SECTION FIVE
Assessment

“Growing Together”
Assessment in Religious Education

Assessment is an essential part of everyday teaching and learning in Religious Education. The purposes of assessment in RE are: to improve planning and delivery by teachers; to help diagnose problems; to ensure pupils understand what is required of them and how they can improve their learning; to ensure that tasks are appropriately challenging so that pupils make best progress. This section helps teachers to understand how to make the most effective use of assessment in Religious Education.

Assessment for Learning in RE - AfL

AfL is "the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by the learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.” (Assessment Reform Group 2002)

It is this clear understanding of starting points, progression and the how to progress, by both teacher and pupil, that makes AfL central to effective teaching and learning in RE.

The learning objectives for RE need to be explicit and uncomplicated, based on either knowledge and understanding or skills. This may require more than one objective for a particular learning session. It is essential that pupils engage with the learning objectives and develop a clear understanding of what they mean. They should be able to answer “What will I be learning today?”

Tasks set should be clearly matched to the learning objectives and be appropriately challenging for all pupils. Differentiation should be used to enable this to happen. It will involve strategies to enable every pupil to meet the learning objectives (for example, adult support, scaffolding, peer tutoring).

Providing pupils with excellent models of expected outcomes enables success criteria to be created by pupils and for pupils. All pupils should be clear about how they can be successful with the tasks set. They should be able to say, "To be successful in my learning I must.....". Success criteria should act as a list of ingredients for success. When pupils are involved in creating their own success criteria, they are often far clearer about what exactly is expected of them.

Using these pupil-generated success criteria, self and peer assessment become possible (and desirable). Pupils can see what they have done well and how they can improve. They become clearer about where to go next in their learning.

It may be appropriate on a small number of occasions to share Level Descriptions with pupils to allow self and peer assessment against these towards a level judgement. It is, however, essential that teachers model success and set high expectations. The WAGOLL (what a good one looks like) approach can be effective at all ages and with all abilities. Pupils are then clear about what is expected of them. Using not so good examples and asking how to make them better is also a good strategy to use.
Assessment of Learning in RE

Summative assessment opportunities may be built in very occasionally to enable teachers to make judgements of pupils’ attainment against the Level Descriptions. However, to be most effective, these opportunities should be designed to contribute to assessment for learning.

- Make assessment criteria clear and accessible to pupils;
- Use a variety of styles of learning and outcomes;
- Require pupils to reflect on their work against the assessment criteria;
- Take account of both attainment targets: Learning about religion and belief and Learning from religion and belief;
- Provide specific feedback to pupils to show how improvements can be made.

To Assess or Not to Assess?

Knowledge: for example, factual knowledge about Christian Worship;

Understanding: for example, of concepts such as belief, forgiveness, commitment;

Skills: for example, ability to interpret through drawing meaning from artefacts, works of art, text and symbolism.

Religious Education can assess:
- How “religious” or “spiritual” a pupil is;
- Levels of spiritual or moral development.

A school should evaluate its provision, but it would be both difficult and improper to assess pupils’ attainment in these areas in any systematic or comparative way in RE; Attitudes, in any clear and specific way. There is much debate over how far attitudes can be assessed but teachers may wish to comment on positive examples.

Religious Education cannot assess:

Assessing Practical Work

Teachers need to identify the specific Religious Education objectives of a task rather than those related to progress in other curriculum areas. For example, if a group has produced a guide to a Gurdwara, the focus for the assessment should be on how they have demonstrated their ability to identify the key features of the building and how well they have explained the importance and use of these features. The quality of the leaflet, its design, the use of ICT and any artwork are not part of the assessment as far as the RE is concerned. Pupils need opportunities to explain what they have done, made or created and it is this explanation which will show their levels of learning. Teachers may need to develop their own skills in eliciting information from pupils about such practical work, particularly when pupils are at the early stages of literacy or are speakers of English as a second language.

Recording

Schools need to keep records of pupils’ attainment against the Level Descriptions in Religious Education. Records should be made regularly so that progress can be gauged and monitored. Records can include the retention of evidence, such as a portfolio of a class’ work. Records should be passed to the next teacher or school.

Reporting to Parents

Good assessment for and of learning will provide teachers with ample evidence on which to base best fit judgements of pupils’ attainment. Information outlined in the Level Descriptions will be helpful in summarising these judgements.

