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# Religious education

## Guidance for Key Stages 2 and 3

Key messages for planning  
learning and teaching

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## Guidance for Key Stages 2 and 3

### Key messages for planning learning and teaching

<b>Audience</b>	Teachers at Key Stages 2 and 3; SACREs; local authorities; tutors in initial teacher training; and others with an interest in continuing professional development.
<b>Overview</b>	These materials provide key messages for planning learning and teaching in religious education. They include profiles of learners' work to exemplify the standards set out in the level descriptions and illustrate how to use level descriptions to make best-fit judgements at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3. These are to be found in <i>Exemplifying learner profiles at Key Stages 2 and 3 in religious education: Additional guidance</i> , on the accompanying CD-ROM and on the Welsh Assembly Government's website at <a href="http://www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills">www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills</a>
<b>Action required</b>	SACREs to review learning plans and activities in their locally agreed syllabuses at Key Stages 2 and 3, and to prepare to make judgements at the end of Key Stage 3.
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<b>Related documents</b>	<i>Exemplifying learner profiles at Key Stages 2 and 3 in religious education: Additional guidance</i> (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011); <i>Religious education: Guidance for 14 to 19-year-olds</i> (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009); <i>National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales</i> ; <i>Skills framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales</i> ; <i>Making the most of learning: Implementing the revised curriculum</i> ; <i>Ensuring consistency in teacher assessment: Guidance for Key Stages 2 and 3</i> (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008)

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## Introduction

The programmes of study in the *National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* set out the opportunities that learners should be given at each key stage and provide the basis from which you, as a teacher, can plan learning and teaching. They are divided into two sections, Skills and Range. The Skills section lists the skills to be developed in a subject and the Range section comprises the opportunities and contexts through which these skills can be developed and consolidated.

Ongoing formative assessment – assessment **for** learning – lies at the heart of good teaching. Through the assessments that you make in the course of your teaching, you will build up an extensive knowledge of your learners' strengths, as well as the areas that need further development, and you will use this knowledge to help you plan for the next steps in their learning. Learners will also gain understanding of specific learning goals and the associated success criteria so that, supported by you, they can develop their capacity for self-assessment and peer assessment. In this way, they can establish their current position, set and move towards targets, and discover if and when the targets have been reached. Individual targets are linked to improving the quality of a learner's work, as highlighted through formative feedback, and are therefore linked to success criteria for specific tasks. Level descriptions do not make effective targets as these describe attainment across the breadth of the programme of study at the end of a key stage.

Level descriptions can help to inform your planning, teaching and assessment at Key Stages 2 and 3 by indicating expectations at particular levels and progression in the subject. Evidence from assessment for learning will indicate where more time is needed to consolidate learning and when learners are ready to move on. You may wish to keep some evidence so that you can discuss a learner's work and progress with them and/or with colleagues or parents/guardians. However, there is no statutory requirement to keep unnecessarily complex records or detailed evidence on every learner.

The essential function of level descriptions is to help you make rounded summative judgements at the end of the key stage about a learner's overall performance. Level descriptions are designed neither to be used to 'level' individual pieces of work nor for the production of half-termly or termly data. It is only by the end of the key stage that you will have built up sufficient knowledge about a learner's performance across a range of work, and in a variety of contexts, to enable you to make a judgement in relation to the level descriptions.

It may be that some learners will be more advanced in some aspects of the work than in others, and that no one level description provides an exact fit. That is to be expected, and the range of individual learners' work included in these materials illustrates the making of best-fit judgements under those circumstances. Many schools/departments have found it helpful to develop their own learner profiles to support moderation of end of key stage judgements. These profiles also help to maintain a common understanding of standards when they are reviewed annually and refreshed when necessary.

SACRE, through its agreed syllabus, may recommend that schools report at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3.

When making judgements at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3, you should decide which level description **best fits** a learner's performance. The aim is for a rounded judgement that:

- is based on your knowledge of how the learner performs across a range of contexts
- takes into account different strengths and areas for development in that learner's performance
- is checked against adjacent level descriptions to ensure that the level judged to be the most appropriate is the closest overall match to the learner's performance.

Religious education outcomes have also been written for learners working below Level 1.

## Using these materials

The guidance for religious education at Key Stages 2 and 3 is set out in two separate documents.

This booklet is divided into two sections.

**Section 1** highlights key messages for learning and teaching in religious education.

**Section 2** highlights expectations and progression in religious education.

The accompanying document *Exemplifying learner profiles at Key Stages 2 and 3 in religious education: Additional guidance* is available on the accompanying CD-ROM and on the Welsh Assembly Government's website at [www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills](http://www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills)

It is divided into two sections.

**Section 1** contains a series of Key Stage 2 learner profiles. These are designed to show the use of the level descriptions in coming to judgements about a learner's overall performance at the end of the key stage.

**Section 2** contains a series of Key Stage 3 learner profiles. These are designed to show the use of the level descriptions in coming to judgements about a learner's overall performance at the end of the key stage.

Both documents can be used for reference when you wish to:

- review your learning plans and activities
- consider the standards set out in the *National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales*
- work with other teachers to reach a shared understanding of the level descriptions
- prepare to make judgements at the end of the key stage
- develop your own learner profiles
- support transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

For ease of reference, the level descriptions are included at the end of the additional guidance document.

A CD-ROM is also included with this booklet. It contains a PDF version of *National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales*, *Skills framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales*, this guidance and *Exemplifying learner profiles at Key Stages 2 and 3 in religious education: Additional guidance*.

This guidance is part of a series of materials that will help teachers at Key Stages 2 and 3 to implement the revised curriculum and its associated assessment arrangements. The series includes:

- *Making the most of learning: Implementing the revised curriculum* – overview guidance on implementing the new curriculum
- *Skills framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* – which includes guidance about progression in skills
- *Ensuring consistency in teacher assessment: Guidance for Key Stages 2 and 3*
- *A curriculum for all learners: Guidance to support teachers of learners with additional learning needs*
- *How to develop thinking and assessment for learning in the classroom* (web-based only)
- specific guidance for religious education, all national curriculum subjects, personal and social education, careers and the world of work
- *Religious education: Guidance for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales*
- *People, Beliefs and Questions: Religious education for children 3 to 7-years-old*
- *Making the most of assessment, 7–14* (web-based only).





## *Section*

# 1

Key messages for learning and teaching  
in religious education

*The National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* provides opportunities to enhance the standards of religious education in schools in Wales. Most SACREs have adopted/adapted this framework as their locally agreed religious education syllabus.

The focus of this section is to help teachers implementing such locally agreed syllabuses to plan learning and teaching and revise programmes of study to be relevant and motivating for each learner, i.e. to be learner centred and skills focused. Your plans provide opportunities for learners to develop the three interrelated core skills – ‘Engaging with fundamental questions’, ‘Exploring religious beliefs, teachings and practice(s)’ and ‘Expressing personal responses’ through a breadth of religious education contexts, which are identified under the heading Range. You should use Skills and Range as a flexible framework from which it is possible to select contexts and develop activities that will be relevant and motivating for learners.

## Developing a Skills focus

The exemplar programmes of study are learner centred and skills focused and reflect the requirements of the non-statutory *Skills framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales*.

Your learning plan should ensure that learners have opportunities to develop, practise and apply all aspects of the three interrelated core skills identified in the exemplar programme of study for religious education. Developing the links between each aspect of the core skills is essential if learners are to:

- **engage with fundamental questions**<sup>1</sup> to investigate interpretations of meaning and the purpose of existence as raised by religious and non-religious people alike. These questions are informed by philosophical/theological thinking and relate directly to religious beliefs, teachings and practices which provide a context for open and balanced exploration

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<sup>1</sup> Fundamental questions are all-encompassing – they might include ultimate questions (that relate to the essentials of existence and do not have conclusive answers), religious questions (that relate to specific religious/theological/philosophical/ethical concepts) and human questions (that relate to making sense and finding purpose in normal daily living). Each of these questions will focus on the profound and are essential if learners are to engage fully with any aspect of study in religious education.

- **explore the religious beliefs, teaching and practice(s)** to gain coherent (theologically sound) understanding of the nature of religion, religious commitments and lifestyles; and the influence religion has on society in terms of ethnic and cultural equality and diversity and the moral and spiritual dimensions of life
- **express personal responses** which are well considered and informed and are based on insights and viewpoints accessed through links with the other two core skills. Opportunities for personal communication allow learners to express their individual beliefs and values within an informed context and provide opportunities to develop spiritual reflection, emotional intelligence and creative thinking.

By selecting any one of the core skills as a starting point you can then interrelate the other two through research, analysis, reflection, discernment and consolidation. Learners can revisit the skills in order to provide a relevant and realistic experience through which they can develop skills for life.

**Some useful questions to guide your planning and develop a skills focus**

- Which religious education skill(s) from the programme of study is/are the focus of this activity?
- What is the purpose and expected outcome of this activity? Does it introduce a new skill, consolidate understanding, develop, apply or extend a skill?
- Do learners have sufficient sources/resources to carry out research and investigate a range of informed religious/non-religious viewpoints?
- Have I planned sequences of activities which enable learners to develop the three interrelated core skills?

**A curriculum plan is more likely to support the development of a range of skills if it offers opportunities for learners to:**

- focus on relevant and engaging topics for investigation in religious education
- develop problem-solving techniques, critical, creative and intuitive thinking using a range of informed sources and contexts
- work alone and with others in a variety of settings such as school, locality, places of worship, places of religious interest, community projects, etc.
- use a variety of organisational and communication skills.

