

Skilful Secondary RE

Discussion Activities linked to *What do you know about Religious Education?* – a short film from NATRE



Skilful and creative RE

- In your department/faculty, watch the film and identify all the skills and attitudes it sees RE promoting.
- Compare your list with the list below and with those outlined in your Agreed Syllabus or faith community guidelines (aided schools).
- Use the film to support talk about the kinds of RE learning activities which can help students develop these important skills.
- Use the 'Skills Audit' activity (see below) to help you reflect on the quality of RE learning in your own school. Identify any requiring more focus.

The film refers to, shows or implies many of following skills/attitudes:

Asking philosophical questions	Justifying views	Evaluating arguments
Personal reflection	Learning about beliefs, practices and ways of life	Communication skills
Group discussion	Thinking deeply – reflection	Critical thinking
Presentation skills	Expressing beliefs	Developing confidence
Learning from great thinkers from past and present	Considering issues of truth and belief, meaning and purpose, values and commitment	Knowledge and understanding of religious and non-religious beliefs and practices
Seeing the bigger picture – relate studies to wider world	Developing understanding and respect	Presenting arguments with evidence
Listening to other points of view	Participating in informed debate	Understanding different perspectives
Exploring beliefs and practices	Challenging points of view	Evaluating ideas
Discovering answers for yourself	Contributing to harmonious society	Appreciating diversity
Thinking for yourself	Open-mindedness	Empathy
Exploring human nature	Tackling challenging questions	Exploring ethical issues
Analysing ideas	Clarifying beliefs	Making a difference
Clarifying ideas	Assessing the impact of beliefs	Finding out more about yourself

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Skills and the eight-level scale of achievement in RE

The chart* below picks out the ‘**skill words**’ from the **eight-level scale** in the *Non-Statutory National Framework for RE* (QCA 2004). Many local Agreed Syllabus and faith community guidelines make use of this scale or a version of it.

Good RE enables students to use the skills specified here. Activities developing some of these skills are shown or referred to in the films.

Activities:

- You might like to try and place the list of skills identified in the film in a hierarchy, from least demanding to most skilful. Compare this with the skills outlined in the eight-level scale in your Agreed Syllabus or the *Non-Statutory National Framework*. Use the key words below as well as the full version of the levels. Match the skills to the levels.
- Use the chart below and suggest tasks and activities that allow students to develop these skills.

* from *A Teacher’s Handbook of Religious Education*, 3rd edn, ed. Rosemary Rivett, p.30.
ISBN 978-1-904024-95-8 available from RE Today (www.retoday.org.uk).

Level	Learn about religion	Students could.....	Learn from religion	Students could.....
8	Analyse / Contextualise		Justify views	
7	Account for...		Evaluate	
6	Interpret		Express insight	
5	Explain		Express views	
4	Show understanding		Apply ideas	
3	Describe		Make links	
2	Retell		Respond sensitively	
1	Name		Talk about	

Skills audit: what skills are students developing?

Look through the following activities and decide with a partner which RE skills are developed by each. Are some less skilful than others?

Tick any activities you have used during the last term.

As a group – formulate and respond to a key question	Use music / sound or song to express thoughts/ feelings/ experiences	Highlight important information on a handout		Clarify questions to be asked	Take part in a stilling/ reflective activity & express responses	Plan an enquiry into a question about a religion or belief
Listen to, talk about, explore religious stories	Agree/disagree activity – responding to statements	Design a game to help younger children learn about a religious festival or teaching		Role play/ freeze frame /thought tap key moment	Talk about the meaning of an artefact and how it is used	Design a questionnaire
Complete sentence stems	Draw a picture	Do a word search		Write a poem to express own insights / beliefs	Visit a local place of worship	Write a news report/broadcast
Tell a faith story from another person's point of view	Write a critical evaluation of an article or lecture	Read prayers and explain what they show		Talk about the meaning of a picture/ symbol/faith story	Find out what it means to belong to a religion or to hold a belief	Comprehension exercise
Sort out pictures e.g. matching artefacts to faiths/beliefs	Write a report of a visit	Produce a presentation about a big question or a belief		Watch/listen/ make notes from DVD/ website	Evaluate a range of responses to an ethical issue	Examine the social and cultural contexts of different beliefs and ways of life
Prepare questions for a faith visitor	Compare similarities and differences	Take part in a quiz		Use colour, collage, diagrams, to express ideas	Explain the meaning of words	Take part in a guided visualisation
Use creativity to express knowledge/ understanding/ ideas	Respond to a case study or dilemma	Sequence events in a faith story/ festival		Write a commentary for a video or presentation images	Work out a dance to express an important idea or belief	Use a thinking skills strategy e.g. odd one out/ fortune line
Match quotations to different faiths	Explain pictures and posters with RE themes and ideas	Produce a story board		Identify spiritual values such as love, hope, forgiveness, in a story or case study.	Respond to multi-sensory experiences linked to learning in RE– taste/ touch/ sight/ sound/ smell	Discussion structures: e.g. Pair and share; snowball discussion, jigsaw discussion.