The use of levels for reporting to parents is not a requirement – general reporting regulations, applied to all subjects taught, mean that schools must report to parents annually on the child’s ‘progress and attainment with regard to the subjects of the curriculum’ and RE is included in this general requirement. However, the use of the levels for this report is a matter for schools.
The School Prospectus

Each school’s prospectus should include:
- The ethos of the school which underpins pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- The Religious Education provided at the school;
- The rights of parents with regard to withdrawal from Religious Education;
- The complaints procedure for the school curriculum, including Religious Education.

It is good practice for schools to clearly note in their prospectus that the school will not support selective withdrawal from RE (i.e. withdrawal from the teaching of one religion, or one topic). This means parents are informed at the point of choosing the school that the policy encourages all pupils to take a full part in Religious Education.

Where pupils are withdrawn from RE by their parents, the school has responsibility to provide supervision for the child.

The Northamptonshire 8 Level Scale of Expectations in RE

The two Attainment Targets for RE set out the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils of different abilities and maturities are expected to have by the end of the key stage. The Attainment Targets consist of 8 Level Descriptions of increasing difficulty, plus a description for Exceptional Performance above Level 8. Each Level Description describes the types and range of performance that pupils working at that level should characteristically demonstrate.
RE are contained in three strands for Attainment Target 1 (Learning about religion and belief, here in plain text) and three strands for Attainment Target 2 (Learning from religion and belief, here in italic text). They are:

knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs, teachings and sources;
knowledge and understanding of religious practices and lifestyles;
knowledge and understanding of ways of expressing meaning.

*skills of asking and responding to questions of identity, diversity and belonging;*
*skills of asking and responding to questions of meaning, purpose and truth;*
*skills of asking and responding to questions of values and commitment.*
The Level Descriptions provide the basis to make judgements about pupils’ performance at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. At Key Stage 4, national qualifications are the main means of assessing attainment in RE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of levels within which the great majority of pupils are expected to work</th>
<th>Expected attainment for the majority of pupils at the end of the key stage</th>
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<td>Key Stage 3</td>
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**Level 1**

**Recognising and talking about religion**

- Use some religious words and phrases to **recognise and name** features of religious life and practice;
- Can **recall** religious stories, actions, and celebrations and **recognise** religious symbols, words, gestures and artefacts.

**Pupils:**

- Use religious words and phrases to identify some features of religion and its importance for some people;
- Begin to show awareness of similarities in religions;
- Retell and suggest meanings for religious stories, actions and symbols;
- Identify how religion is expressed in different ways.

**Level 2**

**Retelling stories, identifying religious materials and asking questions**

- **At:** LEARNING ABOUT RELIGION AND BELIEF: This includes exploring and examining religious beliefs, spirituality, teachings, worship, practices, behaviour and ways of expressing meaning.

- Use some religious words and phrases to **recognise and name** features of religious life and practice;
- Can **recall** religious stories, actions, and celebrations and **recognise** religious symbols, words, gestures and artefacts.

**Pupils:**

- Use religious words and phrases to identify some features of religion and its importance for some people;
- Begin to show awareness of similarities in religions;
- Retell and suggest meanings for religious stories, actions and symbols;
- Identify how religion is expressed in different ways.
their own experiences and feelings;
what they find interesting or puzzling;
what is of value and concern to themselves and others. Pupils express and talk about:

ask, and respond sensitively to, questions about their own and others' experiences and feelings;
recognise that some questions cause people to wonder and are difficult to answer;
in relation to matters of right and wrong, recognise their own values and those of others. Pupils:

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LEVEL 3
Describing religion and making links to their own experience

USE a developing religious vocabulary to describe some key features of religions, recognising similarities and differences;
make links between beliefs and sources, including religious stories and sacred texts;
begin to identify the impact religion has on believers’ lifestyles;
describe some forms of religious expression.

Pupils:

identify what influences them, making links between aspects of their own and others’ experiences;
ask important questions about religious beliefs and lifestyles, linking their own and others’ responses;
make links between values and commitments, and their own attitudes and behaviour.

