



The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Northamptonshire

Support Materials



Guidance for Teaching RE in Special Schools and Designated Special Provision Units



Guidance for Teaching Religious Education in Special Schools and Designated Special Provision Units (DSPs)

Special Schools and Designated Special Provision Units (DSPs) are required to teach the Agreed Syllabus as far as it is practicable. Curriculum entitlement for pupils in Special Schools means that they should be encouraged to use the syllabus as a resource and select work from the Programmes of Study that is appropriate and practicable.

Teachers in Special Schools and DSPs should modify and adapt the Programmes of Study to meet the range of needs of the pupils, which will include profound and multiple learning difficulties, moderate and severe learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and physical disabilities.

Expectations of attainment in Religious Education for pupils in Special Schools or DSPs and for those pupils identified with special educational needs in mainstream schools will be different.

In order to support teachers to incorporate the principles of inclusion in their planning, “P” Levels are identified in the Agreed Syllabus, based upon work from the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA). These Performance Descriptions outline early learning and attainment before Level 1 in eight levels from P1 to P8.

This guidance is offered to support the planning, development and implementation of the Religious Education curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties. Much of the guidance in this Appendix is taken from QCDA's publication, “Planning, Teaching and Assessing the Curriculum for Pupils with Learning Difficulties - Religious Education” (2009). (This document can be found in the Support Materials).

Pupils in Special Schools have the same entitlement to Religious Education as pupils in mainstream schools.

Learning about and learning from religion and beliefs are important for all pupils because Religious Education helps pupils develop an understanding of themselves and others.

Religious Education 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 Religious Education by:

- Moving from a personal to a wider perspective;
- Increasing their knowledge of religious beliefs, practices and experiences;
- Developing understanding of the meaning of stories, symbols, events and pictures;
- Developing and communicating their individual responses to a range of views.

Modifying the Curriculum for Religious Education

- Schools are expected to plan a programme of Religious Education that follows the Agreed Syllabus.
- Schools may modify the units of work in order to give all pupils relevant and appropriately challenging work at each key stage.
- The teachers in each school are in the best position to know what their pupils are capable of achieving in Religious Education and the best way of helping them to get there.

Teachers can modify the units of work by:

- Approaching the content at a very simple or basic level;
- Focusing on one aspect or multiples of aspects of the unit of work, in depth or in outline;
- Integrating, for pupils at the early stages of learning, Religious Education with other subjects and as part of their everyday activities, including routines and shared events;
- Accessing Religious Education 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;
- Maintaining, consolidating, reinforcing and generalising, as well as introducing new knowledge, skills and understanding.

Learning about Religion and Belief (AT1)

For all pupils, their knowledge and understanding of different religions and beliefs begins with awareness that some objects and people are special. They start to experience different religions and beliefs in their own community and wider world.

They learn about similarities and differences and recognise the value of contact with people practising different religions and beliefs.

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 and Belief (AT2)

Learning from religion and belief begins with 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 feeling 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 being part of a group;
- Develop an understanding of moral values.

Improving access to the Religious Education Curriculum

Staff can make Religious Education more accessible by focusing on the senses.

Access can be improved 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 schools, 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;
- Using a range of resources, (for example, interactive / sensory stimuli, information and communication technology) 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, music making, 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 Religious Education 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.

Performance Descriptions (“P Levels”)

For many pupils in Special Schools and DSPs, the Level Descriptions will not be an appropriate means to measure their progress. Where pupils' attainment is likely to be below Level One in the Level Description, schools should use the Performance Descriptions. They outline early learning and attainment before Level One in eight levels from P1 to P8.

The Performance Descriptions can be used by teachers in the same way as the Agreed Syllabus 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 Level One.
- 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 key stage.

P Levels

- P levels 1-3: **early development** expected across the curriculum
- P levels 4-8: development specifically **related to Religious Education**

Early Development (P levels 1-3)

- P1** Pupils are beginning to show sensory awareness in relation to a range of people, objects and materials in everyday contexts. They show reflex responses to sensory stimuli, *e.g. startling at sudden noises or movements.*
- P2** Pupils begin to respond to familiar people, events and objects, *e.g. reaching and holding objects, smiling and turning to familiar voices.* They make sounds or gestures to express simple needs, wants or feelings in response to their immediate environment, *e.g. protesting or requesting, using facial expressions to enhance meaning.*
- P3** Pupils begin to communicate intentionally. They show anticipation in response to familiar people, routines, activities and actions and respond appropriately to them. They explore or manipulate objects, toys, artefacts or other equipment. They are able to communicate simple choices, likes and dislikes. They can communicate, using different tones and sounds and use some vocalisations and/or gestures to communicate.

Performance Descriptions in RE (P levels 4-8)

Levels P4 to P8 describe pupils' performance in terms of the development of skills, knowledge and understanding in Religious Education. 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 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 co-operate 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 phases. They evaluate their own work and behaviour in simple ways, beginning to identify some actions as right or wrong on the basis of consequences. They find out about aspects of religion through stories, music or drama, answer questions and communicate their responses. They may 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 religions 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.

