

## Guidance on the use of KS3 Strategy training materials to support the teaching of gifted and talented pupils in religious education

This guidance is provided to outline how the teaching and learning principles of the KS3 Strategy, and the Strategy's training materials relevant for the foundation subjects, focus the teaching of gifted and talented pupils in religious education.

The underpinning principles used here are consistent with the guidance provided by QCA in teaching gifted and talented pupils in Religious Education. This is important prior reading and can be found by clicking [here](#). This website also provides further information on identification, example of units of work, activities beyond the classroom, resources, monitoring and evaluation in religious education.

Your school may have a policy on identifying gifted and talented pupils. You should refer to your school's policy to ensure that your departmental policy is consistent. General guidance for identifying gifted and talented pupils can be found by clicking [here](#).

You may find it helpful to refer to the background information relating to gifted and talented pupils, their identification, and provision for them, prior to looking at the subject detail provided here. A useful starting point is the short guidance provided by the KS3 Strategy for teaching able, gifted and talented pupils. This can be found by clicking [here](#).

In addition to this, there is a generic training module which can be downloaded by clicking [here](#).

Throughout this guidance, you will find reference to a range of KS3 Strategy training materials. These can be found via the links below:

Training materials for the foundation subjects [FS] DfES 0350/2002

[Click here](#)

Literacy across the curriculum [LAC] DfEE 0235/2001

[Click here](#)

Assessment for learning, whole-school training materials DfES 0043-2004 G

The following guidance uses the KS3 Strategy's teaching and learning principles. These apply to all subjects and for all pupils. In this guidance they are related to gifted and talented pupils. This group of pupils is referred to throughout as 'able' pupils. (This definition is used in the existing whole-school guidance for gifted and talented pupils published by the Strategy.) The guidance consists of a three-row table for each of the principles, set out as follows:

- The first row states one of the teaching and learning principles of the KS3 Strategy, followed by the generic defining features for able pupils and, where relevant, defining features for able pupils in the subject.
- The second row provides subject-specific examples of those features which apply to KS3 teaching in the subject.
- The third row provides the relevant references to the existing training materials from the KS3 Strategy.

## **The principle: FOCUS THE TEACHING**

### **Defining features for able pupils**

- The department has clear and wide-ranging criteria for the identification of able pupils and this is used directly to inform teachers' planning.
- The learning needs of able pupils are clearly addressed in schemes of work and short-term plans. They are expressed in carefully differentiated learning objectives and intended learning outcomes.
- Teaching explicitly builds on prior skills, knowledge and understanding of able pupils to ensure appropriate progression.

### **Examples**

Religious education abounds with opportunities for able pupils to have their need to engage with difficult and challenging situations and materials met.

Mysteries – based on a key question, to which there is no single correct answer – enable pupils to draw upon existing knowledge and bring into play a range of skills, including dealing with ambiguity. For examples, see V. Baumfield, *Thinking through religious education* (Chris Kington Publishing, 2002).

Able pupils may be encouraged to engage with the role of a character in the mystery, and to develop the attitudes and arguments of the character in order to respond sensitively to questions from their peers in a 'hot seating' exercise.

### **Supporting training material**

FS module 3, 'Planning lessons'. Refer to session 3.2, 'Objective-led lesson planning', session 3.3, 'Writing objectives', handout 3.5 Lesson Plans A–D. Use OHT 3.4 to review and revise long- and medium-term planning to ensure that learning objectives focus on how able pupils will be taught and will learn, rather than focusing on activities.

FS module 14, 'Big concepts and skills'. Refer to session 14.2, 'Important cognitive skills' and session 14.3, 'Classifying learning outcomes'. This will support able pupils in identifying the essential building blocks that make the subject distinctive and which underpin progression in the subject.

AfL unit 3, 'Objective-led lessons', handout 3.2 and associated subject development tasks for the unit (from September 04).

AfL unit 2, 'The formative use of summative assessment', including the accompanying video sequence.

AfL unit 6, 'Curricular target setting', including the subject development tasks.

