

**Non - Statutory Guidance
to the
Kent Agreed syllabus
2017-22

Learning & teaching**

Learning and Teaching in Religious Education.

Teaching World Faiths

Religious Education makes an important contribution to promoting and cultivating understanding of, respect for and harmony with fellow human beings in our diverse society.

To understand society and many world events and situations requires a recognition of religious issues which often exert a strong influence on people's thinking and action. It is therefore essential that children have opportunities to explore religion in a personal, social and global sense, so that their understanding of people, society, culture and their world is deepened and their thinking and opinions well informed.

This guidance is offered to support teachers in the difficult task of exploring 'faith' with the utmost integrity. We hope that the guidance will support a more confident, secure and professional approach to RE. Good teaching about world faiths will encourage children to new depths of questioning and openness and contribute to the breaking down of barriers of racism, religious prejudice and discrimination, nationalism and xenophobia. It is important to maintain balance within the RE curriculum and the integrity of faiths studied. Beliefs and practices need to be treated seriously and in increasing depth, as found in the Kent Agreed Syllabus 2017-22.

Our media so often reports religious issues negatively, using crude stereotyping and categorisation, therefore it is important in the classroom to present, as nearly as possible the authentic beliefs, experiences and expressions of faith of believers. To achieve this end teachers will find it helpful to consider the following when teaching about world faiths:

- use the words 'many', 'most', 'some' or 'one' rather than 'all'. It is very unlikely that any statement beginning 'all Christians' or 'all Muslims' will be true
- use 'distancing' as a technique to describe religion and religious beliefs eg. 'Christians believe' rather than 'we believe'
- accept and reflect the differences and conflicts between religions as well as highlighting commonality and harmony, so that a more accurate and balanced view which does not distort the nature of religious experience and reality is presented
- reflect the internal diversity of each religion. There is difference and sometimes conflict within as well as between religions. Fundamentalists, conservatives, liberals and radicals are generally to be found in all religions. Diversity is to be welcomed, respected and celebrated rather than merely tolerated
- use 'primary sources' eg. visitors, visits, artefacts and resources from within a religion wherever possible so that an internal perspective is conveyed
- encourage children to consider religion in its local and contemporary forms ie. the 'here and now' rather than something remote and from long ago
- present the faith as adherents understand it through teaching the beliefs, values and practices identified by faith communities using their particular terminology.

Some recommended Do's and Don'ts when teaching Christianity

Do:	Do not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure pupils understand that Christians believe Jesus to be not only 'special' but fully God and fully man, i.e. God in a human form, hence the term 'Incarnation' meaning God 'taking flesh' • Ensure pupils are aware of the rich diversity in Christianity. It is diverse not only in that there are many denominations, but it is also expressed differently in different cultures • Remember that not all Christians read the Bible every day • Most Christians do not understand the Bible in a literal way but believe that its truth is expressed in different ways through different types of language such as law, poetry and legend. Christians disagree about how much history is to be found in the Bible. • Select Bible stories and other passages carefully so they are accessible and appropriate for the age and ability of pupils • Use local resources to the full, e.g. local churches, both clergy and lay people • Ensure that there are visits to and visitors from different churches and denominations • Use a variety of stories about Christians who display both 'tough and tender virtues' such as courage and perseverance, love and kindness • Ensure that pupils understand that both Protestants and Roman Catholics are Christians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglect or undervalue the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus when teaching about Easter as it is so central to Christianity • Teach only one Christian view about the meaning of the death of Jesus on the cross, (the doctrine of the atonement) as if it were the only view of the matter. Some books mistakenly suggest that the only correct view is that Jesus' death was a sacrifice to God for human sin and that Jesus was punished instead of us. This view is only one amongst a number of ways Christians explain its meaning. It should not be seen as the only or main view. It is recommended, especially with younger pupils, that the emphasis be on the Christian belief that the death of Jesus reveals the depth of his love, and so God's love, for humankind. • Use the older term the Holy Ghost, rather use the term Holy Spirit • Suggest some e.g. Roman Catholics, worship Mary and the Saints. Veneration is not the same as worship.