Pupils:

“RE helps us think for ourselves.”
Raj
Age 9

LEVEL 4
Showing understanding of religion and applying ideas themselves

use developing religious vocabulary to describe and show understanding of sources, authorities, practices, beliefs, lifestyles,

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make links between them, and describe some similarities and differences both within and between religions; describe the impact of religion on people's lifestyles; suggest meanings for a range of forms of religious expression.

**Pu pupils:**

raise and suggest answers to questions of sacredness, identity, diversity, belonging, meaning, purpose, truth, values and commitments;

apply their ideas simply to their own and other people's lives;

describe what inspires and influences themselves and others.
LEVEL 5

Explaining the impact of religion and expressing their own views of religious questions

use an increasingly wide religious vocabulary to explain the impact of beliefs upon individuals and communities;

*describe why* people belong to religions;

*know that similarities and differences* illustrate distinctive beliefs within and between religions and *suggest possible reasons for this*;

*explain how religious sources* are used to provide authoritative answers to ultimate questions and ethical issues,* recognising diversity* in forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression, within and between religions.

Pupils:

LEVEL 6

Explaining and interpreting religion and expressing their own insights

use religious and philosophical vocabulary to explain religions and beliefs, *explaining reasons* for diversity within and between them;

*explain why the impact of religions* and beliefs upon individuals, communities and societies *varies*;

*interpret sources and arguments,* explaining different answers, from different traditions to *ultimate questions and ethical issues*;

*interpret the significance of different forms* of religious, spiritual and moral expression.

Pupils:

pose and suggest answers to, questions of sacredness, identity, diversity, belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, values and commitments, *relating them to their own and others' lives*;

explain what inspires and influences them, expressing their own and others' views on the challenges of belonging to a religion.

Pupils:

**“I like RE because I like learning about different people and their stories. I also like it because I like sharing my thoughts with other people.”**

Emma
Age 10
**LEVEL 7**

Showing coherent understanding of religious questions and accounting for and evaluating responses to religious questions insightfully

- use a religious and philosophical vocabulary to show a coherent understanding of a range of religions and beliefs;
- show a coherent understanding of issues, values and questions of authority, meaning and truth;
- account for the influence of history and culture on aspects of religious life and practice;
- account for differences between people within the same religion or tradition;

**Pupils:**

**LEVEL 8**

Analysing and contextualising their understanding of religion and justifying their views

- use a religious and philosophical vocabulary to analyse a range of religions and beliefs;
- analyse religious material with reference to historical, cultural and social contexts;
- critically evaluate the impact of religions and beliefs on differing communities and societies;
- analyse differing interpretations of religious, spiritual and moral sources and authorities, using some of the principal methods by which religion, spirituality and ethics are studied;
- analyse varied forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression.

**Pupils:**

- evaluate with insight questions of meaning, purpose and truth and ethical issues;
- evaluate the significance of religious and other views for understanding questions of human relationships, sacredness, belonging, diversity, identity, society, values and commitments, using appropriate evidence and examples.

**Pupils:**

- justify their views on a wide range of viewpoints on questions of sacredness, identity, diversity, belonging, meaning, purpose, truth, values and commitments;
- justify their views about religious, spiritual and ethical questions from evidence, arguments, reflections and examples, providing a comprehensive evaluation into the perspectives of others.

**Pupils:**

**SECTION FIVE**

Northamptonshire The Level 8 Scale of Expectations
Exceptional Performance

**Synthesise effectively and draw balanced conclusions**

use a complex religious, moral and philosophical vocabulary to provide a consistent and detailed analysis of religions and beliefs;

evaluate in depth the importance of religious diversity in a plural society;

clearly recognise the extent to which the impact of religion and beliefs on different communities and societies has changed over time;

provide a detailed analysis of how religious, spiritual and moral sources are interpreted in different ways, evaluating the principal methods by which religion and spirituality are studied;

synthesize effectively their accounts of the varied forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression.

**Pupils:**

analyze in depth a wide range of perspectives on questions of identity, diversity and belonging, meaning, purpose and truth and values and commitments;

give independent, well informed and highly reasoned insights into their own and others' perspectives on religious and spiritual issues, providing well-substantiated and balanced conclusions.

Pupils:

Additional guidance on the use of the 8 level scale, including a set of exemplary ‘I can…’ statements, can be found in the Support Materials on the accompanying CD Rom.