## **The principle: PROVIDE CHALLENGE**

### **Defining features for able pupils**

- Teachers model a range of activities and skills, such as their own thinking, using higher order questions and analysing different writing genres.
- Teaching offers a diversity of opportunities for able pupils to extend ideas, suggest hypotheses and develop creative and innovative outcomes.
- Teaching requires pupils to use strategies for active learning, as independent or collaborative learners.
- Teaching demands individual and imaginative responses of pupils to practical tasks, informed by rigorous critical skills.

### **In particular, in RE**

- Teaching demands individual and imaginative responses from pupils to questions of meaning and purpose, informed by rigorous critical skills, extending their capacity for independent, well-informed and reasoned judgement.
- Teaching actively encourages risk and provides opportunities for pupils to question and challenge opinions sensitively, ensuring that they feel secure in formulating and expressing their own opinions and views.

### **Examples**

By posing challenging questions – for example, ‘What do we mean by “truth”?’, ‘How do the religions we studied regard truth?’ – the teacher involves pupils in higher order thinking. Pupils may be asked to work in pairs to generate a definition and then meet with another pair to interrogate and critique each definition.

There is a high level of challenge inherent in tasks such as this. (The above task is appropriate for all Key Stage 3 pupils and enables all pupils to respond according to ability.)

Radio RE: pupils interview members of different faith communities about a key issue and create a radio/TV programme to reflect the various opinions represented, together with their own commentary and conclusions.

### **Supporting training material**

FS module 9, ‘Challenge’ explores the meaning of ‘challenging learning opportunities’. In particular, it shows how teachers can make challenging tasks achievable. Refer to session 9.2, ‘How we create challenges in the classroom’, which contains an activity on Bloom’s taxonomy to stimulate teachers’ thinking about the cognitive demands of teaching activities.

See also session 9.3, ‘Creating a climate for challenge’.

Use handout 9.4 to review the challenge offered to ensure that able pupils are challenged by higher order and more open-ended tasks.

Refer to ‘Structure the learning’ later in this guidance, where module 9 is explored in more detail.

FS module 4, ‘Questioning’, video sequence and handout 4.3.

FS module 10, ‘Engagement’, video sequence.

## **The principle: MAKE CONCEPTS AND CONVENTIONS EXPLICIT**

### **Defining features for able pupils**

- Teachers encourage pupils to use complex and advanced subject terminology with confidence.
- Teachers model a range of activities and skills, such as their own thinking, using higher order questions and analysing different writing genres.

### **In particular, in RE**

- Teachers encourage pupils to use complex RE terminology with confidence.
- Teachers' medium-term plans ensure that the key concepts and skills of RE are regularly revisited so that they can be consolidated and applied in varied contexts.

### **Examples**

Teachers provide pupils with the skills to ask and respond to questions of meaning – for example, is there life after death? What do the religions we are studying say about these issues? What are my views? Pupils then can draw on evidence, identify bias and understand the nature of belief. An activity to develop these key skills of enquiry and investigation involves working in pairs or small groups to frame questions about visual resources, such as works of art which express key religious ideas and concepts in relation to life after death.

Pupils have the opportunity to engage with people of faith through, for example, 'hot seating' interview, email, letter writing.

Pupils are developing the capacity to think critically, to relate what they are learning through these engagements to their own life experiences, for example, through keeping a reflective journal or learning log.

Asking, and responding to, hard questions, is a key feature of religious education. These modules enable teachers to consider ways of developing questioning techniques that can enhance learning and support pupils in becoming more independent as learners.

### **Supporting training material**

FS module 6, 'Modelling' shows how modelling can help clarify complex concepts and support pupils' independent use of skills and processes. Refer to session 6.1, 'Introduction'. Refer to the two supporting video sequences showing annotation of a photograph and concept mapping.

FS module 5, 'Explaining' identifies the need to provide high quality explanations to pupils, particularly those which relate to more complex, abstract principles and important ideas. Refer to session 5.1, handout 5.4 and the video sequence.

FS module 14, 'Big concepts and skills' – session 14.2, 'Important cognitive skills' – outlines the importance of being able to pick out a pattern when presented with a wealth of information.

LAC unit 2, 'Writing non-fiction', especially handout 2.4 (x17) and the accompanying video sequence.

