

Attitudes in Religious Education

It is vital that religious education encourages pupils to develop positive attitudes to their learning and to the beliefs and values of others. The following four attitudes are essential for good learning in religious education and should be developed at each stage or phase of religious education:

- self-awareness
- respect for all
- open-mindedness
- appreciation and wonder.

Self-awareness in religious education includes pupils:

- feeling confident about their own beliefs and identity and sharing them 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 affirming their self-worth;
- becoming increasingly sensitive to the impact of their ideas and behaviour on other people.

Respect for all in religious education includes pupils:

- developing skills of listening and a willingness to learn from others, even when others' views are different from their own;
- 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;
- being sensitive to the feelings and ideas of others.

Open-mindedness in religious education includes pupils:

- being willing to learn and gain new understanding;
- engaging in argument or disagreeing reasonably and respectfully (without belittling or abusing others) about religious, moral and spiritual questions;
- being willing to go beyond surface impressions;
- distinguishing between opinions, viewpoints and beliefs in connection with issues of conviction and faith.

Appreciation and wonder in religious education includes pupils:

- 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 their capacity to respond to questions of meaning and purpose.

(QCA: Non-Statutory National Framework for Religious Education, 2004)

Skills for learning in RE

Pupils' learning about the content of RE takes place alongside the development of their skills. In RE pupils need general skills such as gathering information, expressing ideas or evaluation sources. There are some skills that RE particularly needs to develop and use. This section describes these skills and gives examples of how pupils progress in using them in RE. It is intended to stimulate teachers' thinking, but there is no requirement for the skills to be developed in a linear fashion. Pupils' RE skills often develop in cycles, so for example 7 year olds may evaluate a question simply, but 15 year olds need to bring balance, evidence and self-expression to their evaluative work. As pupils progress in developing these skills, they will be increasingly able to understand the characteristics of each religion, and the similarities and differences between religions.

<p>Skills for learning in RE:</p>	<p>The skills are expressed in four progressed steps, which teachers may relate to advancing age groups.</p> <p>Teaching should enable pupils to:</p>
<p>Investigation - in RE this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asking relevant questions; • knowing how to use different types of sources as a way of gathering information; • knowing what may constitute evidence for understanding religions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask increasingly deep and complex questions about religion and what it means to be human; • Use a widening range of sources to pursue answers; • Focus on selecting and understanding relevant sources to deal with religious and spiritual questions with increasing insight and sensitivity; • Evaluate a range of responses to the questions and issues raised.
<p>Expression - in RE this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ability to explain concepts, rituals and practices; • the ability to identify and articulate matters of deep conviction and concern; • the ability to respond to religious issues through a variety of media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what words and actions might mean to believers; • Articulate their own reactions and ideas about religious questions and practices; • Clarify and analyse with growing confidence aspects of religion that they find valuable or interesting or negative; • Explain in words and other ways their own responses to matters of deep conviction.
<p>Interpretation - in RE this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ability to draw meaning from artefacts, music, works of art, poetry and symbolism; • the ability to suggest meanings of religious texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say what an object or a symbol means; • Use figures of speech or metaphors to speak creatively about religious ideas. • Understand different ways in which religious and spiritual experience can be interpreted; • Explain the role of interpretation in religion and life.

<p>Reflection - in RE this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ability to reflect on feelings, relationships, experience, ultimate questions, beliefs and practices; the ability to use stillness, mental and physical, to think with clarity and care about significant events, emotions and atmospheres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify some places and experiences that help them to think deeply; Describe how actions and atmospheres makes them feel; Experience the use of silence and thoughtfulness in religion and in their own lives. Respond with insight to religious and spiritual issues.
<p>Empathic skills - in RE this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ability to consider the thoughts, feelings, experiences, attitudes, beliefs and values of others; developing the power of imagination to identify feelings such as love, wonder, forgiveness and sorrow; the ability to see the world through the eyes of others and to see issues from their point of view. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See with sensitivity how others respond to their actions, words or behaviour; Connect their feelings, both positive and negative, with those of others, including those in religious stories and contexts; Imagine with growing awareness how they would feel in a different situation from their own; Identify thoughtfully with other people from a range of communities and stances for life.
<p>Application - in RE this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> making the association between religions and individual community, national and international life; identifying key religious values and their interplay with secular ones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See links and simple connections between aspects of religions; Make increasingly subtle and complex links between religious material and their own ideas; Apply learning from one religious context to new contexts with growing awareness and clarity; Apply their learning from different religious sources to the development of their own ideas.
<p>Discernment - in RE this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explaining the significance of aspects of religious belief and practice; developing insight into people, motives, actions and consequences; seeing clearly how individuals might learn from the religions they study for themselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience the awe and wonder of the natural world and of human relations; Be willing to look beyond the surface at underlying ideas and questions; Weigh up the value religious believers find in their faith with insight, relating it to their own experience; Discern with clarity, respect and thoughtfulness the impact (positive and negative) of religious and secular ways of living.
<p>Analysis - in RE this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> distinguishing between opinion, belief and fact; distinguishing between the features of different religions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See what kinds of reasons are given to explain religious aspects of life; Join in discussion about issues arising from the study of religion; Use reasons, facts, opinions, examples arguments and experience to justify or question a view of a religious issue; Analyse the religious views encountered with fairness, balance, empathy and critical rigour.

