



Northern Ireland
Curriculum

Religious Education in Primary Schools

Non-Statutory Guidance Materials

[MAIN MENU](#)

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About this Resource

These non-statutory guidance materials have been prepared to help teachers in primary schools to make effective use of the Northern Ireland Core Syllabus for Religious Education and to assist curriculum leaders and co-ordinators in their planning for RE throughout the school. They offer advice and suggestions on how to develop themes and topics from the core syllabus and to teach them using approaches and activities that teachers are familiar with from other areas of the curriculum. The core syllabus topics for primary schools focus on Christianity but schools may also include material from other religious traditions and some references to these have been included in these guidance materials. Despite its slightly different legal status, RE should, in practical terms, be as much a part of the curriculum as all the other Areas of Learning. We hope that the suggestions found here will, over time, enrich the teaching and learning in relation to Religious Education (RE) in your school.

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Acknowledgements



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Rewarding Learning

Religious Education in Primary Schools

Non-Statutory Guidance Materials

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1.1 Introduction

Non-Statutory Guidelines on RE in the Primary School

RE in the primary school can be defined as being about developing children’s awareness and understanding of religion. It focuses on encouraging each child to become informed and inquisitive about their own religious beliefs and practices and those of others. This is so that, over time, they will grow as citizens of a religiously and culturally diverse local and global society, aware of similarities and respectful of differences.

An awareness and understanding of religion should help children to:

- make sense of the world around them;
- think about universal human questions;
- begin to shape their own attitudes and values;
- be aware of and respect the different views of others;
- understand the important routines of life for many people, such as worship or prayer, or seasonal festivals;
- be aware of how people mark important stages of life such as birth, growing up into adulthood and death; and
- develop an understanding of how moral choices are made.

The purpose of these non-statutory guidelines is to help teachers to relate their teaching of RE more clearly to the objectives and approaches of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. This will include linking RE to the processes of Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities as well as encouraging teachers to make full use of cross-curricular approaches and active learning and teaching methods.

The Northern Ireland Core Syllabus for RE at primary level focuses particularly on the beliefs, practices and teachings of the Christian faith, mostly because the Judaeo-Christian traditions and scriptures have affected the history and structures of society in the UK and Ireland more than any other religion. This should be balanced, however, with the growing need of children to develop broad intercultural competencies in their awareness and understanding of religion.

While the core syllabus for primary schools is concerned mainly with Christianity, it also states that primary children should ‘be aware of and have respect for differing cultures and faiths’ (Core Syllabus for RE, Foundation Stage, Learning Objective 3: Morality, Key Stage 2). Such an approach is encouraged by the Department of Education (DE) and is already the policy and practice of a growing number of primary schools. Thus these guidelines relate to both the core syllabus and to topics ‘beyond the core’ that schools are encouraged to teach.

The examples of activities have also been broadened to include a range of world religions to more fully reflect the religious diversity which children experience in society, in the media and increasingly in the classrooms of Northern Ireland. This approach is designed to support, develop and improve the use of the core syllabus in Northern Ireland’s primary schools.

Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) as a new area of learning within the Northern Ireland Curriculum also requires teachers to provide opportunities for the exploration of cultural similarities and differences including religious diversity. There are significant overlapping areas between RE and PDMU, but RE remains a distinct area because it provides opportunities for specific attention to be given to religious beliefs and practices.

RE is often linked to *spiritual understanding*, which is listed as one of the Curriculum Objectives and defined simply as helping children to ‘develop a sense of awe and wonder about the world around them’. While spiritual awareness is not exclusively synonymous with religious awareness, it is a significant dimension of it for many people.

Many of the issues touched on briefly in this introduction are dealt with in more detail in other sections. A useful way of using these guidelines would be to base a number of staff development sessions around them – first for the RE co-ordinator or co-ordinating group, and then for the whole staff. Some sections are presented in a discursive format that could be particularly helpful in encouraging discussion, particularly in issues that may bring up different points of view and teaching approaches.

1.2 A Rationale for RE: Issues for Discussion

Consider the ideas in the following paragraphs and use them as a basis for discussion with senior management, with the whole-staff team, and with the Board of Governors.

In the not too distant past it was widely assumed that Northern Ireland, like the rest of the UK and Ireland and much of Europe, was a largely Christian society with very little diversity other than the differences between Christian denominations. RE was therefore understood as essentially 'Christian education'. However, in recent decades society has become much more culturally and religiously plural. This has happened on a local and global level, and RE has been adapted accordingly in many countries and regions.

While RE in Catholic-maintained and voluntary schools continues to focus significantly on faith nurture, some teachers in other kinds of schools remain uncertain about what is now expected of them in relation to RE. Should they teach Christianity (or any other religion) as truth, whether or not they themselves are practising members of a faith? Is RE about promoting a particular set of beliefs, or even religion in general, or is it about presenting information objectively? Many teachers, including those in church schools, may have concerns about how or whether to try to include children from minority religious (or non-religious) backgrounds in RE. These and many other questions may make some teachers, especially those without specialist knowledge or qualifications, very cautious about how they teach RE. This can be a particular concern for primary school teachers who normally have to teach all areas of the curriculum to their class.

The purpose of this section is to encourage teachers towards a professional and inclusive approach to RE, whatever their personal beliefs may be, and to raise issues for whole-staff discussion.

Why Should We Teach RE?

Unlike most other areas of the curriculum, RE has often been regarded as controversial, with some people questioning whether it should be included at all in publicly funded schools. For this reason it is important that schools are able to articulate a clear rationale for including RE on soundly *educational* grounds. A statement included at the start of a school's RE policy may be helpful, and it may be wise to include such a statement on the school website.

It could be suggested that the main reason why religion should be included in education is because it exists! It is an aspect of life, of human experience. Some children are members of religious communities and are brought up by their families to learn and practise a particular faith. Other children encounter religion in various ways: even if they or their families are not practising members of any religious faith, they are aware of churches, mosques, synagogues or other religious buildings, perhaps in their locality, in the media, on the internet or on holiday; they hear people talking about religious characters or events; they may attend special occasions such as weddings, funerals or festivals in religious places of worship; many stories, novels, songs, films, paintings and theatre performances include references to religious places or ideas. RE should help children to explore these aspects of life and to see how they relate to other parts of human experience.

In order to offset any parental or public concerns it may also be important to add some clarification about what RE is not trying to do. Parents in all kinds of schools should be reassured that school RE is not attempting to change or convert their children. It should be clear to parents that the school's task is one of religious *education* rather than religious *instruction* or *indoctrination*. Church schools (or other faith schools) will probably wish to add something about faith nurture to such a statement based on their own permitted denominational circumstances and ethos, but the principle of an *educational* approach to RE applies to all kinds of schools

Suggested Purposes for RE

These proposed purposes (see below) are offered as a basis for discussion. They are expressed in broad adult terms but must of course be adapted according to the age and developmental level of the children.

RE seeks, over time, to help children and young people:

- to explore and understand religion in its various expressions;
- to develop an awareness of religious language and religious practices;
- to explore the links between religious belief, ethical or moral issues and shared human values;
- to understand how religion can be a powerful influence, positively or negatively, on people's lives, individually and in communities;
- to value and respect religious diversity and to learn how to live with it in a shared society;
- to be aware of the importance of feelings and emotions in religion;
- to develop an understanding of spirituality; and
- to develop skills in discussing religious and ethical or moral issues.

Therefore the general purposes of RE could be seen as helping children, over their time at school, to develop:

- awareness (having some knowledge about religion);
- understanding (over time and with maturity);
- sensitivity (to a range of people's beliefs and feelings);
- respect (for differing religious traditions and ideas);
- openness (to the possibility of new ideas); and
- reflection and critical ability (the capacity to evaluate and discuss religious ideas).

Teachers in schools where denominational or confessional teaching is permitted may, of course, wish to add other matters to this list and in particular to outline how their overall approach to RE may include aspects of faith nurture.

Learning *About* and Learning *From* Religion

On the basis of the suggested purposes listed above, RE might be described in an increasingly plural society **as education in the awareness and understanding of religion.**

- This is not the same as the promotion of religious beliefs (although some types of schools are permitted to include this in their approach to RE).
- This is not just providing facts or information about religion, which might imply a dispassionate, purely descriptive approach, because religion is also about feelings, attitudes and beliefs, and therefore needs to take into account the affective dimensions of human experience. In some other parts of the UK and Europe it has become common to express this in terms of the balance between learning about religion and learning from religion.

Learning about religion can be understood as the knowledge base of RE: developing an awareness of religions and religious ideas, and an understanding of religious language, terminology and concepts.

Learning from religion can be understood as the affective or values dimension of religious learning: being able to reflect on ideas and to discuss and evaluate them, developing attitudes, making judgements, and listening to the views of others.

Similarities, Differences and RE

Learning about religion should involve exploring those forms of religion which are most common and familiar in a particular society along with some less familiar aspects of religion. If children only learn about or from their own religion, denomination, belief or culture, it will be hard for them to develop an appreciation or understanding of their classmates or fellow citizens who are religiously and culturally different from them. This process of exploring and valuing difference as a means of countering stereotyping and prejudice is now widely recognised as an important aspect of education in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. It is a major focus of other curriculum areas such as PDMU, and is just as essential in RE. It is also a significant aspect of **learning from religion.**

Research (Connolly et al., 2002) has shown that pre-school children are aware of difference and that if this is not dealt with by positive interventions it can lead to a hardening of negative attitudes as children grow older. In Northern Ireland, where many children from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds still attend largely or wholly separate schools, it will be especially important for primary RE to help them begin to grow towards a mature awareness of their similarities and differences. Similarly, in an increasingly multicultural society it will be important for primary age children to learn about differences beyond Christianity and to begin to explore other forms of religious expression. The core syllabus provides for a more formal and systematic teaching of world religions at Key Stage 3, but there are many opportunities for beginning that process in an incidental or thematic way in the primary school.

RE, Values and Personal Development

All education is about values and this has been emphasised by the Northern Ireland Curriculum in its focus on the values that underpin the curriculum. RE has a significant part to play in this process. It may help children and young people to consider their attitudes and motivations, to learn about differences between themselves and others, to begin to shape their own opinions, and to make considered ethical judgements.

In terms of the concept of **learning from religion** (see above) RE can contribute a great deal to children's personal development. The subject should, over time, help children to become:

- informed, thoughtful, critically reflective, sensitive; and
- engaged in an open-ended development towards their own mature life stance.

In this sense, primary RE can be seen as a significant contributor to values education along with PDMU and some other areas of the curriculum.

RE and School Ethos

Ethos is of central importance to a school and it is important that RE should make its own positive contribution to this.

Every School A Good School – A Policy for School Improvement states: 'Evidence suggests that schools that are performing well invariably have a strong ethos and a positive, caring culture, one that drives and motivates not just staff and children but also parents and the wider community served by the school.'

(www.deni.gov.uk/esags_policy_for_school_improvement_-_final_version_05-05-2009.pdf).

An earlier Education and Training Inspectorate (ETINI) document *Together Towards Improvement* defines school ethos as the 'discernible and distinctive character, atmosphere and expectations of the school which enable it to promote the all-round development of its pupils.'

(www.etini.gov.uk/together-towards-improvement.pdf)

RE can make a particular contribution to a number of characteristics of good practice identified in both these documents. These include the following:

Climate of the School

- 'Sense of purpose and identity' – through the encouragement of the values of loyalty and inclusion
- 'Quality of the learning environment' – through the provision in RE of a 'welcome and stimulating environment which supports the children's learning and celebrates their academic and non-academic achievements'
- 'Morale and relationships' – through the encouragement of good working relationships at all levels
- 'Expectations of pupils and staff' – through 'high but realistic expectations of what can be achieved...reflected in good standards of work'

- ‘Pupils’ behaviour’ – through helping pupils to gain ‘high levels of confidence and self-esteem’ and through the encouragement of the values of respect, co-operation and responsibility

The Links with Parents

- ‘Communication and information’ – through ensuring that parents are fully aware of the aims, policies and practices of RE in the school
- ‘Involvement in the pupils’ education’ – through the encouragement of parents to become involved with their children’s work, and facilitating input to RE by parents from different faiths, as appropriate

Pastoral Care

- ‘A caring atmosphere’ – through showing ‘a strong commitment to the care and welfare of the pupils’ and through attentive listening to their concerns
- ‘Arrangements for ensuring pupils’ welfare’ – through helping pupils to develop personal and social skills which will ‘help them to respond appropriately to situations affecting their welfare’

RE also supports the whole-school ethos through the development of skills and attitudes in three key areas.

RE supports every pupil to reflect on their own identity as unique human beings through:

- facilitating progressive reflection on the purpose of life;
- promoting an understanding that there is a spiritual dimension to life; and
- encouraging individual gifts and talents.

RE supports every pupil to understand and respect diversity and to appreciate the value of difference and inclusion through:

- encouraging pupils to respect those who are different from them;
- providing opportunities for them to explore the richness of different religious and cultural traditions; and
- celebrating diversity.

RE supports each pupil to play a positive part in society through:

- exploring the values which build community;
- helping them to make reasoned choices while respecting those of others;
- encouraging a willingness to challenge injustice; and
- creating an awareness of environmental issues.

Positive ways in which these three key areas can be supported through RE include the following:

- RE can seek to make a specific contribution to the creation or review of a mission statement, or a statement on the ethos of the school.
- The RE policy, schemes of work, and the timetabling of the subject: these should all reflect the importance of these aspects of ethos.
- Classroom practice: this should help each pupil to acquire a positive and self-confident identity and to accept all forms of diversity.
- Class and whole-school resources, displays and assemblies: these provide an opportunity to celebrate the range of religious and cultural diversity in the school.
- Visitors from a range of religious and cultural backgrounds who can be invited to the school through RE.

Inclusion and Social Cohesion

An important dimension of the ethos of any school, as suggested above, relates to the ways in which the whole-school community deals with issues of diversity and inclusion.

In RE one of the key questions will be how to ensure that children from minority belief backgrounds, their families and those of no religion may be included as much as possible in the school.

In a plural society in which schools welcome families from a variety of minority beliefs as well as those who do not follow any religion, RE, in particular, presents new challenges. The traditional (and legally permissible) option of children being withdrawn from RE classes may not be appropriate or desirable in many circumstances, so teachers will need to consider how best to treat the subject in a way that includes a diverse range of children, rather than exclude some.

This will impact on:

- the content and style of RE teaching and the way in which it is communicated to parents;
- the teacher's sense of fairness and openness and the use of inclusive terminology;
- the school's approach to less familiar religious festivals and holidays;
- issues relating to religious dress, symbolism and dietary requirements;
- the practices put in place for those who do request the right of withdrawal from RE; and
- many other pastoral issues.

These issues will vary in impact and practice from school to school. It is important that they are addressed openly in whole-staff discussion to ensure that in RE the principles of inclusion, openness and the fair treatment of all are upheld, as they are in other areas of the life of the school. If staff are well-informed and clear about the school's policies in relation to these issues it should contribute positively towards a school's commitment to social and community cohesion. It will also help if issues arise relating to sectarianism and racism.

Issues for Discussion and Professional Development

- List the purposes of RE that the teachers in your school believe are appropriate. To what extent do these match the principles suggested above?
- What do you think should be the desired outcomes of school RE?
- How does the effective teaching of RE enhance children's learning and help fulfil the aim and objectives of the Northern Ireland Curriculum?
- What do you think are the key skills to which RE can make an effective contribution?
- To what extent does the discussion above reflect the ways in which RE is taught in your school?
- In what ways does RE in your school contribute to a positive whole-school ethos? Are there ways in which this could be strengthened or improved?
- Consider doing an audit of RE provision in your school. This might include inviting teachers to share their own perspectives on the purposes and scope of RE.
- Work collectively on writing an agreed statement about the purposes of RE that could be presented to parents, for example in a school prospectus or on the school website.

RE and Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Provision in RE for children with SEN should be seen as an important part of an inclusion policy in this subject. Effective learning opportunities should be provided for all children in RE. It should be recognised that developing an RE lesson that is differentiated according to students' needs requires teachers to be creative, and to have a profound knowledge of the students.

Suitable learning challenges should be set. The type and extent of the difficulties experienced by children should be taken into account in planning and assessment. Tasks and materials need to be differentiated to meet the needs of individual children. Teachers should also, when appropriate, use a multisensory approach, and be sensitive to non-verbal modes of communication.

There are actions, relevant to the place of RE in the curriculum, which the teacher may take to support children with moderate, profound and severe learning difficulties. They can also apply this to children whose attainments significantly exceed expected levels.

These might include:

A Relational Approach

Relationships – with others and, for some, with God – are at the centre of RE. Some examples of how this might be expressed in RE by pupils are:

- awareness of self and others through feelings, emotions, senses; awareness of reactions to events; relationships awareness (school, home, community); and awareness of the needs of others and achievements;

- recognising own needs and the needs of others through a recognition of their own worth; self-esteem, own achievements, choice and a purpose in life; awareness of worth and self-esteem in others, caring, sharing, giving, and acknowledging the right of others to have different feelings;
- celebrating life – awareness of personal events; school and home events; festivals and celebrations; and exploring the common elements of religion;
- reflecting on life as a whole – opportunities for stillness and privacy; awareness of belonging; meditation; and awareness of other lifestyles; and
- being helped to manage emotions and behaviour and encouraging an active engagement in learning.

A Multisensory Approach

The selective use of sensory material can be an effective way of communicating and encouraging receptiveness in children. Research suggests that developing a programme built on sensory experiences and activities may help deepen children's awareness of religion. For example:

- the world around me – awareness of the beauty and uniqueness of the natural and man-made world, the sensory world, caring for the world; and
- the numinous (having a strong religious or spiritual quality) sense – developing a sense of mystery and wonder, extending sensory awareness.

Communication

There should be a focus on verbal communication and expressive language. Additional communication such as visual aids, British Sign Language, Makaton signing, and symbols can support many of the children's motivation and engagement. It can also mean an emphasis on physical contact, body language, gesture, movement, eye contact and facial expressiveness. This may involve:

- provision for children who need support with language and literacy;
- the use of vocabulary, both general and subject specific, which is appropriate to both the maturity and intellectual ability of children; and
- use of art and design, music and drama, as these can be of particular help in the development of co-operative skills.

Teachers may also become aware that some children display spiritual insights, knowledge and understanding which indicate a level of performance in RE which exceeds expectations based on their performance in other areas of the curriculum.

Such children should be given opportunities to develop their understanding in ways that are appropriate for them.

For children whose attainment significantly exceeds expected levels, teachers will need to plan suitably challenging work. This may be done by extending the breadth and depth of study of a particular topic.

All teachers should familiarise themselves with the Department of Education's *Community Relations, Equality and Diversity* (CRED) policy, issued in 2011. RE is particularly well placed to contribute to the objectives of the CRED policy, including that of equipping children and young people with the 'skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to develop mutual understanding and recognition of, and respect for, difference' (paragraph 6.3). (See 4.1: Links)

1.3 Contribution of RE to the Northern Ireland Curriculum

Aim, Objectives and Key Elements¹

RE can play an essential part in the personal, moral, cultural and spiritual development of children, while developing those skills, capabilities, attitudes and dispositions which they will need for life and work in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world.