LAC unit 4, 'Spelling and vocabulary'.

## **The principle: STRUCTURE THE LEARNING**

### **Defining features for able pupils**

- Lesson planning ensures that able pupils are engaged in learning as a process of discovery.
- Lessons are structured to facilitate optimum progress in independent learning.
- Lessons begin with challenging starters and contain plenaries which not only consolidate learning but also stimulate the desire to extend learning.

### **Examples**

Pupils start to engage with a challenging problem – e.g. how can human beings be capable of enormous courage and commitment but also great evil? – or thought-provoking image as soon as they enter the room. They should feel that they have learned something in the first ten minutes.

In the main part of the lesson, pupils are expected to explain and justify their thinking and reasoning. They engage in group or paired activities that require them to show independence. Activities involving the classification of statements, images or artefacts will help pupils to make conceptual links and understand similarities and differences. The level of challenge is raised when pupils are asked to suggest their own categories, in the light of their learning in RE.

One way of increasing the level of challenge in the plenary is to hand over the responsibility for debriefing the lesson to the pupils themselves.

### **Supporting training material**

FS module 3, 'Planning lessons', handout 3.5, Lesson plans A–D.

FS module 4, 'Questioning', appendix 4.1 to explore the use of questions for learning. Handout 4.3 – Bloom's taxonomy of questioning.

FS module 7, 'Starters' – session 7.6, 'Extending the repertoire' and session 7.7, handouts 7.2 and 7.3, appendix 1.

FS module 8, 'Plenaries' – handouts 8.3 and 8.5. The supporting video encourages pupils to be metacognitive.

FS module 10, 'Engagement': refer to session 10.2, 'Promoting pupils' involvement in learning'. Refer to session 10.3, 'Planning to improve motivation and engagement'.

## The principle: MAKE LEARNING ACTIVE

### Defining features for able pupils

- Teaching uses a wide range of stimuli to take account of the preferred learning styles of able pupils.
- Teaching uses questioning strategies to support higher order thinking.
- The classroom environment encourages pupils to use generic, transferable thinking skills activities.

### Examples

Provide groups of pupils with, for example, parables of Jesus which link to the religious concepts being studied – e.g. the Prodigal Son and the theme of redemption. Discuss the messages contained within the parables and how they hold relevance for Christians today. Ask groups to select one to rewrite for a particular audience, for example, teenage Christians. Put the message of the parable in a modern setting using any appropriate medium (e.g. a computer game or board game that allows for either/or choices to be made).

Another approach to using text or religious stories could be through a 'Community of Enquiry' approach (see materials from *Philosophy for children*). The class listens to a short story or extract, and pupils frame questions about the account, share questions with a partner, then a group. The group chooses one question for the whole class to discuss. The teacher provides questions to be displayed and pupils decide the order in which the questions will be discussed. The discussion begins with the thoughts of the individuals who framed the selected questions, and others participate by offering their opinions: *I agree/disagree because ...* The questions are worked through, providing opportunities for all to contribute. The teacher helps pupils to reach some kind of agreement about their conclusions.

The above activity is one that promotes interest and engagement among pupils. It offers opportunities to able pupils to articulate their thinking while enabling all pupils to make a contribution and feel valued.

### Supporting training material

Making learning active is addressed in FS modules 9–14. These modules are particularly supportive of the development of able pupils' critical skills and contextual understanding. They offer strategies whereby pupils might reflect on and articulate their personal views about their work, using these skills to further enhance their work. They address the notion of talk as a tool for thinking and learning and show how pupils can be helped to talk and reason together most effectively.

FS module 9, 'Challenge', including handout 9.2 and supporting video from the module.

FS module 10, 'Engagement', session 10.2 onwards.

FS module 11, 'Principles for teaching thinking', appendix 11.1.

Handout 11.2 provides insights into why able pupils can do such tasks, through examination of the characteristics of their long-term and working memories.

