

Inclusion in Religious Education

Providing effective learning opportunities for all pupils in Religious Education

Teachers should read this document in conjunction with the paper on Inclusion to be found in the section 'General Teaching Requirements' in the National Curriculum Document and in each separate subject booklet.

The provisions set out in the national document apply to the delivery of the Isle of Wight Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. Certain sections are amplified below with specific reference to Religious Education.

Schools on the Isle of Wight are required, as part of their provision of a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils, to provide Religious Education in accordance with the IOW Agreed Syllabus in such a way as to meet the specific needs of individuals and groups of pupils.

The Agreed Syllabus is set out in a similar way to the subjects of the National Curriculum, forming as it does with them the Basic Curriculum entitlement of all pupils. It details the Breadth of Study, under which heading is listed the knowledge content; it details the skills and it gives a statement of expectations for the end of each phase of education on the Isle of Wight. Unlike the National Curriculum subject's documents, it presents its curriculum appropriately for island schools in the three phases, Primary Schools (Key Stage 1 and Lower Key Stage 2), Middle Schools (Upper Key Stage 2 and Lower Key Stage 3) and High Schools (Upper Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4, and Key Stage 5 (also called 6th Form)). There is a separate paper on the modification of the Skills Section of the Agreed Syllabus for Primary Schools for the different Key Stages in IOW Special Schools. It has been presented in this way to make the learning opportunities for all pupils in all the schools as clear as possible.

In planning and teaching the Isle of Wight Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education teachers are required to have due regard to the following principles :

- setting suitable learning challenges
- responding to pupils' diverse learning needs
- overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups.
- Teachers should modify, as necessary, the Isle of Wight Agreed Syllabus Programmes of Study to make it as inclusive as possible, and so provide all pupils with relevant and appropriately challenging work at each key stage.
- Suitable learning challenges should be set (this may be in the development of skills and in the concepts specific to religion and morality; as well as in the development of vocabulary specific to a religion).
- Teachers should respond to the diverse learning needs of pupils by the provision of material which is appropriate to their needs for Learning about Religion as well as by providing alternative ways of responding to material to show their progress in Learning from Religion.
- Assessments in Religious Education need to be appropriate to the particular learning needs of the pupil.

Setting Suitable Learning Challenges

- The teacher should aim to give every pupil the opportunity to experience success in learning Religious Education and to achieve as high a standard as possible. It is essential, in order to achieve these ends, that considerable use is made of the expressive and performance arts as ways to offer opportunities of both 'Learning About Religion' and 'Learning From Religion' in Religious Education. The Isle of Wight Agreed Syllabus Programmes of Study set out what most pupils should be taught at each Key Stage, but teachers should teach the knowledge, skills and understanding in ways that suit their pupils' abilities. This may mean choosing knowledge, skills and understanding from the earlier Key Stages so that individual pupils can make progress and show what they can achieve. Where it is appropriate for pupils to make extensive use of content from an earlier Key Stage there may not be time to teach all aspects of the age-related programmes of study.
- Teachers of pupils in the special schools on the Isle of Wight will use the primary programme of study, suitably adapted to suit both the learning needs and maturity of their pupils for most of the Religious Education curriculum. However, it is important that the older pupils in Special Schools have the opportunity, (needed for personal development as well as for preparing them as citizens of a multi-cultural country) provided by topics which tackle religious practices and areas of morality which are appropriate to their age. These will necessarily be approached at a very simple level. Teachers therefore need to take note of the Programmes of Study in relation to the Middle Schools and High Schools.
- For pupils whose attainments fall significantly below the expected levels in Religious Education at a particular key stage, or within a particular class, a much greater degree of differentiation will be necessary. The programme of study for the Key Stage will still be followed but in order to provide a context in planning the learning appropriate to the age and requirements of the pupils. This may mean providing the vocabulary and concept work from an earlier level to give the pupil(s) access to the same knowledge material in the topic as the rest of the class.
- For pupils whose attainments significantly exceed the expected level of attainment in Religious Education, teachers will need to plan suitably challenging work. This may be by extending the breadth and depth of study within a particular topic or by planning work which draws on different subjects to bring them into the context of the religious education topic. Teachers should be careful not to introduce, for such gifted/talented pupils, material which, in its knowledge content, is in the Programme of Study of a different Key Stage.
- Teachers should be aware that some pupils' performance in Religious Education shows spiritual insights, and knowledge and understanding which exceeds expectations based on performance in other curriculum areas. Work for such pupils needs to enable their spiritual growth and depth of knowledge and understanding to develop appropriately. They should be afforded opportunities to express their development in ways that are appropriate for them; this is particularly important where their facility with writing is not fully developed.