Developing Individuals

The Northern Ireland Curriculum is informed by the pivotal idea of helping young people to achieve personal fulfilment and individual well-being by living successful lives. This means success in worthwhile activities and relationships in which they have freely engaged and which they pursue wholeheartedly.

The key elements associated with this objective include:

- personal understanding;
- mutual understanding;
- personal health;
- moral character; and
- spiritual awareness.

1. Personal Understanding

This key element of the curriculum is informed by the centrality of self-awareness and emotional literacy to the growth of individual self-confidence and self-esteem and, ultimately, to an individual's motivation and capacity to learn, as well as their individual health and happiness.

One of the major aims of education is therefore to contribute to the development of emotionally literate and discerning individuals by helping children and young people to become personally, emotionally and socially empowered to live healthy, safe and fulfilled lives; to recognise their strengths; to be objective about their shortcomings; and to work towards achieving their hopes and dreams with flexibility, patience and resilience.

Throughout the primary stages teachers should help children to:

- develop self-confidence, self-esteem and self-discipline;
- understand their own emotions;
- develop the ability to talk about how they feel;
- develop their motivation to learn; and
- develop their individual creative potential.

Teachers can assist this by providing frequent opportunities, within and beyond the curriculum, for children to consider the challenges of life now and in the future; weigh up situations and opportunities; make judgements about relative worth; cope with change, uncertainty, setbacks and adversity; and become aware that learning and self-development is a lifelong process.

¹ *The Northern Ireland Curriculum Primary*, page 4

RE can play a significant part in promoting personal understanding through enabling pupils to:

- recognise their own uniqueness as human beings;
- discover their self-worth and value;
- develop confidence and responsibility;
- make the most of their abilities;
- feel confident about their own beliefs, opinions and identities and be able to share these without fear of embarrassment or ridicule; and
- develop a realistic and positive sense of their own religious, moral and spiritual selves.

2. Mutual Understanding

This key element of the curriculum is informed by the centrality of relationships to our lives at home, at work and in wider society. If young people are to be successful in life they will need to be able to relate to all sorts of people in all sorts of situations.

Throughout the primary stages teachers should help children to:

- listen to and interact positively with others;
- understand others' feelings and emotions; and
- explore and understand how others live.

Teachers can assist this by providing frequent opportunities, within and beyond the curriculum, for children and young people to work with others in a variety of roles towards shared goals; to appreciate friendship and support; to communicate appropriately and effectively in various contexts; to develop and sustain worthwhile, healthy and caring relationships; to manage interpersonal conflicts and negotiate solutions or appropriate compromises, particularly in situations where values may conflict; to reflect on their own and others' contributions and behaviours; to empathise with others; and to strike an appropriate balance between their own needs and aspirations and those of others.

RE can play a significant part in promoting mutual understanding through enabling pupils to:

- develop good relationships;
- talk about relationships and feelings;
- become increasingly sensitive to the impact of their ideas and behaviour on other people;
- learn about what is fair and unfair, right and wrong;
- consider issues of marriage and family life;
- meet and encounter people whose beliefs, views and lifestyles are different from their own;
- respect the differences between people by learning about the diversity of different religious and ethnic groups and the destructive power of prejudice; and
- challenge sectarianism, discrimination, racism and bullying.

3. Personal Health

This key element of the curriculum is informed by its centrality to individual well-being, the health of families and society now and in the future, and, ultimately, to the economy and the health of the nation. This involves helping children and young people to understand not only their physical health but also their social, mental and emotional needs at different ages; what it takes to develop sound and caring relationships; and to live harmonious and fulfilled lives at home, at school, at work and at leisure.

Throughout the primary stages teachers should help children to:

- have an understanding of healthy eating and the importance of exercise;
- develop positive attitudes towards an active and healthy lifestyle;
- become aware of key issues which affect their physical, social and mental well-being and that of others; and
- develop an awareness of their own personal safety.

Teachers can assist this by providing frequent opportunities within and beyond the curriculum for pupils to consider choices and their consequences, including:

- striking the right balance between sensible enjoyment and risk; and
- developing strategies to resist undue pressure and challenges from peer groups, authority figures, the media and public opinion.

Health can be understood on physical, intellectual, emotional, ethical and spiritual levels. When pupils explore the impact of practices and the ways in which people live their lives, it helps them to make informed choices about ideas and lifestyles. Religions and beliefs can be either life-affirming or damaging in their teaching about the human condition. Evaluating both kinds of beliefs can lead pupils to positive and healthy attitudes. When pupils confront issues such as relationships, drugs, advertising, or violence, they learn how to make wise decisions, to help or advise others and to understand moral or emotional pressures. By gaining an understanding of ideas such as temptation and loneliness, pupils strengthen their understanding of spiritual and moral perspectives on health and well-being.

RE can play a significant part in promoting personal health through enabling pupils to:

- respect the dignity and worth of the human body (their own and others');;
- appreciate the rich diversity of humanity;
- celebrate their sense of identity;
- consider religious teachings and beliefs on drug use and misuse, food and drink and leisure;
- consider and express their own views; and
- explore how love and relationships are valued in Christianity and a variety of faith traditions.

4. Moral Character

This key element of the curriculum is informed by the central need for children and young people to understand the agreed codes of behaviour and values in our society (both explicit and implicit) which govern harmonious, respectful and law-abiding relationships with others and which should inform the way we live our lives.

Throughout the primary stages teachers should help children to:

- develop an awareness of right and wrong;
- develop an awareness of how their actions can affect others;
- understand that values, choices and decisions should be informed by a sense of fairness;
- take responsibility for their actions; and
- develop tolerance and mutual respect for others.

Teachers can assist the development of moral character by providing frequent opportunities, within and beyond the curriculum, for children and young people to consider moral dilemmas that confront people every day in ordinary life (especially those in which there is ambiguity or conflict) which require us to act within a code of moral values. They can help them to weigh up potential actions and their consequences in order to make judgements which are grounded in values and to understand the impact and responsibilities that arise from these.

RE can play a significant role in promoting the development of moral character through enabling pupils to:

- develop an awareness of right and wrong based on a consideration of religious teachings, including the teachings of Jesus from the New Testament;
- recognise the values found in the Bible of truth, justice, trust, love, peace, compassion, forgiveness and reconciliation;
- develop agreed virtues including truth-telling, respect for people, and listening carefully to others;
- understand that choices and decisions should be informed by a sense of fairness;
- explore the influence of family, friends and media on moral choices;
- learn to follow a path through the conflicting demands of faith, family, peers, society, the media and the world of ideas;
- explore how society is influenced by beliefs, teachings, sacred texts and guidance from religious leaders;
- recognise the importance of personal integrity;
- develop tolerance and mutual respect across religious and racial divides;
- recognise that people's rights also imply responsibilities;
- take responsibility for their actions; and
- develop a sensitive conscience.

5. Spiritual Understanding

This key element of the curriculum is informed by our human need for some sense of meaning, purpose and appreciation in our lives, especially in circumstances of adversity, joy, challenge or fear.

Throughout the primary stages teachers should help children to:

- develop a sense of awe and wonder about the world around them;
- develop an inner appreciation of life's purpose; and
- develop the personal strengths and resources to cope with adversity.

Teachers can assist the development of spiritual awareness by providing frequent opportunities, within and beyond the curriculum, for children to reflect on aspects of their personal experience and its meaning to them beyond the material dimension, for example the uniqueness of creation and of themselves as individuals; the aesthetic beauty of their surroundings; the diversity and creativity of humankind; the natural wonder of the earth and space; the experience of love; and their own inner strength in times of need. In particular children need opportunities to reflect appropriately on current and future challenges, such as loss, bereavement, and other forms of stress in order to develop strategies to survive and find resilience and meaning in the face of adversity.

RE can play a lead role in promoting the development of spiritual understanding through enabling pupils to:

- think about themselves, how they relate to other people, to the wider world in which they live and to teachings about God;
- reflect beyond and within themselves on creation and the precious nature of human existence;
- discuss and reflect upon key questions of meaning and truth such as the existence of God, the origins and purpose of the universe, good and evil, life after death;
- discuss feelings and emotions openly;
- recognise and use personal and group gifts and talents;
- develop their gifts of imagination and creativity;
- discover how the creative and expressive arts enable spiritual development;
- develop curiosity and questioning so that their own views on and ideas about religious and spiritual issues can be developed within a secure environment where faith is valued;
- develop a sense of personal significance and belonging;
- develop greater self-awareness and self-esteem;
- consider and explore what people believe about their relationship with God and why it is important to them;
- explore prayer and worship; and
- understand why people feel and express thankfulness to God.

Developing Contributors to Society

What makes for one's own individual fulfilment is closely intertwined with other people's lives. We want children and young people to be concerned for the well-being of others as well as themselves, in their own society and beyond it. With this in mind, the key elements associated with developing children as positive contributors to society include:

- citizenship;
- cultural understanding;
- media awareness; and
- ethical awareness.

1. Citizenship

This key element of the curriculum is informed by the importance of children and young people understanding how our lives are governed and how they can participate using democratic processes to improve the quality of their own lives and that of others.

Throughout the primary stages teachers should help children to:

- become aware of some of their rights and responsibilities;
- become aware of some of the issues and problems in society; and
- contribute to creating a better world for those around them.

Teachers can assist the development of children and young people's concept of citizenship by providing frequent opportunities, within and across the curriculum, for children to think about and experience what it means to act democratically, for example to make democratic choices in class; to play a helpful part in the life of the school; and to act considerately and democratically within their family. They should have opportunities to consider issues of diversity and inclusion, equality and justice, and human rights and social responsibility. They should also have opportunities to make reasoned judgements about the best action to take in particular situations, especially where fairness is being challenged or where values are in conflict and compromise may be required.

RE can play a role in promoting the key element of citizenship through:

- fostering good relationships and respecting the differences between people by learning about the diversity of different ethnic and religious groups and the destructive power of bullying, prejudice, racism and discrimination;
- developing pupils' awareness, knowledge and understanding of diversity in local and global communities, and the need for mutual understanding and respect;
- encouraging and enabling pupils to investigate and think about topical spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and some of the challenges of living in Northern Ireland, *for example responding to sectarianism, religious diversity and the importance of resolving conflict fairly*;
- enabling pupils to justify and defend, orally and in writing, personal opinions about themes *(for example cultural identity, homelessness, disability, unemployment, refugees, wealth and poverty, and issues affecting the elderly)*; and
- exploring the rights, responsibilities and duties of citizens locally, nationally and globally.

RE can also offer pupils a structured forum in which they can:

- voice their questions and hopes;
- engage with major issues affecting their futures and consider the contributions made to these issues by religions and beliefs;
- share opinions and develop an appreciation of different points of view; and
- investigate, discuss and build reasoned arguments, giving them experience of dealing with difference respectfully.

Pupils learn that they can make a difference by engaging with themes such as justice, authority and the environment, by getting involved with their local community, and by meeting and sharing experiences with people of other faiths. Using ICT to discuss these themes with other schools in the UK, Ireland or overseas can help pupils understand that their generation can contribute to and shape the future.

2. Cultural Understanding

This key element of the curriculum is informed by its centrality to how we relate to and appreciate the diversity of human existence, achievement and expression.

Throughout the primary stages teachers should help children to:

- develop an awareness and respect for the different lifestyles of others;
- develop an awareness and respect for similarities and differences in families and people in the wider community;
- understand some of their own and others' cultural traditions; and
- be aware of how we rely on each other.

As part of pupils' cultural development, RE should encourage them to appreciate their own religious and cultural heritage as well as the diversity and richness of other religious and

cultural traditions. RE may include a study of a variety of religious practices and lifestyles and pupils will be encouraged to relate these to aspects of their own lives.

Teachers can assist the development of children and young people's understanding and appreciation of culture by providing frequent opportunities, within and beyond the curriculum, for children and young people to experience cultural diversity in beliefs, customs, dance, drama, food, language, literature, moving image, music and so on. This will help pupils to appreciate how cultures have blended and interwoven to influence society, the economy and environment now and in the past; and to welcome cultural diversity within our own and other societies for the contribution it brings.

RE can play a significant part in promoting cultural understanding through enabling pupils to:

- develop a positive self-identity;
- appreciate the role of belief and tradition in identity and culture;
- develop empathy towards others and show respect for different cultures;
- develop thoughtfulness and sensitivity towards others;
- show acceptance that we are all part of the human race;
- foster a curiosity to learn about and enjoy other cultures as well as their own;
- consider the relationship between religion and culture and how religions and beliefs contribute to cultural identity and practices, and explore this in relation to Northern Ireland;
- consider the place of Christianity within British and Irish culture;
- develop an understanding of Christianity as a worldwide, multicultural faith that has an impact on the lives of millions of people;
- begin to understand Christianity from a global perspective through encounters with people, literature and the creative arts from different cultures;
- appreciate the diversity of cultures within Britain and Ireland;
- explore the damaging effects of prejudice, discrimination, sectarianism and racial stereotyping;
- encounter people, literature, the creative and expressive arts and resources from differing cultures;
- articulate their own views on a range of current issues and show respect for the opinions of others and a willingness to learn from their insights; and
- research, express and discuss personal opinions about issues, problems and events (*for example marches, music, flags, emblems, murals and slogans*) orally and in writing.

3. Media Awareness

This key element of the curriculum is informed by the centrality and influence of all forms of media in modern society. The phenomenal growth of the internet, along with cable, digital, microchip and satellite technologies has expanded our access to and use of all types of media.

Throughout the primary stages teachers should help children to:

- be aware of and use information available to us through all sorts of media; and
- become aware of the potential impact of media in influencing our personal views, choices and decisions.

Teachers can assist the development of young people's media and internet literacy by providing frequent opportunities, within and beyond the curriculum, for young people to use technology effectively; to check the source and veracity of information and the potential motivation of those providing it; and to develop the skills to critically assess the social roles and influence of the media in a modern democracy and a global society.

RE can play a role in promoting the development of media awareness through enabling pupils to:

- explore the influence of the media on moral choices; and
- reflect on how the contemporary media conveys the place of religion in the world, *for example digital media, newspapers, magazines, television and advertisements.*

4. Ethical Awareness

This key element of the curriculum is informed by the need for young people, as individuals, citizens and potential future parents, to understand and respond appropriately to an increasing range of ethical issues arising from scientific, technological and social change.

Throughout the primary stages teachers should help children to:

- become aware of the imbalances in the world around us, at both a local and a global level; and
- become aware of the potential impact of developments upon the lives of others.

Teachers can assist the development of children's ethical awareness by providing frequent opportunities, within and beyond the curriculum, to examine different points of view about ethical issues; to weigh evidence carefully; and to consider choices for action and their consequences.

RE can play a role in promoting the development of ethical awareness through enabling pupils to:

- consider what is of ultimate value to religious believers through studying the key beliefs and teachings from religion about values and ethical codes of practice; and
- study a range of ethical issues, including those that focus on the sanctity of life and human rights to promote religious respect and personal integrity.

Developing Contributors to the Economy and Environment

As they grow older, young people are likely to spend a proportion of their school years in part-time employment and the majority of their adult lives at work, which will impact on the economic choices they make and how they, in turn, impact individually and collectively on the environment. With this in mind, the key elements associated with developing young people as positive contributors to the economy and environment include employability, economic awareness and education for sustainable development.

1. Employability

This key element of the curriculum is informed by the need for all teachers to be aware of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will help children in the future to become effective employees, employers or entrepreneurs.

Throughout the primary stages teachers should help children to:

- develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills;
- develop their aptitudes, abilities and creativity;
- work independently and as a member of a team;
- develop perseverance, initiative and flexibility;
- become willing to take calculated risks when appropriate;
- use critical and creative thinking to solve problems and make decisions; and
- identify the main reasons why people set up their own business.

Teachers can assist preparation for employability and careers learning by providing frequent opportunities, within and beyond the curriculum, to help young people to be creative; to take risks for learning; and to identify and develop their individual talents and interests so that they can pursue the kinds of jobs and careers that in the future may be open to them. It is also important that children are given opportunities to develop the attitudes, knowledge, skills and qualities required in a changing economy, such as enterprise, flexibility, independence, co-operativeness and a willingness to take calculated risks for success.

RE can play a role in promoting the development of employability through enabling pupils to:

- develop awareness of the personal attributes that many employers look for;
- develop awareness of how beliefs, attitudes and lifestyle choices connect to economic well-being;
- discover that the workplace may present them with specific religious issues such as diet, clothing, use of money, use of time for prayer, or values and attitudes; and
- prepare for the world of work by learning about the nature of a contract and the characteristics of trustworthiness, imagination or empathy.

2. Economic Awareness

Economic awareness highlights the need for children to learn how to manage their money and build up savings, and be able to interpret information in order to make informed choices as consumers.

Throughout the primary stages teachers should help children to:

- learn to manage their money and build up savings;
- interpret information in order to make informed choices as consumers;
- develop an understanding of the importance of using resources carefully in the classroom; and
- develop an awareness of some environmental issues.

Teachers can assist the development of children's economic awareness by providing frequent opportunities within and beyond the curriculum to learn about making simple financial decisions and to consider how their money, for example their pocket money, might be spent. It is important that they learn that their decisions can have individual, social and environmental consequences and that they have opportunities to explore the concepts of earnings, expenses and budgeting. It is important too that by learning how to look after money, they begin to understand the benefits of saving. Children should develop an understanding that financial circumstances and standards of living can vary across time and place. They should also have opportunities to explore the different values and attitudes that people have with regard to money.

RE can play a role in promoting the development of economic awareness through enabling pupils to:

- investigate how issues of faith impact on the issues of wealth, debt poverty, gambling, business and investment;
- consider how religious beliefs can inform actions and concerns;
- develop their knowledge and understanding of religious rules on finance matters relating to issues such as charity, stealing, tithing, offerings and so on (see *Living. Learning. Together* – Year 4, Unit 5);
- learn about how to use money responsibly and the importance of giving;
- use their understanding of beliefs and teachings to perceive how economic activity can help or harm humanity, other species and the planet as a whole;
- raise questions about social injustice and inequality, prejudice and discrimination, human rights and fair trade; and
- acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills to live ethically in an increasingly complex economic world.

3. Education for Sustainable Development

This key element of the curriculum is of central importance to informing the way we live now and how we sustain the resources of the planet for future generations.

Throughout the primary stages teachers should help children to:

- appreciate the environment and their role in maintaining and improving it; and
- understand how actions can affect the environment.

Teachers can contribute to education for sustainable development by providing frequent opportunities, within and beyond the curriculum, to help children develop dispositions and values such as curiosity, concern, respect, tolerance and personal responsibility in relation to a range of environmental and global issues. Children should be encouraged to think about the impact of change and development on the environment, on society and on the economy. They could consider questions such as:

- Is the balance right?
- For all?
- For now?
- For the future?
- What can be done to get a better balance?
- How can we play our part?