**In the *Exemplifying learner profiles at Key Stages 2 and 3 in religious education: Additional guidance document, examples of activities that can offer opportunities for skills development* include:**

- questioning in order to inform debate, to challenge, to test hypotheses and to evaluate. This will lead to a range of interesting perspectives and new, even more challenging questions (Safia, Key Stage 3)
- participating in problem-solving activities and collaborative learning (Angharad, Key Stage 3)
- developing intellectual curiosity, open-mindedness, emotion, reflection, intuition and empathy to explore the spiritual and moral aspects of religion and life (Sion, Key Stage 2)
- investigating authentic texts from holy books, sources of authority such as church doctrine, the Talmud or Hadith, the writings/testimonies of religious leaders and/or authoritative religious articles alongside other sources of information such as newspapers, scientific journals, historical documents, literary sources and religious and philosophical thinkers, etc., to allow engagement with religious and human fundamental questions (Mali, Key Stage 2)
- visiting local places of worship/religious communities and sites of religious significance to explore religious beliefs, teachings and practice(s) in a tangible way. First-hand experiences can foster community cohesion, can raise learners' awareness of the sensitivities and complexities involved when exploring religions, and can promote the Curriculum Cymreig (Helen, Key Stage 2)
- examining artefacts and other religious sources to help explore symbolism and meaning, and arrive at a sense of what it means to take a religion seriously (Matthew, Key Stage 3)
- adopting creative, intuitive and problem-solving skills to evoke meaning hidden in metaphorical language (as seen in poetry, literature, myth, parables, etc.) or artistic interpretations (as seen through various media such as artefacts, ritual, art, dance, role play, drama, or music) (Mali, Key Stage 2)
- accessing emotional intelligence through role play, interpretative dance, scripted fantasy and meditation to explore spirituality, values and beliefs (Ben, Key Stage 2)
- investigating individual religions in a systematic way or a combination of religions, e.g. Christianity and one or more of the principal religions of Great Britain to inform a fundamental question (Safia, Key Stage 3)

- data sorting and sequencing, classifying or ranking to identify trends and patterns; using graphic organisers such as Venn diagrams to explore similarities and differences (Helen, Key Stage 2)
- considering and debating other people's perspectives in a balanced, non-judgemental way, to participate in philosophical, theological and ethical debate and be well informed with valid, relevant evidence and reasoned justification (Safia, Key Stage 3)
- using a range of communication techniques including oral, written, physical, visual and ICT to develop religious vocabulary and an understanding of symbolic language and symbolism conveyed in a range of verbal and non-verbal media (Mali, Key Stage 2).

Examples of activities which offer only limited opportunities to progress skills and/or understanding and which are best avoided	Examples of activities which can be used to support progress in skill development
Without an interrelated approach (i.e. linking the three core skills to make a coherent investigation into religion) there is a danger of the subject losing its integrity and identity.	By interrelating the three core skills there is more possibility of learners developing an in-depth understanding of religion and more opportunities for learners to be fully engaged and motivated by the questions raised and the responses given. They will also be more fully informed about relevant issues relating to the challenges facing society.
Copying out pictures or text without any requirement to adapt or apply the information.	If pictures or texts (e.g. sacred texts, diagrams or religious buildings, etc.) are required then they should be provided for learners to use as a source or reference for research or investigation activities.
Drawing pictures or 'colouring in' images which do not develop a religious education skill or understanding.	Creative artwork is appropriate if learners are trying to convey a difficult concept or are developing a symbolic interpretation of an idea. (An accompanying commentary is often helpful.)
Researching on the internet, downloading, cutting and pasting without a requirement to select and use material to investigate a religious education question.	Research on the internet can be beneficial, but it is important to be discerning and selective in order to judge reliability while investigating a religious education question.
Producing posters or pamphlets that have limited learning outcomes beyond presentational skills.	An information poster which uses a range of facts to convey an idea or concept in an imaginative way can be beneficial provided that the learning outcomes are valuable and clear.
Inappropriate creative tasks that challenge the integrity of the subject matter, e.g. asking for images that are offensive or insensitive.	Creative tasks that relate closely to the integrity of the religion studied or allow learners to explore ideas personally, e.g. through personal poetry, can be beneficial.
Tests that only access knowledge rather than understanding.	Assessments that access a combination of skills, knowledge and understanding can be valuable.

## Implementing the Range

In the *National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales*, the Range section provides the contexts for the areas of study for the whole of the key stage. The Range has been designed to build on the knowledge and understanding acquired at Foundation Phase and to ensure balance, breadth and depth in your planning. The Range should not be regarded as discrete topics (or a checklist) but rather as interwoven areas of study that provide a structure for learners to engage, explore, and express ideas and responses. The Range is designed to offer flexibility for you to choose topics and approaches that will be relevant and provide quality experiences for learners.

The three main headings in the Range provide the broad context for study and show that at its core religious education is absorbed with understanding 'The world', 'Human experience' and 'Search for meaning'. All religions provide an insight into these elements of life and meaning and it is for this reason that all aspects of the Range should be included in your learning plan to ensure coherence and appropriate breadth and depth.

The world	Human experience	Search for meaning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the origin and purpose of life</li><li>• the natural world and living things</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• human identity</li><li>• meaning and purpose of life</li><li>• belonging</li><li>• authority and influence</li><li>• relationships and responsibility</li><li>• the journey of life</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• non-material/spiritual</li><li>• knowledge and experience regarding the non-material/spiritual</li></ul>

The aspects of the Range (as shown in the 10 bullet points above) may be covered separately or combined and do not necessarily require equal amounts of study time, but they do summarise the essentials needed to build a course of study.

**Examples of different ways that might be used to cover the Range requirements of the programme of study may include the following:**

- One aspect of the Range is covered as a discrete topic, e.g. 'the origin and purpose of life' or 'authority and influence' or 'non-material/spiritual'. This approach would need to be sufficiently challenging and there would be a need to ensure adequate coverage of the rest of the Range by the end of the key stage.
- An aspect of the Range is covered as a discrete topic that relates to a fundamental question. Examples of such questions might be – 'What does it mean to be human?' (human identity), 'What happens when we die?' (meaning and purpose of life), 'How do people respond to Jesus?' (authority and influence), 'How do religions interpret the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in promoting equality?' (relationships and responsibilities), 'What is the meaning and significance of Pesach?' (belonging).
- Items from the Range are combined to offer a traditional religious topic, such as Easter, worship, or Hinduism. For example, the study of Easter would include a combination of aspects of the Range such as 'meaning and purpose of life', 'belonging', 'authority and influence', 'relationships and responsibility', 'non-material/spiritual' and 'knowledge and experience of the non-material/spiritual'.

Each of the 10 aspects of the Range<sup>2</sup> are accompanied by text which shows the level of engagement that is expected of learners at each key stage. It is essential that the 10 aspects are used in conjunction with their accompanying text so as to ensure that there is progression between each key stage and that topics are covered in sufficient depth. For example, if the statement 'the origin and purpose of life' were used without the accompanying text this might lead to merely retelling creation stories at each key stage, but the accompanying text for Key Stage 2 requires that learners engage with '*how interpretations of the origins of the world and life influence people's views*'. If religious people believe, therefore, that they have been given responsibility for the world, this might affect the way they treat the environment/living things. Similarly, if they think humans have been created in the image of God this might inspire them to demand high ethical standards from themselves and others.

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<sup>2</sup> To be found in the bottom section of each of the programmes of study within the *National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales*.



The following sections offer additional guidance on elements of the Skills and Range that are new in the programmes of study for religious education.

### **Key Stages 2 and 3: Investigating**

Activities across the key stages should be planned to develop learners' skills in investigating. Investigations offer opportunities for a real enquiry experience in which learners respond to fundamental questions, pose their own questions, seek their own answers and develop understanding. The enquiry approach can place the learner at the centre of the learning experience.

In both Key Stages 2 and 3 the three core skills (but particularly Engaging with fundamental questions) require learners to develop skills that are pertinent to investigation. At both key stages learners need to be supported by providing them with a range of appropriate resources in order for them to carry out guided research. The better the range and quality of the resources the more likely the learner will be able to compare, contrast, analyse, synthesise, evaluate information and draw relevant conclusions. Learners will also be encouraged to carry out independent research both in and outside the classroom. An important part of this personally initiated research is to increasingly develop skills of discernment and evaluation so that learners become better able to develop their own criteria on which to evaluate the reliability of information gathered.

As well as appropriate resources it is also essential that learners are provided with focused tasks. These will ensure that learners are more likely to avoid providing lengthy, unstructured, descriptive projects and more likely to provide concise, focused investigations that demonstrate skills development. You should ensure that learners have adequate opportunities throughout each key stage to make progress in these investigative skills.

## Planning for investigation – a checklist

### Asking fundamental questions in religious education

- Is the central question guiding the investigation a fundamental question?
- Are the sub-questions also fundamental questions?
- Are learners introduced to ideas that are fully compatible with the topic?

All topics in religious education should have a guiding fundamental (all-encompassing) question at their core. Fundamental questions are identifiable by the fact that they:

- interrelate the three core skills
- utilise a wide selection of the Range
- are profound and challenge learners to think and reflect
- are all-encompassing and wide ranging
- have no specific answer and can, therefore, be investigated from a theological/philosophical/ethical perspective.

Types of fundamental questions include:

- ultimate questions such as ‘What is the origin and purpose of life?’
- religious questions such as ‘Was Jesus the Son of God?’
- human questions such as ‘Did the dream die?’ (concerned with equality/civil rights and the role of Martin Luther King).

