do not fall within their experience. Religious ideas about God, life, mortality, death and the universe are more challenging than the usual KS3 diet and more likely to engage teenagers

who have a natural interest in these matters. Teachings present religions in a more sophisticated light than do practices

- if pupils are to study 'exemplars of the faith', ask them to research people in their own community who are motivated by their faith to work for the common good. This might have a greater impact than the study of someone such as Mother Teresa whose life, though admirable, is unlikely to be seen as an accessible model by teenagers
- create opportunities for pupils to meet and talk with members of faith communities. This is usually more effective than watching videos. In areas with few minority ethnic groups, visits to faith communities or exchange visits to schools in more multi-faith, multi-ethnic areas can be arranged and e-mail links with pupils in such schools can be established

The advocacy of these aims and accompanying classroom practice raise a number of practical questions and issues which need to be considered and thought through by teachers. These include:

- although theoretically respect is due to every individual as a member of the human family, it is not always possible to respect what people do or what they stand for eg. Hitler or Harold Shipman - how does one draw the distinction for oneself and then help others, particularly young people to do so?
- challenging racism may well mean challenging family values. Should, and if so how should, a teacher judge what family values to challenge and which to support and encourage?
- RE can only make a limited contribution on this issue. The RE department can only be effective in combating racist attitudes or 'phobic dreads' such as Islamophobia if the whole school has and implements a rigorous anti-racist policy
- RE generally presents religion and religions positively. How much should RE teachers acknowledge the present and historic appeal to religion in support of violence and war?
- RE teachers do not treat religions in the same way. For example, when studying Christianity pupils will be introduced to biblical criticism, rationalisation of miracles and questions about the literal truth of the bible. Other religions, notably Islam are not treated in the same way. What common principles should be adopted when teaching about any religion? eg. emphasis on the educational nature of the subject; adopting a subjective or objective perspective etc.

## Religious Education and Inclusion : Gifted and Talented Pupils

### Characteristics

In Religious Education gifted and talented pupils will display characteristics generic to literate subjects such as English eg. insight, curiosity, imagination, creativity, reflection, empathy, discernment, sensitivity, awareness, originality etc. Similarly, gifted and talented pupils will demonstrate a higher level of acquisition or possession of generic skills eg. the ability to: listen intently, understand complexity quickly, express personal views confidently, receive responses of others sensitively and respond appropriately, lead in oral and group work, grasp and understand abstract concepts eg. the holy spirit/God, understand the limitations and meanings within religious language eg descriptions /characteristics of God, see connections between things eg. belief and practice, read well and with understanding and meaning, respond intelligently and sensitively to religious language - its metaphors and poetry etc, write well and have a high level of appreciation of writing for a variety of audiences, express outcomes in a creative, unusual and imaginative way to maximise impact, possess an extensive general and subject vocabulary, use previous knowledge effectively to inform new learning, have and develop interesting and unusual ideas and so on.

### Skills

There are no skills that are exclusive to RE but some which are particularly relevant and related to the Aims of the Agreed Syllabus are given below with examples of expectations of gifted and talented pupils.

### Investigation

- ask searching questions
- know how to use different sources to gather information
- know what may constitute evidence for understanding religion

### Interpretation

- draw meaning from artefacts, art, poetry and symbolism
- interpret religious language meaningfully
- suggesting and identify meanings in religious texts

### Reflection

- personal feelings and those of other people
- articulate thoughts and feelings
- relationships and their own experience and draw meaning from these
- ultimate questions and the response of religion to these
- religious beliefs and practices

### **Empathy**

- consider thoughts, feelings, experiences, attitudes, beliefs, needs, desires, hopes, aspirations, motivation and values of themselves and other people
- develop the power of imagination to identify feelings/emotions such as love, wonder, forgiveness and sorrow
- see the world through the eyes of others and issues from their point of view

In addition to such skills there are certain attitudes which are fundamental to RE in that they are prerequisites for entering fully into the study of religion and learning from that experience. Within each, gifted and talented pupils might be expected to demonstrate or develop these earlier and in greater depth than other pupils.

