

Planning, teaching and assessing the
curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties

Religious education

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Introduction

What are the purposes of these guidelines?

These guidelines support the planning, development and implementation of the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties. They draw on effective practice across a range of schools and can be used in mainstream and special primary and secondary schools, specialised units and independent schools. They also provide support to the range of services that work with these schools.

The guidelines can be used with the school's own material, the National Curriculum, the agreed syllabus for religious education and the frameworks for teaching literacy and mathematics to:

- confirm the statutory entitlement to learning for all pupils and build on the principles of inclusion set out in the National Curriculum
- help schools develop an inclusive curriculum by:
 - setting suitable learning challenges
 - responding to pupils' diverse learning needs
 - including all learners by overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment
- provide a stimulus to revisit and revise existing schemes of work or a basis to develop new ones.

Who are the pupils?

The guidelines relate to all pupils aged between five and 16 who have learning difficulties, regardless of factors such as their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background or gender, or the extent of their other difficulties. This includes pupils who are unlikely to achieve above level 2 at key stage 4. (These pupils are usually described as having severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties.) This also includes pupils with learning difficulties who may be working at age-related expectations in some subjects but are well below this in others. (These pupils, along with those with other significant difficulties, are often described as having moderate learning difficulties.)

Who are the guidelines for?

The guidelines support the work of a range of adults who are concerned with meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. This includes class teachers, subject coordinators, special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), senior managers, teaching assistants, parents, carers, governors, therapists, Local Education Authority (LEA) and advisory support services, and professionals from health, social services and the voluntary sector. Throughout these materials, the term 'staff' is used to refer to all those concerned with the education of these pupils.

What is in the guidelines?

The guidelines contain:

- support on developing and planning the curriculum
- support on developing skills across the curriculum
- subject materials on planning and teaching and assessing each National Curriculum subject, religious education (RE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. These include descriptions of pupils' attainment showing progress up to level 1 of the National Curriculum, which can be used to recognise attainment and structure teaching.

The subject materials

The subject materials support staff in planning appropriate learning opportunities. The materials do not represent a separate curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties or an alternative to the National Curriculum or agreed syllabus. They demonstrate a process for developing access to the curriculum and support staff in developing their own curriculum to respond to the needs of their pupils at each key stage. The materials offer one approach to meeting this challenge. Schools may already have effective structures or may wish to adopt different approaches.

The materials identify learning opportunities relevant to each subject. They demonstrate appropriate learning across the scope of the curriculum or agreed syllabus from the earliest levels. They are intended to increase schools' confidence in their capacity to provide appropriate access to the curriculum or agreed syllabus.

A common framework for these materials has been used. In each subject, appropriate learning for pupils with diverse needs at each key stage has been identified. Those aspects of the programmes of study that may create particular difficulties are also discussed, as well as aspects that may be unsuitable at a particular key stage. The suggested activities can be used to develop ideas for relevant, accessible and challenging experiences in curriculum plans.

Responding to pupils' needs when teaching religious education

The importance of religious education to pupils with learning difficulties

Religion is the experience and expression of faith. Learning about religion and learning from religion are important for all pupils, as RE helps pupils develop an understanding of themselves and others. RE promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of individuals and of groups and communities.

In particular, RE offers pupils with learning difficulties opportunities to:

- develop their self-confidence and awareness
- understand the world they live in as individuals and as members of groups
- bring their own experiences and understanding of life into the classroom
- develop positive attitudes towards others, respecting their beliefs and experience
- reflect on and consider their own values and those of others
- deal with issues that form the basis for personal choices and behaviour.

In response to these opportunities, pupils can make progress in RE:

- by moving from a personal to a wider perspective
- by increasing their knowledge of religious beliefs, practices and experiences
- through developing understanding of the meaning of stories, symbols, events and pictures
- through developing and communicating their individual responses to a range of views.

When developing the RE curriculum, schools will need to take into consideration local requirements and regional variations in cultural and religious experiences. This subject guidance is intended to support the guidance available through agreed syllabuses and show ways of teaching RE to pupils with learning difficulties.