Having raised the fundamental question with the class they will be guided through active engagement to explore a range of supplementary questions which promote development of the three core skills.

Some questions are limiting and would not be described as fundamental questions, even though they might provide useful information to inform an investigation. For example, a general religious education question such as ‘What happened to Siddhartha Gautama to lead him to search for truth?’ at best will only require the learner to provide a description of the Buddha’s early life. Learners will need access to this information to explore the fundamental question ‘What is truth (from a Buddhist perspective)?’, but reiterating the story will only develop descriptive literary skills rather than the three core religious education skills. On this occasion it would be better to provide the learner with the information about the Buddha and ask them questions that are more evaluative in nature.

Some questions would not be described as fundamental questions, and also go beyond the scope of religious education. For example, in the exploration of the fundamental question 'What is evil?' a supplementary question that merely asked for historical details of the Holocaust (e.g. 'What events in the Holocaust could be described as evil?') is not appropriate because it would merely lead to a description of events rather than helping learners evaluate and respond to the fundamental question raised. A more focused question would be 'What decisions/circumstances led (a specific person or group) to act in a way which you consider to be evil?'. This question relates directly back to the original question 'What is evil?' and might also lead learners to consider beliefs, motives and free will, etc., as opposed to merely historical detail.

### **Resources for collecting and authenticating information**

- Are learners provided with a sufficient range of materials to be able to develop higher-order skills? (e.g. text books; holy books; case studies/interviews with believers; a range of media, internet, CDs, DVDs, videos; information from religious denominations, organisations and sources of authority; teacher-designed resources; resources from a range of appropriate disciplines including accessible information relating to theology, philosophy and ethics.)
- Are learners supported in order to develop criteria to evaluate the reliability of sources of information? (e.g. extensive research, historical authenticity, religious authority, expert witnesses, religious experience, balanced opinions, etc.)

### **Organising and analysing information**

- Can learners identify and interpret information in a balanced way?
- Can learners analyse the range of opinions gathered in order to draw conclusions?

It is helpful if learners are encouraged to carry out their investigations in an objective, balanced way and without personal bias. To support this balance and objectivity it is helpful if learners, when referring to religious or non-religious beliefs, use statements such as 'Some Muslims believe . . . because . . . , whilst others believe . . . because . . . '. This tries to ensure objectivity and awareness that similarities and differences exist within and across religions and other disciplines.

It is also helpful if learners gather the information for their research in a guided, structured way rather than just copying out random facts they have found. For example, when requiring learners, as part of their investigation to *draw on a variety of informed sources . . . and develop appropriate responses* they might make use of thinking strategies to help them:

- compare information (including listing arguments, for and against), listing alternatives and possibilities and identifying what is valid and what is not
- develop an argument
- consider contexts (including an awareness of preconceptions, possibilities and explanations)
- construct hypotheses, gather evidence, evaluate (consider alternatives and possibilities)
- foster open-mindedness to continue the search.

### **Drawing conclusions**

Having gathered the appropriate information, are learners:

- focusing on the explicit requirements of the task and returning to the original question?
- able to draw out the similarities and differences and the reasons for the range of opinions?
- able to begin to develop explanations?
- able to weigh evidence to develop an argument and justify it?

In order to embed and extend skills it is important to ensure that concepts are revisited at a deeper level or applied in a different context where they can be re-evaluated. This synoptic approach ensures that nothing is studied in isolation and that work covered previously can be revisited at greater depth and from a different perspective. Such an approach ensures that there is progression in both skills development and in depth of knowledge and understanding.

## Evaluating the investigation

When evaluating their investigations it is helpful if learners reflect on the following questions.

- Did I complete what I set out to achieve?
- If not, how could I complete what I set out to achieve?
- How did I carry out my investigation and how could I have developed this skill further?
- What methods did I use to draw conclusions and how valid were my conclusions?
- How could this investigation have been extended?
- What do I need to investigate next and what skills do I need in order to improve my investigation?
- What have I learned?
- What new question has my investigation raised?

## Range of religions

### Key Stages 2 and 3: Using insight from a range of religions

Learners are required (by law<sup>3</sup>) to be given opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other principal religions (as specified in the locally agreed syllabus). In order to have a balanced course of study, it would be beneficial to use a systematic study of religion together with a more thematic method of study.

For example, a balanced course of study would ensure that the skills, knowledge and understanding developed at an earlier part of a key stage through systematic study would be revisited in greater depth at a later part of the key stage either as part of a systematic or thematic study.

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<sup>3</sup> The legal requirements for religious education can be found in the *National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales*.

## Key Stage 2: Exploring religious beliefs, teachings and practice(s) – example of a systematic approach

The starting point for a systematic study of religion would be through the skills identified under 'Exploring religious beliefs, teachings and practice(s)', giving learners a greater depth of knowledge and understanding about a particular religion. During such a systematic study of religion, religious questions, ultimate questions and/or human questions would emerge naturally from the content. Learners should engage with the fundamental questions raised and express relevant personal responses based on the study as they arise.

The starting point for a systematic approach would be the skills identified under 'Exploring religious beliefs, teachings and practices'. For example, a systematic study could be planned by identifying the main aspects of Judaism that learners are to explore such as synagogue, Torah, kashrut, Shabbat, etc. then providing active learning resources focused on the three core skills around these aspects of a religion. A systematic study would then deal with:

- What is special about a synagogue?
- How does the Torah influence Jewish life?
- What is the significance of kashrut?
- Why is Shabbat important to many Jews?
- Why do many Jews celebrate Sukkot?
- How and why do many Jews care for others and the world?
- Do we have to die?

Below is an example showing how sessions might be planned on why Shabbat is important.

- **Why is Shabbat important to many Jews?** This initial religious fundamental question sets the scene for an exploration focused on worship and lifestyle in Judaism.
- **Finding out about Shabbat:** As Shabbat relates directly to religious practice learners will need to find out about Shabbat using the Five Ws – 'Who?', 'What?', 'Where?', 'When?', 'Why?'. Learners participating in exploration can answer these questions by using a number of different thinking skills approaches, e.g. a market place, philosophy for children, personal investigation using resources or a re-enactment of a Shabbat meal in the classroom (using artefacts, religious texts, songs and food).

- **Why do some Jews think it is important to celebrate Shabbat?** This question requires learners to find out more about the religious teachings relating to Shabbat. It is essential when dealing with religious teachings that they relate closely to their religious context and that they are fully understood by learners. Matching, sorting, sequencing, ranking and explaining activities help learners explore the authentic texts<sup>4</sup>.
- **What do some Jews believe about Shabbat?** In order to draw conclusions about Jewish beliefs they will need to make links between what they have discovered from their exploration of the practices and teachings and in drawing on these informed sources they will be better able to draw conclusions.
- **Why is a day of rest or special time important?** This question allows learners to consider the viewpoints of Jewish people (through case studies, articles, personal interviews, etc.). This will help learners identify any similarities and differences within Judaism, assess the impact that Shabbat has on Jewish people's lives and will also help them to express personal responses in an informed way.
- **Why is Shabbat important to many Jews?** This summary activity draws together all the insights gained by making links between the religious beliefs, teachings and practice(s) in order for them to analyse and synthesise and draw balanced conclusions.

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<sup>4</sup> Accessing authentic religious texts is essential if learners are required to interpret their meaning and evaluate the impact that they have on believers' lives. To support learners you might need to find an alternative translation or children's version. On occasion you might need to simplify texts to make them accessible to learners, but it is important that the simplifying does not significantly alter the meaning of the texts.

## **Key Stage 2: Exploring religious beliefs, teachings and practice(s) – example of a thematic approach**

The starting point for a thematic approach could be the skills identified under 'Engaging with fundamental questions' or 'Expressing personal responses'. During such a study, religious, ultimate or human questions will act as the stimulus to explore aspects of religion(s) that relate directly to the question(s) raised. For this study the religions that provide the most interesting/diverse perspective on an issue might be chosen.

- **Why do people show concern and responsibility for the natural world and living things?** The initial human fundamental question sets the scene for an exploration focused on the ways in which religions are motivated to show stewardship and care. The topic could begin by focusing on the beauty of nature and how humans impact on that beauty.
- **What do some religious people do to celebrate the natural world?** This relates directly to religious practice and in order to discover more, learners will need to find out how several religions celebrate the beauty and wonder of the natural world. For example, many Jews celebrate Sukkoth, many Christians celebrate Harvest and some Buddhists in Thailand celebrate Songkran, etc. This exploration can be carried out by using a range of thinking skills approaches, relevant stories and personal investigation.
- **Why do many religious people think it is their duty to care for the natural world and living things?** This question requires learners to find out more about the religious teachings relating to the natural world/living things and stewardship (using terminology relevant to each religion studied). It is essential when dealing with religious teachings that they relate closely to their religious context and that they are fully understood by learners. If learners have encountered specific religious texts in previous systematic studies of a specific religion this will help them better understand the context and associated beliefs and practices. Matching, sorting, sequencing, ranking and explaining activities help learners explore the authentic texts<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> See footnote 4 on page 21.