### **Attitudes**

#### **Self-understanding**

- develop a mature sense of identity, self-worth and value
- develop the capacity to discern the personal relevance of religious questions
- develop self-confidence, allowing recognition that there are a variety of ways of expressing beliefs and ideas
- develop a set of personal values on which to base moral and ethical decisions

#### **Enquiry**

- show curiosity and a desire to seek after truth
- develop a personal interest in metaphysical questions
- possess an ability to live with ambiguities and paradox
- possess a desire to search for meaning in life
- be prepared to reconsider existing views
- be prepared to acknowledge bias and prejudice in themselves
- show willingness to value insight and imagination as ways of perceiving reality
- perceive a sense of mystery in the world

#### **Commitment**

- understand the importance of commitment to a set of values by which to live
- possess a positive approach to life
- demonstrate the ability to learn while living with uncertainty

#### **Fairness**

- listen to the views of other people without prejudging their own response
- consider carefully the views of other people
- show willingness to consider evidence and argument
- show readiness to look beyond surface impressions
- possess an 'openness' which allows recognition that many issues concerned with beliefs and values are by nature controversial and ambiguous

### **Respect**

- respect for those who have different customs and beliefs from their own
- recognise the rights and freedom of other people to hold their own views
- avoid ridiculing other people or their beliefs and way of life
- discern what is worthy of respect and what is not
- show willingness to learn from the insights of other people
- appreciate that people' religious convictions are often deeply felt
- recognise the needs, feelings, concerns and desires of other people

### **Evaluation**

- demonstrate the ability to debate issues of religious significance with reference to evidence and argument
- weigh the respective aims of self interest, consideration for others, religious teaching and individual conscience

### **Analysis**

- distinguish between opinion, belief and fact
- distinguish between the features of different religions
- demonstrate the ability to ask 'religious' questions or ask questions in a religious way

### **Synthesis**

- link significant features of religion together in a coherent pattern
- connect different aspects of life into a meaningful whole

### **Application**

- make associations between religions and individual, community, national and international life
- identify key religious values and their interplay with secular ones

### **Expression**

- demonstrate the ability to explain concepts, rituals and practices
- demonstrate the ability to identify and articulate matters of deep conviction and concern,  
and to respond to religious issues through a variety of media

**Gifted and talented pupils might be able to:**

**At age 7**

- retell religious stories imaginatively and creatively
- identify religious beliefs teachings and practices and recognise that they are characteristics of more than one religion
- show understanding of meanings in religious symbols, language and stories
- recognise and accept that there are some mysteries and life questions to which there are no certain answers
- respond sensitively to the feelings and experiences of others
- identify their own values and responses to situations clearly and recognise that peers have values and concerns which are different from their own eg. in relation to religious and moral issues and accept these as valid

**At age 11**

- describe the key beliefs and teachings of religions studied accurately and see connections between these and other features of them, eg. events and stories
- make comparisons between religions studied and demonstrate awareness of key differences as well as similarities
- demonstrate understanding of what belonging to a religion involves and the influence of faith on the living and values of religious believers
- use technical religious vocabulary accurately
- explain the meanings within some religious stories, symbols and language
- show awareness of how religious beliefs, ideas and feelings can be expressed in a variety of forms and suggest new and different forms for some of these expressions
- ask profound questions
- suggest answers to some of life's puzzling questions, moral, ethical and social issues from their own and others' experiences
- empathise with the religious experiences of key religious figures and believers generally
- show understanding of why certain things are considered right or wrong

**At age 14**

- use their knowledge and understanding of religions studied to explain some of the key differences of belief, teaching, tradition and expression between religions and denominations within faith traditions eg. Christianity
- see and explain the connection between beliefs and behaviour for religious people
- understand and accept that believers are not always 'true to their faith' in how they live
- evaluate religious and other views on human identity, experience, questions of meaning and purpose and values and commitments

- compare their own views on these and their responses to eg. ethical and moral dilemmas with religious views and show understandings of why these might be different
- show awareness of how studying and exploring the nature of religious faith might inform their own living even though they may not 'believe' in the traditional religious sense

#### **At age 16+**

- analyse and account for the influence of religious beliefs and teaching on individuals, communities and society
- show understanding of how and why the views, practice and lifestyle of believers from the same religious tradition might be different
- show understanding of how and why sacred texts, language and symbolism might be interpreted differently within the same religious tradition and thus lead to different forms of expression

#### **Exceptional performance**

- pupils distinguish and investigate different interpretations of the nature of religious belief and teaching, giving a balanced analysis of their sources, validity and significance; the importance for believers of religious practices and lifestyles and of the issues raised by their diversity within a plural society; and the meaning of language in religion in the light of philosophical questions about its status and function
- pupils place religious and non-religious views of human identity and experience, the nature of reality and religious and ethical theories concerning contemporary moral issues within a comprehensive religious and philosophical context and make independent, well-informed and reasoned judgements about their significance

#### **Range of methods for identification**

- curriculum tests
- Ability Profile tests
- teachers' assessment and personal knowledge of individual pupils
- teacher nomination
- classroom observation
- pupils' oral and written work - responses to questions and their own questions eg. Quality and depth of responses to open-ended questions
- subject specific checklists
- generic checklists
- reading and creativity tests
- educational psychologists
- parents and peers
- personal nomination