## **The principle: MAKE LEARNING ENGAGING AND MOTIVATING**

### **Defining features for able pupils**

- Teaching ensures that able pupils are engaged in lessons as a process of discovery, through teachers communicating their own enthusiasm and passion for the subject.
- Teaching recognises and resonates with pupils' sense of personal and cultural identity.
- Teaching responds to the interests and experience of pupils and has relevance for them.
- There are opportunities for a variety of contexts to be used as a learning resource, including the local area and the community.

### **In particular, in RE**

- Teaching recognises and resonates with pupils' sense of personal and cultural identity and beliefs.

### **Examples**

Explore sacred texts which focus on wisdom and insights into the human spirit. Encourage pupils to articulate and discuss the questions and dilemmas that are raised for them through their reading.

Interpreting text and putting it into a different medium such as video, play, poem, Powerpoint presentation or article enables pupils to engage with text and to draw out more complex ideas and issues. This can lead to a deeper level of understanding of familiar stories – for example, from faith communities – and the ways in which different groups might interpret them.

Use the local environment to your advantage. Encourage and support pupils to seek out the range of faiths in their locality and to produce a 'faith directory' with contact names, places where people worship, key features of each faith and particularly the impact of the faith in the community.

Opportunities to make visits can prove to be excellent sources of inspiration, prompting higher-level responses. For example, visits to Beth Shalom or the Holocaust Exhibition and the trenches at the Imperial War Museum.

### **Supporting training material**

FS module 9, 'Challenge' – session 9.2, 'How do we create challenges in classrooms?'

FS module 10, 'Engagement'. In particular, refer to session 10.2, 'Promoting pupils' involvement in learning'. Also session 10.4, 'Addressing different learning styles'. Refer to the video sequence for the module.

FS module 11, 'Principles of teaching thinking', appendix 1.1, has some generic ideas that can be readily adapted to subject teaching. For example, Classification tasks, Odd One Out, and Maps from Memory can provide a rich source of stimulus and engagement for able pupils.

## **The principle: DEVELOP WELL PACED LESSONS WITH HIGH LEVELS OF INTERACTION**

### **Defining features for able pupils**

- Teaching responds flexibly to the range and depth of able pupils' independent study.
- Teaching promotes the autonomy of able pupils.
- The teacher negotiates clearly defined goals with able pupils and identifies the steps needed to achieve them.
- Lessons contain a balance of closed and open tasks suitable for able pupils.

### **In particular, in RE**

- Lessons are planned and structured to facilitate effective interaction. This is not only between teachers and pupils, but also encourages pupils to interact with each other, responding to and building on each other's answers, agreeing or disagreeing, giving reasons and asking additional questions, in an atmosphere of trust.

### **Examples**

Questions are the most common form of interaction between teachers and pupils. Effective questioning is closely linked to the objectives of the lesson, so that the level of challenge increases as the lesson proceeds and makes space for pupils to listen to each other's questions and answers as well as the teacher's.  
Example: Engage in discussion of a philosophical question such as 'Is God real or a figment of imagination?'

Analysis requires pupils to distinguish between opinion, belief and fact and enables them to tell the difference between a religious and a non-religious question.  
Example: 'In RE we learn about many different views and opinions. Why?'

Synthesis requires them to link significant features of religion together in a coherent pattern.  
Example: Pupils make sense of the symbolism in examples of religious art, extracts from sacred texts and music to consider in depth how differing forms of religious expression convey key beliefs and concepts.

Evaluation requires pupils to draw on their knowledge and understanding in order to decide which argument or point of view they find most convincing.  
Example: Pupils study different interpretations and explanations of the arguments for and against the existence of God, and are asked to explain which argument or view they find most convincing and why.

### **Supporting training material**

Refer to FS module 9, 'Challenge' – session 9.3, 'Creating a climate for challenge'.  
Refer to FS module 12, 'Thinking together', in particular the pre-course tasks and handout 12.7.  
LAC module 7, 'The management of group talk'.

The above modules support teachers in developing pace and challenge through carefully structured learning experiences.  
Group talk facilitates high levels of interaction and shared thinking, allowing pupils to build on and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding.  
FS module 10, 'Engagement'. Use OHT 10.4 as a checklist with specific reference to able pupils.