Modifying the curriculum for religious education

The statutory inclusion statement of the National Curriculum requires staff to modify the programmes of study to give all pupils relevant and appropriately challenging work at each key stage. Staff teaching RE are encouraged to note this and similarly teach knowledge, skills and understanding in ways that match and challenge their pupils' abilities.

Staff can modify the curriculum for RE by:

- choosing material from earlier key stages
- maintaining, consolidating, reinforcing and generalising, as well as introducing new knowledge, skills and understanding
- using a syllabus and/or the guidelines as a resource, or to provide a context, in planning learning appropriate to the age and needs of pupils

- focusing on one aspect, or a limited number of aspects, in depth or in outline
- integrating, for pupils at the early stages of learning, RE with other subjects and as part of their everyday activities, including routines and shared events
- accessing RE through personal exploration and contact with a range of people
- providing a variety of learning environments and contexts in which content can be delivered
- providing a range of teaching approaches to meet the needs of individuals and groups.

RE is part of the basic curriculum and should be taught to all pupils except those withdrawn by their parents. In community schools, voluntary controlled schools and foundation schools not of religious character, the Agreed Syllabus Conference of the LEA decides on the RE curriculum with an agreed syllabus reviewed every five years. In voluntary aided and foundation schools of religious character, RE is taught according to the trust deed or governors' policy. Staff in special schools must provide RE for all their pupils, where practicable; it does not have to be taught to the locally agreed syllabus although staff are encouraged to do so and most will use the syllabus as a basis for their planning.

There are two attainment targets for RE in the national model RE syllabuses: learning about religions and learning from religion.

Learning about religions

For all pupils, their knowledge and understanding of different religions begins with awareness that some objects and people are special. They start to experience different religions in their own community and the wider world. They learn about similarities and differences and recognise the value of contact with people practising different religions.

Teaching this attainment target across key stages can help pupils to:

- encounter religious ideas expressed in a range of ways, *for example, through pictures and sounds*
- explore the special elements in Christianity and other religions represented in the UK, *for example, music, food and artefacts*
- find out how people express their religious beliefs, *for example, singing and prayer*
- discover how religions deal with loss and bereavement
- meet and communicate with people practising Christianity and other religions represented in the UK
- find out about religion in their community
- recognise and celebrate the similarities and differences in people and religions
- become familiar with a range of stories from Christianity and other religions and cultures.

Learning from religion

Learning from religion begins with an awareness that each pupil is personally valued and that others are special too. Pupils with learning difficulties should have opportunities to explore what it means to be part of a group and to learn how to share with others. They express their ideas and feelings in a variety of ways.

Teaching this attainment target across key stages can help pupils to:

- appreciate the world
- explore the significance of, and ask questions about, what they learn
- explore the things, times and events that are special in their lives, *for example, music, food and celebrations*

- experience times of stillness and quietness and develop the skill of reflection
- share feelings, experiences and their work with others
- appreciate the value of others and of being part of a group
- develop an understanding of moral values.

Improving access to the religious education curriculum

Staff can make RE more accessible by focusing on the senses. They can improve access by:

- using sensory materials and resources through sight, touch, sound, taste or smell, *for example, music, tactile artefacts, plants in a sensory garden*
- giving pupils first-hand experiences, *for example, visitors to school, visits to religious buildings, involvement in festivals*
- organising a range of activities to give personal experiences, *for example, dance, drama, visits to a range of environments*
- helping pupils to understand and appreciate their world and its diversity.

Staff can also improve access by:

- using a range of resources, *for example, interactive/sensory stimuli, information and communication technology (ICT), to increase pupils' knowledge of religions and the elements in them*
- using specialist aids and equipment
- providing support from adults or other pupils when necessary, while allowing pupils the space, time and freedom to develop skills for themselves
- adapting tasks or environments and providing alternative activities where necessary, *for example, tactile story books, puppets, role play, presenting work as a painting instead of writing*
- being aware of the pace at which pupils work and of the physical and mental effort required
- balancing consistency and challenge, according to individual needs.