Pupils can consider the origins and the value of life by studying the ways in which religious beliefs and teachings have influenced attitudes to the environment and other species. This can help them realise the importance of looking after the environment.

RE can play a role in promoting the development of sustainable development through enabling pupils to:

- reflect on and develop their understanding of global issues such as the importance of the environment and climate change;
- consider spiritual issues such as the worth of all living species: human beings, plants and animals; and
- develop a sense of conscience.

1.4 Skills, Attitudes and Dispositions in RE

Skills in RE

RE provides a rich context for the development of a range of skills and capabilities alongside the acquisition of a framework of knowledge and understanding. In addition to the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and the Cross-Curricular Skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT, the following skills are central to RE and should be developed where possible through learning experiences.

The particular skills which RE seeks to promote are:

a. Investigation

- asking relevant and appropriate questions
- listening to others and hearing correctly what they are saying
- using a variety of sources in order to gather information
- knowing what may count as good evidence in understanding religion

b. Interpretation

- drawing meaning from religious stories, artefacts, works of art, poetry and symbolism
- interpreting religious language
- suggesting meanings of religious texts

c. Reflection

- reflecting on feelings, experience, attitudes, beliefs, values, relationships, religious practices and ultimate questions

d. Empathy

- developing the power of imagination to identify feelings such as love, wonder, forgiveness and sorrow
- considering the thoughts, feelings, experiences, attitudes, beliefs and values of others
- seeing the world through the eyes of others and seeing issues from their points of view
- appreciating an individual or group with sensitivity and perception
- considering others' feelings, responses and points of view

e. Evaluation

- debating issues of religious significance with reference to evidence, argument, opinion and statements of faith
- weighing the respective claims of self-interest, consideration for others, religious teachings and individual conscience

f. Analysis

- distinguishing between opinion, belief and fact
- recognising bias, caricature, prejudice and stereotyping
- distinguishing between the features of different religions

g. Synthesis

- linking significant features of religions together in a coherent pattern
- connecting different aspects of life into a coherent whole

h. Application

- applying previous knowledge to a new situation or concept
- applying religious principles and practice to one's own life
- making links between religion and individual, community, national and international life

i. Expression

- articulating ideas, beliefs and values
- explaining concepts, rituals and practices
- identifying and articulating matters of deep conviction and concern by a variety of means, not only through words
- responding to religious issues through a variety of expressive and creative forms

j. Self-Understanding

- drawing meaning from significant experiences in their own and others' lives and from religious questions and answers
- recognising and critically evaluating one's own standpoint and presuppositions.

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

The Northern Ireland Curriculum Primary (pages 8 and 9) requires that the following Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities should infuse every Area of Learning:

Thinking Skills

- Managing Information
- Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making
- Being Creative

Personal Capabilities

- Working with Others – the ability to work co-operatively to achieve goals
- Self-Management – the ability to manage emotions, time and learning

RE can play a significant part in helping pupils to acquire and develop these Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities.

Thinking Skills

Managing Information

Pupils should have opportunities to:

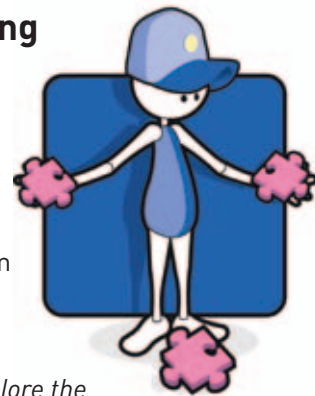
- ask focused questions, *for example when investigating a charity such as TEAR Fund or Trócaire ask 'who, when, what, why, where and how' questions in relation to its work;*
- plan and set goals and break a task into sub-tasks;
- use their own and others' ideas to locate sources of information, *for example identify some written, verbal, digital or human sources that might be used to find out about a local church;*
- select, classify, compare and evaluate information from a variety of religious sources, *for example on a chosen key figure in religion;*
- select the most appropriate method for a task;
- use a range of methods for collating, recording and representing information relevant to the study of RE, *for example gather information from a particular source about a chosen religious festival using a mind map to record findings;* and
- communicate their own religious views and ideas and those of others with a sense of audience and purpose.



Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making

Pupils should have opportunities to examine evidence in order to:

- sequence, order, classify and make comparisons, *for example between different religions, key people, biblical events, annual religious festivals, celebrations, artefacts and symbols;*
- make predictions, examine evidence, and distinguish fact from opinion, *for example in areas related to religious belief and behaviour;*
- make links between cause and effect, *for example begin to explore the connections between religious belief and behaviour such as giving to charity;*
- justify methods, opinions and conclusions, *for example contribute to a class debate by offering an opinion on a moral or ethical issue such as gambling, creating litter or using drugs, and give some reasons to support it;*
- generate possible solutions, try out alternative approaches and evaluate outcomes;
- examine options and weigh up pros and cons, *for example when considering what to do in the event of a moral dilemma;*
- use different types of questions; and
- make connections between learning in different contexts.



Being Creative

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- seek out questions to explore and problems to solve, *for example using the 'Community of Enquiry' approach (see 'Primary Values: a literacy based resource to support the Personal Development Programme in primary schools') show eagerness to pose thoughtful questions relating to religious or moral issues that do not have straightforward answers;*
- experiment with ideas and questions, *for example use guided material such as 'Mysteries' to explore questions that have no single answer such as: 'Is there life after death? Why do people suffer?'*
- make new connections between ideas and information, *for example use a visual technique such as mind mapping to present researched information on a religious festival;*
- learn from and value other people's ideas and beliefs, *for example take on another's point of view on a religious or moral issue;*
- make ideas real by experimenting with different designs, actions and outcomes, *for example choose a new way of presenting researched information;*
- challenge the routine method employed in religion and explore alternative approaches to them, *for example architecture or religious services outreach;*
- value the unexpected or surprising, *for example miracles, answers to prayer or reconciliation between former enemies;*
- see opportunities in mistakes and failures, *for example appreciate how restoration and reconciliation can emerge from past mistakes and failures;* and
- take risks for learning.

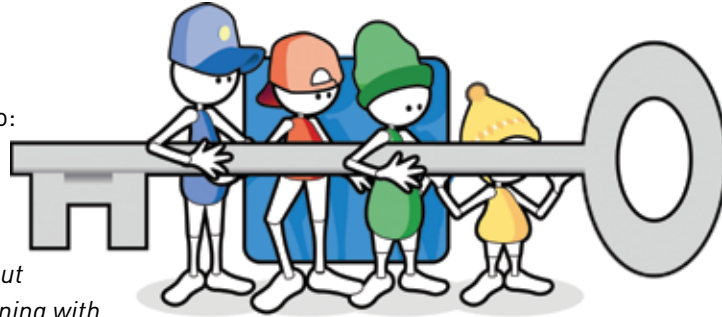


Personal Capabilities

Working with Others

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- listen actively and share opinions, *for example willingly interact with others, sharing beliefs, values and opinions about religious/moral issues and listening with interest to the beliefs, values and opinions of others;*
- develop routines of turn-taking, sharing and co-operating, *for example work together to plan a visit to a place of worship, and take on a range of roles;*
- give and respond to feedback;
- understand how their actions and words affect others;
- adapt their behaviour and language to suit different people and situations;
- take personal responsibility for work with others and evaluate their own contribution to the group;
- be fair;
- respect the views and opinions of others and reach agreements using negotiation and compromise, *for example allow others to talk and share their opinions on a religious or moral issue such as prayer or begin to question others about their points of view in an appropriate way, showing some awareness of sensitivities that may arise;* and
- suggest ways of improving their approach to working collaboratively.



Self-Management

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- reflect on their personal strengths, gifts, limitations and interests;
- set personal targets and review them, *for example use self-assessment strategies to become aware of interests, strengths and weaknesses in different aspects of RE and discuss these with others (for example the teacher) in order to agree areas for improvement;*
- manage their behaviour in a range of situations;
- organise and plan how to go about a task;
- focus, sustain attention and persist with tasks;
- review learning and some aspect that might be improved;
- learn ways to manage their own time, *for example follow set instructions to complete an investigation on a key religious figure within a given time;*
- seek advice when necessary; and
- compare their own approach with others' and in different contexts.



Cross-Curricular Skills

1. RE and Communication

Communication is central to the whole curriculum. Children should be able to communicate in order to express themselves socially, emotionally and physically so that they can develop as individuals, engage with others and contribute as members of society.

The modes of communication include Talking and Listening, Reading, and Writing. However, effective communication also includes non-verbal modes of communication. Children are therefore encouraged to become effective communicators by using a range of techniques, forms and media to convey information and ideas creatively and appropriately.

In terms of **Talking and Listening**:

RE should provide opportunities for pupils (as appropriate to their age and stage of development) to:

- listen well to the stories, viewpoints and ideas of others, including people from different religious traditions or denominations;
- consider viewpoints and arguments carefully;
- acquire and develop a specialist vocabulary;
- use this specialist vocabulary with increasing accuracy and fluency;
- take part in discussions, explanations, role-plays and presentations;
- articulate their own views and ideas when considering religions, beliefs and ideas;
- structure their talk and speak clearly so that ideas can be understood by others;
- communicate information, ideas, opinions, feelings and imaginings, using an expanding vocabulary;
- adapt ways of speaking to the audience and situation;
- respond to others' points of view;
- contribute relevant comments on their learning in RE;
- express and justify feelings, opinions, values and attitudes which influence them;
- ask appropriate questions on issues of personal value, religious belief and the world around them; and
- use non-verbal methods to express ideas and engage with the listener.

In terms of **Reading:**

RE should provide opportunities for pupils (as appropriate to their age and stage of development) to:

- read from, explore and interpret at an appropriate level a range of key stories, teachings and sayings from the Bible and other religious texts, considering their meanings and the ways in which they have been interpreted;
- use evidence from the Bible and other religious texts to explain opinions;
- consider how and why the Bible and other religious texts have been influential and significant;
- reflect on how ideas, values and emotions are explored and portrayed in the Bible and other religious texts;
- find, select and use information from a range of sources, *for example the internet, RE software, RE text books, Bible dictionaries, maps and reference books, and apply this appropriately to their learning;* and
- reflect on how the contemporary media conveys the place of religion in the world today, *for example in newspapers, magazines, articles, leaflets and advertisements.*

In terms of **Writing:**

RE should provide opportunities for pupils (as appropriate to their age and stage of development) to:

- use specialist vocabulary accurately and consistently;
- use a range of techniques and different ways of structuring material to convey ideas, themes and beliefs;
- use a variety of genres and styles, *for example when writing letters, diaries, reports, recounts, narratives and poetry to convey their learning in RE;*
- structure ideas and viewpoints on religious issues clearly;
- communicate information, meaning, feelings, imaginings and ideas in a clear and organised way; and
- develop, express and present ideas in a variety of forms and formats, using traditional and digital resources for a variety of audiences and purposes.

2. RE and Using Mathematics

For many people, RE and Numeracy may seem to have very little in common. However, RE can specifically help contribute to the acquisition and development of various aspects of the Cross-Curricular Skill of Using Mathematics.

RE can contribute to the pupils' development of numeracy skills by enabling them to:

- **handle data**, *for example by carrying out surveys on religious beliefs and practices and collating the results to produce charts and graphs as part of a written report on the issue such as:*
 - understanding and using pie charts relating to the different types of Christian denominations represented in a local area;
 - making bar charts to show varying responses to questionnaires, for example on church attendance; and
 - looking at the designs of Christmas cards to classify and record how many depict the true Christmas story;
- **use number** – there are several opportunities within RE to develop the pupils' concept of number, *for example:*
 - *using fractions and/or percentages when considering the practice of tithing; and*
 - *sequencing the 'days' of creation;*
- **practise measurement skills**, *for example:*
 - *working with time to produce a timeline of the life of Christ;*
 - *producing a calendar of the Christian year, showing all the festivals and saints' days;*
 - *producing a calendar showing the festivals of other faiths and cultures;*
 - *comparing biblical units of measurement with those we use today;*
 - *carrying out biblical map work; and*
 - *dating the Easter holidays;*
- **work with shape**, *for example:*
 - *examining the perfection and beauty of creation as seen in the hexagons in a beehive, or the shape and colour of a rainbow;*
 - *making models of a house from New Testament times or Noah's Ark;*
 - *examining plans of churches; and*
 - *examining diagrams or drawings of the Temple in Jerusalem.*

3. RE and Using ICT

Using ICT is about providing pupils with opportunities to acquire, develop, understand and apply ICT skills, concepts and processes appropriately. Since there is a focus on using the skill, opportunities should also be provided for pupils to transfer their knowledge, understanding and skills in a variety of meaningful contexts across the curriculum. RE is an invaluable context for the acquisition, development and application of ICT skills, concepts and processes.

The requirements for Using ICT are set out under headings described as the 5 'E's:

- Explore
- Express
- Exchange
- Evaluate
- Exhibit

Explore:

This is about looking for, finding, choosing and using information as well as using digital tools to investigate and solve problems. Pupils move from having resources provided for them to being more independent and discriminating ICT users. This 'E' often forms the first part of the work which a pupil engages in.

In RE pupils may have opportunities, for example, to:

- discuss how to search for appropriate information (such as text, still or moving images, or sound files on St Patrick), using a suitable search engine;
- research information on the work of a Christian charity such as TEAR Fund using the internet;
- edit or use the information they have found on St Patrick or TEAR Fund to create a presentation, a wiki, a leaflet or a website;
- use the software 'Stagecast Creator' to create a simulation of an Old Testament story such as Noah's Ark, David and Goliath or Jonah and the Great Fish;
- use computer simulations such as 'The Crystal Rainforest' to investigate an environmental issue;
- create and design a spreadsheet to show the range and variety of Christian denominations and other religions represented in their local area;
- use digital mind mapping software to unpack and explore festivals such as Christmas and Easter or ceremonies such as baptisms or weddings; and
- make use of the internet to virtually 'tour' places which might otherwise be inaccessible or not practical, *for example a place of worship.*

Express:

This is about pupils being creative, developing and presenting their ideas using text, sound, music and still or moving images. It ranges from simple text, sound or pictures to creating a multimedia product.

In RE pupils may have opportunities, for example, to:

- create a multimedia presentation or whiteboard flipchart (showing an awareness of audience and purpose) by making a talking Bible story book for younger children;
- produce a website on a local church of at least three linked pages, combining text, sound, still or moving images;
- digitally create a newspaper including reports of some of Jesus' miracles, *for example The Feeding of the Five Thousand, The Raising of Jairus's Daughter, or Turning the Water into Wine;*
- work with a range of images and sounds to create a presentation on the Creation Story; and
- use a digital video camera to produce a short film illustrating the concept of forgiveness.

Exchange:

This is about pupils collaborating with others online to share and develop their ideas. This can include sending an email, participating in a videoconference, contributing to an online course or using an online collaborative tool. Tasks with a strong 'Exchange' focus can make a valuable contribution to the richness of pupils' experiences of 'Explore' and 'Express'.

In RE pupils may have opportunities, for example, to:

- link with pupils in a school from another religious or cultural background in Northern Ireland and communicate online, using *for example email, webcam or videoconferencing to share similarities and differences in religious faith and practice;*
- link with pupils in another part of the world and share online, by webcam or videoconferencing, differences and similarities in religious faith and practice;
- access and share religious ideas or materials from a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) such as Fronter, Blackboard or Moodle; and
- form a class link with a Christian missionary, charity worker or religious leader and communicate online using webcam or videoconferencing.

NB: These can take place in the form of one-off events or longer-term projects.

Evaluate:

This is about pupils reflecting on their process and outcome, thinking about how they carried out an activity and how they might improve on what they did.

In RE pupils may have opportunities, for example, to:

- reflect on a presentation they have created digitally on The Ten Commandments and discuss how to improve it; and
- create a short account considering how they carried out the work and what they still might do differently.

Exhibit:

This is about pupils managing and showcasing their work digitally. It ranges from pupils printing and saving their work to organising and maintaining digital personalised areas.

In RE pupils may have opportunities, for example, to:

- create an 'ICT in RE' folder, file a range of ICT work done on a variety of RE topics, and be able to access these as required; and
- select a favourite to showcase on the school website or on the school intranet.

Attitudes and Dispositions

Attitudes such as concern for others, community spirit, integrity, moral courage and determination to achieve should be promoted through all areas of school life. There are however some attitudes that are essential for good learning in RE and should therefore be developed at each stage or phase. These attitudes will enable pupils to enter fully into the study of religion, but will in turn be fostered and deepened by the study of RE.

- **Self-awareness** includes:
 - feeling confident about their own beliefs and identities and being able to share these without fear of embarrassment or ridicule;
 - developing a realistic and positive sense of their own religious, moral and spiritual ideas;
 - recognising their own uniqueness as human beings and appreciating their self-worth and value; and
 - becoming increasingly sensitive to the impact of their ideas and behaviour on other people.

- **Respect** includes:

- developing skills of listening and a willingness to learn from others, even when others' views are different from their own;
- respecting those whose beliefs and customs are different from their own;
- appreciating that convictions are often deeply held;
- discerning what is worthy of respect and what is not;
- recognising the needs and concerns of others;
- being ready to value difference and diversity for the common good;
- appreciating that some beliefs are not inclusive and considering the issues that this raises for individuals and society;
- being prepared to recognise and acknowledge their own bias; and
- being sensitive to the feelings and ideas of others.

- **Commitment** includes:

- understanding the importance of commitment to a set of values by which to live their lives;
- seeking meaning and purpose in life; and
- having the motivation to learn, while living with certainty and uncertainty.

- **Openness to new ideas** includes:

- developing confidence in their own identities so that they are able to appreciate the identity of others;
- being open to points of view that differ from their own;
- having the ability to argue or disagree reasonably and respectfully about religious, moral and spiritual questions without belittling or abusing others;
- being willing to learn and gain new understanding;
- being willing to go beyond surface impressions; and
- being able to identify opinions, viewpoints and beliefs in connection with issues of conviction and faith.

- **Curiosity, appreciation and wonder** includes:

- developing their imagination and curiosity;
- recognising that knowledge is bounded by mystery;
- appreciating the sense of wonder at the world in which they live;
- developing an interest in key questions of meaning and purpose; and
- developing their capacity to respond to questions of meaning and purpose.

Religious Education in Primary Schools

Non-Statutory Guidance Materials

RE and the Northern Ireland Curriculum	Learning, Teaching and Assessment Opportunities in RE	Issues for Staff Development	Links and Resources
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2.1 Core Themes

Foundation Stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	RE Beyond the Core
Introduction	Introduction	Introduction	
The Bible	The Bible	The Bible	
Jesus	Jesus	Jesus	
Church	Church	Church	
Festivals	Festivals	Festivals	
Moral and Spiritual Values	Moral and Spiritual Values	Moral and Spiritual Values	
The Natural World	The Natural World	The Natural World	
	Judaism	Judaism	

2.2 Links to other Areas of Learning

2.3 Suggested Activities

2.4 Assessment

Language and Literacy	Ideas from Active Learning and Teaching Methods	Assessment for Learning
The Arts	Additional Ideas	Summative Assessment and Reporting
The World Around Us		
Links between RE and PDMU		

2.1 Core Themes

The core syllabus outlines three broad areas for study at Foundation Stage and at Key Stages 1 and 2 – The Revelation of God, The Christian Church and Christian Morality.