- **What do religious people believe about the natural world and living things?** In order to draw conclusions about the range of religious beliefs studied they will need to make links between what they have discovered from their exploration of the practices and teachings. They will then need to identify the similarities and differences between the range of religious beliefs explored.
- **If religious people believe the world is a gift, how should they treat it?** This question allows learners to consider the viewpoints of a range of religious people (through case studies, articles, personal interviews, etc.) and consider whether their religion influences the way they respond to the environment and living things.
- **How can people make a difference?** This question will help learners use the viewpoints of believers in order to help them express their personal responses in an informed way.
- **Why do people show concern and responsibility for the natural world and living things?** Returning to the original fundamental question draws together all the insights gained, allowing learners to analyse and synthesise, draw balanced conclusions and make explicit references to the contrasting reasons why and how different people (including those from different religions and beliefs) respond to the natural world.

The two examples provided relate to the *Optional Assessment Materials for Religious Education* produced by ACCAC in 2004 and materials commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government (for further information see the 'Useful resources' section).

## Key Stages 2 and 3: Expressing personal responses

At its very heart each religion provides a different way of looking at the world, some focusing more on the spiritual, others more on the material side. It is important to realise that these ideologies influence the outlook, attitudes and actions of believers. In a similar way, each of the learners bring to their learning their own ideologies which influence the way they live and the way they view life. It is important for them to explore these ideologies and compare them to those of other people if they are to truly understand and respect others. Personal responses are not an excuse for learners to rehearse prejudice. As part of their response, learners should consider their own and other people's perspectives in a balanced, non-judgemental way. They should also be open to philosophical, theological and ethical debate and be well informed with valid, relevant evidence and reasoned justification.

### Examples of questions that can support learners expressing personal responses

- What interesting ways can you use to convey what you have learned about religion/spiritual experience and moral decision making?
- How would you respond to some of the questions we have been exploring?
- Identify the most interesting religious viewpoints that you encountered and discuss them.
- Why are the viewpoints similar and/or different to your own feelings, actions and opinions?
- Why do people make time to reflect on the spiritual side of life?
- From your studies, what has puzzled you most and what further questions would you like answered?
- Do the questions raised have conclusive, definitive answers?

## Religious education and skills across the curriculum

A non-statutory *Skills framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* has been developed in order to provide guidance about continuity and progression in developing thinking, communication, ICT and number for learners from 3 to 19.

At Key Stages 2 and 3, learners should be given opportunities to build on the skills they have started to acquire and develop during the Foundation Phase. Learners should continue to acquire, develop, practise, apply and refine these skills through group and individual tasks in a variety of contexts across the curriculum. Progress can be seen in terms of the refinement of these skills and by their application to tasks that move from: concrete to abstract; simple to complex; personal to the 'big picture'; familiar to unfamiliar; and supported to independent and interdependent.

Icons have been used in the religious education framework to signal explicit requirements for the development of skills and learning across the curriculum. However, in preparing a learning plan relevant for learners you will identify other opportunities to enrich learning. The ideas below relate to the *National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* and to *Exemplifying learner profiles at Key Stages 2 and 3 in religious education: Additional Guidance*. These can be found on the accompanying CD-ROM and on the Welsh Assembly Government's website [www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills](http://www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills)

### Developing thinking



Learners develop their thinking across the curriculum through the processes of **planning**, **developing** and **reflecting**.

In religious education, learners will have opportunities to:

- **ask** fundamental questions which are raised by human experience, the world and aspects of religion
- **explore** and **make links** between the religious beliefs, teachings and practices that they study
- **plan investigations** by **gathering** and utilising a range of religious and non-religious sources and **use** these to **evaluate** and **justify** their personal responses
- **use** a range of **critical and creative problem-solving techniques** in order to **develop** ideas and **explore** and **challenge** interpretations, preconceptions and possibilities.

The learner profiles in the additional guidance demonstrate that learners at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 are supported in developing their thinking skills through each of the activities as they clearly focus on the three interrelated core skills. Every topic requires investigation and analysis into the religious beliefs, teachings and practices, the fundamental questions raised and an informed personal response. The exploration and engagement with these core skills requires learners to question critically and evaluate issues raised, make links between aspects of the course that inform one another, creatively challenge preconceptions and embed and extend knowledge and understanding relating to the context of study. Learners will also develop skills of discernment and reflection when expressing personal responses.

### Developing communication

Learners develop their communication skills across the curriculum through the skills of **oracy, reading, writing** and **wider communication**.

In religious education, learners will have opportunities to:

- **ask** questions, **communicate** ideas and **express** their own feelings and opinions using different forms as appropriate to the audience and purpose of the activity
- **listen** carefully to others, noting the strengths and weaknesses of viewpoints or lines of reasoning
- **use** different reading/writing strategies depending on the investigation or activity they are undertaking
- **show increasing understanding** of religious/symbolic language with a growing awareness of the range of possible interpretation.

The learner profiles in the additional guidance provide learners with opportunities to research and discuss their investigations and share their findings in class groups, smaller groups and pairs. They have read a range of appropriate written sources, comparing these with visual and, in some cases, aural sources to support the investigations at each key stage and the learners have communicated their findings in a variety of creative ways. Learners have communicated their conclusions through written work of increasing length and complexity, including different styles of factual writing. They have also communicated their ideas, opinions, arguments and conclusions through diagrams, role plays, presentations and discussion.

## Developing ICT



Learners develop their ICT skills across the curriculum by **finding, developing, creating and presenting information and ideas** and by using a wide range of equipment and software.

In religious education, learners will have opportunities to:

- **communicate** and **share** information (using, for example, e-mails, PowerPoint slides, blogs, podcasts, etc.)
- **present** information in a variety of formats using word processing and graphics
- **find and develop** information on the internet and other sources including CD-ROMs, etc.
- **support** oral presentations and the creation of ideas and strategies to improve the impact of their work.

In the learner profiles in the additional guidance learners at both key stages used the internet as part of their investigations. For example, Mali (Key Stage 2) uses the internet to find out more about religious beliefs, teaching, and practices, to access photographs of the universe from specific (teacher approved) websites and to carry out additional research. Similarly, Safia (Key Stage 3) carried out research relating to various reliable religious interpretations of truth. A number of learners used PowerPoint to create presentations to convey information and share ideas with class members.

## Developing number



Learners develop their number skills across the curriculum by **using mathematical information, calculating, and interpreting and presenting findings.**

In religious education, learners will have opportunities to:

- **use** information such as ordering events in time, by **measuring** time through the calendars of various religions, by **calculating** percentages of tithing, and by **considering** the significance of number within religions
- **interpret** results/data and **present** findings from questionnaires, graphs and other forms of data in order to **draw conclusions**
- **ask** further questions about issues relating to religion and the world.

At Key Stage 2 as well as at Key Stage 3, as part of their investigations learners will come across data such as census returns and statistics relating to attendance at religious places of worship and numbers of adherents across the world. The additional guidance shows how Ben (Key Stage 2) considered simple chronology in relation to the exploration of the historical Jesus, and Safia (Key Stage 3) carried out a class survey and analysed the data. In considering the wonder of the universe, Mali (Key Stage 2) touched on the pattern in nature and enormity of distances across the universe.

## Religious education and learning across the curriculum

At Key Stages 2 and 3, learners should be given opportunities to build on the experiences gained during the Foundation Phase, and to promote their knowledge and understanding of Wales, their personal and social development and well-being, and their awareness of the world of work.

### Curriculum Cymreig



Learners aged 7–14 should be given opportunities to develop and apply their knowledge and understanding of the cultural, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales.

Religious education contributes to the Curriculum Cymreig by allowing learners to:

- **appreciate** the significance, value and impact of the rich Christian heritage and dynamic multi-faith composition of Wales past and present
- **use** a range of stimulating resources from the locality. Learners are challenged to **ask** fundamental questions about meaning and the purpose of life, and the significance and impact of religion and religious thinking on twenty-first century society. Such insight supports social cohesion, cultural/religious awareness and cooperation within society and individual communities.

The learner profiles (to be found in the additional guidance document) have been chosen to show how the locality and local people can be used as the starting point of investigations. At Key Stage 2, Ben was given opportunities to interview and carry out research about a local Christian group who, because of their faith, help young people deal with drug addiction. Learners such as Helen (Key Stage 2) carried out research relating to the local practice(s) of religion which was/were encountered when visiting places of worship or meeting local adherents. On occasion, learners drew on famous figures in Wales to identify the influence that religions have had on local communities in Wales; for example, Helen (Key Stage 2) studied the experiences of Mary Jones and Thomas Charles to explore commitment. Exploration of responsibility towards the world and living things can explicitly be found in Mali's work (Key Stage 2).

## Personal and social education



Learners should be given opportunities to promote their health and emotional well-being and moral and spiritual development; to become active citizens and promote sustainable development and global citizenship; and to prepare for lifelong learning.

Religious education contributes to personal and social education through exploration of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions by allowing learners to:

- **develop understanding** of and respect for various world religions
- **explore** how religion impacts on decisions made, and lifestyles adopted by, individuals and societies within various cultures in Great Britain and around the world
- **focus** on the desire of many religions to foster values and aspirations such as equality, justice, responsibility, peace and morality through such things as social action, sustainability and global citizenship
- be encouraged to **question** the values and aspirations of their own lives, the lives of others and of society.

In the learner profiles (to be found in the additional guidance document) learners at both key stages investigate religious education topics which support these themes. Within each topic there are increasing opportunities to develop understanding and respect for a range of world religions studied, thus fostering equality and social cohesion and the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Every topic explores the impact of lifestyle and culture for believers and considers how religion impacts on the decision making of individuals and communities. Each profile develops an understanding of values and responsibilities and aims to develop understanding and engagement with increasingly complex concepts. Asking fundamental questions about religions, the world and ourselves is an essential part of religious education, and therefore all topics will engage with the values and aspirations of learners and other people.