<p>Synthesis - in RE this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> linking significant features of religion together in coherent ways; trying to connect different aspects of life into a meaningful whole. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notice similarities between stories and practices from religions; Use general words (e.g. sacred book, festival) to describe a range of religious practices from different faiths; Make links between different aspects of one religion, or similar and contrasting aspects of two or more religions; Explain clearly the relationships, similarities and differences between a range of religious arguments, ideas, views and teachings.
<p>Evaluation - in RE this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ability to debate issues of religious significance with reference to evidence and argument; weighing the respective claims of self-interest, consideration for others, religious teaching and individual conscience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk about what makes people choose religious ways of life and the reasons they give for these choices; Describe how and why religious people show the importance of symbols, key figures, texts or stories; Weigh up with fairness and balance the value they see in a range of religious practices; Evaluate skilfully some religious responses to moral issues and their own responses.

Adapted from several sources including materials from RE Today Services

Promoting Citizenship through Religious Education

Religious education plays a significant part in promoting **citizenship** through:-

- developing pupils' knowledge and understanding about the diversity of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding;
- enabling pupils to think about topical spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues including the importance of resolving conflict fairly;
- exploring the rights, responsibilities and duties of citizens locally, nationally and globally;
- enabling pupils to justify and defend orally, and in writing, personal opinions about issues, problems and events.

Promoting Personal, Social and Health Education through Religious Education

Religious education plays a significant part in promoting *personal, social and health education* through pupils:

- developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities by learning about what is fair and unfair, right and wrong and being encouraged to share their opinions;
- developing a healthy, safer lifestyle by learning about religious beliefs and teachings on drug use and misuse, food and drink, leisure, relationships and human sexuality, learning about the purpose and value of religious beliefs and sensitivities in relation to sex education and enabling pupils to consider and express their own views;
- developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people by learning about the diversity of different ethnic and religious groups and the destructive power of prejudice, challenging racism, discrimination, offending behaviour and bullying, being able to talk about relationships and feelings, considering issues of marriage and family life and meeting and encountering people whose beliefs, views and lifestyles are different from their own.

Promoting Key Skills through Religious Education

Religious education provides opportunities for pupils to develop the key skills of:

- **communication** through developing a broad and accurate religious vocabulary, reading and responding to a range of written and spoken language (including sacred texts, stories, poetry, prayers, liturgy and worship), communicating ideas using the creative and expressive arts, talking and writing with understanding and insight about religious and other beliefs and values, reflecting critically on ultimate questions of life, using reasoned arguments;
- **application of number** through calendrical reckoning, collecting, recording, presenting and interpreting data involving graphs, charts and statistical analysis;
- **information technology** through using CD-ROMs and the internet selectively, researching information about religions and beliefs, teaching and practices, using email to communicate and analyse information with people of differing beliefs and cultures, using spread sheets and databases to handle and present data relevant to the study of religious education;

- **working with others** through sharing ideas, discussing beliefs, values and practices, collaborating with each other and developing respect and sensitivity;
- **improving own learning and performance** through setting targets as part of religious education development, reviewing their achievements and identifying ways to improve their own work;
- **problem solving** through recognising key issues to do with religious belief, practice and expression, interpreting and explaining findings and making personal decisions on religious issues (for example, considering their own and religious ideas on good and evil), ethical dilemmas and priorities in life.

Promoting Other Aspects of the Curriculum

Religious education provides opportunities to promote:

- **thinking skills** through helping pupils to research, select, interpret and analyse information from religious traditions, reflect and question their own views and ideas and those of others and communicate their ideas in a variety of ways;
- **financial capability** through considering the responsible use of money, the importance of giving and the ethics of wealth, debt, poverty, gambling, business and investment;
- **creativity and culture** through considering the scope of human nature, sources of inspiration and discovery, connections between beliefs, values and forms of artistic expression, appreciating the value of cultural distinctiveness and reflecting on beauty, goodness and truth in creative and expressive arts;
- **education for racial equality and community cohesion** through studying the damaging effects of xenophobia and racial stereotyping, the impact of conflict in religion and the promotion of respect, understanding and co-operation through dialogue between people of different faiths and beliefs;
- **effective contributions to scientific, medical and health issues** through exploring philosophical and ethical questions of the origin, purpose and destiny of the cosmos and life within it, exploring the nature of humanity and human interaction with the world, exploring developments in genetics and medicine and their application and use and exploring concepts of health and well-being and their promotion;
- **links to employment, vocations and work-related learning** through a focus on individual sense of purpose and aspiration in life, and through considering the appropriateness and relevance of religious education to a wide range of employment opportunities and the development of spiritual and ethical issues linked to the world of work;

- **education for sustainable development** through helping pupils consider the origins and value of life, the importance of looking after the environment and studying the ways in which religious beliefs and teachings have influenced attitudes to the environment and other species.

Taken from the QCA document *Religious Education The Non-Statutory National Framework*
ISBN 1 85838 574 1