**Assessing Attainment at the End of a Key Stage**

In deciding on a pupil's level of attainment at the end of a key stage, teachers should judge which description best fits the pupil's performance. When doing so, each description
should be considered alongside descriptions for adjacent levels. Arrangements for statutory assessment at the end of each key stage are set out in detail in QC DA’s annual booklets about assessment and reporting arrangements. There are no national statutory assessment requirements in RE.

The Northamptonshire SACRE, however, does have a statutory requirement for the collection of end of Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 teacher assessment data. Letters are sent annually requesting this data, which is not collected in any other way either locally or nationally.

Schools are required to send this information to the Officer Serving SACRE by the middle of July each year.
Using the Level Descriptions

When using the scale in action, the following

A supportive tool

The Agreed Syllabus eight level scale for RE is to be used to set high standards of learning. It is intended to provide teachers with a supportive professional tool and to enable teachers to be confident in setting standards in their RE work.

Using levels in planning

Teachers will find that using the levels in planning provides a helpful focus for a differentiated curriculum that enables continuity and progression towards the highest possible standards for each pupil. Many skills in each level guide good practice:

Learning activities planned for particular classes will often focus upon a small or particular aspect of pupils’ attainment or a single phrase within the level description. The teacher’s professional judgement is central to monitoring pupils’ progress. Single pieces of work cannot show achievement with regard to the whole level.

Working towards a level

Pupils will usually demonstrate some parts or aspects of a level before they can consistently and securely achieve all that the Level Description includes. They are working towards the levels described.

Professional judgement

The professional judgement of the teacher of RE about the pupils’ achievements is the most important factor in the assessment process: the levels are a tool but the teacher makes the judgements about learning and achievement.

Two areas of attainment

Pupils may achieve different levels with regard to AT1 and AT2 in RE.

The use of sub levels

The use of ‘sub levels’ by some schools is not supported by this syllabus. There are dangers in assessment structures modelled on subjects where there are several hours of teaching time per week and applied without thought to RE, where an hour a week is normal. These dangers are, principally, of unmanageable and invalid assessment practice, which serves no purpose in improving pupils’ learning.
**Oral evidence of achievement**

Pupils are often able to speak about religious issues at a higher level than they are able to write. Oral evidence of achievement through speaking and listening is a significant part of the evidence teachers need in evaluating what pupils can do.

**Overuse of the levels**

There are some significant difficulties attached to using the levels for regular feedback to children about their week-to-week work. For example, there is little incentive in getting 'Level Three' week after week, and pupils will not learn much from such general feedback. Teachers are encouraged to give pupils informative, clear and diagnostic feedback.

**Shared understanding between teachers**

Teachers working together, for example in the same school or in a 'pyramid' family or cluster of schools, will often find it helpful to discuss the application of the levels in planning and assessing pupils' work.

**Transfer of information**

The transfer of usable, accurate information about achievement between key stages and phases makes a powerful contribution to setting high standards in RE 5-14.

**Value wider learning**

RE has important aspects, such as its contribution to providing opportunities for spiritual development or developing positive attitudes to those who hold different beliefs to oneself, which are not open to individual assessment using the 8 level scale. The Agreed Syllabus recognises this. Schools may want to find other ways to credit and celebrate such achievements.

**Reporting attainment and progress**

This syllabus requires schools to give parents an annual report on each child's attainment and progress in Religious Education, in line with the national reporting requirements of the Department for Education. However, use of the levels in this report is not statutory: it is a matter for schools to decide.
“It’s fun to learn about what others do.”

Janet
Age 11

Modelling Rangoli.
A Ladder of Key Skills for Assessing RE:
Progression in Learning

This simple ladder uses skill terms extracted from the 8 level scale, intended to clarify and make explicit the progression of skills which the Agreed Syllabus uses to enable all pupils to achieve in RE. It is to be read in conjunction with the full version of the scale above.

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<td>Contextualising, analysing and synthesising their understandings of religion</td>
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<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>Showing coherent understanding and accounting for religion</td>
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<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>Explaining and interpreting religion in depth and diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>Explaining similarities and differences and the impact of religion in people's lives</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Using correct vocabulary to show understanding of religion</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Describing religious materials</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Retelling religious stories, identifying religious materials</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Recognising and naming religious materials</td>
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Good teaching will share the appropriate skills with pupils and make explicit opportunities for pupils to acquire, practise and develop these central skills in RE.