## Careers and the world of work



Learners aged 11–19 should be given opportunities to develop their awareness of careers and the world of work and how their studies contribute to their readiness for a working life.

Religious education contributes to careers and the world of work by allowing learners to:

- **provide insight** into how religion influences believers in their choice of career and the standards expected of them in their working lives. Thus it contributes to community cohesion and cultural understanding in the work place
- **enhance knowledge** of essential religious, cultural and ethical beliefs and practices (e.g. dress codes, festivals, death rituals, etc.). Knowledge of these things is essential for occupations such as medicine, politics, law and education, as well as for occupations relating to travel, entertainment, media and the armed forces, and in fact for all citizens in our multicultural world.

In the drive to create a just and equitable society learners can:

- **evaluate** various religious and moral perspectives relating to, for example, employment rights, ethical entrepreneurship, business ethics, money lending/borrowing, and promoting sustainable green industrial processes and practices
- **develop** a variety of transferable skills such as **insight, problem-solving, critical thinking, the ability to evaluate** differing perspectives and **weigh up** consequences, etc. All of these skills underpin many of the qualities needed in today's challenging, complex and ever-changing world of work
- be given opportunities to **develop their awareness** of careers and the world of work and how their studies contribute to their readiness for a working life.

In the learner profiles (to be found in the additional guidance document) all learners at Key Stages 2 and 3 are developing the transferable skills that are essential for the world of work. They are also enhancing their knowledge about religions, cultures and traditions which could be relevant to employers and employees and develop the skills needed in our ever-increasing multicultural society. By being made more aware of religious and ethical issues in relation to employment and businesses they will also become more discerning customers, inventors, employers and employees.



## *Section*

# 2

Expectations and progression in  
religious education

In this section, the statements from the level descriptions have been organised to describe progression in the three core Skills strands. The emboldened words demonstrate the focus of the skills and progression.

This section should be used to plan schemes of work and activities that provide opportunities for learners to progress. One level builds upon another and not all characteristics are repeated in the next level.

### Progression in Engaging with fundamental questions

Learners should develop the skills needed to engage with fundamental questions by interrogating a range of informed and relevant evidence, using evidence and other sources to develop thinking skills and formulating a range of alternative explanations and arguments.

#### Level descriptions

Learners:

**1 talk about** their own experiences, the world around them and aspects of religion.

**2 ask** questions about their own experiences, the world around them and aspects of religion, and **suggest** some answers.

**3 discuss** the **questions** raised by their own experiences, the world around them and aspects of religion, **giving** their own opinions.

**4 discuss** their own and others' **responses** to questions about life, the world around them and religion.

**5 express** and **justify** ideas and opinions about fundamental questions in the light of their investigations and experiences.

**6 draw on** a variety of informed sources and their own experiences in order to **present** evidence and **develop** appropriate responses to fundamental questions.

**7 investigate** fundamental religious and moral questions from a variety of religious perspectives and begin to **draw reasoned** conclusions.

**8 investigate** fundamental religious and moral questions, **evaluate** a range of possibilities and **draw rational** conclusions based on evidence gathered.

**Exceptional Performance** **acknowledge** that fundamental religious questions are often complex and that answers are often partial and inconclusive.

## Exploring religious beliefs, teachings and practice(s)

Learners should progress their religious education skills through an increasing range of knowledge and understanding of the links between the religious beliefs, teachings and practices so as to develop an in-depth and theologically sound understanding of religion. They should have opportunities to understand the impact that religion has on the lives of believers, communities and society. They should also be given the opportunity to analyse and interpret layers of meaning and symbolism within religions.

### Level descriptions

Learners:

- 1 recall** and **respond** to some basic religious beliefs, teachings and practices investigated. They **show** some awareness that these aspects of religion are special.
- 2 recall** and **communicate** simply some of the basic religious beliefs, teachings and practices investigated. They **suggest**, in simple terms, why these aspects of religion are important to some people.
- 3 describe** some of the **basic** religious beliefs, teachings and practices investigated. They **describe** how some of these aspects of religion affect believers' lives.
- 4 describe** and begin to **explain** the religious beliefs, teachings and practices investigated. They **give** specific examples of the ways in which these aspects affect believers' lives and begin to **identify** the similarities and differences within religions.
- 5 make links** between the religious beliefs, teachings and practices studied, **describing** the impact on believers' lives and **identify** the similarities and differences within and across religion.
- 6 use** their understanding of the links between the religious beliefs, teachings and practices investigated to **consolidate** their understanding of religion and to **explain** differing religious viewpoints.
- 7 apply** a wide range of religious concepts to a variety of beliefs, teachings and practices. They accurately **explain** and **justify** the reasons for the range of viewpoints held by religious people.
- 8 demonstrate** an understanding of a wide range of religious concepts, including various perspectives on beliefs, values and traditions within the religions studied. They **evaluate** the various aspects of religion and **explain** how these affect the lives of individuals, communities and society.

**Exceptional Performance** **analyse** and **give reasons** for the different perspectives held concerning the beliefs, values and traditions of the religions studied, **recognising** the differences between religions and appreciating the tension of unity and plurality within each religion. They **have** a detailed knowledge and understanding of the behaviour and beliefs of adherents of various faith systems.

## Expressing personal responses

Learners should progress their skills in expressing personal responses in religious education through clear communication of religious ideas and concepts using a range of appropriate, creative strategies and by explaining, with sensitivity and insight, how what they have learned might affect their own lives and the lives of others. This strand also includes showing understanding of religious vocabulary and symbolism which should be contextualised against the level as a whole.

### Level descriptions

Learners:

- 1 recognise** that their feelings, actions and opinions may be similar to or different from those of other people. On occasion, they **use** simple religious vocabulary appropriately to express their ideas.
- 2 talk** in simple terms about their own feelings, actions and opinions and those of other people. They **use** simple religious vocabulary appropriately.
- 3 describe** their own feelings, actions and opinions, and in simple terms **comment** on the viewpoints of others. They begin to **recognise** that religious symbols carry meaning, and **use** religious vocabulary appropriately.
- 4 explain** in simple terms how their own feelings, actions and opinions **differ** from those of others. They **recognise** some religious symbols and **use** a range of religious vocabulary appropriately.
- 5 explain** how their own feelings, actions and opinions **affect** their own lives, and **describe** how those of others similarly affect their lives. They **use** a range of religious vocabulary appropriately and **demonstrate** a basic understanding of symbolic language.
- 6 explain** the **relationship** between their own beliefs and actions. They also **explain** the relationship between other people's beliefs and actions. They **use** a range of religious vocabulary appropriately and **demonstrate** an understanding of symbolism and symbolic language.
- 7 consider** the implications of their own beliefs and actions, **compare** these to other people and **draw** balanced conclusions. They **use** a range of religious vocabulary appropriately and are able to **explain** the symbolic meaning of religious objects, actions and/or language.
- 8 investigate** the religious concepts studied, **evaluating** their own and other people's viewpoints through reasoned argument and evidence. They **use** a wide range of religious vocabulary appropriately and **demonstrate** a developed understanding of symbolic language.

**Exceptional Performance** In relation to the religious and moral concepts studied, they **express** well-considered opinions of the viewpoints of others based on in-depth investigation. They **use** an extensive range of religious vocabulary appropriately and **demonstrate** a well-developed understanding of symbolic language.

**Conceptual awareness can be developed in each of the core skills. The following example explicitly shows how conceptual awareness can be developed within the skill Exploring religious beliefs, teachings and practice(s).**

### **Developing skills in conceptual awareness by exploring religious beliefs, teachings and practice(s)**

A concept is an idea, theory or representation. It is usually a simple word or phrase, such as 'truth', 'creation', 'jihad' or 'moksha', that summarises a range of complex philosophical, theological, spiritual or ethical ideas. The *National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* has developed an innovative way of allowing learners to access conceptual awareness in a tangible, straightforward way. It does so by focusing on simple, straightforward ideas that are accessible to all, but when combined lead to a higher level of understanding and skills development.

Essential ways of developing skills in conceptual awareness include the following.

- Ensure that every topic provides opportunities for learners explicitly to explore the religious beliefs of adherents as they relate to the fundamental questions raised.
- Ensure that every topic provides opportunities for learners explicitly to explore religious teachings as quoted from the holy books and other authoritative religious sources/interpretations as they relate to the fundamental questions raised.
- Ensure that every topic provides opportunities for learners to explicitly explore religious practices in the form of worship, ritual, celebrations and lifestyle and the impact they have on believers' lives in relation to the fundamental questions raised.
- Use a range of engaging thinking activities to allow learners to connect fully with the religious beliefs, teachings and practices identified.
- Encourage learners to record information gained in imaginative personal ways using a range of techniques, so that information is easily accessed.
- Help learners to make links between the religious beliefs, teachings and practice(s) by:
  - describing the ideas and activities explored
  - collating relevant information in easily accessible formats so that links become obvious (e.g. concept maps, graphic organisers, diamond ranking, etc.)

- explaining why the teachings inform the religious beliefs and why the teachings and religious beliefs inform the practice(s), e.g. the teachings of Holy Week describe Jesus' Last Supper, this informs Christian belief about Jesus acting as a sacrificial lamb and these in turn influence Anglican/Catholic practice in relation to the Eucharist
- identifying similarities and differences between and across religions.
- Help learners to recognise that their understanding of these links leads to conceptual understanding so that they can:
  - identify the aspects of the religious beliefs, teachings and practice(s) that combine together to make up a concept such as forgiveness, hope and justice
  - recognise that different religious beliefs, teachings and practices will combine together to make up a concept within each religion/religious tradition, thus concepts such as forgiveness, hope and justice might have different interpretations depending on the specific religious perspective
  - recognise the complexity of concepts and be aware that drawing conclusions without fully exploring the detail might be counterproductive.