These three areas are unpacked in this document into seven broad themes, each introduced by a 'Focus for Learning', which over time can contribute to a balanced RE programme.

- The Bible
- Jesus
- Church
- Festivals
- Moral and Spiritual Values
- The Natural World
- Judaism (Key Stages 1 and 2)

While the seven themes broadly reflect the current (predominantly Christian) religious landscape of Northern Ireland, when a child or children is from a faith background other than Christianity it will be important that the teacher is aware of this. In these cases the teacher should provide opportunities for all the children in the class to begin to learn about those stories and books, people of faith, places of worship and festivals and celebrations which are special to those children and their families. It is important too that values which are held by all faith groups represented within the class are analysed and explored and that opportunities are provided for children to use their imagination and curiosity to develop appreciation and wonder of the world in which they live.

The statements attempt to reflect the language used in the Northern Ireland Curriculum Primary document ('The Golden Book' – CCEA 2007) and are primarily designed to help teachers with their planning. They also attempt to highlight the many connections which exist between RE and other areas of the curriculum, for example Language and Literacy, PDMU, The Arts, and The World Around Us (TWAU). Finally they identify the many opportunities for the development of Moral Character and Spiritual Understanding which effective RE can uniquely offer.

Foundation Stage

The following applies to Years 1 and 2

Introduction

The early years of a child's life are crucial in their all-round development. Building on what children already know, understand and are able to do, the learning that takes place in the Foundation Stage is not just extremely important in its own right; it also provides the foundation on which later learning is built. It is widely agreed that children develop rapidly during the early years – physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. Children develop spiritually during these years too, and it is important to value and build on their early experiences of religion and spirituality, which will of course vary according to their home and community backgrounds.

For some children, this experience and learning will have taken place in the context of a faith community and in homes where religious beliefs and practices are at the centre of their family life. Others will have had occasional visits to places of worship; others will come without any knowledge or experience in this area of life.

While the religious landscape of Northern Ireland remains predominantly Christian, children from all faith communities need to be affirmed by finding that their families' cultures and beliefs are respected and valued too. It is strongly recommended however that all planning and provision should have meaningful contexts for the children and be based on their personal, first-hand experiences. It is vital that teachers become aware of the individual child and the child's significant and unique experiences so that all activities and learning opportunities are relevant.

Teachers who need to decide which faiths to include in their classroom planning should primarily consider the need for very young children to have their home backgrounds acknowledged and celebrated in the school environment. They should therefore take the faiths to which the children in their group belong to as their starting point.

Some Key Principles for Good Practice in Early Years RE:

Children are affected by the context in which learning takes place, the people involved in it, and the values and beliefs that are embedded in it.

Also, the process of learning – how children are encouraged to learn – is inseparable from the content – what they learn.

Effective RE:

- is based on respect for what children and their families bring to the school community from their own religious or non-religious experience, values and cultures – it is important to share similarities and value differences;
- contributes to children's growing sense of themselves as individuals and as members of the communities to which they belong;
- recognises, values and encourages children's capacity to wonder at and enjoy aspects of their experience;

- recognises and takes seriously children's questions and ideas about profound, puzzling or difficult areas of life; and
- gradually opens children's awareness of differences and encourages positive attitudes towards these.

Teachers who enable children to build up religious concepts and ideas:

- start with familiar experiences and then widen children's experience to take them into what is new and unfamiliar, *for example exploring children's own experience of birthdays as a way into developing understanding of Christmas as the celebration of the birthday of Jesus*; and
- provide a learning environment in which children:
 - know that they are loved and appreciated for who they are;
 - can develop trust; and
 - can develop good relationships.

Learning Experiences and Opportunities at Foundation Stage

Children should be provided with opportunities in RE to:

- listen to and talk about appropriate stories which engage them;
- directly experience religion – visit places of worship (with a focus on the observable and on senses and feelings), listen and respond to visitors from faith communities, and engage with artefacts when and where appropriate;
- get to know and use religious words accurately, *for example God, Bible, church, or prayer*;
- use all five senses – smell and taste (*for example special foods*), see and touch (*for example religious artefacts*), and hear (*for example hymns, prayers or bells*);
- make and do – make festive food, role-play, dress up or dance;
- have times of quiet and stillness for reflection;
- share their own beliefs, ideas and values;
- talk about their feelings and experiences;
- use their imagination and curiosity to develop their appreciation and wonder of the world in which they live; and
- begin to use ICT to explore religious beliefs and beliefs as practised in the local and wider community.

For links to other Areas of Learning, and to one of the Key Elements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (Spiritual Understanding) see the table below.

Links to other Areas of Learning

Language and Literacy	LL
Mathematics and Numeracy	M and N
The Arts	The Arts
The World Around Us	TWAU
Personal Development and Mutual Understanding	PDMU
Physical Development and Movement	PDM

Links to the Key Elements of the Curriculum

Spiritual Understanding	SU
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The Bible

Focus Statement

At Foundation Stage, children will hear and enjoy stories from the Bible, focusing on strong narratives and characters. In doing so they will start to learn from the stories and begin to apply them to their own lives.



Children should have opportunities to:

- think about books and stories which are very special to people and say why (LL) (SU);
- recognise that Christians believe that the Bible is the Word of God and a special book to be listened to with reverence (LL) (SU);
- engage with stories and extracts from the Bible which bring their experience and imagination into play (LL) (The Arts);
- learn about some Old Testament stories that must have been familiar to Jesus (LL);
- learn that Bible stories tell us about people's lives, particularly about the lives of children and young people (*for example Moses, Joseph, David, Samuel, Daniel, Miriam, Ruth or Jesus as a child*) (LL) (PDMU);
- learn that Jesus himself told stories about God when he grew up (LL);
- retell stories from the Bible and talk about their meanings, making, if possible, connections with their own lives (LL) (PDMU); and
- begin to understand how Christians learn from reading and hearing the Bible at home and at church (LL) (SU).

Jesus

Focus Statement

At Foundation Stage children will begin to learn about some of the main events in the life and teachings of Jesus. This will help them begin to appreciate why Jesus is regarded as special and important by many people.



Children should have opportunities to:

- appreciate the concept of a special person (PDMU);
- begin to talk about Jesus and appreciate him as a special person to whom Christians pray (PDMU) (SU);
- explore some stories about the life of Jesus, *for example stories relating to his birth, his ministry and his death and resurrection* (LL) (SU);
- understand that he was part of a family (PDMU);
- begin to experience some of Jesus' teachings in parables and stories (LL) (SU);
- begin to consider what Jesus meant when he taught about the importance of loving God and loving each other (PDMU) (SU); and
- begin to consider the qualities of Jesus (*for example caring, kind and courageous*) and to think about how and why Christians try to follow his example (PDMU).

Church

Focus Statement

At Foundation Stage children will learn to recognise the characteristics of a church and begin to understand that there may be different types of church in their own area. They will begin to be aware of some of the activities that take place in churches and why churches are special places for many people.



Children should have opportunities to:

- share their own experiences of places which are special to them (TWAU) (PDMU) (SU);
- explore local places which are important for people, including at least one place of significance for a religious family (TWAU) (PDMU) (SU);
- visit a place of worship, describing what makes it different and special, *for example a Christian Church* (TWAU) (PDMU);
- experience awe and wonder when entering a church building (SU);
- begin to understand the use of a church building (TWAU);
- begin to understand that Christians meet in church buildings to worship God (SU);
- learn that Christians understand prayer as a way of talking to God (SU);
- begin to understand that the church is a special place of worship (TWAU) (SU); and
- prepare some questions and interview a local religious leader (PDMU).

Festivals

Focus Statement

At Foundation Stage children will begin to be aware of special times and celebrations with religious associations, including those that occur as part of the regular calendar, and why people mark them with special events, meals, music or gifts.



Children should have opportunities to:

- share enjoyment of celebration and talk about celebrations of special occasions in their own lives, in those of others significant to them and in religious communities (PDMU);
- listen to stories associated with religious festivals and celebrations, *for example Christmas, Passover or Easter* (SU) (LL);
- share in the preparations for and observe the celebration of Christian festivals, *for example Harvest, Christmas or Easter* (PDMU);
- observe or experience ceremonies in which children are welcomed into a particular religious community, *for example a baptism* (PDMU); and
- act out or observe a ceremony in which special moments in the cycle of life are marked, *for example a wedding* (PDMU).

Moral and Spiritual Values

Focus Statement

At Foundation Stage children should begin to learn basic moral and spiritual values, starting with an awareness of the Christian belief that they are special to God. They should also begin to consider that how they treat other people matters. What they learn in this area will come from the Bible and from the examples of family, school, church, community and significant others.



Children should have opportunities to:

- begin to understand the Christian belief that each person is special to God (SU);
- begin to develop an awareness of their own value and the value of others (SU) (PDMU);
- learn that each person is precious, unique and special (SU) (PDMU);
- begin to understand that Christians believe that God loves everyone (SU);
- begin to understand the Christian belief that because God cares about people we should care for ourselves and others (SU) (PDMU);
- talk about their own experience of belonging to a group or family (PDMU);
- hear and talk about stories of belonging and relating to each other (PDMU);
- begin to understand that they belong to a family, school, church and that they can express this 'belonging' through being together, loving and caring for others, prayer and worship (PDMU);
- begin to take responsibility, share and co-operate with others, *for example by observing rules, having respect for others at school, trying hard, doing their best, helping, tidying toys or asking to help at home* (PDMU);
- begin to consider the consequences of their words and actions for themselves and others, and so begin to understand what is right, what is wrong and why (SU) (PDMU); and
- explore some of the ways in which people express care and concern for each other and the importance of this for relationships (PDMU).

The Natural World

Focus Statement

At Foundation Stage children can begin to enjoy experiences of the natural world and relate this to the concept of thankfulness and teachings about creation.



Children should have opportunities to:

- explore the variety and beauty of the natural world (TWAU) (SU);
- express their personal responses to aspects of the natural world (TWAU) (SU);
- retell in simple terms the story of the creation from the Bible and talk about how this is important for Christians and Jews (TWAU) (LL) (SU);
- ask and respond to questions arising from the Creation Story (SU) (LL);
- use colour, words, actions and/or music to express their own feelings and ideas about the Creation Story and about God (The Arts) (SU);
- reflect on what it means to create something (The Arts) (SU); and
- begin to understand that as part of creation we all have to take responsibility for the world and its creatures (TWAU).

Key Stage 1

The following applies to Years 3 and 4

Introduction

At Key Stage 1 it is important that the RE provided draws on and takes account of the experiences of the children who come to school with widely differing understanding and experiences of religion. It is important that RE widens their awareness of and contact with religion and religious traditions, especially those in the immediate locality. It is important too that children are helped to understand the idea that religion and belief are very important to many people and that it affects how they live and what they do.

Effective RE at Key Stage 1 will enable children to learn about religion from a range of sources including the Bible and other books, other RE programmes, pictures, photographs, DVDs and artefacts. It will also involve making use of buildings and the local environment and listening to people talking about their experiences of religion.

Effective RE will also encourage them to communicate their awareness and understanding of religion in a variety of ways, for example through talking, writing, art, drama and music. It should also encourage the development of a sense of wonder and provide opportunities for children to use their senses and have times of quiet reflection.

Work relating to religions other than Christianity should reflect the religious experience of children in the class. Children from families that belong to or practise a religious tradition should find their experience reflected in the RE provided. Where there are no children from practising families of major religions other than Christianity it is important that children learn that other religions exist, that they should find the exploration of religions interesting and that they should develop a respect towards people who are different from themselves.

For links to other Areas of Learning, and to two of the Key Elements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (Spiritual Understanding and Moral Character) see the table below.

Links to other Areas of Learning

Language and Literacy	LL
Mathematics and Numeracy	M and N
The Arts	The Arts
The World Around Us	TWAU
Personal Development and Mutual Understanding	PDMU
Physical Education	PE

Links to the Key Elements of the Curriculum

Spiritual Understanding	SU
Moral Character	MC

The Bible

Focus Statement

At Key Stage 1 children should become familiar with the Bible as a source of stories and teachings that encourage a variety of responses. They should be taught Bible stories appropriate to their own age and stage of development (particularly those involving children), as well as being made aware of biblical teaching about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.



Key Stage 1

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- recognise how important and influential books are in many people's lives (LL);
- talk about favourite books and say why they like them so much (LL);
- become aware that for Christians the Bible is the Word of God and a special book that many use for worship and personal guidance every day (LL) (SU);
- hear a range of Bible stories from readings and digital media (LL);
- respond sensitively to and ask questions about these stories (LL) (SU);
- role-play Bible stories together (The Arts) (LL);
- become aware that the Bible contains many different types of material including stories, poetry, letters and wise sayings (LL);
- become aware that the Bible contains an account of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus (LL) (SU);
- become aware that some Bible stories are about children and some teachings which emphasise the value of children (LL) (PDMU);
- understand how Christians value the Bible as a guide to the way they treat other people (LL) (PDMU) (MC); and
- understand how Bible stories are used in Christian ceremonies (LL) (PDMU) (MC).

Where appropriate in a class, children should have opportunities to identify other major religions' sacred writings, find out what they are and discover how they are used for personal worship and teaching.

Jesus

Focus Statement

At Key Stage 1 children should become familiar with the character of Jesus, with what he taught and did, and why he is so important to Christians. They should also begin to learn why many of his teachings are valued and respected by people of other faiths.



Key Stage 1

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- think about people who are special to them, whom they admire and why (PDMU);
- know that Jesus was a real person who lived in Palestine two thousand years ago (TWAU) (SU);
- become aware that Jesus is a special person for Christians, who remember his life, death and resurrection and try to follow his teaching (SU) (PDMU);
- learn about the birth of Jesus from readings, impromptu retellings and digital media (LL);
- learn about the childhood of Jesus, particularly about his visit to the temple at the age of twelve (PDMU);
- begin to learn about Jesus' relationships with his friends and followers (PDMU);
- learn something about the key features of his teaching, *for example about prayer, forgiveness and obedience* (SU) (PDMU);
- explore what Jesus meant when he taught that people should love God and love their neighbour (PDMU) (MC);
- reflect on Jesus' teaching that everyone is important and of equal value in the sight of God (SU) (PDMU);
- begin to understand that Jesus often used stories called parables to teach people about God (LL) (SU);
- learn about some of the miracles of Jesus (SU);
- begin to relate stories about Jesus to their own lives (PDMU) (SU);
- examine the words, actions and example of Jesus (PDMU) (MC);
- learn about the death and resurrection of Jesus and reflect on their significance (SU);
- begin to explore the Christian belief that Jesus is the Son of God (SU);
- explore the Christian belief that Jesus is alive today (SU); and
- explore what it means for Christians to follow Jesus today (SU) (PDMU) (MC).

Church

Focus Statement

At Key Stage 1 children should learn about church buildings, what they are for, what happens in them and what they mean to Christians. Where possible they should become comfortable with church buildings and appreciate the elements of church services. They should also learn that the word 'church' refers to the caring family of God.



Key Stage 1

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- recognise church buildings in their locality (TWAU);
- become familiar with a nearby Christian place of worship and discover how it is used (TWAU) (SU);
- experience awe and wonder through encountering the atmosphere of church interiors (SU);
- learn about some parts of church buildings, for *example font, communion table, stained glass windows or pulpit, and explain their use* (TWAU) (SU);
- consider the respect shown to symbols and artefacts in church buildings (PDMU) (SU);
- view pictures of Jesus in church, for *example in stained glass windows* (The Arts) (SU);
- recognise the cross as the main Christian symbol that reminds Christians of Jesus (SU);
- be aware that Sunday is a special day for most Christians when they meet as communities to worship God, for *example saying prayers, singing, listening to the Bible being read, hearing some preaching and teaching and participating in Holy Communion* (PDMU) (SU);
- learn about some of the ways in which Christians mark special occasions in the lives of individuals, for *example baptism, confirmation, communion or marriage* (PDMU);
- begin to recognise some of the symbolism used in these ceremonies (SU);
- explore their own feelings and thoughts about the importance of 'belonging', being welcomed, having a name and being part of a family (PDMU);
- begin to understand the Christian belief that the church is a family whose members care for each other (PDMU);
- be aware that a church is a community of people in which everyone, including children, has a role to play (PDMU);
- meet and talk to some people, both men and women, who are active in a Christian church (PDMU) (SU); and
- begin to learn about the early history of Christianity in Ireland (TWAU).

Festivals

Focus Statement

At Key Stage 1 children should be introduced to the main, universally celebrated Christian festivals and learn to see them as celebrations in which they can participate and to which they can contribute. They should also begin to appreciate Christian music.



Key Stage 1

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- recognise that most people including Christians and others celebrate special occasions during the year (PDMU);
- understand that Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus and that it is a time when Christians retell stories about him from the Bible (LL) (TWAU) (SU);
- explore some of the ways in which Christmas is celebrated by Christians and learn about some of the symbols used, *for example Advent calendars, Christingles or the Crib* (The Arts) (SU);
- understand how children can take part in Christmas services (*for example by singing, reading, saying prayers or taking part in a Nativity play*) (The Arts) (SU);
- understand that Lent is seen by Christians as a time for preparing for Easter (SU);
- meet and talk to some people who are active in a church during the Easter period and ask about what they do in Holy Week (PDMU) (SU);
- understand that Easter is associated with Jesus and that it is a time when Christians retell stories about him from the Bible (LL) (SU);
- explore why Easter is the most important festival to Christians and reflect on the meaning of the word 'resurrection' (SU);
- explore some of the ways in which Easter is celebrated by Christians and learn about some of the symbols used, *for example palm crosses or Easter gardens* (The Arts) (SU);
- take part in Good Friday and Easter services, *for example by singing, reading, saying prayers or taking part in a play* (The Arts) (SU);
- make or eat Shrove Tuesday pancakes, hot cross buns or Easter eggs and talk about special food, music and so on linked to a familiar celebration (The Arts);
- explore and express their feelings linked to a Christian festival or celebration (PDMU) (SU); and
- begin to celebrate other Christian festivals and traditions as important and happy events, *for example St Patrick's Day, Mothering Sunday or Harvest Thanksgiving* (PDMU) (TWAU).

Moral and Spiritual Values

Focus Statement

Key Stage 1 children should learn basic moral and spiritual values beginning with an awareness of the Christian belief that they are special to God even though they are young and small. They should also learn that what they say and do is important and that how they treat other people matters. What they learn in this area will come from the Bible and from the example of Christians through the centuries.