## **Enhancing provision**

### **In the classroom**

- ensuring that learning from religion is at least equally addressed in relation to learning about religion in schemes of work, teachers' planning and classroom practice
- planning for the enrichment of gifted and talented pupils in schemes of work
- creating a stimulating and affective classroom environment
- creating appropriate pupil groupings
- using various forms of differentiation eg. pace, task, dialogue, support outcome, content, responsibility and particularly effective is by resource
- setting differentiated homeworks
- adopting an experiential approach to learning eg. use of artefacts
- visits from religious believers from various traditions
- promoting thinking skills in RE following guidelines within this syllabus based on University of the First Age (UFA) materials

### **Beyond the classroom**

- an out of school RE group
- use of the resource centre and libraries for enrichment materials
- out of school activities eg. visits to faith communities
- use of gifted and talented pupils who are involved in a faith community to deliver areas of the curriculum
- contributing to eg. a school based newspaper

## Religious Education and Inclusion : Special Educational Needs

The Government has clearly stated its determination to reduce children's disaffection with schooling and ensure as far as possible, that all children have the opportunity to achieve the highest standards of which they are capable.

The Kent SACRE is firmly committed to the 'Inclusion agenda' and recognises that Religious Education (RE), has an important contribution to make. This agreed syllabus has therefore been prepared in such a way as to enable teaching and learning in RE to make a positive contribution to an inclusive education for all learners.

The statutory requirements and guidance on Inclusion for schools apply to all subjects of the 'basic curriculum', which includes RE. The statutory inclusion statement sets out three principles that are essential to developing a more inclusive curriculum:

- setting suitable learning challenges
- responding to the diverse needs of children
- overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups

(NC handbook 2000: Key Stages 1&2 pp 30-37; 3&4 pp 32-39).

The QCA document 'Planning, Teaching and Assessing the Curriculum for Children with Learning Difficulties - Religious Education' published in 2001, sets out clear and sound advice and guidance on how RE might be most effectively approached with children who have special educational needs (SEN).

There is clear evidence that RE makes some distinctive and positive contributions to the academic standards achieved by all children generally and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their personal development in particular.

Teaching and learning in RE for children with SEN are generally underdeveloped, yet the subject can make a powerful contribution to the learning and development of children with a range of personal and learning difficulties.

Teachers can make RE more accessible to children by:

- recognising RE as an entitlement for all children, valuing its contribution and therefore approaching and teaching it with the same professional integrity as all other subjects

- using children's own experiences of difficulty to explore and understand profound concepts in RE such as evil and suffering
- building on children's own interests and activities and recognising their intuitive responses to religious issues
- being sensitive to the variety of children's understanding of religious concepts and their use of 'religious' language
- allowing children to engage with explicitly religious material eg. through use of sensory resources and personal first-hand experiences
- prompting use of the arts to help children express themselves and valuing their achievements through creative forms of assessment and recording

Expectations of standards and attainment and achievement in RE for children in special schools and those identified with SEN in mainstream schools will be different. In RE, as in any subject, teachers need to provide equal opportunities in learning through adopting a flexible approach and matching the challenge of work to individual learners' needs. Effective differentiation is dependent on planning, teaching and learning methods and assessment. This requires:

- an understanding by teachers of the way in which children learn
- matching work to children's previous experience
- an understanding of factors which may hinder or prevent children learning
- careful analysis of the knowledge and skills which comprise learning tasks
- structured teaching and learning which will help children to achieve and to demonstrate their learning outcomes
- providing imaginative learning experiences which arouse and sustain interest
- supporting the learning which takes place in RE by what is taught in other curriculum areas

Planning is crucial for it enables work to be tailored to individual children's needs eg. through Individual Education Plans (IEPs), which may require a focus on communication, social, sensory or other skills to which RE can make a considerable contribution.

Good planning will provide for:

- the range of ability in the group, with appropriate differentiated activities
- the past and present experience of children
- the family background of children
- the individual needs of children, including their special educational needs
- a range of opportunities to assess progress and report to parents

The QCA document sets out a range of possible teaching and learning approaches for children with special educational needs at each key stage, related to the DfEE/QCA scheme of work for RE (2000). These opportunities and activities

suggest a variety of ways of recording children's achievement which could, within one level of the 8 level scale or a 'P' level include recognition of children's responses to:

- experiencing an activity
- developing awareness or skills through an activity
- using the senses in different ways
- exploring artefacts, experiences, stories, music and other stimulus materials

The use of the 8 level scale and P levels should enable teachers to:

- plan future work with objectives, tasks and learning experiences appropriate to children's ability and development
- ensure continuity and progression to the next stage
- set appropriate RE targets for children's personal IEPs
- recognise children's levels of engagement and response

The new National Qualifications framework provides for entry level qualifications to accredit the achievement of students at 16 whose achievement is below that of GCSE. Entry level qualifications in RE/RS are available from several awarding bodies. These accreditation routes award grades of pass, merit and distinction roughly equivalent to National Curriculum levels 1, 2 and 3. These qualifications may allow appropriate forms of assessments for children with special needs. Local collaboration between special schools and other schools can provide support for the use of such accreditation.