Some Muslim sensitivities

The use and storage of the Qur'an. Schools need to decide whether to implement the following recommendations often given about the use of the Qur'an. It is often recommended that it is necessary to:

- store the book carefully wrapped up and place it on a high shelf
- wash hands before handling the book
- place the book on a clean surface
- do not leave it open when not being read.

The teacher should also consider:

- concerns about pupils acting out the prayer positions on a prayer mat
- respect shown by Muslims for the prophet Muhammad by the use the term 'peace be upon him', (pbuh), after the prophet's name and that of other prophets.

Some recommended 'Do's and Don'ts' when teaching about Islam

Do	Do not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoid stereotypes which regularly link Islam with terrorism, harsh punishments and extreme strictness • avoid interpreting 'jihad' simply as a 'holy war' as it also means a spiritual struggle • if possible, use a Qur'an stand to hold the book • be careful about art work any Muslim pupils are asked to undertake, e.g. avoid asking them to depict or draw Muhammad and the other prophets of Islam • seek to show the way that culture and religion are often blended in Islam and indicate that some customs and practices may be more to do with culture than religion • be aware that Muslims do interpret parts of the Bible in ways that are not accepted by Jews and Christians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe Islam as 'Muhammadism' for it can imply the worship of Muhammad • describe Muhammad as the founder of Islam. He is believed by Muslims to be the last prophet. The first prophet in Islam was Adam and the founder is believed to be Abraham • ask someone to role play or act as Muhammad in a drama • compare wudu (washing before prayers), to Christian baptism as they do not have the same meaning • imply that the killing of an animal at Id-ul-Adha is a sacrifice to a bloodthirsty God. It is not. It is a reminder of the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) and Isma'il (Ishmael) • call Muslim prayer beads (subhah), a 'Muslim rosary'

Some recommended 'Do's and Don'ts' when teaching about Judaism

Do	Do not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to the Jewish Bible as the Jewish Bible or the Tenakh • Ensure pupils are aware of the diversity of Judaism, e.g. Orthodox and Reform. Not all Jews are as strict as Hasidic Jews • Ensure pupils understand that the Jewish people do not see obedience to the Torah as a burden but as a privilege • Take care with the use of the dating system of BC and AD. Today many use instead BCE, (before the Common era) and CE, (Common era) • Ensure pupils understand that traditional Jews believe that Moses received 613 laws (mitzvah), from God on Mount Sinai. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the term Old Testament when talking about the Bible in a Jewish context. Make it clear that this is a Christian term • Use the term Jehovah for God. Jewish people consider the name of God to be sacred and often use the terms 'the Lord' or 'the Holy One' and spell God as G-d • Use the term 'Wailing Wall' but instead the 'Western Wall' for the surviving temple wall in Jerusalem.

Some recommended 'Do's and Don'ts' when teaching about Buddhism

Do	Do not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that the translation of <i>Dukkhaas</i> suffering is not entirely accurate. It can also be translated as unsatisfactory. Buddhists do not claim that all life is painful • Make it clear that Siddhatta Gotama should not be considered to be the Buddha until after his enlightenment • Ensure pupils understand that meditation practices differ not only in practice but also in intention. The aim of Christian meditation is very different from that of the Buddhist • Ensure pupils understand that karma for Buddhists is not exactly the same as for Hindus • Ensure that pupils understand that the Noble Eightfold path is not a path in the sense that you take one step at a time. It is more like a single path with eight aspects to it • Ensure pupils understand that Buddhists do not worship the Buddha when bowing before a statue or image of him. It is more a matter of showing respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call Buddhist atheists. They do have ideas about 'a realm of the gods' but do not have a concept of God as in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Better described as 'non-theistic'. • Imply that all Buddhists are celibate monks or nuns wearing yellow robes. Monks and nuns wear different coloured robes, e.g. Tibetans wear wine or gold, Zen wear black or brown • Use the term 'begging bowl.' It suggests monks are parasitic. Use the term 'alms bowl' instead • Use the word reincarnation (unless carefully qualified), for it strictly speaking indicates that a soul is reborn. Buddhists do not believe in a permanent soul or self and prefer the term rebirth • Equate the 5 and 10 precepts with commandments. They are more like guidelines or 'a training manual.'