Key Stage 1

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- learn that Christians believe that individuals are unique and valuable to God (PDMU) (SU);
- recognise worth in themselves and others, and learn that Christians believe that everyone is important and of equal worth (PDMU) (SU);
- deepen their understanding that each has been given gifts and talents that make him or her unique (PDMU) (SU);
- explore the importance of caring for their own bodies (PDMU);
- explore their own feelings in various contexts and begin to be aware of how these are reflected in Christianity (PDMU) (SU);
- learn that Christians believe that God cares about people and how they treat each other (PDMU);
- reflect on people who care for them and talk about how they care for others (PDMU);
- learn that Christians share many values with people of other faiths, *for example the importance of speaking the truth* (PDMU) (MC); and
- learn that forgiveness is important to Christians (PDMU) (SU).

The Natural World

Focus Statement

At Key Stage 1 children should explore the themes related to appreciation of the natural world, and in particular the ideas of creation and of creativity. They should begin to understand that people of different faiths believe that caring for the natural world is important and that human beings have particular responsibilities. They should have opportunities to explore this in a practical way in the school environment.



Key Stage 1

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- explore the variety and beauty of the natural world (TWAU);
- express their personal responses to aspects of the natural world (SU);
- recognise and express feelings associated with their response to the natural world (SU) (TWAU);
- become aware that Christians believe that God created the world and cares for it, and expects people to care for it too (TWAU);
- retell in simple terms the story of the creation from the Bible and talk about how this is important for Christians and Jews (LL) (SU);
- ask and respond to questions arising from the Creation Story (LL) (SU);
- use colour, words, actions and/or music to express their own feelings and ideas about the Creation Story and about God (The Arts) (SU);
- reflect on what it means to create something (The Arts) (SU);
- begin to appreciate beauty in the creation of others (The Arts) (SU) (TWAU);
- begin to understand that we all have to take responsibility for the world and its creatures (TWAU);
- become aware that Christians care about animals as part of God's creation (TWAU);
- consider some of the concerns that pupils or the school community might have about their local environment (TWAU); and
- reflect on how important it is to be grateful and thankful (SU).

Judaism

Focus Statement

At Key Stage 1 some aspects of contemporary Judaism might also be taught, as a monotheistic religion that has an intimate relationship with Christianity. Children should learn about the life of Moses and some other key figures from the Jewish Bible (called the Old Testament by Christians). They could also begin to learn how Jewish people today worship both at home and in the synagogue.



Key Stage 1

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- hear about the life of Moses and others, *for example Abraham, Joseph, King David and Elijah*, in the Old Testament (LL) (SU);
- appreciate that Moses is spoken about in the Old Testament (LL);
- hear the story of the Exodus and the giving of The Ten Commandments (SU) (MC);
- develop an awareness that there are people in Northern Ireland who belong to religions other than Christianity, including some members of the Jewish faith (PDMU);
- hear about some of the things that Jewish people do when they worship at home, *for example how Jewish families celebrate Shabbat (the Sabbath), and the festivals of Hanukkah and Pesach (Passover)* (PDMU) (SU);
- look at illustrations of synagogues in books, pictures and online, and talk about them (LL);
- explore some of the things that happen in a Jewish place of worship (PDMU) (SU); and
- see and handle some religious artefacts and symbols associated with Judaism, *for example mezuzah, tallit, menorah or Star of David* (PDMU) (SU).

Especially at Key Stage 1 the inclusion of learning about other faiths in any individual school will follow a consideration of the background of the children in the catchment area and, of course, the expertise of the teachers and the resources available to them.

Key Stage 2

The following applies to Years 5, 6 and 7

Introduction

During Key Stage 2 children should have opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs, values, experiences and questions and should be enabled to further develop their understanding of some of the central beliefs, teachings, practices and ways of life of the Christian faith. They should also have opportunities to consider the beliefs and values of others.

As at Key Stage 1, learning relating to religions other than Christianity should reflect the religious experience of the children in the class. It is important that children from families that belong to or practise other religious traditions should find their experience reflected in the RE provided. Where there are no children from practising families of major religions other than Christianity it is nevertheless important that pupils learn that other religions exist, that they should find exploring these religions interesting and that they should develop a respect towards people who have different religious beliefs.

Pupils should:

- extend the range and use of specialist vocabulary;
- recognise the challenges involved in distinguishing between ideas of right and wrong, and valuing what is good and true;
- communicate their ideas, recognising other people's viewpoints; and
- begin to recognise diversity in religious belief and expression, learning about similarities and differences both within and between religions and beliefs and the importance of dialogue between them.

For links to other Areas of Learning, and to two of the Key Elements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (Spiritual Understanding and Moral Character) see the table below.

Links to other Areas of Learning

Language and Literacy	LL
Mathematics and Numeracy	M and N
The Arts	The Arts
The World Around Us	TWAU
Personal Development and Mutual Understanding	PDMU
Physical Education	PE

Links to the Key Elements of the Curriculum

Spiritual Understanding	SU
Moral Character	MC

The Bible

Focus Statement

At Key Stage 2 pupils should have opportunities to learn Bible stories and respond to these in a variety of ways. They should become aware that the Bible contains many different kinds of literature including law, history, poetry and prophecy. In their appreciation of biblical events, they should also begin to understand the basic chronology of the Bible.



Key Stage 2

Children should have opportunities to:

- explore how the Bible is valued and used by Christians (LL) (SU);
- further explore the Christian understanding that the Bible is the Word of God (LL) (SU);
- reflect upon how Christians use the Bible to find out about God and Jesus (LL) (SU);
- be aware that the Bible is a collection of books, which contain many types of literature, *for example history, laws, poetry, prophecy, sayings, gospels and letters* (LL);
- understand how the Bible is divided into two testaments, many books, chapters and verses (LL);
- understand that part of the Bible (the Old Testament) is also the important sacred text for Jews – known to them as the Law, the Prophets and the Writings ('the Tanakh', or just simply as 'The Bible');
- learn how to use references to locate passages in the Bible (LL);
- be aware of the basic chronology of the Bible, *for example that Abraham was before Moses and that David was before Jesus and the use of BC and AD for dating historical events* (M and N);
- explore the concept of the Covenant through Old Testament accounts of key figures, *for example Noah, Abraham, Moses and David from readings, retellings and digital media such as Genesis 12: 1–5, Genesis 17: 1–9 and Exodus 3: 1–10* (SU);
- talk about these stories together, exploring their moral and spiritual meanings (LL); and
- respond to these stories, *for example through reflection, pictures, poems, music and drama and see how the lives of major Bible characters are unfolded in the text* (The Arts) (LL).

Jesus

Focus Statement

At Key Stage 2 pupils should be taught about Jesus so that they can see the impact he had on many kinds of people in his own day. Rather than seeing his life as a series of disconnected miracles and parables they should begin to appreciate the purposeful shape of his ministry and how his people may apply his teachings to their everyday lives. They should also begin to consider the meaning and saving purpose of the death and resurrection of Jesus.



Key Stage 2

Children should have opportunities to:

- explore the concepts of promise and prophecy in relation to the birth of Jesus, *for example Micah 5: 2–5 and Isaiah 7: 14* (SU);
- hear about the background to the life of Jesus, *for example Roman influences, his Jewish upbringing relating to the Temple, synagogue and Sabbath* (TWAU);
- learn about the birth, baptism, life and teachings of Jesus from readings and digital media (SU);
- know about the childhood of Jesus, *for example growing up in the Roman Empire, his interests at the age of twelve, or his visit to the Temple* (TWAU);
- reflect on the environment in which Jesus lived in contrast to their own (TWAU);
- begin to understand the call of some of the disciples (SU);
- begin to understand the mission of Jesus (SU);
- consider why people believed Jesus and responded to him (SU);
- know about and reflect on the way Jesus treated people, especially socially disadvantaged groups, *for example people with leprosy, and also people of various races such as Samaritans* (PDMU);
- understand the basic teaching of Jesus in relation to other people and to God, *for example Who is my neighbour? Luke 10:29; The Great Commandments Matthew 22: 38–39; and the Golden Rule Matthew 7: 12* (PDMU);
- raise and discuss some issues suggested by the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, *for example the Beatitudes: Matthew 5: 1–12* (SU);
- begin to understand the symbolic nature of the stories Jesus told and the idea that stories can convey meaning beyond the literal and have relevance for today (SU) (LL);
- explore the Christian belief that Jesus is the Son of God (SU);
- explore the teachings of Jesus through a selection of parables and central sayings (LL);
- learn about the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus from readings and digital media (LL) (SU); and
- think about how Christians see Jesus (*for example as their saviour and what they feel about him*), and talk about their own feelings and ideas (PDMU) (SU).

Church

Focus Statement

At Key Stage 2 pupils should be learning about the architectural, cultural and religious value of church buildings and begin to appreciate the spiritual structure and purpose of church services. They should also begin to see how the church, as the caring people of God, exists outside the church building and that a variety of denominational expressions of Christian life can be found. The beginnings of a perspective on church history should also be put in place, starting with the work of St Paul and St Patrick.



Key Stage 2

Children should have opportunities to:

- know the main external and internal features of some Christian places of worship and realise that these features vary from denomination to denomination because they express different emphasis in belief (TWAU) (PDMU);
- learn about the siting of church buildings (*for example at the centre of a town or village or in the countryside*), their orientation (*for example east facing*), their construction and historical significance (*for example telling us how people lived in the past and what they cared about*) (TWAU);
- understand how and why a local church is named as it is, and understand the history of the church and its churchyard (TWAU);
- respond to the atmosphere and surroundings of Christian places of worship and develop the sensitivity to respond appropriately (PDMU) (SU);
- find out how Christians worship God in church, *for example in prayer, in silence, singing, reading the Bible, listening to preaching and teaching or giving money* (SU);
- discuss the roles of people involved in services and sacraments, *for example minister, priest or pastor, readers, choir and congregation* (PDMU);
- talk together about services and sacraments that characterise the church and explore their spiritual meanings (SU);
- learn about and appreciate the importance of varied Christian ceremonies that mark significant events in the lives of individuals, families and communities, including Baptism and Confirmation (PDMU) (SU);
- express thoughts and feelings about belonging to a group or having a belief in God (PDMU) (SU);
- know about the central act of worship in most Christian traditions which is based on the Last Supper Jesus had with his disciples and is known by various names, *for example Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, the Mass, or the Breaking of Bread* (SU);
- know about the link between Holy Communion and Passover (SU);
- become familiar with the actions and symbols used in various services or ceremonies, *for example water at Baptism, bread and wine in Communion and Eucharist, or exchanging rings in the marriage service* (SU);

Church *(continued)*

- consider the use of prayer and music in Sunday worship and other religious ceremonies (The Arts) (SU);
- know that all Christians use the Lord's Prayer and become familiar with its meaning for them (SU);
- discover what leaders of local Christian churches do (PDMU);
- know about the various uses made of places of worship by Christians and the wider community (TWAU) (PDMU);
- begin to understand that the church cares about its local community, its village, town or city (PDMU);
- understand that the church is a community of Christians from all races and nationalities (PDMU);
- begin to understand that the church is a worldwide community with Jesus as its head and that the church is seen as the vehicle to carry on the work of Jesus; (SU) (TWAU);
- hear and explore accounts of how the followers of Jesus began to organise themselves in their new way of life (SU);
- begin to understand the importance of the life and teachings of St Paul and the Early Church (SU); and
- begin to understand the historical role of the church in the life of the people of Northern Ireland.

Festivals

Focus Statement

At Key Stage 2 pupils should begin to grasp the annual pattern of Christian festivals and their purpose in keeping the life of Christ and the work of God constantly before the church. They should begin to associate Christian festivals with words, music and art, and they should be helped to explore the meaning of these. They should continue to be given opportunities to understand and to take part in Christian festivals.



Key Stage 2

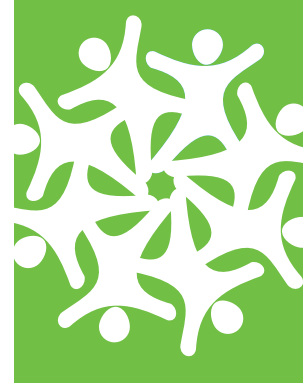
Children should have opportunities to:

- learn and understand that the structure of the church year reflects key events in the life of Jesus and the church, *for example Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost* (PDMU);
- become familiar with the biblical stories retold during Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost and through them become aware of Christian beliefs about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit (LL) (SU);
- find out how Christians celebrate the major festivals and explore the feelings, values and beliefs associated with them through music, art and story (PDMU) (The Arts);
- hear or participate in the music associated with Christian festivals, *for example Christmas carols* (The Arts);
- investigate art work and symbolism associated with Christian festivals, *for example through looking at Christmas cards* (The Arts);
- understand the link between holidays from work and school with Christian festivals (TWAU); and
- appreciate the variety of Christian festivals around the world and understand what they mean (PDMU) (TWAU).

Moral and Spiritual Values

Focus Statement

Key Stage 2 pupils should begin to work out how their beliefs about other people and about right and wrong are linked with behaviour. They should begin to realise that rules of behaviour and moral values are expressed in the life of communities and in human relationships and also, in a more general sense, in our concerns for people we have never met and in our treatment of the natural world.



Key Stage 2

Children should have opportunities to:

- consider how Christian behaviour is based on beliefs about God and on the teaching of Jesus (SU) (MC);
- find out about Christians, women and men, now and in the past, whose actions affect or have affected others, *for example people who have helped others and people of faith, courage and commitment (including some with a local connection)* (PDMU);
- learn about the connection between belief and behaviour, *for example in the lives of Dr Barnardo, Mother Teresa or William Booth, and in the work of charities such as Christian Aid, St Vincent de Paul, Trócaire, Operation Christmas Child or TEAR Fund* (PDMU);
- explore some of the ways in which people express their Christian beliefs and values through action in their church, local community and the world and why they do this (PDMU);
- consider some of the ways in which Christians respond to suffering and death, *for example through offering support to the bereaved, or giving to charities such as Christian Aid, Trócaire or TEAR Fund* (PDMU);
- learn about the lives and influences of some early Irish Christians, *for example research the life of a local saint* (TWAU);
- think about Christian values and why communities need rules, *for example to be fair to everyone, to protect the weakest or to prevent arguments* (PDMU);
- reflect on how Christian beliefs are relevant to personal relationships, *for example in the family by honouring parents, sharing or forgiveness* (PDMU); and
- consider how Christian beliefs and values are relevant in school (PDMU).

The Natural World

Focus Statement

At Key Stage 2 children should extend their appreciation of the natural world and understand how such themes feature in Jewish, Christian and other religious texts (especially both parts of the Bible), worship and festivals. They should be able to relate this to issues of moral responsibility and to other areas of the curriculum, for example TWAU.



Key Stage 2

Children should have opportunities to:

- explore some of the ways in which Christians express and respond to their belief that God is creator, *for example through expressing thankfulness in prayers and hymns, celebrating harvest or looking after the environment* (SU) (TWAU);
- learn that Jews and Christians see God as the creator and the world as God's gift to humanity (TWAU) (SU);
- understand how this belief causes Jews and Christians to feel a sense of responsibility for, and wonder at the natural world and its creatures, and thank God for them (SU);
- be familiar with some expressions of these beliefs as found in the Bible, *for example in Job and in Psalms* (LL); and
- consider how Christian beliefs are relevant to concern for the environment, *for example in the idea of stewardship of the land or not being cruel to animals, or in concern for the beauty of the coastline and in mountains which express the work of God* (TWAU) (SU).

Judaism

Focus Statement

At Key Stage 2 children should extend their awareness of contemporary Judaism and its relationship with Christianity. They can explore the symbols associated with contemporary Jewish practices in the home and the synagogue and the importance of the Law in relation to diet and Sabbath observance. They can explore links between the Jewish Scriptures and the New Testament, noting some of the characters, narratives and practices mentioned in both.



Key Stage 2

Children should have opportunities to:

- learn that there are people in Britain and Ireland who are practising Jews (TWAU) (PDMU);
- explore the lives of Abraham and Moses in order to understand the Jewish belief in one God, *for example how he intervenes in the history of the Jewish people* (SU);
- consider why Moses is so important in the Jewish and Christian faiths (SU);
- understand that for Jews prayer as individuals or in small groups is as important as worship in the synagogue (SU);
- be aware of the use of external symbols and artefacts, *for example mezuzah, tallit and kippah* and understand how, by providing constant reminders of religious commitment, they strengthen Jewish identity (SU);
- recognise that the home is an important place for the expression of Jewish beliefs, *for example in Shabbat (Sabbath) and Kashrut (dietary law)* (PDMU);
- explore some of the major Jewish festivals celebrated in the Jewish family and community including Shabbat and Pesach (Passover) (PDMU);
- find out about worship in the synagogue, *for example about the reading of the Sefer Torah (the scroll of the law)* (LL);
- understand the relationship between the Christian Bible and the Jewish Scriptures (LL); and
- identify similarities and differences between Christianity and Judaism (LL) (PDMU).

RE Beyond the Core

At Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2 the Northern Ireland Core Syllabus for RE offers a structure based on three Learning Objectives: The Revelation of God; The Christian Church; and Morality. A further Learning Objective, World Religions, applies to Key Stage 3 only. It has always been emphasised, however, that the syllabus is only a core and that schools may include material 'beyond the core'.²

A useful model for such an approach was provided in 2010 when the RE Advisory Group issued three thematic units for schools: Saint Patrick and People of Faith; Faith and Light; and Food for Thought. These units focused on RE and included topics from the core syllabus as well as themes from a range of religions and cross-curricular dimensions.

The following topics are offered as possibilities to help teachers and co-ordinators to reflect some of the broader dimensions of RE while following the general structure of the core syllabus. This may be particularly helpful where teachers wish to strengthen their cross-curricular teaching by linking with themes in PDMU, TWAU, The Arts and LL. All topics and themes will, of course, need to be structured and adapted according to the ages and abilities of the pupils.

Additional Possibilities associated with or extended from Learning Objective 1 of the Core Syllabus (The Revelation of God)

- **Themes from world religions: especially contemporary Judaism and Islam**
 - key figures or founders of faiths (*for example Abraham, Muhammad and the Buddha*)
 - holy books (*for example the Torah and other parts of the Hebrew Bible, the Qur'an and the Hadiths*)
 - stories from Judaism and Islam
 - creation stories from around the world

Additional Possibilities associated with or extended from Learning Objective 2 of the Core Syllabus (The Christian Church)

- **Themes from Christianity and other world religions**
 - religious and secular festivals and special times, *for example Chinese New Year, winter festivals (such as Diwali; Hanukkah; Advent and Christmas), spring festivals (Passover; Holi; Lent and Easter and saints' days – see also below) remembrances*
 - stories and characters from various faiths
 - faith symbols and artefacts (*for example crosses; other Christian symbols; Jewish, Muslim and Hindu symbols and artefacts; and special religious dress*)
 - places of worship (*for example a church, synagogue, mosque, mandir or gurdwara*)
 - visits to different places of worship (*for example a Christian church, a Jewish synagogue or a Hindu temple – see 'Visiting Churches' on the Northern Ireland Curriculum website for both RE and PDMU*)

² For example, from the introduction of the original core syllabus in the early 1990s the then-Minister of Education wrote that: 'I ... consider the inclusion of other world religions in schools' total Religious Education programmes to be of great importance, and I would like to encourage schools in this respect' (Minister Jeremy Hanley's letter to the Churches' Drafting Group, June 1992).