Responding To Pupils' Diverse Learning Needs

When planning Religious Education teachers should set high expectations and provide opportunities for all pupils to achieve, including boys and girls, pupils with special educational needs, pupils with disabilities, pupils from all social and cultural backgrounds, pupils of different ethnic groups, including travellers, refugees and asylum-seekers, and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Teachers need to be aware that pupils bring to school different experiences, interests and strengths, which will influence the way in which they learn.

Teachers should plan their approaches to teaching and learning so that all pupils can take part in Religious Education lessons fully and effectively.

Teachers should be aware and take account of the faith or secular life stances of pupils in their classes. Care should be taken not to infringe the integrity of pupils and their family backgrounds by assuming beliefs and stances. [It is important that stereotyping in the context of religious beliefs and practices, as well as moral stances, is avoided and cultural diversity emphasised. Language must be used with care so as not to offend or exclude people of faith and secular stances by the terminology used (see Agreed Syllabus Handbook for further information on a this area)].

To ensure that they meet the full range of pupils needs, teachers should be aware of the requirements of the equal opportunities legislation that covers a race, gender and disability.

Teachers should take specific action to respond to pupils' diverse needs by :

- creating effective learning environments
- securing their motivation and concentration
- providing equality of opportunity through teaching approaches
- using appropriate assessment approaches
- setting targets for learning

It is essential for effective Religious Education learning, that the environment in both the school as a whole and in the classroom, values the religious dimension of life. As an institution the school should show that it gives respect to the religious beliefs and practices of others, as well as to secular life stances, and that it is a place where moral questions are appreciated as having both a religious and a secular dimension. The school should demonstrate (in its assemblies, including the collective act of worship, through its ethos/mission statement) its appreciation of the important role that Religious Education plays in preparing pupils for life as citizens in a multi-cultural, multi-religious society, which is founded upon the beliefs, practices and principles which derive from Christianity. **Without this atmosphere in the school as a whole, inclusion policies within the class learning environment are ineffective, and pupils holding a religious faith stance can feel at risk or marginalised.**

The effective learning environment in Religious Education is one where the contribution of all pupils is of equal value.

In the RE classroom all pupils should feel secure in their religious/secular and cultural background and all pupils should feel able to contribute appropriately.

In the RE lesson stereotypical views must be challenged and pupils taught to appreciate and view positively, differences in others, whether arising from race, gender, ability or disability. The effective learning environment for Religious Education encourages pupils to be sensitive to what is special to others, valuing what we have in common and valuing what makes us different, in religious beliefs and practices, morals stances and cultures, as well as individual characteristics.

Religious Education provides learning opportunities for all pupils to learn to take responsibility for their actions and behaviours both in school and in the wider community. Religious Education provides learning opportunities for looking at bullying and harassment, including racial and religious harassment. The stories and teachings from the faiths provide rich material through which to address and challenge these. The issues which arise from religious dress codes and principles can provide important learning opportunities for developing understanding of the multi-cultural society.

While it is important to plan work in Religious Education which builds on the cultural experiences of pupils, since this helps to secure a motivation and concentration, care needs to be taken that a pupil does not feel singled out and different.