Teaching RE can help pupils develop their broader communication and literacy skills through encouraging interaction with other pupils as well as staff. With some pupils, communication and literacy skills will develop as they use a range of visual, written and tactile materials, *for example, large print, symbols and symbol text*. These skills also develop as pupils use ICT and other technological aids. Other pupils' skills will develop as they use alternative and augmentative communication, *for example, body movements, eye gaze, facial expressions and gestures including pointing and signing*.

Opportunities and activities at key stage 1

The focus of teaching RE at key stage 1 may be on what is special in religion, through giving pupils opportunities to:

- learn about religions through:
 - special places, objects, symbols, sounds, events, times, music and stories in Christianity and other religions represented in the UK
 - stories about the lives and activities of Christians and those from other religions represented in the UK
 - meeting people from a variety of religions
- learn from religion by:
 - being aware of things which are special and important in their lives
 - appreciating the wonder and beauty of the world
 - learning the importance of quietness and reflection
 - expressing personal thoughts about stories, pictures, music and life experiences
 - expressing feelings, *for example, through the creative arts*
 - showing it is valuable to share feelings and experiences with others, *for example, birthdays, loss of pets or family members*
 - learning the importance of belonging to groups and communities, *for example, class groups, sports club, religious groups*
 - learning the difference between right and wrong in situations appropriate to each pupil
 - asking questions about what others think or experience
 - appreciating that they are personally valued and that others deserve respect.

Given these opportunities in RE at key stage 1:

<p>all pupils with learning difficulties (including those with the most profound disabilities)</p>	<p>have opportunities to build on their own experiences and knowledge of activities from the foundation stage. They experience some of the characteristics and people associated with a variety of religions and begin to appreciate the world and the diversity of the people in it. They are enabled to express their feelings.</p>
<p>most pupils with learning difficulties (including those with severe difficulties in learning) who will develop further skills, knowledge and understanding in most aspects of the subject</p>	<p>begin to explore what it means to belong to a variety of groups and communities.</p>

<p>a few pupils with learning difficulties who will develop further aspects of knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject</p>	<p>begin to identify similarities and differences in others, <i>for example, what they believe and what they do</i>, and answer questions about such differences.</p>
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The units in the DfEE/QCA scheme of work for RE key stages 1 and 2 can be adapted for pupils with learning difficulties. The following activities show how this can be done and provide examples of an approach staff can take with other units.

Noah's ark

This is based on the DfEE/QCA scheme of work for RE key stages 1 and 2, unit re 'Who was Noah?'.
 This unit is based on the story of Noah's Ark.

Pupils explore and investigate the story

They may:

- listen to this story and look at pictures and artefacts, *for example, animals from the Jewish and Christian traditions*
- retell parts of the story to others in different classes or in an assembly, using the props in a story sack
- respond to simple questions about the story, *for example, 'What did Noah see in the sky?'*, and recognise that a rainbow they can see in the sky is similar to the one in the story
- communicate if they liked the story and what their favourite parts or animals are
- paint pictures and make models from the story for a display, *for example, rainbow, ark, animals or the dove as a symbol of peace*
- act out the story and sing the song 'Who built the ark?'
- produce a story board showing the main points and retell the story, putting the events in the correct order and communicating why the rainbow was so important
- discuss in more depth the meaning of the story and the theme of God's promise as shown by the rainbow and what promises are.

This work can link to work in mathematics, art and design, music and English.

Exploring a religious building

This is based on the DfEE/QCA scheme of work for RE key stages 1 and 2, unit 1f ‘What can we learn from visiting a church?’ and unit 2d ‘Visiting a place of worship’.

Pupils explore and investigate a religious building in their locality

They may:

- discuss their visit and think about what they might see by using photographs or pictures of religious buildings
- visit the building and experience the atmosphere using as many senses as possible, *for example, where appropriate, touching cold stone, seeing shining metal, hearing music being played, smelling candles or incense*
- meet and communicate with people who use the religious building and those who look after it, finding out what people do there
- make drawings or rubbings of artefacts in the building
- look for symbols of the religion to which the building belongs, *for example, menorah, cross*
- take photographs of the objects they see and the people they meet
- record their visit by making pictures and collages of the people they met and the artefacts they saw
- express and share their feelings about the building
- communicate why the building is ‘special’.