For more information about these and other skilful activities see *A to Z: Practical Learning Strategies*, 2nd edn, ed. J Mackley and P Draycott. ISBN 1-904024-55-2 available from RE Today (www.retoday.org.uk).

Skills

Context

Progress in Religious Education is dependent on the application and developing use of general educational skills and processes.

The following skills are central to Religious Education and are reflected in a wide range of agreed syllabuses, programmes and approaches. Teachers should plan to enable pupils to make progress in the use and application of these skills through each key stage.

RE skills	Examples of teaching and learning activities
Investigate – this includes the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gather information from a variety of sources • ask relevant questions • know what may be appropriate information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a widening range of sources to pursue answers • Highlight important information on a handout • Watch/listen and make notes from video/audio/website • Clarify questions to be asked and write/email for information • Prepare questions for a visitor
Interpret – this includes the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw meaning from artefacts, symbols, stories, works of art and poetry • interpret religious language • suggest meanings of religious texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the meaning of words/actions/artefacts/symbols • Respond to questions such as: What do you think it is? What is going on (in a picture)? What issues does the story raise? • Use figures of speech or metaphors to speak about religious ideas • Read prayers and explain what they show about the person's beliefs and feelings
Reflect – this includes the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ponder on feelings, relationships, experience ultimate questions, beliefs and practices • think and speak carefully about religious and spiritual topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for pupils to describe how atmosphere and actions make them feel • Take part in stilling/guided visualisation activities • Use music to explore feelings/thoughts • Write a prayer a Jewish/Christian/Muslim child might use • Make a 'wall of wisdom' to record pupils' insights • Express feelings/insights in a reflective poem (or prayer?)
Empathise – this includes the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider the thoughts, feelings, experiences, beliefs and values of others • see the world through someone else's eyes • develop the power of the imagination to identify feelings such as love, forgiveness, sorrow, joy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to a case study • Role-play and freeze-frame, drama/mime activities • Fortune line or feelings graph for one character, e.g. Peter in Holy Week • Write thought bubbles or captions to pictures or slides • Tell a story from another person's point of view • Hot seat, i.e. answer questions in role of another person • Read or hear or watch or talk about a real-life case study • Take part in a guided visualisation

RE skills	Examples of teaching and learning activities
Analyse – this includes the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw out essential ideas, distinguish between opinion, belief and fact • distinguish between key features of different faiths • recognise similarities and differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight key words or beliefs on a handout • Sort out pictures of religious artefacts and symbols, matching them to the correct faith or festival • Identify the ‘odd one out’, e.g. a Hindu artefact within a set of Christian artefacts • Match quotations to different faiths studied • Identify differences and similarities between religious practices of different faiths studied using, for example, a triad activity
Synthesise – this includes the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • link significant feature/s of religion together in a coherent pattern • make links between religion and human experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about prayers, texts, places of worship and festivals, drawing conclusions about similar beliefs, values and practices • Identify similarities and differences within religions, e.g. between different Christian denominations and between different religions
Express – this includes the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain concepts, rituals and practices • identify and express matters of deep concern by a variety of means, not only through words • respond to religious issues through a variety of media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative: drama, role-play, dance, mime, add percussion or actions to religious story or song; make a game • Visual: use of collage, colour, charts, diagrams, digital video, photography, IT presentation (e.g. PowerPoint) • Oral: use of audio recording or presentation or debate • Written: poetry or reflective diary or letter or email or narrative story or newspaper report; questions for interview or visit
Apply – this includes the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply what has been learnt from a religion to a new situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a story to be acted out showing the meaning of a faith story or religious teaching in a different context • Design own symbols • Respond to a case study or dilemma, for example, think about what Jesus, Guru Nanak, Buddha might do or say; what a Muslim might do
Evaluate – this includes the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw conclusions by reference to different views and using reason to support own ideas • debate issues of religious significance with reference to experience, evidence and argument. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use sorting and ranking strategies, such as diamond ranking statements according to what pupils think or what a Muslim/Christian/Jew/Buddhist/Sikh/Hindu might think • Contribute personal responses to statements relating to topics in RE (e.g. ‘can of worms’ activity) • Respond to points of view on a scale of 1–10, followed by discussion, for example, a continuum or human bar chart activity.