- **Special people: character studies**
 - Irish and other saints (*for example Columba; Brigid; Columbanus and Francis of Assisi*)
 - historical and contemporary world figures (*for example Father Damian; M.K. Gandhi; Anne Frank; Rosa Parks; Ray Davey and Corrymeela; Desmond Tutu; Aung San Suu Kyi*)
- **Local studies: historical and contemporary, relating to TWAU**
 - places with religious associations (*for example St Patrick or other Irish saints in relation to ancient monuments such as round towers; monastic sites; ancient ruined churches; events in the local area*)

Additional Possibilities associated with or extended from Learning Objective 3 of the Core Syllabus (Morality)

(Many of the themes in this strand link particularly well with PDMU)

- **Respect for differences**
 - developing awareness and good relations between people of different Christian traditions
 - developing awareness and good relations between people of different religions
 - developing awareness and good relations between people of different racial and ethnic groups
 - prejudice and stereotyping: countering sectarianism and racism
 - practical opportunities for building intercultural, inter-religious and cross-community trust and friendship
- **Justice and human rights**
 - justice and peace in the Bible
 - developing a sense of fairness and justice
 - causes of poverty and need in the developing world
 - cultural, ethnic and racial awareness
 - the work of global agencies such as the United Nations, UNICEF, Amnesty and Save the Children
 - developing a sense of global citizenship
- **Conflict**
 - understanding and dealing creatively with conflict
 - bullying
 - war: why people and nations fight
 - peace and working for peace: case studies
 - peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland: case studies

Most of the themes above are broadly cross-curricular, although RE may often be the place in which the themes link very effectively.

2.2 Links to other Areas of Learning

Language and Literacy

This applies to Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2.

Talking and Listening

Foundation Stage Pupils should have opportunities to:

- listen to a range of religious stories and songs;
- talk about a range of religious pictures, stories and artefacts, *for example Christmas cards or crosses;*
- recall the sequence and detail of familiar stories from the Bible, *for example The Nativity Story;*
- talk about and ask and answer questions relating to their own experiences of religion, *for example visiting a church building, attending a church service or taking part in a festival or ceremony or praying;*
- share their thoughts, feelings and ideas using appropriate religious vocabulary relating to their own experiences of religion, *for example the love of God, love of self or love of others;*
- adopt or assume a role relevant to a religious context, *for example a character in a Bible story or a minister;*
- take part in discussion activities relating to, *for example a religious festival such as Easter.*

Key Stage 1 Pupils should have opportunities to:

- listen to, respond to and explore *religious* stories through the use of traditional and digital resources;
- recreate Bible stories or parts of stories in a range of expressive activities, *for example:*
 - *create pictures or models of some characters or places from a Bible story or from a poem;*
 - *role-play the story of the Good Samaritan; or*
 - *freeze-frame the moment when the priest passes by;*
- listen to, interpret and retell with some supporting detail a range of oral and written texts, *for example use the hot seat to ask questions and talk about a character in a Bible Story such as Jonah, Zacchaeus or Peter;*
- tell their own stories based on personal experiences, *for example talk about an event they have witnessed and describe how they and others reacted, such as an incident in which they saw someone being bullied because of their religious background;*
- take part in a range of drama activities, *for example hot seat each of the key characters in the Nativity Story, or create tableaux of the events of Holy Week;*
- express thoughts, feelings and opinions in response to personal experiences, *for example after a visit to a local church or other place of worship or reception of sacraments;*
- devise and ask questions to find information, *for example before a visit to a local church or other place of worship or before a visit from a member of a faith community;*
- present ideas and information with some structure and sequence, *for example talk about the visit afterwards.*

Key Stage 2 Pupils should have opportunities to:

- listen and respond to a range of religious texts through the use of traditional and digital resources, *for example discuss the behaviour and attitudes of a character in a Bible story such as Zacchaeus or Herod;*
- tell, retell and interpret stories based on memories and personal experiences, such as when they had been tempted or experienced peer pressure;
- participate in group and class discussions, *for example express and ask for opinions on a range of moral issues or questions;*
- share, respond to and evaluate ideas, arguments and points of view and use evidence or reason to justify opinions, actions or proposals, *for example discuss how beliefs affect people's attitudes and behaviours towards others;*
- participate in a range of drama activities, *for example hot seating, freeze-framing, tableau and forum theatre using RE stories – key moments can be photographed and downloaded, and pupils' responses, thoughts and feelings related to the character added in speech and thought bubbles;*
- improvise a scene based on experience, imagination, religious literature or the media, *for example relating to the theme of forgiveness in the story of Joseph and his brothers;*
- describe and talk about real experiences and about people, places, events and artefacts, *for example show and share an item of religious or cultural significance to them in circle time;*
- prepare and give a short oral presentation based on a religious theme, showing an awareness of audience and including the use of multimedia, *for example present their ideas or information about care or stewardship of the environment to their group or class;*
- identify and ask appropriate questions to seek information, views and feelings, *for example plan and carry out an interview with a church leader or charity worker;*
- talk with people in a variety of formal and informal situations, *for example during visits to local places of worship.*

Reading

Foundation Stage Pupils should have opportunities to:

- begin to understand the concept of a special book such as the Bible;
- learn how to handle and care for special books;
- listen to a range of religious stories read to them by adults and other children;
- sequence biblical stories in reasonable detail using appropriate language;
- make and give reasons for predictions;
- use extended vocabulary when retelling Bible stories;
- make links between the religious text and personal experience.

Key Stage 1 Pupils should have opportunities to:

- read and be read to from a range of religious texts, for example a range of biblical material from both the Old and New Testaments in age-appropriate formats;
- read, explore and understand a range of biblical stories;
- retell and act out a range of religious texts, representing ideas through drama, pictures and ICT, for example recreate biblical characters or events through role-play;
- begin to locate books, chapters and verses within the biblical text;
- research and manage information relevant to specific purposes, using traditional and digital sources and present their findings in a variety of ways, for example locate and present information on the life of a Christian leader;
- use a range of comprehension skills, both oral and written to interpret and discuss key biblical texts and other religious stories;
- express opinions and give reasons for these based on what they have read, for example on some of Jesus' teachings;
- begin to use evidence from text to support their views, for example on stealing, telling the truth, and so on;
- explore and interpret a range of visual texts, *for example religious images, stained glass windows, or other religious art.*

Key Stage 2 Pupils should have opportunities to:

- read, explore and understand a wide range of religious material through traditional and digital texts;
- use traditional and digital sources to locate, select, evaluate and communicate information relevant for a particular task;
- represent their understanding of texts in a range of ways, including visual, oral, dramatic and digital, for example a travel brochure for Israel, a local news bulletin based on one of Jesus' miracles or a digital presentation on baptism;
- consider, interpret and discuss religious texts, exploring the ways in which language can be used in order to affect the reader or engage their attention, for example considering Jesus' use of parables to encourage people to think for themselves;
- begin to become aware of how different media present information, ideas and events in different ways, for example comparing the different Gospel accounts of the Nativity.

Writing

Foundation Stage Pupils should have opportunities to:

- understand that writing is a form of communication and can be used for different purposes, for example explore the Christian belief that God communicates with people through his special book the Bible;
- talk about ideas related to their drawings of religious stories;
- use ICT to present and communicate their ideas.

Key Stage 1 Pupils should have opportunities to:

- talk about and plan what they are going to write, for example after a visit to a place of worship;
- understand and use a range of religious vocabulary;
- express thoughts, feelings and opinions in imaginative and factual writing, for example write prayers, songs, stories, poems, diary entries and so on in response to a variety of stimuli;
- organise, structure and present ideas and information using traditional and digital means.

Key Stage 2 Pupils should have opportunities to:

- write for a variety of purposes and audiences, selecting, planning and using appropriate style and form;
- express thoughts, feelings and opinions in imaginative and factual writing, for example assume the character of one person in a Bible story and retell it from his or her perspective;
- create, organise, refine and present ideas using traditional and digital means, for example create a digital presentation on the work of TEAR Fund, Christian Aid, St Vincent de Paul or Trócaire.

The Arts

This applies to Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2.

Art and Design

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- look at, investigate and respond to a range of natural objects such as leaves and shells, *for example in the context of the natural world or story;*
- visualise and describe places and people, *for example talk about and draw what a scene or character from the Bible or other religious story might look like;*
- use individual thoughts and ideas as the starting point for visual work, *for example make a personal drawing based on experiences of fear, loneliness or happiness;*
- view examples of religious art at first hand, *for example stained glass windows when taking part in a visit to local church, and record the visit through a series of drawings;*
- explore religious symbols, *for example different types of crosses, the Star of David or menorah;*
- talk about the religious art they have seen, *for example in Christmas cards, icons, church building styles, Islamic calligraphy, or illuminated manuscripts, giving personal responses and offering individual interpretations or reactions;*
- react to what they have seen as a stimulus and use it as a starting point for individual ideas and personal interpretations, *for example develop a sequence of images as a narrative documenting a festival or celebration such as a baptism or a wedding.*

Music

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- work creatively with sound:
 - choosing sounds to add mood and atmosphere to parts of a Bible story, *for example in response to The Creation Story, The Story of Noah's Ark, The Story of Jonah, The Calming of the Storm and so on;*
- sing and perform with simple instruments:
 - listening to, joining in and remembering a range of religious songs, hymns and choruses;
 - taking part in singing a variety of religious songs, hymns and choruses as a class, group or individual;
 - using simple instruments to accompany religious songs;
- listen and respond to their own and others' music-making:
 - listening to a variety of religious music, responding to the beat using appropriate actions, *for example nodding head, tapping foot, clapping hands, marching;*
 - responding imaginatively through movement, drama or dance to a wider range of religious music, *for example The Hallelujah Chorus or African Sanctus;*
 - thinking and talking about the simple features of music and how they are used in religious music from different styles and cultures, *for example loud and quiet, high and low, fast and slow in music associated with Hanukkah or Diwali;*
 - discussing and making suggestions about religious music-making, *for example The Psalms, Palestrina chants, hymns, carols or choruses.*

Drama

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- take on roles and work with others in the context of an RE story such as The Story of the Unforgiving Servant, The Pharisee and the Tax Collector or The Parable of the Sower;
- freeze-frame and hot seat characters from stories such as Joseph and his Brothers, Saint Francis and the Leper;
- use symbols and images to make meaning, *for example symbolic actions to represent peace or forgiveness of enemies;*
- explore issues creatively through use of drama, *for example exploring family relationships through the story of Joseph and his brothers;*
- use drama to begin to explore their own and others' feelings about issues, *for example imagined eyewitness accounts of Jesus feeding the five thousand.*

The World Around Us

This applies to Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2.

Interdependence

Children should have opportunities to:

- explore their own cultural and religious backgrounds;
- identify the range of different cultures that exist in the community;
- explore the similarities and differences in the lives of children from different religious and cultural backgrounds using both traditional and digital sources;
- reflect on the importance of treating people with respect;
- consider our responsibility to each other;
- consider people who because of their faith have helped others in the past and who help us today, *for example interview a local minister, priest or youth worker to find out what his or her job involves;*
- find out about the lives of people who have worked to break down barriers and foster good relationships, *for example Martin Luther King;*
- understand the interdependence between people and the environment;
- develop understanding of ways in which human beings are dependent on the natural world, *for example explore the Christian theme of stewardship;*
- consider ways of caring for and improving the environment, *for example plant seeds and care for them until fully grown or consider recycling;*
- reflect on how people's actions can affect plants, birds and animals;
- reflect on the effect of people on the natural environment over time;
- generate ideas for the perfect world of the future.

Movement and Energy

Children should have opportunities to:

- explore the theme of life as a journey, including the emotional, physical, social and spiritual changes that take place;
- explore the theme of a journey through the year, including key religious festivals;
- explore some of the reasons for and effects of people movement, *for example the story of the Exodus, or stories of people who had to move to other places or countries because of religious persecution such as the Pilgrim Fathers, the Huguenots or Jewish people;*
- explore some journeys taken by people of faith, *for example pilgrimages to Rome, Lourdes, Israel or Mecca;*
- explore the religious significance of the terms 'light' and 'darkness' referring to the thematic unit.

Place

Children should have opportunities to:

- explore their local area which will include church buildings, *for example go on a church trail;*
- observe, describe and record some exterior and interior features of church buildings using digital cameras;
- gather evidence from interviews, pictures, photographs and newspapers so that they can present a 'This is your Life' story of a local church;
- explore why many churches are named after saints;
- compare and contrast some church buildings, *for example those of different ages and of different denominations;*
- discover what older people remember about attending church in the past;
- consider what church buildings may look like in years to come, *for example plan and design a church for the future;*
- explore how place influences the nature of life, *for example compare the life of a child in India with the life of a child in Northern Ireland;*
- consider the ways in which people of faith work to help developing countries, *for example TEAR Fund, Christian Aid, St Vincent de Paul and Trócaire.*

Change over Time

Children should have opportunities to:

- explore their own and others' personal history including significant events and achievements such as birth, baptism, first communion and confirmation;
- identify the causes and consequences of changes over time, including how church buildings have changed over the years;
- identify similarities and differences between ways of life, past and present, *for example between life in biblical times and today;*
- explore changes that have taken place in the religious and cultural landscape of Britain and Ireland over the past number of years;
- develop an awareness of patterns, rhythms and cycles in the natural world, including seasonal changes.

Links between RE and PDMU

This applies to all key stages.

Some teachers are uncertain about the relationship between RE and PDMU, perhaps worrying that PDMU has been designed to replace or subsume RE.

These concerns are often expressed in the form of questions:

- Are RE and PDMU really just the same thing?
- Could PDMU be perceived as 'RE for a secular age' – without 'the religious bits'?
- Is PDMU a form of moral education that has now been liberated from being too closely associated with religion?
- Are RE and PDMU complementary or competitive?

How are RE and PDMU linked?

- They are both values-related subjects.
- There are inevitable overlaps in some themes and topics.
- They may well make use of similar methodology: discussion, group work and active and interactive teaching and learning activities.
- They are both process-related – not just about information and knowledge.

How are RE and PDMU different or distinct?

- They are not the same subject. They are distinct areas of the curriculum.
- They do not depend on each other for their validity:
 - PDMU is not 'the morality bit' of RE; and
 - RE is not 'the religious bit' of PDMU.
- One is not designed to replace the other – they are complementary, not competitors.

RE and PDMU can work best as partners in values education, supporting and complementing each other. Some schools have developed schemes of work incorporating both areas, shaping their programmes according to the context of their local community and developing a pedagogical approach which makes full use of active and interactive learning. This requires good co-operation between subject co-ordinators and an awareness of the key requirements of both subject areas.

In relation to PDMU, RE should help children to become:

- informed and thoughtful about ethical and religious issues in general;
- reflective about their own religious views;
- aware of how religious beliefs affect people's attitudes and behaviour;
- able to discuss religious differences openly, sensitively and with respect; and
- aware of their own skills and talents.

The relationship between RE and PDMU is also reflected in the balanced approach to RE –

Learning *About* and Learning *From* Religion:

Learning *About* Religion involves:

- knowledge;
- understanding; and
- information on religion and specific religions.

Learning *From* Religion involves:

- values;
- attitudes; and
- reflection on life's questions.

The links between RE and PDMU are perhaps at their strongest in relation to RE Core Syllabus Learning Objective 3: Morality, and PDMU Strand 2: Mutual Understanding in the Local and Wider Community. One of the key themes in PDMU Strand 2 is diversity: exploring 'similarities and differences between people'. When taken seriously together, RE and PDMU can be particularly effective in this theme by helping children to explore their own and others' beliefs, attitudes and values.

PDMU, RE and Diversity

Diversity is a significant theme in both curriculum areas and RE can provide many opportunities for exploring religious and cultural diversity in relation to PDMU. This can be achieved through the following.

Curriculum work

- exploring Christian diversity – visiting churches, meeting visitors from other churches
- exploring other religions – including visits and visitors, websites
- sharing ideas on similarities and differences through circle time and thinking skills activities
- classroom projects and displays focusing on cultural and religious diversity

A positive and inclusive whole-school ethos

- whole-school celebrations of a range of festivals and special occasions from different religious traditions
- getting different classes and individuals involved in presenting assemblies which recognise the diversity of religious cultures in the school
- openness to children from different backgrounds
- corridor and entrance hall displays that acknowledge and welcome religious and cultural diversity

Good relationships between teachers within and between schools

- teachers exemplifying openness towards other traditions
- collaborative work between schools based on curriculum co-operation between teachers
- a readiness to visit each other's schools
- highlighting in class, and sharing in, diverse special occasions – *for example confirmation of Catholic children; Harvest festivals (in Christianity and Judaism); Eid ul Fitr (the Muslim end-of-Ramadan celebration); Diwali (Hindu festival taking place in the Autumn)*

Community involvement

- developing a good relationship with various local religious communities
- involvement in creative inter-school cross-community activities
- sharing special occasions with partner schools
- engaging in joint exploration of places of worship and cultural significance

Key principles for teachers focusing on diversity

- be inclusive
- develop an awareness of diverse religious and cultural traditions
- help children to value and celebrate their own traditions
- help children to explore and value unfamiliar traditions
- encourage the building of trust between diverse groups within and beyond the school
- encourage good listening skills
- relate faith issues to life issues (*for example human rights, fairness, justice or peace*)

2.3 Suggested Activities

Ideas from *Active Learning and Teaching Methods*

There are examples of activities in the *Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stages 1 and 2*, which is available at www.nicurriculum.org.uk

Back to Back (page 8)

Two children sit back to back. One has a picture from a religious story or a diagram of a religious object and attempts to describe it to the other child. The other child then tries to draw what he or she has heard described.

CAF (Consider all Factors) (pages 9–10)

This approach encourages the children to think about all the relevant factors that need to be taken into account when making a decision or considering an idea, *for example when deciding whether or not to tell a lie or whether or not to forgive* they might think about the possible impact on themselves, on others and on wider society.

Collage (page 14)

The children are given a word, idea, issue or concept relating to RE *such as forgiveness, compassion or sacrifice*. They must represent it using a range of provided materials such as magazines, newspapers, coloured paper, marker pens, felt tips, scissors or glue.

Conscience Alley (page 16)

Talk about conscience and illustrate with some simple role-plays. Talk about thoughts being invisible, how we cannot see the thoughts going through a person's head and how thoughts are depicted in comics with bubbles.

Choose a story or a situation where a character has to decide between right and wrong using their conscience. Jesus' temptations in the wilderness (Luke 4: 1–13) or Peter denying Jesus (Luke 22: 54–62) would work well with this technique. A story about a young person facing peer pressure to do something wrong could also be used, for example shoplifting or smoking underage.

Children line up in two parallel lines. They represent the conscience of a character from the story. One side of the alleyway can be good thoughts; the other side can be bad thoughts. A child in the role of the character walks between the lines as the others whisper what they think the person should do. (It may be useful to give the children an opportunity to discuss what they might say, in pairs or small groups, before joining the line.)