This work can link to work in English, PSHE, history, art and design and science.

Opportunities and activities at key stage 2

The focus of teaching RE at key stage 2 may be on features of religions through giving pupils opportunities to:

- learn about religions through:
 - exploring and finding out about important features of Christianity and other religions, *for example, beliefs, ideas, sounds, music, symbols, people, events, times, objects, books, places, activities and stories*
 - collecting examples and evidence of religion in their surrounding area and the wider world, *for example, visiting local places of worship in the local community and meeting the people involved*
 - recognising similar features in different religions
- learn from religion:
 - that taking part in religious and spiritual activities is important to many people
 - to use periods of silence and stillness as times of reflection
 - to consider their personal thoughts about stories, pictures and music, ideas, life experiences and the natural world
 - to express ideas, views, beliefs and feelings, *for example, through the creative and expressive arts*
 - to share the feelings, experiences and views of others
 - about significant events or times in life and how we mark them, *for example, birth, adulthood, marriage and death*
 - that we all belong to groups or communities, including some that may be of a religious nature
 - about right and wrong and fair and unfair in appropriate situations
 - stories about values and relationships, *for example, trust*
 - that others may have different views, beliefs and practices
 - that it is important to ask questions
 - stories from different religions and cultures.

Given these opportunities in RE at key stage 2:	
all pupils with learning difficulties (including those with the most profound disabilities)	are encouraged to learn more about some of the characteristics of, and people associated with, religions. They have opportunities to develop further ways of expressing themselves.
most pupils with learning difficulties (including those with severe difficulties in learning) who will develop further skills, knowledge and understanding in most aspects of the subject	realise that they are not the same as others; they do not always think, experience or believe the same things as others. They develop a fundamental sense of right and wrong.
a few pupils with learning difficulties who will develop further aspects of knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject	ask questions about, compare and contrast aspects of religion and are able to personally reflect during times of stillness and quietness.

Throughout key stage 2, staff can maintain and reinforce the knowledge, skills and understanding introduced during key stage 1 by applying these in different areas, and introduce new learning.

The units in the DfEE/QCA scheme of work for RE key stages 1 and 2 can be adapted for pupils with learning difficulties. The following activities show how this can be done and provide examples of an approach staff can take with other units.

The Christian celebration of Easter

This is based on the DfEE/QCA scheme of work for RE key stages 1 and 2, unit 3b ‘How and why do Hindus celebrate Divali?’, unit 4b ‘Celebrations: Christian journeys’ and unit 4c ‘Why is Easter important for Christians?’

Pupils explore and investigate the theme of Easter

They may:

- share the story using an appropriate text and illustrations
- explore artefacts that link with Easter, *for example, a wooden cross*
- help to paint a frieze showing the story, or make an Easter garden for display
- ask questions about the story that show they have understood some of its main elements, *for example, suffering and joy*
- think about the story and communicate their thoughts and feelings about it in a simple way
- share their work with others by reading or showing items, and by dancing, singing or playing percussion instruments
- produce a collage showing the main elements of the story using pictures or other means of communication to illustrate the importance of each part

- explore their own personal beliefs about Jesus and the Easter story and share these with others
- ask questions about the Easter story through looking at pictures of Jesus on the cross
- find out how Christians celebrate Easter by meeting and communicating with people and by looking at pictures and videos
- visit a local church and find artefacts and pictures that have links with the story
- meet local Christian leaders and ask them what they do at Easter
- share in an Easter assembly and learn appropriate songs.

This work can link to work in music, art and design, English and PSHE.

Special books: the Qur'an

This is based on the DfEE/QCA scheme of work for RE key stages 1 and 2, unit 2a 'What is the Torah and why is it important to Jewish people?', unit 3d 'What is the Bible and why is it important for Christians?' and unit 6d 'What is the Qur'an and why is it important?'