This agreed syllabus in seeking to respond positively to the high expectations associated with the SEN inclusion agenda has identified 'P' (pre) levels, based on QCA guidance, to evaluate children's attainment. These are for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) : statemented and non-statemented; those with learning difficulties; those with physical and sensory difficulties and those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is important for all teachers to have these performance descriptions since it is increasingly common for children with special educational needs to be educated in mainstream schools.

However, teachers in special schools should use their expertise to modify and adapt the Programmes of Study to meet the range of needs of the children, particularly those with profound and multiple learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties. Similarly, activities to explore the content of the Programmes of Study will need to meet children's needs, for example, it may be necessary to use specialist equipment to make experiences meaningful for children with sensory and physical disabilities.

There are performance descriptions for 8 P levels; P level 8 leads into mainstream level 1. The performance descriptions focus mainly, though not exclusively, on Aim 2, which is entirely appropriate for children operating at this stage of development. All children can be included and participate in some way and be challenged and stimulated through RE in a non-threatening learning context.

**The P levels are set out of follows:**

- P levels 1 – 3 expected early development across the curriculum generally
- P levels 4 – 8 expected development related to RE

**P level performance descriptions:**

- P1** children are beginning to show awareness of self and give physical attention to carer/teacher; beginning to demonstrate sensory awareness in relation to everyday objects, materials and activities eg. smile, show pleasure, reflex responses to sensory stimuli
- P2** children show reactive responses to familiar people and objects eg. reaching and holding objects, smiling, reacting to own name or familiar voices. They make sounds or gestures to express simple needs, wants and feelings to familiar people in response to their immediate environment
- P3** children respond appropriately using senses, body language, facial expression and gesture to familiar people, routines, activities and actions and to their 'self' eg. reflection. They explore or manipulate objects, toys and artefacts and respond to stimuli eg. changing facial expression or body language in response to music, light, scents and objects
- P4** children can listen and respond to familiar religious stories, eg parables through drama activities and show some awareness that these stories are connected to particular 'special' books. They can communicate through sounds, facial expressions and body language, their feelings and response to eg. religious music, songs, rhymes. Children sometimes engage in activities alongside others eg. drama or circle time. They sometimes show interest in their immediate environment, which might include, eg. religious artefacts, lighted candles, stained glass windows (on a visit), songs, music, rhymes, colours, food, textures, chants, prayers and dance
- P5** children show awareness through gestures, sounds, facial expression and body language of family celebrations such as birthdays and religious festivals such as Christmas and special days in the school year. They can interact appropriately with people, objects, sounds and events in various

- contexts, eg. circle time, assemblies, a quiet area or visiting a place of worship. Children show some understanding of religious stories and words; curiosity about some religious objects and symbols and are able to match, group and sort with help familiar words, pictures, signs and symbols
- P6** children demonstrate some sense of awe and wonder through exploration of the natural world and care for living or special things eg. an animal or special book or object. They show increasing awareness of special times and events in their own lives, the life of the school and the local community. Children show increasing understanding and recognition of familiar religious stories, prayers, music and artefacts and they are able to, for example, ask simple questions about these and communicate simple ideas about them to others
- P7** children show a growing awareness of their own 'self', gifts, talents and abilities and of others, showing sensitivity to their needs and feelings, for example, through contributing appropriately in one-to-one and group situations. They show concern and care for living things and respect for religious things eg. handling artefacts with care. Children can follow stories and prayers and begin to use simple but relevant religious language appropriately and can match relevant words and artefacts to a topic, eg. baptism, appropriately
- P8** children show curiosity and engagement through taking an active part in looking at religious material and they show sensitivity by, for example, careful handling of artefacts and attentiveness to music. Children can communicate meaning in various ways, eg. pictures, words, symbols, sounds and show increasing understanding through sequencing familiar stories and associating particular sounds, smells, colours and textures to religious activity, eg. worship. Children develop a growing religious vocabulary with which to compare religious people, material and values with themselves and their own lives