Drawing things together

The thoughts become the basis of discussion, relating them to the story and to the children's experience. Choose according to age and aptitude.

- How might the character have reacted to these thoughts?
- Which ones do you think he or she would 'listen' to?
- What influenced which thoughts were heard and acted upon?

- What role did their faith play in listening to their thoughts or conscience?
- When do we 'hear' conscience speaking? What influences when we listen to it?
- Is conscience always right? Do we need to check with other people?
- What happens if people keep ignoring their conscience?

Consequence Wheel (page 17)

The children use a consequence wheel to identify and reflect on the possible consequences of a particular course of action, *for example choosing to begin to smoke at the age of nine; bullying.*

Freeze-Frame (page 30)

The hall is the most suitable room for this activity, although a large classroom could be used. Another alternative is to use the playground.

Start by playing 'Musical Statues'. Develop the activity by encouraging the children to walk around the hall, then calling 'freeze' and asking them to remain completely still. Explain that they will need to be able to keep completely still for the activity.

Drama Freeze-Frame

As the children enact part of a story in groups, the teacher says 'freeze' as a cue for them to stop. He or she walks among the 'frozen' children and gently touches one or two on the shoulder with something soft (a soft toy or something similar) and asks them a question, to which they respond as they think their character would. The enactment can be stopped at different points and explored. Select from the following as appropriate for the age group:

- What is happening?
- How are you feeling, and what are you saying?
- What do you think about what is happening?
- What do you feel about other characters, and how they respond to your opinions?

Act and Photograph Freeze-Frame

The children enact scenes from a story and they decide important moments to 'freeze-frame'. These moments can be photographed, downloaded to the computer, and children's responses, thoughts and feelings relating to the characters added.

DVD Freeze-Frame

Watch a DVD of a religious story. Pause and 'freeze-frame' the film at crucial points and ask how the story may develop. What may happen next? With older children explore different ways in which they think the story might develop. The children can create tableaux of that frame. On a given cue they can then enact how the film might continue in different ways, before watching the original. With older children explore the factors that will decide how the film develops (for example decisions, beliefs or events). The freeze-framing can be used to follow a particular character and can then be repeated for another character. Explore a moment when we make choices that affect others and ourselves. What affects our choices?

Hot Seating (page 36)

After enacting a story (see above) 'hot seat' one character. A child, still in character, sits on a chair and is asked questions by the rest of the group. The child responds in role. Questions should relate to what the child is thinking at that moment and to how he or she is feeling.

Discuss what the children discovered about the characters from the freeze-frame and hot seating activities. Encourage the children to give reasons why they think their character reacted in a particular way, giving evidence from the text if possible. Explore what they have found out about the characters and the beliefs, values and commitments in their lives. Relate this to the children's beliefs, values and commitments.

Jeopardy (page 40)

In this activity the children are given the answer and are then asked to make up questions to which this might be the answer. In the context of RE, for example:

- The answer is 'three'. What might the question be? or
- The answer is 'miracle'. What might the question be?

Just a Minute (page 43)

Having completed a topic, the child must then speak for one minute about it, *for example the events of Easter week or the story of Moses*. The other children listen carefully but interrupt them if they repeat themselves, hesitate or go off the subject (repetition, hesitation, deviation).

KWL (page 44)

This is very useful at the beginning of an RE topic to ascertain what the children already know about it, what they would like to learn about it, how they might go about finding out and how they might show at the end what they have learned.

Mind Maps (page 48)

Mind maps can be used in any RE topic or unit. They can be used at the start of a unit to see how much the children already know – a form of baseline assessment. They can be filled in as the unit progresses and become part of an RE display that the children add to as they discover things. They can add questions and responses and links to their experience. Mind maps can also be a way of recapping on an RE unit and capturing the learning. Use a large piece of paper with plenty of room to add both words and images.

- Write your subject, or use an image, at the centre of the paper.
- Decide, after discussion, on some main headings: for example, if your subject is churches, your headings might be 'buildings', 'people' and 'beliefs'. Connect your main headings (or branches) to your title. Make them different colours so that they are easy to follow. Keep the number of branches low with younger children.
- Focus on one branch at a time, and add details as sub branches, keeping to the correct colour. You can add smaller 'twigs' to the branches. So 'buildings' may split into 'inside' and 'outside'. 'Inside' would have details such as 'altar' and 'pulpit'.
- Add images as you go along. These can be drawn or stuck on.
- Add a branch called 'our space' for the children's questions, responses and links to experience.

Odd One Out (page 53)

- The children, working in pairs or groups, are given a set of three or four items (words, phrases, sentences or pictures can all be used) appropriate to their RE topic such as festivals, Bible characters or well-known Christians.
- Working in pairs or groups, the children are asked to identify the 'odd one out'. They must say why it is the odd one out, and what the other items have in common.
- The lists of items which the children work with should allow for different possible answers, rather than only one correct answer. What matters here is how the children arrive at their answers.
- An odd one out grid can be used to record what the children have learned or remembered.

OPV (Other People's Views) (page 55)

This strategy can be used to explore different points of view in moral dilemmas and religious stories, for example the views of all the characters in The Parable of the Good Samaritan, or of people who witnessed The Feeding of the Five Thousand.

Spectrum Debate (page 64)

Signs saying 'agree' and 'disagree' are placed on opposite ends of the classroom. The teacher reads a statement relating to the RE topic under discussion, and the children move to the position on a continuum that they feel matches their view on the subject. They can then be asked to explain their decision.

Tableau (page 67)

The children discuss what the characters in a painting or picture (related to the RE that is being explored) may have been thinking and feeling, and what might have been happening. The children create a tableau of the painting or picture. On a given signal the painting comes to life and the children improvise what characters might have been saying and what may have happened next.

Taboo (page 68)

Each group of children receives an envelope containing word cards relating to a religious topic. There is the key word and then five words which they must not use when explaining their key word to the other groups.

Think, Pair and Share (page 70)

This strategy can be used to help the children consolidate and articulate their thinking before answering a question.

Using Images (Photographs) page 74

Below are some useful questions to explore when using photographs.

- What interests or surprises you about the photograph or picture? What puzzles you?
- What questions do you want to ask about it?
- Does this image tell a story or send a message? What is the story or message?

- Explore the feelings of the people in the image. Look at their expressions and body language.
- Add speech and thought bubbles to show what people are saying and thinking.
- Is there an important colour in the image? Does the artist create a particular feeling by the use of this colour?
- Does this image have a particular mood or atmosphere? What is it?
- What is happening or has just happened? If you were to paint the next event, what would it be?

Additional Ideas

Maps from Memory

This is a good way of getting the children to memorise visual information. Explain the activity to the children (see below) and ask them to decide their strategy before they begin. Will everyone in their group look at the whole picture or will they divide it up and decide to look at a section each? After each person has added their part to the drawing, the group can brief the next person on what to look for.

- Put an RE picture (*for example of a seder dish or the interior of a church*) flat on a table some distance from the children.
- Divide the children into groups of four and give each group an A3 sheet of paper, pencils and rubbers.
- Number the children 1–4 within each group.
- At a given signal, child no.1 from each group goes up to the table and memorises as much as they can of the image in 10–20 seconds. They go back to the group and draw what they saw.
- On a given cue the 'no. 2' children then do the same, adding to the previous drawing.
- This carries on until all the members of the group have seen the picture and added to the drawing.
- Show them the original picture. Ask the children to give their drawing marks out of ten.
- Discuss how effectively the teams had worked together. How might they have done things better?

Telephone Conversations

This involves pairs of children improvising a telephone dialogue between two characters at a particular moment in a story, for example the child whose lunch Jesus used to feed the 5000 might be in telephone conversation with his mum! Variations might include the teacher speaking as one character while the rest of the class, in turn or when ready, speak as the other character. Telephone conversations are a simple way of focusing on important conversations so that the whole group are aware of how two characters are communicating.

2.4 Assessment

Assessment for Learning

Assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching process. It helps to provide a picture of a child's or young person's progress and achievements and to identify the next steps in learning. Assessment approaches need to promote pupil engagement and ensure the appropriate support so that all pupils can achieve their aspirational goals and maximise their potential.

In RE, as in all other areas of learning, teachers should:

- share learning intentions and success criteria with pupils:
 - displaying the learning intentions in the classroom (these can be written or projected onto the board);
 - referring to them throughout the lesson and revisiting them at the end;
 - writing them in words the pupils will understand; and
 - sharing and agreeing with pupils on what you are looking for (with practice, children should be able to write success criteria themselves);
- ask and encourage effective questions:
 - asking open-ended questions, giving pupils 'thinking time' and using strategies such as think – pair – share; and
 - encouraging pupils to formulate their own questions;
- provide formative feedback showing how attainment can be improved:
 - using a variety of prompts, scaffolding, examples and reminder prompts;
 - relating feedback given to the success criteria;
 - providing pupils with time to read the comments; and
 - providing pupils with time to act on the comments;
- encourage pupils to review their own progress through self- and peer- assessment and evaluation:
 - providing time for pupils to think about and reflect on their learning;
 - providing prompts which will help pupils think about their learning, *for example* 'I learned most from...' or 'I need to work more on...';
 - recording these reflections, *for example in diaries, learning logs and progress files*; and
 - developing action plans which show pupils how to progress in their learning.

Summative Assessment and Reporting

The statutory summative assessment arrangements for the Northern Ireland Curriculum focus on pupil progression in the literacy, numeracy and ICT skills needed for life and the world of work. These skills are described in the Levels of Progression for the Cross-Curricular Skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT.

RE provides a rich context for the acquisition and development of these skills, particularly the skills of Communication (Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing) and in Using ICT. It also provides a very useful context for the acquisition and development of Thinking Skills (Managing Information, Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making, and Being Creative) and the Personal Capabilities of Self-Management and Working with Others.

When pupils have acquired and developed these skills, teachers should provide them with some opportunities within the context of RE to demonstrate them. Teachers should ensure that assessment activities have a clear purpose and are planned and embedded in learning and teaching.

Assessment of pupil achievement in the Cross-Curricular Skills should be made using the Levels of Progression.

Assessment of the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities should be carried out during normal, ongoing classroom activities and based on qualitative judgements of pupil progress.

Teachers must also assess and report annually on each of the Areas of Learning, including RE. This should be carried out following the whole-school policies. While reporting to parents on RE is optional, it is certainly good practice to do so.

Religious Education in Primary Schools

Non-Statutory Guidance Materials

RE and the Northern Ireland Curriculum	Learning, Teaching and Assessment Opportunities in RE	Issues for Staff Development	Links and Resources
3.1 The Legal Framework for RE in Northern Ireland	3.2 RE in Different Types of Primary Schools	3.3 The RE Teacher and Professionalism	
Issues for Information and Discussion RE and the Northern Ireland Curriculum Type of Provision The Core Syllabus Inspection of RE Opting Out of RE	RE in Controlled Schools RE in Catholic-Maintained Schools RE in Integrated Schools	Issues for Discussion	

3.1 The Legal Framework for RE in Northern Ireland

Issues for Information and Discussion

RE in Northern Ireland, as in other parts of the UK and many other countries, has been provided in schools for a very long time and is prescribed in law. The current legislation states:

The curriculum for every grant aided school shall –

- (a) include provision for religious education for all registered pupils at the school in accordance with such of the provisions of Article 21 of the 1986 [Education and Libraries] Order as apply in relation to the school...

[The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, Section 5(1)].

Other legislation makes it clear that this also applies to special schools, but not to nursery schools. 'All registered pupils' in this regard applies to all pupils up to the statutory school-leaving age of 16 years.

RE and the Northern Ireland Curriculum

Background and Context:

The relationship of RE to the rest of the Northern Ireland Curriculum is sometimes a cause of confusion, especially when teachers examine the 'Big Picture' diagrams on the Northern Ireland Curriculum website, which seem to set RE apart by use of a broken line. As in other parts of the UK, RE in Northern Ireland is provided for in a different way from the rest of the curriculum, as outlined in the section on the core syllabus. It therefore sits alongside the Northern Ireland Curriculum, rather than as a formal part of it. In practical terms, however, RE is (or should be) as much a part of the curriculum of any school as all the other Areas of Learning.

For discussion:

- How can we ensure that learning and teaching in RE will reflect the pedagogy and practice of the Northern Ireland Curriculum as a whole? What specific steps do we need to take in our school?

Type of Provision

Legislation allows different approaches to RE teaching in different types of schools. In controlled schools RE is to be 'undenominational'; maintained schools (almost all of which are Catholic schools) may teach according to the teachings of the particular denomination (sometimes termed 'confessional' RE); and integrated schools often combine aspects of both approaches. (See section 3.2 'RE in different types of Primary Schools' below.)

Background and Context:

In relation to controlled schools, legislation specifies that RE should be 'undenominational' – 'that is to say, education based upon the Holy Scriptures according to some authoritative version or versions thereof but excluding education as to any tenet distinctive of any particular religious denomination' [Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, Section 21(2)].

In other school types, including controlled integrated and other types of integrated schools, boards of governors are able to determine if RE should include any denominational or confessional teaching.

Other legislation continues to permit, even in controlled schools, some degree of denominational teaching ('...tenets distinctive of a particular religious denomination...') by 'ministers of religion and other suitable persons, including teachers of the school' [Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, Section 21(7)].

For further background information see section 3.2 'RE in Different Types of Primary Schools.'

For discussion:

- What approach to RE is appropriate in our school?
- In a school where denominational teaching is permitted, is it possible to balance this with a more open-ended approach to RE? Are children from all backgrounds respected and accommodated?

Background and Context:

Some observers have pointed out that the definition (above) of the term 'undenominational' is ambiguous. Does it, for instance, preclude the teaching of any topics in which pupils learn about different Christian denominations (as opposed to teaching their beliefs as truth)? Does it also preclude any topic in RE that is not directly based on the Bible, such as learning about religions other than Christianity (or Judaism?) or studying the lives of special people of faith? Generally speaking schools have taken a fairly broad and relaxed view of these issues, though some have argued for greater clarification in this regard.

Concerns have been expressed, however, about the desirability in a school of separating out children along denominational lines for such teaching and in practice this provision is now only very rarely taken up in controlled schools.

For discussion:

- How do we understand the term 'undenominational' and what might this mean in practical terms? (Is it the same as 'non-denominational'?)
- Is there still a place for permitted denominational teaching in controlled schools? If so, how might this best be carried out?

The Core Syllabus

Since the early 1990s Northern Ireland has had a core syllabus for RE which, according to legislation:

Sets out certain core matters, skills and processes which are to be included in the teaching of religious education to pupils... but does not prevent or restrict the inclusion of any other matter, skill or process in that teaching...

[Education (NI) Order 2006, Section 11(1) (a)].

Described by the Churches' drafting group as 'essentially Christian', the core syllabus outlines three Learning Objectives at each Key Stage: The Revelation of God; The Christian Church; and Morality. (A further Learning Objective, World Religions, appears at Key Stage 3 only.) Schools are permitted to include additional material in their RE provision if they wish, such as world religions at Key Stages 1 and 2.

Background and Context:

This core syllabus is 'specified' by DE, but is prepared by 'a group of persons ('the drafting group') appearing to the Department to be persons having an interest in the teaching of religious education in grant-aided schools' [2006 Order, Section 11(2)(a)]. From the beginning, however, the drafting group has been made up from representatives of the four largest Christian denominations in Northern Ireland (the Catholic Church in Ireland; the Church of Ireland; the Methodist Church in Ireland; and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland). A revised version of the core syllabus was published in 2007 and is available for download from DE's website (www.deni.gov.uk/re_core_syllabus_pdf.pdf) along with other relevant documents.

The provision in legislation that the core syllabus 'does not prevent or restrict the inclusion of any other matter, skill or process' has often been interpreted in broad terms and may also offer a useful perspective on issues around the definition of 'undenominational' RE as raised above.

To offer support and guidance to teachers an RE Advisory Group was established in 2006 by CCEA and the denominations responsible for drafting the revised core syllabus.

For discussion:

- How well does the core syllabus meet the needs of the range and diversity of children in our school?
- What additional material might be helpful in this school to supplement the provisions of the core syllabus? (See the section of these guidelines in 2.1 'RE Beyond the Core'.)

Inspection of RE

RE in Northern Ireland is not normally inspected in the same way as other subjects, although it is possible for boards of governors to request inspection by DE's ETINI.

Background and Context:

The inspection of RE in Northern Ireland is different from that in other parts of the UK. Legislation provides for inspection in grant-aided schools (except nursery schools) by 'ministers of religion and other suitable persons, including teachers of the school, to whom parents do not object' [Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, Section 21(7)]. In controlled schools this role has traditionally been carried out by clergy of the three denominations that constitute the Transferor Representatives' Council (Church of Ireland, Methodist Church in Ireland and Presbyterian Church in Ireland), though some clergy have expressed unease about this role. Since 1989 it has been possible for the boards of governors of schools to request DE to include RE in a school inspection, and the three Protestant denominations named above have attempted to encourage this development. In practice, however, only a small number of schools have taken up this option. It may well be that in a growing number of schools RE is the only subject that does not have proper access to an effective form of quality control.

For discussion:

- How can we ensure internally that RE in our school is subject to the same measures of quality control that we would expect for other subjects?
- Should RE be inspected in the same way as any other subject?

Opting Out of RE

Legislation has long existed in Northern Ireland, as in other parts of the UK and many other countries, permitting parents to withdraw their children from RE:

If the parent of any pupil requests that the pupil should be wholly or partly excused from attendance at religious education or collective worship or from both then, until the request is withdrawn, the pupil shall be excused from such attendance in accordance with the request.

[Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, Section 21(5)]

The request for withdrawal from RE may be made for many reasons – membership of a minority faith community or a non-religious family, for example – although take-up of this legal right is variable and reasons do not have to be given in order for the request to be granted.

Background and Context:

This legislation applies to all school types and schools are obliged to accommodate parents in their request. The legal right belongs to parents rather than children.

Teachers in controlled schools are also entitled to request not to teach RE as long as this is on grounds of conscience. They must do so by making a formal request to the board of governors of their school who are obliged to respond favourably to such a request without any disadvantage to the teacher's position in the school. [Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, Section 22(1,2,3)]

Recent research evidence from Northern Ireland* suggests, however, that there is significant uncertainty on the part of many teachers about what is often termed as 'the conscience clause'. For example, in some schools teachers seemed to believe that the parental right of withdrawal did not apply to them; elsewhere there were very different approaches to the provision of alternatives for children not taking part in RE classes. Many of the parents and children interviewed for this research programme said that if the RE core syllabus was more inclusive in content and approach, there would be much less need to use the facility of withdrawal.

* Mawhinney, A., Niens, U., Richardson, N. & Chiba, Y., *Opting Out of Religious Education: the Views of Young People from Minority Belief Backgrounds* (Queen's University: Belfast, 2010)

For discussion:

- What provisions are made in our school for children whose parents request their withdrawal from RE? Are they adequate, safe and educational?
- Do parents and children from minority belief backgrounds feel respected and included in the school, whether or not they choose withdrawal, especially in relation to RE and school assembly?
- Is the legal right of withdrawal made clear to parents and teachers in school documentation and presentations to prospective parents?