### **How to help learners develop conceptual awareness**

In order to give learners an opportunity to demonstrate characteristics of specific level descriptions you will need to plan appropriate learning opportunities that extend and challenge learners' skills.

In ACCAC's *Optional Assessments Material for Religious Education – Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3* (2004) this planning was demonstrated in relation to an assessment criteria grid which showed each of the levels and the associated unit-specific criteria.

Instead of providing an assessment criteria grid for every unit, this document gives a more visual flavour of progression in conceptual awareness (which demonstrates how making links between the religious beliefs, teachings and practice(s) can lead to greater conceptual awareness). The concept maps for Level 3 and Level 7 show progression within the topic 'Why do people have faith?' while the other concept maps give a flavour of conceptual development across a range of topics. Providing concept maps for each level in each topic would have been ideal, but because this was not feasible each map shows the expectations within each level and how use of appropriate



questions and resources can support skills development and provide access to characteristics of higher levels. When looking at the 'Way forward' section of each learner's case study (to be found in the additional guidance document) it would be worth considering how more advanced questioning and resources could improve learners' performance.

**It is, however, essential to ensure that tasks/questions do not inadvertently limit learner's responses by focusing too closely on the expectations of a specific level description rather than a range of level descriptions.**

## Developing skills in conceptual awareness

### Level 2

#### *Recall and communicate basic teachings*

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- Jesus' teachings about God.
- Jesus being helpful.
- Good Samaritan.

Is helping others important?

#### *Recall and communicate basic practices*

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- Christians who help others.
- Why are many Christians helpful?

*Recall and communicate basic Christian beliefs*

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- Christians who help others – the Salvation Army and the members of the ‘Big Chapel’.
- They believe Jesus was special.
- They want to follow Jesus’ example.

Why are these aspects of religion important to some people?

- In what ways do you help others?
- Why is helping others important?

**Christianity has been chosen as the starting point but other religions could have been used.**

These generic questions help illustrate the meaning of the skills used in this level.

**Generic questions to help learners recall and communicate:**

- **What is going on in the story/picture?**
- **What are they doing?**
- **Why are they taking part?**
- **Why do people think it is special?**
- **Is it important to you?**

At Level 2, learners experience religious beliefs, teachings and practices separately through stories and active experiences and encounters. At this level they mainly recall and communicate what they have learned, by remembering facts and sharing them with others.

It is essential to ensure that tasks/questions do not inadvertently limit learners' responses by focusing too closely on the expectations of a specific level description rather than a range of level descriptions.



## Level 3

*Describe some basic beliefs*

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- Many Christians believe Jesus guides their lives.
- The experiences of Moses gives some Jews faith in God.
- Many Muslims believe and trust in Allah and Muhammad, the prophet of Allah.

*Describe some basic teachings*

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- Jesus taught about the Golden Rule and forgiveness.
- The Ten Commandments guides Jews.
- Muslims follow the teaching in the Qur'an.

**Why do people have faith?**

*Describe how some of these aspects affect believers' lives*

- Believers:
- follow rules and teaching of their religion
  - worship regularly
  - behave in specific ways guided by beliefs, teachings and practices.

*Describe some basic practices*

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LEGAL ISSUES

- Many Christians show their faith by following the example of Jesus and helping others.
- Many Jews show their faith by following God's laws and showing tsedakah.
- Many Muslims study the Qur'an and pray daily and give zakah.

**Christianity, Judaism and Islam have been chosen as the starting point but other religions could have been used.**

These generic questions help illustrate the meaning of the skills used in this level.

**Generic questions to help learners describe:**

- **What is happening in the story, ritual, religious activity?**
- **What do they believe?**
- **Why do they follow the rules/teachings?**
- **Why do they worship regularly?**
- **Why do they believe in a specific way?**

At Level 3, learners provide some description of the religious beliefs, teachings and practices as conveyed through stories, active experiences and encounters. These descriptions can be used to help learners describe how these aspects affect believers' lives. At this level they are aware of more details, but are not able to explain why these aspects occur.

It is essential to ensure that tasks/questions do not inadvertently limit learners' responses by focusing too closely on the expectations of a specific level description rather than a range of level descriptions.





## Level 4

*Describe and begin to explain the religious beliefs investigated*

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THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR  
OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

Many Christians believe they should:

- worship together because . . .
- share bread and wine because . . .
- celebrate important times in Jesus' life because . . .
- read the Bible because . . .
- thank God for everything in their lives because . . .
- take care of the poor and helpless.

**Why is community important for Christians?**

*Describe and begin to explain religious practices investigated*

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THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR  
OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

How and why do Christians:

- celebrate Eucharist
- celebrate Christmas
- celebrate Easter
- celebrate Harvest
- pray together
- work together to follow Jesus' teachings.

*Describe and begin to explain the religious teachings investigated*

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO  
THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR  
OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

The Christian teachings in the Bible tell Christians:

- about Jesus' life, death and resurrection
- about God as creator and protector
- why Christians should care for other people, even enemies
- why Christians should care for the natural world and living things.

*Begin to identify the similarities and differences within religions*

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OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

*Give specific examples of the ways in which these aspects affect believers' lives*

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO  
THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR  
OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

Many Christians:

- meet regularly to pray
- help other people by giving up money and time
- recognise that working together is important.

**Christianity has been chosen as the starting point but other religions could have been used.**

These generic questions help illustrate the meaning of the skills used in this level.

**Generic questions:**

- **to help learners describe:**
  - **What can you say about . . . ?**
  - **What happens? When? Where? Who? How?**
- **to help learners begin to explain:**
  - **Why is it special?**
  - **Why are they taking part?**
  - **Why do believers think this is important?**  
**(religious beliefs, teachings, practices)**
- **to help learners exemplify impact:**
  - **What do religious people do daily?**
- **to help learners compare:**
  - **What are the similarities and differences?**

At Level 4, learners describe the religious beliefs, teachings and practices by giving increasing detail, but the reasons why religious adherents believe and act in a certain way is limited. Thus conceptual awareness is not obvious at this stage because learners are not drawing ideas together. They are beginning to see differences within a specific religion but cannot necessarily make comparisons with other religions. Their examples of the way religion impacts on believers' lives relates directly to each of the religious beliefs, teachings and practices individually.

It is essential to ensure that tasks/questions do not inadvertently limit learners' responses by focusing too closely on the expectations of a specific level description rather than a range of level descriptions.



## Level 5

*Make links between the religious beliefs studied*

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*Make links between the religious teachings studied*

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

Many Christians believe that humans are:

- different to animals because . . .
- created in the image of God because . . .
- have special gifts and a special purpose because . . .
- capable of knowing what is right/wrong because . . .

The Christian teachings in the Bible tell Christians:

- they have been given responsibility to look after the natural world
- they have a special relationship with God
- they are meant to do God's work, sometimes with help
- how to choose between right and wrong.

*Describe the impact on believers' lives*

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**What makes us human?**

Many Christians:

- meet regularly to pray to help them improve
- try hard to use and develop their talents
- help other people by giving up money and time.

*Make links between the religious practices studied*

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How and why do many Christians:

- celebrate the gifts they have been given (e.g. Harvest festivals, Baptisms, praying for strength)
- worship God
- try to follow Jesus' teaching by taking action.

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*Identify the similarities and differences within and across religions*

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Christianity has been chosen as the starting point but other religions could have been used.

These generic questions help illustrate the meaning of the skills used in this level.

**Generic questions:**

- **to help learners make links:**
  - **Explain what the religious beliefs/teachings/practices say about . . .**
  - **How do these teachings help you understand the religious beliefs?**
  - **How do these religious beliefs help you understand the practices?**
  - **How do the practices help you understand the teachings?**
- **to help learners explain impact:**
  - **How does religion impact on their lives?**
- **to help learners compare:**
  - **What are the similarities and differences within and across religions?**