P Scale Descriptions in action: Pupil-Friendly Version with Exemplars

Level	I can...	I can...	I can...	I can...	I can...	I can...
P1	lie, sit, be part of my group whilst an RE session is running	turn my head or eye point towards an auditory/visual stimulus	smile and look towards an adult	turn towards/away from an olfactory stimulus.	become very quiet in response to worship music	become very quiet and still in response to a situation where there is silence
e.g.	experience the RE session	turn to guitar, human voice, white board, light	child makes definite response to adult speaking or singing	candle, incense, spices	child moving body/limbs in normal fashion will cease movement	church, sensory room
P2	clap, vocalise, hum, sing in response to songs and music	move my body towards light, sound or scent	enjoy celebrations with my class group (Passover, birthdays, Christmas)	show response to touching or holding a religious artefact	recognise familiar people (regular visitors, class staff)	perform a simple, repetitive action with an artefact
e.g.	clap to a song being used in the RE lesson	child reaches out arms, leans forward in wheelchair or rolls body towards stimuli	child may smile, clap, make vocal sounds	child may grasp, stroke, accept prolonged contact with object or may drop and discard object	smile, eye contact, reach to touch	put prayer cap on head, ring bell, wave flag

P3	request events or activities	sustain concentration for short periods	explore materials in a more complex way	anticipate events or activities	actively explore events and objects for longer periods	greet known people
e.g.	touch guitar, pull adult in direction of activity, point, perform action that is a known part of an activity	child sits voluntarily in circle for some part of story or activity	make marks in sand or clay	after music or candle, child may point to story book, whiteboard, RE box or symbol	hold, turn and explore an object and pass to another child	by pointing to photo, finger-spelling or saying name

Level	AT1	AT1	AT2	AT2	AT2
P4	use simple elements of communication to express my feelings	join in with activities by starting ritual actions or sounds	<i>show an understanding of yes or no</i>	<i>respond to the feelings of others</i>	<i>demonstrate an appreciation of stillness and quiet</i>
e.g.	communicate to your teacher you liked the piece of music from religion	join in with a song about celebration	<i>communicate a response to a simple question with a visual cue when looking at a religious book</i>	<i>join in with laughter at a funny puppet show which is illustrating a religious story</i>	<i>join in with the class candle time (quiet reflection time)</i>
P5	use words, gestures, signs and symbols in response to a simple, familiar question or experience connected to RE	use simple phrases to talk about a story or picture	<i>respond to a variety of new religious experiences</i>	<i>take part in an activity involving two or three others</i>	<i>engage in moments of individual reflection</i>
e.g.	close hands as a symbol of prayer	'Sita gone.' in the story of Rama and Sita	<i>taste some new food, or respond to music from religion</i>	<i>use gestures, symbols or signs to show a like or dislike, move away / towards an artefact</i>	<i>sit still in a quiet moment in the RE lesson</i>

Level	AT1	AT1	AT2	AT2	AT2	AT2
P6	carry out ritualised actions in familiar circumstances	contribute to celebrations and festivals	<i>respond to others in a group and co-operate when in a group</i>	<i>respond to familiar stories, poems and music from religions</i>	<i>express and communicate my feelings in different ways</i>	<i>See that my actions affect others. Show concern and sympathy for others in distress</i>
e.g.	join in with a happy birthday song	take part in the Christmas play	<i>look at the speaker and or the person holding the resource</i>	<i>answer a simple question about a religious story – ‘Where is Jesus in the picture?’</i>	<i>choose a sad face symbol to show unhappiness</i>	<i>clapping as a positive response to another’s success, comforting someone who is crying</i>
P7	listen to and follow a religious story	communicate my ideas about religion, life events and experiences using simple phrases	<i>find out about different aspects of religion through stories, music, visits and drama and respond to questions</i>	<i>evaluate my work and behaviour in simple ways and know some actions as right or wrong according to their consequences</i>	<i>communicate my feelings on what is special to me</i>	<i>make a purposeful relationship, recognising that other people have different needs</i>

e.g.	name at least one key religious person within the story	'I miss my pet dog'	<i>go to a synagogue and share what they have discovered</i>	<i>make a comment on their work or behaviour: 'I concentrated on the DVD' / 'Sorry I hurt you'</i>	<i>I had a party and presents for my birthday</i>	<i>make a collage with others, respecting other people's choices</i>
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Level	AT1	AT1	AT2	AT2	AT2	AT2
P8	listen attentively to religious stories or to people talking about religion	communicate simple facts about religion and its importance for some people	<i>understand that religious stories can carry moral and religious meaning</i> <i>Retell a religious story</i>	<i>communicate ideas, feelings or responses to experiences</i> <i>Demonstrate a basic understanding of what is 'right' and 'wrong' in familiar situations</i>	<i>realise the significance of religious artefacts symbols and places</i>	<i>reflect on what makes me happy sad, excited or lonely</i> <i>Show sensitivity and respect to others and their environment</i>
e.g.	ask 'Why did the father welcome back his son with open arms?' (story of the Prodigal Son)	know the Torah is a special text for Jews	<i>talk about how David showed courage when he met Goliath</i>	<i>tell a friend about your visit to a local church</i> <i>Think about whether people were right or wrong when they met the injured man in the story of the Good Samaritan</i>	<i>cover head, wash hands and feet before entering a Mosque</i> <i>Change behaviour within the Mosque</i>	<i>'I was lonely when my friend was away sick'</i> <i>Be friendly to someone feeling sad</i>