For further information on the legal position of RE, a very useful document entitled *Religious Education: Legal Matters* has been prepared by the Belfast Education and Library Board on behalf of the Boards' RE advisers. Other useful documentation can be found in the core syllabus section of DE's website: www.deni.gov.uk/index/80-curriculum-and-assessment/80-curriculum-and-assessment-religiouseducationcoresyllabus-pg.htm

3.2 RE in Different Types of Primary School

For a variety of reasons RE has developed differently in the different types of school in Northern Ireland. This, in part, reflects the history of education and the resulting different legal arrangements for the different kinds of schools. A summary is provided here of the approaches in the controlled, maintained and integrated sectors to help teachers to learn about and from each other, and to be aware of the different emphases and nuances between school types. It is important to keep in mind, however, that there are often significant variations *within* each sector as well as between them.

RE in Controlled Schools

Controlled schools were originally schools managed by the three largest Protestant denominations in Northern Ireland (Presbyterian, Church of Ireland and Methodist) that were transferred to state control following the 1930 Education Act. Many other controlled schools have been established since then. They are open to pupils from all backgrounds, although historically they have served mainly the Protestant community, with just a small percentage of pupils from Catholic and other backgrounds. In recent years they have also included small but increasing numbers of 'newcomer pupils', including some from religions other than Christianity. The management of controlled schools (in Education and Library Boards and Boards of Governors) has always included some representatives from the transferring churches. While they are not Protestant schools in any formal sense, some observers have referred to them as *de facto* Protestant, and others sometimes as 'church-related schools'.

RE in controlled schools is not permitted by law to be denominational, and has traditionally been perceived as 'Bible-based'. Many controlled schools emphasise that their ethos is generally Christian, though how this is understood and put into practice varies widely. In many controlled primary classrooms RE seems to have been taught in much the same way for many years, which sometimes results in an unimaginative approach. Some schools, however, have developed a broader approach, including multicultural topics and a wider range of learning activities. The Northern Ireland Core Syllabus for RE (1993, revised 2007) is intended as an officially approved minimum content for all publicly funded schools, including controlled schools. Some controlled schools now include other 'non-core' material such as church visits and teaching about world religions, thus making a cross-curricular link with PDMU.

Resources for controlled primary RE were often previously provided by the education and library board RE advisers, although there is no single pattern to this and no recommended publications. Some schools have one or more sets of class Bibles. Following the introduction of the Northern Ireland Core Syllabus for RE in the early 1990s, most of the education and library boards provided sets of themed worksheets for each primary age group. These are still in use in many schools. The boards also offered curriculum development courses, although staff and financial constraints have more recently limited this provision.

Protestant clergy from the three transferring denominations (see above) have the right of inspection of RE in controlled schools; DE's own Inspectorate (the ETINI) may only inspect RE in a school if requested to do so by the Board of Governors, and such requests are relatively infrequent. In recent years the Transferor Representatives' Council (which represents the

three transferring Protestant denominations) have encouraged boards of governors to request the Department's Inspectorate to include RE. Many clergy now appear to prefer an informal relationship with their local schools by paying individual visits to classes or taking part in a school assembly.

RE in Catholic-Maintained Schools

Catholic-maintained schools are managed by the Catholic Church with funding and support from the state. They are legally entitled to teach RE from a Catholic perspective. They must emphasise a three-way link between the home, the school and the parish, and the importance of teaching the whole curriculum in the context of a Catholic Christian ethos. Some children from other backgrounds also attend Catholic-maintained schools, which, in the words of the Northern Ireland Commission for Catholic Education, are 'open, welcoming and inclusive to all pupils irrespective of their religious, cultural and ethnic background'. ('Catholic Education FAQ', from the website of the Northern Ireland Commission for Catholic Education: [www.catholiceducation-ni.com/component/option,com_cifaq/Itemid,98/.](http://www.catholiceducation-ni.com/component/option,com_cifaq/Itemid,98/))

RE in Catholic schools is catechetical and focused on nurturing children in the Catholic faith. Most children attending Catholic primary schools are prepared for the sacraments of Reconciliation (First Confession – normally in Year 3 or Year 4), Eucharist (First Communion – normally in Year 4) and Confirmation (normally in Year 7), and a good deal of time is devoted to this process. The home, school and parish link referred to above is seen as central to support sacramental preparation. In many Catholic primary schools RE is taught for about half an hour every day.

The Northern Ireland Core Syllabus for RE (1993, revised 2007) is intended as an officially approved minimum content for all publicly funded schools, including Catholic-maintained schools. The Catholic RE programme is generally held to include all core syllabus material plus its own catechetical material. Catholic primary schools use the 'Alive-O' programme (published by Veritas) as their main resource for RE; it is a very thorough and detailed set of resources for pupils and teachers. 'Alive-O' is written from a Catholic Christian perspective but there are a few sections on other Christian traditions and other religions.

A close relationship exists between each Catholic school and the local parish and its clergy. Catholic clergy visit the schools and there are also regular visits by classes to the local parish church (which is sometimes very near the school) for Mass or for sacramental preparation. Overall responsibility for the standard of RE in Catholic schools resides in the diocesan Bishop, and curriculum development and support is provided by RE advisers based in each diocese. It is also possible for boards of governors of Catholic schools to request inspection of RE by the ETINI.

RE in Integrated Schools

Since 1981 there has been a small but growing sector of planned integrated schools in Northern Ireland, including a small number of 'transformed' schools which were former controlled schools that have now taken on integrated status. Their stated ideal is to attract an intake that represents a balance in pupils' community background of 40/40/20 – Protestant/Catholic/others. (DE only requires integrated schools to have a 70:30/30:70 (Catholic: Protestant/Protestant: Catholic) minimum balance. The 40/40/20 balance is the ideal preferred by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), as set out in the NICIE *Statement of Principles*. RE is therefore taught in a range of ways to reflect that diversity, including the teaching of catechetical RE for Catholic pupils.

The Northern Ireland Core Syllabus for RE (1993, revised 2007) is intended as an officially approved minimum content for all publicly funded schools, including integrated schools. While the integrated movement as a whole emphasises that they provide 'a Christian based approach' there is a strong commitment in integrated schools to an inclusive and open approach to RE. Thus the material in the core syllabus is often supplemented with teaching about different Christian traditions, world religions and other beliefs. Many integrated schools organise their RE teaching to provide separate sacramental preparation for Catholic pupils while ensuring that all pupils have opportunities for 'general RE' together. Actual practice, however, is quite varied.

Many integrated primary schools use a specially adapted version of the 'Alive-O' programme for their Catholic pupils and some have used parts of the programme for all pupils. A programme called 'Delving Deeper' has been produced to enable Protestant pupils to explore their traditions while their Catholic classmates are preparing for sacraments. There is also some use of the worksheet resources produced by the education and library boards. Some schools have also developed their own programmes drawing on materials from other parts of the UK or from cross-community programmes such as 'Stepping Out' (now included on the CCEA website as a resource for PDMU and RE).

Integrated schools have no official denominational connections but are normally happy to invite local clergy of various denominations to visit the school; these invitations are taken up to a varying degree in different areas. There is no clergy inspection of RE in integrated schools, but as in other sectors boards of governors may invite inspection of RE by the ETINI.

3.3 The RE Teacher and Professionalism

Issues for Discussion

Primary teachers normally have to deliver the whole curriculum and while some may have a specialist knowledge and skills in certain areas most teachers have to build up their awareness of curriculum areas that may be less familiar to them. In this regard the teaching of RE may be very similar to areas of the curriculum such as science, history and geography (The World Around Us) where background research and preparation is necessary in relation to many topics, aided by awareness of good resources and perhaps by the support of a co-ordinator colleague.

RE also raises other issues for some teachers, however, who may be uncertain of the extent to which the teaching of RE should relate to their own religious beliefs. Some teachers may feel very uncomfortable about such issues, perhaps out of fear of causing offence or of seeming hypocritical. For example:

- Should a primary class teacher only teach RE if she or he has a religious faith?
- Is it a role only for committed Christians?
- Should a teacher of another faith, or of no faith at all, teach RE?
- Should teachers pretend that they are religious believers, or hide their real views, in order to protect the children from controversy or to avoid offence?

Such concerns – which may often be unspoken – leave some (perhaps many) teachers feeling very uneasy about RE. As a result, some may avoid teaching RE as much as possible or simply swap subjects with another colleague.

This section raises some of these questions in order to encourage honest discussion and to offer possible professional approaches. It is recommended that the discussions below be used for personal reflection and/or as part of a whole-staff development process.

Who should teach RE?

Some of the possible responses are indicated below. These may be affected not only by the personal views of an individual teacher but also by the type of school (controlled, maintained, integrated) and the public statements of individual schools, such as in the school prospectus or website.

Discuss these questions first, and then consider some of the suggestions in the next section.

- Must a person teaching RE be someone with a strong personal religious belief?
- Should a person teaching RE be a practising Christian?
- Can or should a member of a religious community other than Christian teach RE?
- Should a person teaching RE be a well-informed specialist? (Is the task too specialised to leave to the general primary teacher?)
- Should it be essential for a person teaching RE to possess some kind of approval from one or more religious denomination or tradition?
- Is it sufficient for persons teaching RE simply to have an active interest in religion?

What are the ideal characteristics of a teacher of RE?

Discuss the following suggestions. Add to or amend them, and place them in your own agreed order of importance:

An RE teacher should be...

- Committed to religious belief and practice?
- Impartial – open and fair to a range of views and religious traditions?
- Sensitive to differing views and practices? (Is this the same as 'Cautious not to offend'?)
- Aware of appropriate subject material, resources and pedagogies?
- Enthusiastic about the children's learning?
- Keen for the children to explore and discover their own ideas?
- Still open to learning about their own values, beliefs and practices?

Background and Context:

Professional Practice in RE

The following suggestions have been proposed in order to encourage discussion and the development of agreed policy and practice:

- Be true to yourself, to your own beliefs and insights.
- Be inclusive in the content of your teaching and the approaches you employ.
- Encourage a respect for, and the inclusion of, differences – between different Christian traditions, between different religions, and between religious and non-religious beliefs.
- Encourage the children to ask questions and to share their own ideas
- Don't be afraid of saying 'I don't know' or 'I'm not sure'. Model the honesty that you would wish the children to learn.
- *Do* talk about religious issues – and not just in RE. Don't give the impression to children that talking about religion is embarrassing or potentially offensive.
- Use inclusive language. Avoid giving the impression that there is only one correct point of view.
- Broaden children's horizons. Encourage critical thinking.
- Remember that your task is educational, not one of persuasion or coercion.

Religious Education in Primary Schools

Non-Statutory Guidance Materials

RE and the Northern Ireland Curriculum

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Opportunities in RE

Issues for Staff Development

Links and Resources

4.1
Links

4.2
Resources

4.1 Links

Northern Ireland Curriculum Website

www.nicurriculum.org.uk

As well as the RE section devoted to Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, teachers in primary schools may also find some of the RE support and guidance material on the Key Stage 3 section of the website useful for their own background information when planning or researching topics.

Click on Key Stage 3 and then on Religious Education.

The following is a list of other useful websites and organisations that may be able to offer support and resources for teaching RE in the primary school.

Alive-0

Available at www.veritasbooksonline.com

The Irish Catholic catechetical programme for primary schools, also used in many integrated schools (with some adaptations). It includes lesson material and teacher resources for all primary age groups, with many supporting materials including music, story, poetry, PowerPoints and so on.

Articles of Faith

www.articlesoffaith.co.uk

Information, calendar and online catalogue on religious artefacts and related resources.

Barnabas in Schools

www.barnabasinschools.org.uk

Tried and tested resources for assemblies and RE and ideas for exploring values and festivals through drama, discussion, art and games.

BBC Learning Zone Class Clips (Primary)

www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips

Select RE to find a wide range of short video clips to support many RE topics on Christianity and other religions.

BBC Religion and Ethics (Religion Homepage)

www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions

Background information on a wide range of religions and religious topics. We recommend 'Featured Religions and Beliefs' and 'Interfaith Calendar'. Many other religious and ethical issues are covered on related pages of this website.

BBC Religion/Religion and Ethics

www.bbc.co.uk/religion

Background information on a wide range of religions and religious topics.

BBC Schools Religion

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion

Background information on festivals, special times and events in Christianity and other world religions. Much of the material is appropriate for older primary pupils, and there are also downloadable worksheets for teachers.

See also the link to **BBC Learning Religious Studies** for additional materials and further links: www.bbc.co.uk/learning/subjects/religious_studies.shtml

Bible Gateway

www.biblegateway.com

Access to a range of downloadable versions of the Bible in English and many other languages.

Channel 4 Learning – RE

www.channel4learning.com/support/websites/re.html

Some resources available for younger primary and early years – Dottie and Buzz: games, songs and simple activities.

CRED Policy: Community Relations, Equality and Diversity

www.deni.gov.uk/

This Department of Education (NI) policy is available for download, along with related documents, from the Department's website.

European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education (EFTRE)

www.eftre.net

A Europe-wide organisation to support teachers of RE. Organises conferences and other events and maintains a useful and informative website.

Guardian Teacher Network – RE

www.teachers.guardian.co.uk/resources.aspx?method=edit&from=subject&view=mr&s=21&l=4

A range of free general and more specific interactive resources to support RE and related areas. Registration (at no cost) is required to this network.

National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE)

www.natre.org.uk

A subject teacher association for RE professionals in primary and secondary schools of all kinds. Publications and courses are available and members and non-members can access many free resources via its website.

Primary Resources – RE

www.primaryresources.co.uk/re/re.htm

A wide range of downloadable resources, including activities, visual presentations, policy guidelines, and so on.

RE Online

www.reonline.org.uk

A very comprehensive website with resources for teachers and for pupils of all age groups, with access to photos, video clips, and so on. Well worth extensive exploration!

RE Quest

www.request.org.uk

Many free downloadable resources for teaching about Christianity in RE.

RE Today Services

www.retoday.org.uk/

One of the leading RE support organisations in the UK, responsible for producing many teacher-friendly resources for all age groups. Some resources are downloadable. It also gives you access to a range of other RE publications and to news and information of interest to those teaching RE.

Saint Patrick Centre

www.saintpatrickcentre.com

The website of the St Patrick interpretive centre in historic Downpatrick. Much of general interest to those teaching about Ireland's patron saint and the development of Christianity in Ireland. We recommend the education section.

Shap Working Party on Education in Religions

www.shapworkingparty.org.uk

Information on the well-known Shap Calendar of Religious Celebrations, plus other relevant news, updates and access to publications.

Stepping Out

Available at www.nicurriculum.org.uk

A web-based resource by Yvonne Naylor especially developed to introduce mid- and upper-primary pupils to a range of religious and cultural celebrations and issues, with lesson plans, illustrations and a particular focus on the use of puppets. Now accessible via the RE section of the Northern Ireland Curriculum website (Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2).

The Stapleford Centre

www.stapleford-centre.org

A support website for Christianity in education, including access to many RE downloads for subscribers. We recommend their Forty Creative Ideas for Teaching Primary RE, Forty Creative Ideas for using Drama in RE and Forty Creative Ideas for Reflective Spaces.

Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools

www.osce.org/odihr/27217

This important document was prepared in 2007 by a group of legal, educational and human rights experts under the auspices of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to provide guidance on appropriate principles and standards for teaching about religion. The document indicated here is the Executive Summary of the report and the ten *Key Guiding Principles* are to be found on page 5–6.

(The full document can be found at www.osce.org/odihr/29154)

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4.2 Resources

We recommend the following printed materials to support some of the RE themes highlighted here. Many standard educational catalogues include a wide range of high quality resources for RE. Some of these resources are also available online (see section 4.1).

Northern Ireland Curriculum Thematic Units

These were developed by the RE Advisory Group and issued to schools in booklet form in 2010. They are also available in English and Irish for downloading from the RE section of the Northern Ireland Curriculum website (Key Stages 1 and 2):

www.nicurriculum.org.uk/key_stages_1_and_2/areas_of_learning/religious_education

- *Food for Thought* – Thematic Unit and Resource Book on the place of food in religions (for Years 3 and 4)
- *Saint Patrick and People of Faith* – Thematic Unit and Resource Book featuring Moses, Gandhi and the Dalai Lama as well as the patron saint of Ireland (for Year 5)
- *Faith and Light* – Thematic Unit and Resource Book featuring festivals and special times such as Advent/Christmas, Hanukkah, Diwali and Ramadan (for Years 6 and 7)

See also the section of the Northern Ireland Curriculum website on *Ideas for Connected Learning* (ICLs), where you can find other relevant downloadable booklets, especially *Celebrations and Good Times* (Years 3 and 4).

RE Today Services

RE Today have many excellent resources (see section 4.1). The following may be of particular interest:

- *A to Z: Practical Learning Strategies to Support Spiritual and Moral Development*, 2nd edition, Pamela Draycott and Joyce Mackley
 - active learning activities on a range of RE themes.

Other relevant primary series include:

- **Developing Primary RE:** titles include *Christmas, Special Times, Special Places, Faith Stories, Symbols of Faith*, and so on.
- **Exploring a Theme:** titles include *Beliefs in Action, Celebrations, Exploring Worship, Leaders and Followers*, and so on.
- **Opening Up:** titles include *Christianity, Easter, Judaism, Islam, Community, Respect*, and so on.
- **Spiritual Development:** titles include *Talking Pictures* [for 4–7 age group], *Inspiring Visual RE: Using and Making Art in Primary RE, Listening to Children in RE*, and so on.

These and many other RE Today resources can be viewed in the online catalogue at www.shop.retoday.org.uk

Religious and Moral Education Press

This has a range of resources for RE and collective worship in schools. The following series are worth noting:

- **Faith in Action:** a long-standing series of character studies in booklet form, with many titles including *Martin Luther King; Gandhi; Mother Teresa; the Dalai Lama; Aung San Suu Kyi; Simon Wiesenthal* and so on.
- **Biblos (Primary):** a series developed in association with the Bible Society to help children think about questions related to biblical and contemporary themes, with titles including *Everybody Hurts, Sometimes; Meetings with Mystery; and Where Are We Going?*

Many other books for pupils and teachers are available from the RMEP and can be viewed via their website: www.rmep.co.uk

Articles of Faith

A wide range of religious artefacts are available on the six largest religions found in the UK: Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. The online catalogue includes artefacts, books (including Bibles and other scriptures), CDs, DVDs, etc., in relation to the named religions, plus sections on Chinese religions, Christmas around the world, worship and assemblies and a wide range of teachers' resources: www.articlesoffaith.co.uk

Special Needs Resource for teachers

O' Brien, L., *Connecting with RE – RE and Faith Development for Children with Autism and/or Severe and Complex Learning Disabilities* (National Society: Church House Publishing: London, 2002)

The list above is by no means exhaustive and is only a snapshot of possibilities from some of the major RE publishers. Updates and additional sources can easily be obtained via the websites indicated above and in section 4.1.

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