Pupils explore and investigate the Qur'an

They may:

- look at a variety of special books
- see and respect the washing of hands before the book is handled
- see that the Qur'an is kept on a high shelf and often read on a stand
- explore the Qur'an respectfully, noting its language and reading from right to left
- communicate what they think about the book
- use words or symbols to describe it, *for example, special, blue and gold*
- find pictures of someone reading the Qur'an or draw their own
- listen to some of the stories that are in the Qur'an and illustrate them in ways appropriate for Islam
- make repeated printed patterns like those in the Qur'an and use them in a display of work, remembering they may contain God's name
- make their own cover for the Qur'an
- listen to a recording of the Qur'an being read or to a live recitation
- learn how God is described in the Qur'an, *for example, the ninety-nine names*
- help to make a class 'special book'
- use pictures, videos and contact with people in the community to find out why the Qur'an is special and how Muslims use it, and present their work in a variety of ways
- present to others a character study of a person in the Qur'an or other Muslim stories.

This work can link to work in history, music, art and design, PSHE and English.

Opportunities and activities at key stage 3

The focus of teaching RE at key stage 3 may be on the community, through giving pupils opportunities to:

- learn about religions through:
 - exploring and asking about their beliefs and key features, *for example, ideas, sounds, music, symbols, people, events, times, objects, books, places, activities and stories of Christianity and other religions represented in the UK*
 - knowing how people express their religious beliefs, *for example, praying, singing*
 - collecting examples and evidence of religion in their surrounding area and the wider world, *for example, visiting a religious group and finding out how its members work in the community*
 - understanding the importance of religion in their local community, *for example, meeting those involved*
 - recognising similarities and differences between different religions, *for example, the story of the Garden of Eden as known in Islam, Judaism and Christianity*
 - being aware of how a religion began, who started it and what it was like
- learn from religion:
 - that spiritual practices, *for example, prayer and meditation, silence and reflection*, are important
 - to use periods of silence and stillness as times of reflection
 - to consider the place of stories, pictures and music, thoughts, life experiences and the natural world
 - that people can communicate and express their views, ideas, feelings and beliefs in many different ways
 - that it is valuable to find out about how people share feelings and experiences
 - stories about values and relationships
 - to develop a sense of responsibility to others, *for example, in groups and communities*
 - about right and wrong, fair and unfair in appropriate situations, including some understanding of moral and social issues
 - the value of asking questions (even questions that are very difficult to answer) and listening to the views of others
 - stories from different religions and cultures
 - that people are different and that what they believe in is part of them
 - that others have the right to hold and practise different beliefs
 - to relate their knowledge to their own lives and to develop a sense of identity.

Given these opportunities in RE at key stage 3:	
all pupils with learning difficulties (including those with the most profound disabilities)	have opportunities to learn more about the main characteristics of religions, particularly those practised in their own communities. They may explore similar areas and themes from different religions and may become more aware of what people from religious groups think, say and do. With help they may develop their skills of reflection and consideration.
most pupils with learning difficulties (including those with severe difficulties in learning) who will develop further skills, knowledge and understanding in most aspects of the subject	relate their growing knowledge and understanding to their own experiences and to those of others. They become more aware of people who are part of a religious group, and can understand what they think, say and do.
a few pupils with learning difficulties who will develop further aspects of knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject	start to form their own views, ideas and beliefs, based on their knowledge and experiences.

Throughout key stage 3, staff can maintain and reinforce the knowledge, skills and understanding introduced during key stages 1 and 2 by applying these in different areas, and introduce new learning.

The units in the DfEE/QCA schemes of work for RE key stages 1, 2 and 3 can be adapted for pupils with learning difficulties. The following activities show how this can be done and provide examples of an approach staff can take with other units.

People in our community

This is based on the DfEE/QCA scheme of work for RE key stages 1, 2 and 3, unit 8c 'Beliefs and practice: generic' and unit 8d 'Beliefs and practice: how do the beliefs of Sikhs affect their actions?'