## The principle: SUPPORT PUPILS' APPLICATION AND INDEPENDENT LEARNING

### Defining features for able pupils

- Teaching equips pupils with the skills in thinking, research and reflection necessary for independent learning.
- Teaching provides pupils with opportunities to evaluate their learning. The teacher negotiates clearly defined and appropriately challenging targets with able pupils, and jointly they identify the steps needed to achieve them.
- Teachers use a variety of demanding resources that help pupils engage with difficult or complex ideas.
- Teachers encourage pupils to use ICT to access a wider range of resources, and utilise ICT to allow able pupils to work at a faster pace.
- Teachers use homework to give scope to go beyond the obvious by challenging pupils to discover more.

### Examples

Opportunities to develop thinking skills are essential in RE, to make pupils think hard and transfer their learning to different contexts.

Examples include puzzling questions, such as: 'Is it possible to live forever?', 'What is beyond infinity?' (ref. Buzz Lightyear in *Toy Story*), 'Would a good God have made a world like this?'

Mysteries are problem-solving activities that focus on a key question. This might relate, for example, to moral dilemmas such as crime and punishment or conscientious objection, or religious practices which concern growing from childhood to adulthood, e.g. bar and batmitzvah.

Using stories from both religious and secular sources can be a powerful means of helping pupils to consider how something looks from a different perspective. (See Robert Fisher's *Stories for thinking, Philosophy for children*, [www.sapere.net](http://www.sapere.net).)

### Supporting training material

FS module 11, 'Principles for teaching thinking' – session 11.1, 'What is outstanding performance?' – addresses the characteristics of pupils who perform outstandingly in a subject. See also session 11.2, 'Understanding the principles of teaching and thinking', which is supported by appendix 11.1. FS module 12, 'Thinking together': refer to session 12.1, 'Introduction: What is talk used for?' and session 12.3, 'Exploratory talk'. See also appendix 12.1, 'Thinking together: summary of relevant research'.

FS module 13, 'Reflection' and FS module 8, 'Plenaries', with supporting video sequence.

LAC unit 6, 'Reading for information'.

As with the principle 'Focus the teaching' explored earlier, these modules offer strategies for thinking and reflection that support pupils' increasing independence as creative thinkers and makers.

AfL module 1, 'Assessment for learning in everyday lessons' and module 2, 'The formative use of summative assessment', including the supporting video sequence.

## The principle: BUILD REFLECTION

### Defining features for able pupils

- Teaching gives able pupils the opportunity and the means to reflect on their own work and that of others.
- By facilitating metacognition, teaching illustrates the essential relationship between reflection and activity.

### Examples

Lesson planning ensures that time is built in at key points during and at the end of each lesson for reflection on not only **what** was learned but **how** it was learned.

Encourage pupils to pause and think before speaking, and provide opportunities for them to present or explain their thinking to others.

A useful strategy is to identify 'thinking words' for RE. For example:

<i>interpret</i>	<i>visualise</i>	<i>articulate</i>
<i>reflect</i>	<i>attitude</i>	<i>analyse</i>
<i>empathise</i>	<i>imagine</i>	<i>evaluate</i>
<i>discern</i>	<i>belief</i>	<i>synthesise</i>
<i>metaphor</i>	<i>express</i>	<i>self-understanding</i>
<i>respect</i>	<i>symbol</i>	<i>awareness</i>

Display some thinking words – complete with definitions – and, after a suitable activity, allow pupils to choose words that match their mental processes.

Plan opportunities to develop the use of these words in plenaries.

Visit a place of worship and ask pupils to record their thinking as they walk around the building, perhaps using a portable tape recorder or camcorder. Following the visit, pupils use their thoughts to create a "stream of consciousness" type of extended writing response.

### Supporting training material

Foundation subjects, module 13, 'Reflection' and module 12, 'Thinking together', and LAC unit 7, 'The management of group talk'.

Refer specifically to session 13.1, 'The importance of reflection', session 13.2, 'Developing a vocabulary about thinking and learning' and session 13.3, 'Developing a language for learning'. Examples of 'thinking words' can be found on handout 13.7.

LAC unit 7, 'The management of group talk'.