It is important that materials used in Religious Education reflect social and cultural diversity and provide images of race, religion, culture, gender and disability which are positive. However, negative images can be used effectively with older/more mature pupils in order to reveal the stereotyping, prejudice and bias which is sometimes a feature of media presentation, particularly in the field of religion and culture.

It is important that in Religious Education lessons account is taken of pupils' specific religious or cultural beliefs relating to the representation of ideas or experiences. Religious Education lessons provide an opportunity for learning about the beliefs and principles in religions that lie behind such practices. (see Agreed Syllabus Handbook for comment about representing God, and in relation to specific Muslim principles with regard to representing God's messengers, the prophets.)

Target setting in Religious Education should build on pupils' knowledge, experiences, interests and strengths, to improve areas of weakness and demonstrate progression over time. Targets set should be attainable and yet challenging. They should help pupils to develop their self-esteem and confidence in their ability to learn. Teachers should be aware of the difference an individual's personal or family background may make and set targets that take account of such a springboard.

In doing pupil assessments in Religious Education teachers should use the National Expectation Levels (as adapted for the Isle of Wight) given in the IOW Agreed Syllabus, Section 9 Q(vii).

Teachers should use appropriate assessment methods which allow for different learning styles. They should ensure that pupils are given the chance and encouragement to demonstrate their competence and attainment through appropriate means. The expressive and performance arts provide opportunities for assessment, as well as written tasks. This is particularly important for pupils with limited language development.

Both Learning About Religion and Learning From Religion are to be assessed. The National Expectation Levels provide two different sets of levels because pupils often achieve different levels in the two attainment targets. Assessment tasks should take account of both these targets and allow for different levels of attainment in each, if appropriate.

APPROPRIATE LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Teachers need to be particularly aware of making learning and assessment appropriate in connection with pupils with special educational needs. Such pupils may be in main stream schools or in Special schools.

Pupils with special educational needs :

Curriculum planning and assessment in Religious Education for pupils with special educational needs must take account of the type and extent of the difficulty experienced by the pupil. The action necessary to respond to an individual's requirements for curriculum access in Religious Education will be met through greater differentiation of tasks and materials, consistent with school-based intervention as set out in the SEN a code of practice. The provision of Religious Education for pupils who have a statement of educational needs, should take account of the specific needs of the pupil.

Teachers should take specific action to provide access to learning by :

- Providing for pupils who need help with communication, language and literacy.
- Planning, where necessary, to develop a pupil's understanding through the use of senses and experiences (the Religious Education curriculum includes work which develops learning through the senses - sight, sound, touch, taste and smell - and through own and others' experiences).
- Planning for pupils' full participation in learning (the Religious Education curriculum stresses the importance of drama, dance, visits and visitors, as well as exploration as vehicles for Learning About as well as Learning From Religion. This encourages the development of understanding as well as co-operative skills for life.)
- Helping pupils to manage their behaviour, to take part in a learning activity effectively and safely, and at Key Stage 4 to prepare for work. (By encouraging the use of the expressive and performance arts for work in Religious Education, pupils are helped to manage their behaviour as they share in pair and group situations; the pupils are taught to value and respect the contribution of others as they participate in this aspect of Religious Education; the knowledge content of the Religious Education breadth of study has much of importance to contribute in connection with the world of work).
- Helping individuals to manage their emotions, particularly in trauma or stress, and to take an active part in their learning (the Religious Education curriculum includes important work on feelings, emotions and relationships, as well as Loss and Change).

Teachers are reminded that the full paper on Inclusion (to be found in the National Curriculum Documents) applies to the delivery of the IOW Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education. It should be read alongside the RE paper.

Full entitlement for all :

The successful delivery of Religious Education depends upon the use of vocabulary both general and subject-specific which is appropriate to both the maturity and intellectual ability of the pupils. This is particularly necessary from Upper Key Stage 2 onwards. If pupils are to have their full entitlement to discuss ultimate questions, religious beliefs and practices and moral dilemmas, it is essential that they are grouped in similar maturity and intellectual ability sets.