Pupils find out about people in their community

They may:

- meet as many people as possible, *for example, visitors to the school*
- produce artefacts that are special to each person, *for example, objects needed in their role*
- examine items brought by the visitor, *for example, a Sikh's five Ks*
- try on the special clothes brought by a religious leader, as appropriate
- look at pictures of the different tasks that a religious leader has to carry out and discuss their responsibilities

- think about their own ambitions and consider what they would like to be or do in the future
- examine ‘A day in the life of ...’ and present their work in pictures or in simple written forms
- share feelings and elements of their own lives as members of a community, *for example, by communicating and sharing with others personal events, and creating a scrapbook of photographs of special family times*
- develop relationships and a sense of values and responsibilities as part of a group and community by taking part in group activities.

This work can link with work in art and design, English, and PSHE.

Our world and our environment

This is based on the DfEE/QCA scheme of work for RE key stage 3, unit 7e ‘What are we doing to the environment?’

Pupils find out about our world and our environment

They may:

- find out what their environment is like, *for example, the school and the local environment and beyond*
- communicate about where the world has come from and why we should care about the world
- learn about people who have, and do, care for the world, *for example, the teaching of St Francis, the Hindu doctrine of Ahimsa*
- listen to stories from religious texts, find and display a series of images, *for example, photographs, drawings, paintings, rubbings*, to show what the physical environment is like
- make a simple book or frieze showing some of the people in their community, *for example, visitors who they have already met as part of previous RE units of work*, and their attitudes to the environment
- communicate with the people they know to find out what part of their environment is special and how they take care of it, *for example, a Christian will regard the church as special*
- make a presentation on what is special in their environment and suggest how they could help to look after it, *for example, helping with flower displays or cleaning*
- visit as many different environments as possible.

This work can link to work in PSHE, science, English and geography.

Opportunities and activities at key stage 4

The focus of teaching RE at key stage 4 may be on the wider world, through giving pupils opportunities to:

- learn about religions through:
 - the key beliefs and features of Christianity and other religions represented in the UK, *for example, how a religion began, who started it, how long ago*
 - the lives of important religious people
 - religion in their community and the wider world
 - knowing that people have different beliefs and different views on religious issues
 - the similarities and differences between Christianity and another religion
 - groups within religions
 - how religious beliefs are expressed through a variety of media, *for example, sculpture and poetry*
 - ways in which religious beliefs influence attitudes to important issues
- learn from religion:
 - that some experiences and events cannot always be easily explained
 - that silence, reflection, prayer and religious action are important to many people
 - to consider personal thoughts about stories, pictures and music, ideas, life experiences and the natural world
 - to express and communicate their own views, ideas and beliefs with developing confidence
 - responsibility to themselves and others, *for example, groups and communities*
 - to share and discuss moral and religious issues and experiences
 - to explore and question religious ideas, showing sensitivity to the beliefs of others and valuing their contributions
 - stories from different religions and cultures
 - that individuals and groups have a right to hold and practise their beliefs
 - the importance of remaining open to the challenge and richness of diversity
 - ways of beginning the personal quest for meaning in their lives.

Given these opportunities in RE at key stage 4:	
all pupils with learning difficulties (including those with the most profound disabilities)	consolidate their experience and knowledge of the special features of religions and experience religious ideas expressed in a variety of ways.
most pupils with learning difficulties (including those with severe difficulties in learning) who will develop further skills, knowledge and understanding in most aspects of the subject	extend their knowledge of the lives and religious beliefs of people and appreciate the diversity of views and experiences.
a few pupils with learning difficulties who will develop further aspects of knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject	offer their own responses to questions and recognise that some questions cannot be answered or may take time to answer. They understand that people's religious beliefs can sometimes affect their views on non-religious issues.

Throughout key stage 4, staff can maintain and reinforce knowledge, skills and understanding introduced during earlier key stages by applying these in different areas, and introduce new learning.

The units in the DfEE/QCA schemes of work for RE key stages 1, 2 and 3 can be adapted for pupils with learning difficulties. The following activities show how this can be done and provide examples of an approach staff can take with other units.