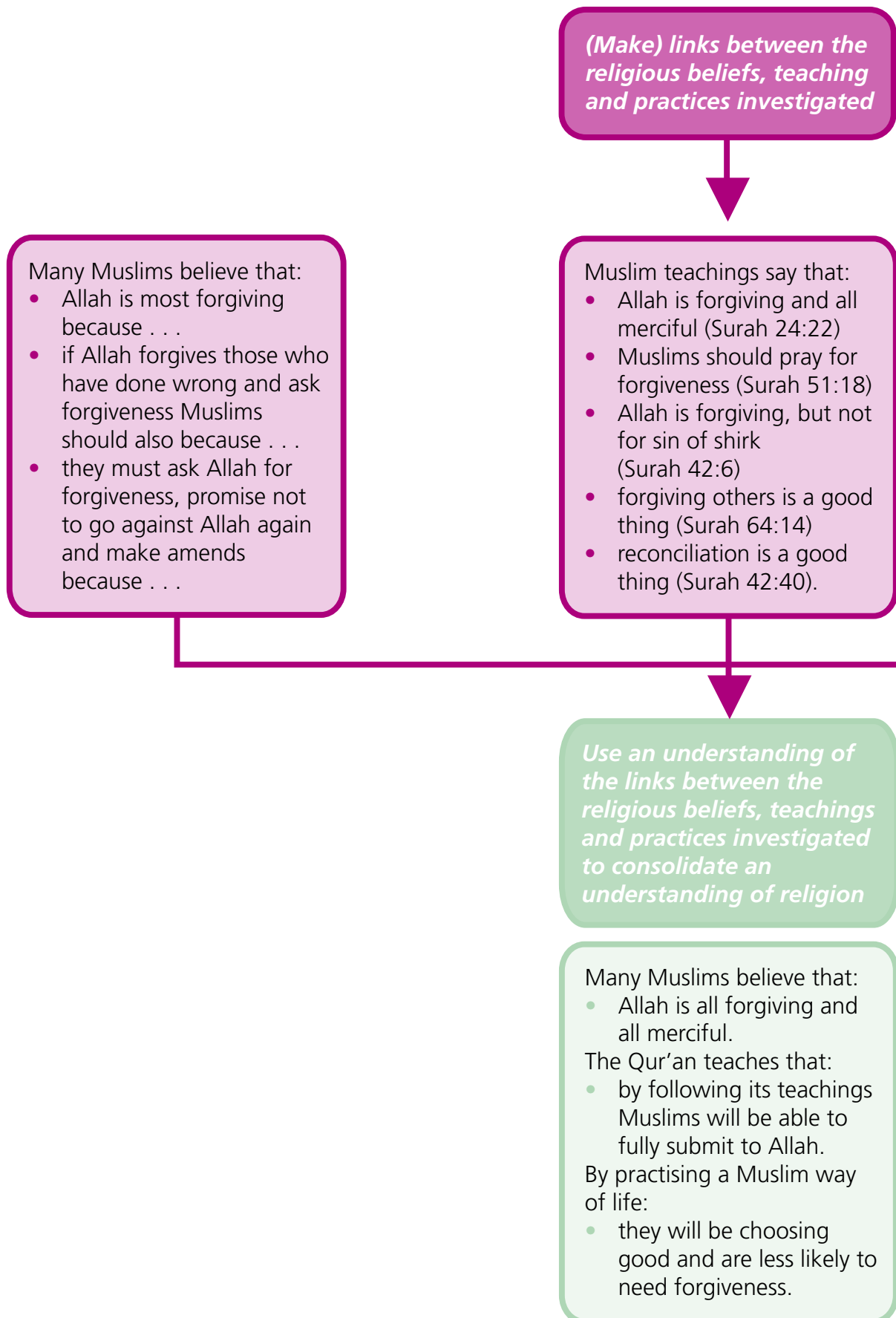
At Level 5, the learner uses the links between the religious beliefs, teachings and practices to help give explanations for the others, so that the teachings help explain why adherents believe and practice certain things; the religious beliefs help explain why adherents practice certain things and the practices help explain the religious beliefs and teachings in a tangible way. These are the essentials for building conceptual awareness, but at this point they are not seeing them as connected but essentially separate. They begin to see that there is variety in each of these and that the variety will impact on believers in different ways.

It is essential to ensure that tasks/questions do not inadvertently limit learners' responses by focusing too closely on the expectations of a specific level description rather than a range of level descriptions.





## Level 6



*Explain differing religious viewpoints*

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Many Muslims:

- worship Allah as a way of life because . . .
- try to follow the teachings in the Qur'an because . . .
- try to practice goodness because . . .
- try to practice forgiveness because . . .

**Should people  
forgive others?**

Islam has been chosen as the starting point but other religions could have been used.

These generic questions help illustrate the meaning of the skills used in this level.

**Generic questions:**

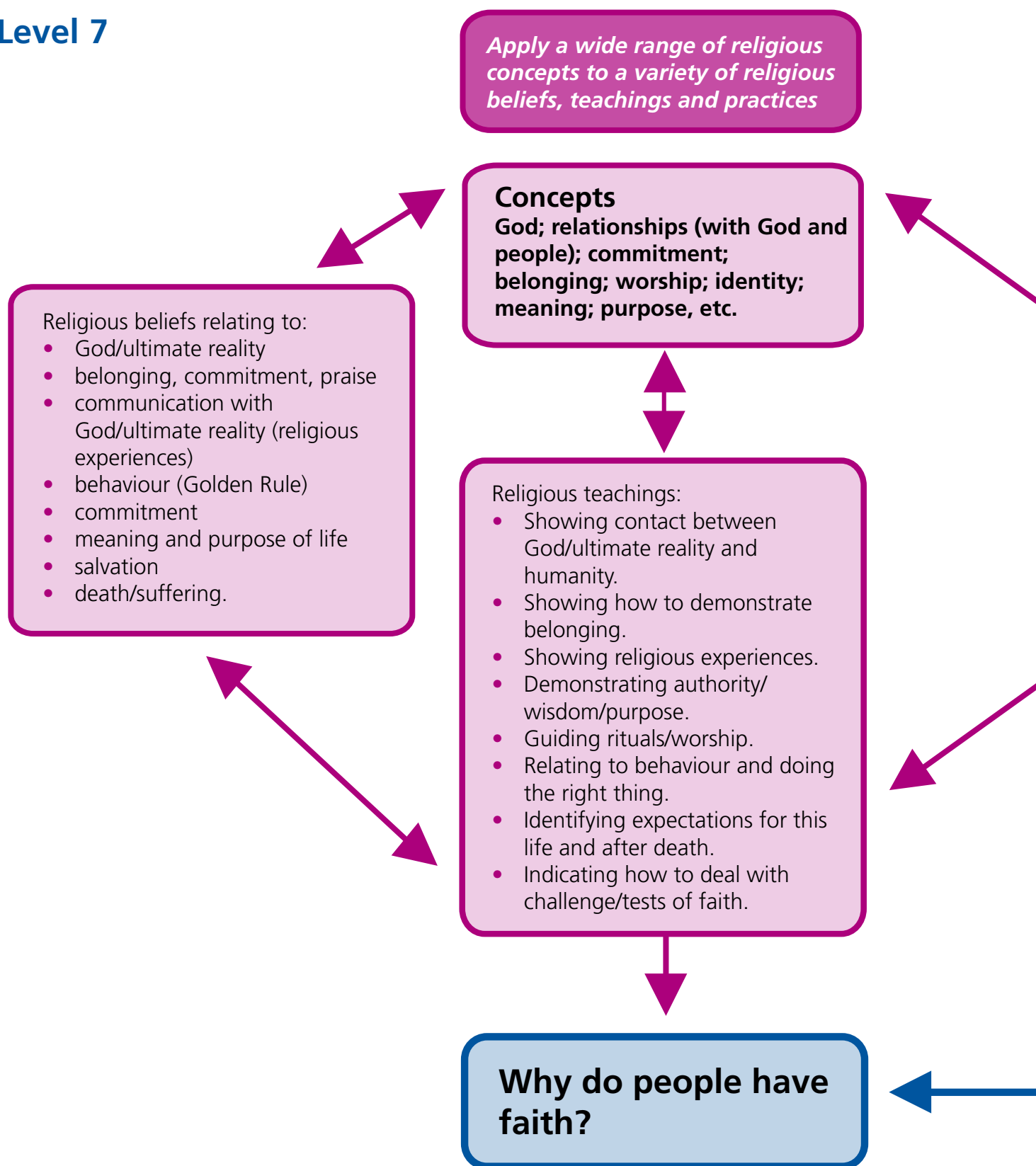
- **to help learners understand and apply links:**
  - Explain what the religious beliefs/teachings/practices say about (concept) . . .
  - Explain how the religious beliefs/teachings/practices help believers understand (concept) . . .
  - Explain the different ways in which the religious beliefs/teachings/practices have been interpreted . . .
- **to help learners:**
  - Explain how the main religious beliefs/teachings/practices demonstrate the understanding of (concept) by this/these religion(s) . . .
- **to help learners explain different religious viewpoints:**
  - What are differences in denominations/traditions and religions (influenced by history/culture/message) . . . ?
  - How does this/these religion(s) interpret fundamental questions . . . ?

At Level 6, the religious beliefs, teachings and practices, when linked, show that each one informs the other and provides further explanation for the topic studied. At this level they can draw general understanding from making these links, but even though they see the connections they do not draw out the generalisations and contradictions necessary for conceptual awareness. They also see the differing viewpoints as separate rather than informing and elaborating on the concept.

It is essential to ensure that tasks/questions do not inadvertently limit learners' responses by focusing too closely on the expectations of a specific level description rather than a range of level descriptions.



## Level 7



Religious practice(s):

- Ceremonies of welcome into a religion.
- Educational rituals/activities to nurture.
- Ceremonies that give praise, worship and thanksgiving.
- Behaviour, actions or traditions that show commitment.
- Support that can be given to help deal with difficult times.
- Actions that build community.
- Instigate positive change in the world.

***Accurately explain and justify the reasons for the range of viewpoints held by religious people***

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While more than one religion has been chosen for the example, the same concept awareness would apply when studying one religion only. The commissioned DVD *Faith, Life, Challenge: Religious education Key Stage 3* (Tinopolis, 2010) can give insight into this theme.

These generic questions help illustrate the meaning of the skills used in this level.