Some recommended 'Do and Don'ts' when teaching about Hinduism

Do	Do not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure pupils grasp the idea of one God Brahman held by many Hindus • Use the word Deities for the many murtis which manifestations of the one God are, Brahman. • take care when using photographs of holy men and ascetics as some e.g. men caked in mud or looking very thin and emaciated may give a bad impression of Hinduism • Take care when speaking about those classed as outcastes or dalits as their treatment is a is a very sensitive area for Hindus • Use the spelling Rama for one of the avatars of the god Vishnu. Although the term Ram is sometimes found 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest that all Hindus are polytheists (those who believe in many gods) • Use the term 'idol' for the images (murtis), of the gods and goddesses as this suggest that Hindus worship them rather than what they represent • Refer to the three gods Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu (the Trimurti), as a Trinity • Oversimplify and so distort and trivialise the idea of reincarnation by suggesting that a person may become a fly in their next life. For Hindus, any change of species is a very long process over many different lives.

Some recommended 'Do's and Don'ts' when teaching about Sikhism

Do	Do not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take care when displaying shorts (kacchera), to avoid amusement. If pupils see a martial arts outfit (a gi), first of all they may come to appreciate the significance of the shorts for earlier Sikhs as loose fitting garments, useful in battle • When visiting a Gurdwara, pupils should know that they will may be offered kara parshad to eat and that it would be viewed as impolite to throw it away • Ensure pupils understand that the Gurus are not seen as gods or as divine • When showing images of Guru Nanak, use pictures rather than small statues as for some Sikhs, they are too similar to Hindu murtis, (statues of the Deities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to the Amrit ceremony as a 'Sikh baptism' • Refer to the kirpan as a dagger, rather call it a sword • Draw the kirpan fully out of its sheath as Sikhs believe it should only be withdrawn if it is to be used • Refer to the chauri as a fly whisk • Refer to the kara as a simply bracelet or bangle as it could suggest that it is merely a decorative or an item of fashion. Use the term 'steel band' • Suggest that Sikhs worship Guru Nanak or any of the Gurus.

Including secular perspectives

The professional role of the religious educator requires that a variety of perspectives is explored in a respectful and open way without seeking to promote religious over non-religious alternatives, or vice versa. The intention is that, over time, RE will help give children and young people the tools to make their own choices in life in an informed and critical way.

Clearly, one of the central purposes of RE is to develop understanding of how Christianity and other major world faiths respond to the big questions about life, questions dealing with issues such as the meaning and purpose of our lives, whether there is a God, how everything came into existence, why there is suffering, how we should act towards others, how we should treat the environment and what happens when we die. Government guidance makes it clear that agreed syllabuses must not be designed to urge religious belief on pupils, so when dealing with religious responses to questions such as these, it is important not to present religious beliefs as statements of fact. To give a simple illustration, rather than saying, "God made the world", we need to say "Christians (or Jews or Muslims or ...) believe that God made the world".

However, as well as learning about religious beliefs, it is also important for children to understand that for many people, including many in the Western world, the most satisfactory answers to the 'big questions' are not found in religion. The non-statutory national framework for RE recommends that, where appropriate, secular world views should be taken into account at all key stages, including Key Stage 1. The Kent Agreed syllabus supports this principle.

Key Stage 1 teachers will need to take opportunities as they arise naturally through the material being explored to make the children aware of secular points of view. To use the illustration given above, a form of words such as the following could be used when exploring the origins of the earth, "Many people do not believe in God, and so they think that the world came into being without any help from God."

The study of any one religious or secular tradition in the key stage would include an exploration of:

- what people believe: the key ideas and questions of meaning in religions and beliefs, including issues related to God, truth, the world, human life and life after death; different sources of authority (including the relationship between religion and science) and how they inform believers' lives;
- what people do: questions and influences that inform ethical and moral choices, including forgiveness and issues of good and evil, right and wrong;
- how people express themselves: how and why human self-understanding and experiences are expressed in a variety of forms; the role of the expressive arts in challenging and inspiring believers;
- making sense of who we are: a study of relationships, conflicts and collaboration within and between religions and secular world beliefs;
- making sense of life: what religions and secular world views say about health, wealth, war, animal rights and the environment; and
- making sense of values and commitments: what religious and secular world views say about human rights and responsibilities, social justice and citizenship.