Comparing two religious figures

Pupils find out about religious figures and why they are important

They may:

- listen to stories about the lives of two religious figures, *for example, Mother Theresa and Martin Luther King*
- add descriptive words to pictures of the religious figures
- communicate and collect information about an important event in their own lives that can be related to the life of a religious figure, *for example, a special journey*
- collect and present, in a variety of ways, pictures and other information from a range of sources about the lives of religious figures
- produce a visual display to show they are aware of something of the lives of religious figures
- examine artefacts that link with religious figures and indicate something about their beliefs and lives
- respond to, and ask questions about, religious figures
- communicate with people who have links with religious figures, *for example, people of the same faith*, to find out about their lives.

This work can link to work in art and design, English, history and PSHE.

Religion and the media

Pupils find out about religion and the media, and focus on how feelings, emotions and viewpoints are expressed

They may:

- see examples of how religion or religious ideas are portrayed in the media, *for example, television, films, magazines, posters*
- collect a range of images, *for example, magazine pictures*, that have a religious theme
- produce their own magazine photographs (actual, made or drawn) to show their own response to a religious theme
- look at the use of colour to express emotion about a religious theme
- look at videos, *for example, news reports, documentaries, dance and drama*, on a religious theme
- create their own ‘news broadcasts’ or dance/drama performances to show their own or others’ feelings on a religious theme
- produce collages of different shapes and textures to show feelings or ideas on a religious theme
- communicate their feelings to others in ways appropriate to individual pupils
- compose and perform short sequences of music, and select instruments and experiment with ways of playing them to convey religious ideas and themes
- work together, using all the expressive arts, to present work on a religious theme
- be encouraged to watch, share and evaluate the work of others.

This work can link to work in PSHE, music, art and design and English.

Performance descriptions

These performance descriptions outline early learning and attainment before level 1 in eight levels, from P1 to P8.

The performance descriptions can be used by teachers in the same way as the National Curriculum level descriptions to:

- decide which description best fits a pupil's performance over a period of time and in different contexts
- develop or support more focused day-to-day approaches to ongoing teacher assessment by using the descriptions to refine and develop long-, medium- and short-term planning
- track linear progress towards attainment at National Curriculum level 1
- identify lateral progress by looking for related skills at similar levels across their subjects
- record pupils' overall development and achievement, for example, at the end of a year or a key stage.

Performance descriptions across subjects

The performance descriptions for P1 to P3 are common across all subjects. They outline the types and range of general performance that some pupils with learning difficulties might characteristically demonstrate. Subject-focused examples are included to illustrate some of the ways in which staff might identify attainment in different subject contexts.

P1 (i) Pupils encounter activities and experiences. They may be passive or resistant. They may show simple reflex responses, *for example, startling at sudden noises or movements*. Any participation is fully prompted.

P1 (ii) Pupils show emerging awareness of activities and experiences. They may have periods when they appear alert and ready to focus their attention on certain people, events, objects or parts of objects, *for example, becoming still in response to silence*. They may give intermittent reactions, *for example, vocalising occasionally during group celebrations and acts of worship*.

P2 (i) Pupils begin to respond consistently to familiar people, events and objects. They react to new activities and experiences, *for example, briefly looking around in unfamiliar natural and man-made environments*. They begin to show interest in people, events and objects, *for example, leaning towards the source of a light, sound or scent*. They accept and engage in coactive exploration, *for example, touching a range of religious artefacts and found objects in partnership with a member of staff*.

P2 (ii) Pupils begin to be proactive in their interactions. They communicate consistent preferences and affective responses, *for example, showing that they have enjoyed an experience or interaction*. They recognise familiar people, events and objects, *for example, becoming quiet and attentive during a certain piece of music*. They perform actions, often by trial and improvement, and they remember learned responses over short periods of time, *for example, repeating a simple action with an artefact*. They cooperate with shared exploration and supported participation, *for example, performing gestures during ritual exchanges with another person performing gestures*.

P3 (i) Pupils begin to communicate intentionally. They seek attention through eye contact, gesture or action. They request events or activities, *for example, prompting a visitor to prolong an interaction*. They participate in shared activities with less support. They sustain concentration for short periods. They explore materials in increasingly complex ways, *for example, stroking or shaking artefacts or found objects*. They observe the results of their own actions with interest, *for example, when vocalising in a quiet place*. They remember learned responses over more extended periods, *for example, following a familiar ritual and responding appropriately*.

P3 (ii) Pupils use emerging conventional communication. They greet known people and may initiate interactions and activities, *for example, prompting an adult to sing or play a favourite song*. They can remember learned responses over increasing periods of time and may anticipate known events, *for example, celebrating the achievements of their peers in assembly*. They may respond to options and choices with actions or gestures, *for example, choosing to participate in activities*. They actively explore objects and events for more extended periods, *for example, contemplating the flickering of a candle flame*. They apply potential solutions systematically to problems, *for example, passing an artefact to a peer in order to prompt participation in a group activity*.

Performance descriptions in religious education

From level P4 to P8, many believe it is possible to describe pupils' performance in a way that indicates the emergence of skills, knowledge and understanding in RE. The descriptions provide an example of how this can be done.

P4 Pupils use single elements of communication, *for example, words, gestures, signs or symbols*, to express their feelings. They show they understand 'yes' and 'no'. They begin to respond to the feelings of others, *for example, matching their emotions and laughing when another pupil is laughing*. They join in with activities by initiating ritual actions or sounds. They may demonstrate an appreciation of stillness and quietness.

P5 Pupils respond appropriately to simple questions about familiar religious events or experiences and communicate simple meanings. They respond to a variety of new religious experiences, *for example, involving music, drama, colour, lights, food, or tactile objects*. They take part in activities involving two or three other learners. They may also engage in moments of individual reflection.

P6 Pupils express and communicate their feelings in different ways. They respond to others in group situations and cooperate when working in small groups. Pupils listen to, and begin to respond to, familiar religious stories, poems and music, and make their own contribution to celebrations and festivals. They carry out ritualised actions in familiar circumstances. They show concern and sympathy for others in distress, *for example, through gestures, facial expressions or by offering comfort*. They start to be aware of their own influence on events and other people.

P7 Pupils listen to and follow religious stories. They communicate their ideas about religion, life events and experiences in simple phrases. They evaluate their own work and behaviour in simple ways, beginning to identify some actions as right or wrong on the basis of the consequences. They find out about aspects of religion through stories, music or drama, answer questions and communicate their responses. They may communicate their feelings about what is special to them, *for example, using role play*. They begin to understand that other people have needs and to respect these. They make purposeful relationships with others in group activity.

P8 Pupils listen attentively to religious stories or to people talking about religion. They begin to understand that religious and other stories carry moral and religious meaning. They are increasingly able to communicate ideas, feelings or responses to experiences or to retell religious stories. They communicate simple facts about religion and important people in religions. They begin to realise the significance of religious artefacts, symbols and places. They reflect on what makes them happy, sad, excited or lonely. They demonstrate a basic understanding of what is right and wrong in familiar situations. They are often sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and show respect for themselves and others. They treat living things and their environment with care and concern.

About this publication

Who's it for?

This handbook is for all those who work with pupils with learning difficulties. This includes pupils who are often described as having severe, profound and multiple, or moderate learning difficulties. The guidelines relate to all pupils aged five to 16 who are unlikely to achieve above level 2 at key stage 4.

What's it about?

It provides support material to schools for planning learning opportunities and activities in religious education for pupils in each key stage. It includes performance descriptions of early learning and attainment.

What's it for?

It will be useful in developing an inclusive curriculum. It can be used in mainstream schools, special primary and secondary schools, specialised units and independent schools. It can also support the range of services that work with pupils with learning difficulties.

Related material

This handbook is part of a set of guidelines on planning and teaching the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties. The entire set, which includes general guidelines, guidelines on developing skills and subject guidelines, can be found on the National Curriculum inclusion website at www.nc.uk.net.

This publication has been sent to:

Head teachers of special schools and LEA SEN advisers

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