**Generic questions:**

- **to help learners apply a range of religious concepts to a variety of religious beliefs, teachings and practices:**
  - **Identify a concept that threads through the religious beliefs/teachings/practices studied . . .**
  - **Sort and match specific religious beliefs/teachings/practices to the concepts identified . . .**
  - **Explain how different denominations/traditions/religions convey/interpret different concepts (community, sacrifice, salvation) . . .**
  - **Show how a specific religious belief/teaching/practices can be used to interpret a specific concept . . . (e.g. crucifixion, resurrection, parables or communion might be used to interpret forgiveness).**
- **to help learners explain and justify viewpoints:**
  - **How do differences in denominations/traditions/religions (influenced by history/culture/message) justify different ways of seeing the world . . . ?**
  - **Explain how and why different religious people interpret fundamental questions in a unique way . . .**
  - **Explain how and why religion has helped people find meaning and purpose in their lives . . .**

At Level 7, the religious beliefs, teachings and practices all link together and in combination directly inform the concepts being explored. At this point the layers of meaning and range of interpretations within the concepts are recognised. The differing viewpoints directly inform the understanding of the concept, for example denominational differences relating to the Eucharist will add a new dimension to the concept of community and sacrifice.

It is essential to ensure that tasks/questions do not inadvertently limit learners' responses by focusing too closely on the expectations of a specific level description rather than a range of level descriptions.





## Exemplifying learner profiles at Key Stages 2 and 3 in religious education: Additional guidance (Summary of content)

The above document (to be found on the accompanying CD-ROM and on the Welsh Assembly Government's website at [www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills](http://www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills), contains learner profiles which exemplify expectations of the level descriptions.

### Section 1: Using the level descriptions at Key Stage 2

#### **Helen demonstrates characteristics of Level 2 through the topic 'Holy books'**

This topic focuses on the three interrelated core skills for religious education by utilising them to investigate the information and values contained in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim holy books and the impact that these books have on believers' lives. In this topic the learners explore:

- Why are books important to you and other people?
- What is special about holy books?
- What do the holy books contain?
- How do holy books affect religious people's lives?
- What gives your life meaning and purpose?

#### **Sion demonstrates characteristics of Level 3 through the topic 'How do people explain it when bad things happen to good people?'**

This topic focuses on the three interrelated core skills for religious education by utilising them to investigate the religious beliefs, teachings and practices of Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism to inform this fundamental question relating to suffering. In this topic the learners explore:

- How do people explain it when bad things happen to good people?
- How do religions explain suffering? (Buddhism)
- How do religions explain suffering? (Christianity/Judaism)
- How do religions explain suffering? (Christianity/Judaism/Buddhism)
- How do people explain it when bad things happen to good people?
- What is the value and purpose of life?

**Ben demonstrates characteristics of Level 4 through the topic 'Why is Jesus important for people today?'**

This topic focuses on the three interrelated core skills for religious education by utilising them to investigate the difference certain beliefs can make to people's lives. This topic builds on a previous topic relating to the significance of Holy Week and Easter that the class investigated in Year 5. In this topic the learners explore:

- Why do we avoid difficult things in life?
- Who was Jesus?
- Was Jesus the Son of God?
- What is the influence of Jesus on people today?
- Why is Jesus important to people today?

**Mali demonstrates characteristics of Level 5 through the topic 'Exploring the origins and purpose of the world and living things'**

This topic focuses on the three interrelated core skills for religious education by utilising them to investigate interpretations of the origins and purpose of the world and living things as presented by Christianity, Islam and Judaism and the impact this has on believers' lives. In this topic the learners explore:

- What is the origin and purpose of life?
- What does science say about the origin of the universe?
- What are the religious responses to questions about the origin and purpose of life?
- How do religious people show their responsibility for the world and living things?
- Who does the world belong to?

## **Section 2: Making judgements at the end of Key Stage 3**

**Matthew demonstrates characteristics of Level 5 through the topic 'Martin Luther King – Did the Dream Die?'**

This topic focuses on the three interrelated core skills for religious education by utilising them to investigate racism and prejudice and to explore the way in which Martin Luther King as a Christian interpreted the Bible to show why equality is an essential aspect of humanity. In this topic the learners explore:

- What were Martin Luther King's Christian beliefs?
- How did Martin Luther King's Christian beliefs influence his work for equality?
- Did the Dream die?

**Angharad demonstrates characteristics of Level 7 through the topic ‘Good, evil, suffering and hope’**

This topic focuses on the three interrelated core skills for religious education by utilising them to investigate how Jewish and Christian concepts of good, evil, suffering and hope can be interpreted through an exploration of the Holocaust. In this topic the learners explore:

- What is evil?
- What is goodness?
- What is suffering and hope?

**Safia demonstrates characteristics of Level 8 through the topic ‘What is truth?’**

This topic focuses on the three interrelated core skills for religious education by utilising them to investigate how Buddhists and Christians find meaning and interpret religious truth. In this topic the learners explore:

- What is truth?
- How do religions convey truth?
- Experience as the basis of truth.

The Welsh version of this document contains learner profiles relating to:

**Key Stage 2**

- Why is Jesus and his resurrection important to Christians? (Level 2)
- How does religion influence a person’s identity? (Level 3)
- Concern and responsibility for the natural world and living things (Level 4)
- What is forgiveness? (Level 5)

**Key Stage 3**

- How do people find inner peace? (Level 4)
- What is faith and how does it impact on religious people’s lives? (Level 5)
- What does commitment mean in Islam? (Level 7).

## Useful resources

*Optional Assessment Materials for Religious Education Key Stages 2 and 3* (ACCAC, 2004)

*The Teacher's Toolkit: Raise Classroom Achievement with Strategies for Every Learner* by Paul Ginnis (Crown House Publishing, 2001)

*Crystal Series* by Gill Vaisey (CAA, 2002)

*Important Religious Questions* by Gavin and Fiona Craigen (UWIC Press, 2008)

*World Faiths Today* (Welsh National Centre for Religious Questions, 2008)

*Faith, Life, Challenge: Religious Education Key Stage 3 DVD* (Tinopolis, 2010)

Philosophy for Children  
Society for Advancing Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in  
Education (SAPERE)  
[www.sapere.org.uk](http://www.sapere.org.uk)

## Acknowledgements

The Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) would like to thank the children and young people, practitioners and other contributors who have helped in the production of this guidance and *Exemplifying learner profiles at Key Stages 2 and 3 in religious education: Additional guidance* including:

Gavin Craigen	Curriculum Support, Flintshire, Denbighshire, Conwy
Rhian Davies	King Henry VIII Comprehensive School, Monmouthshire
Kate Dowell	Ysgol Gellifor School, Denbighshire
Ellyw Evans	Ysgol Penybryn, Gwynedd
Liz Harewood	Ysgol Y Wern, Cardiff
Bethan James	Cwmni Cynnal, Gwynedd and Anglesey
Jennifer Jones	Ysgol Llandygai, Gwynedd
Olwen Jones	Ysgol Tre-Gib, Carmarthenshire
Elen Mason	Ysgol Penybryn, Gwynedd
Kathy Mathias	Twyn Primary School, Caerphilly
Michael Morris	Lampeter Comprehensive School, Ceredigion
Helen Pritchard	Llanvihangel Crucorney County Primary School, Monmouthshire
Menna Pugh	Ysgol Penybryn, Gwynedd
Rachel Thomas	Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni, Caerphilly
Emma Davies	Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw, Torfaen
Falmai Ellis	Ysgol Edmwnd Prys, Gwynedd
Catherine Evans	Ysgol y Castell, Caerphilly
Dr Amjad Hussain	Lecturer, Trinity University College, Carmarthen
Einir Jones	Ysgol Morgan Llwyd, Wrexham
Sarah Randell	Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Denbighshire
Gemma Waring	Prestatyn High School, Denbighshire
Llinos Williams	Ysgol Dyffryn Aman, Carmarthenshire

DCELLS would also like to thank those learners and parents/guardians who agreed to allow examples of work to be reproduced in this guidance.

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Olve Utne (both covers)

[www.artdirectors.co.uk](http://www.artdirectors.co.uk) (main guidance page 53)

World Religions Photo Library (main guidance page 53)

ESA/Hubble (additional guidance cover and page 44)

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The Imperial War Museum Sound Archive (additional guidance pages 67–83).

## Please note

Section 101(1)(a) of the Education Act 2002 provides that religious education is now a requirement of the basic curriculum for all pupils at the school. There is also a duty on the local authority, governing body and headteacher to secure that religious education in all voluntary, community and foundation schools is provided in accordance with section 101(1)(a) of the Education Act 2002. In the course of providing the religious education required by the basic curriculum, teachers can teach about religion including religious beliefs, teachings, practices, the commitment of believers and impact on believers' lives. These aspects are required in locally agreed syllabuses and the *National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales*. This will include among other things:

- studying holy books and their meaning
- studying the range of beliefs and practices that pertain to different religions and denominations
- visiting believers and/or inviting them into the classroom to share their experiences of how religion has impacted on their lives and to explain their commitment to their religion/belief, etc.

In implementing the locally agreed syllabus and the *National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* teachers need to encourage learners to carry out investigations in an objective, balanced way and without personal bias. To support this balance and objectivity it is helpful if learners, when referring to religious or non-religious beliefs, use statements such as 'Some Sikhs believe . . . because . . . , while others believe . . . because . . . '. This tries to ensure objectivity and awareness that similarities and differences exist within and across religions and other disciplines.

When visiting believers or inviting them into the classroom it is the school's choice who to invite and it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that objectivity is retained – where believers have been invited because of a particular viewpoint it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the messages are balanced by providing further stimulus and a range of viewpoints.



The examples used in the case studies are suggestions of the type of activities that could take place. It is the responsibility of the school to check the suitability of resources and to acquire any site licences needed to make use of commercially available materials.

It is good practice when using commercially produced materials that might cause offence that parents complete a parental permission form.

It is crucial that prior to visiting any website with learners the practitioner visits the website in advance. This should be done to check that the information/material intended for use:

- supports the learning of children and young people
- is relevant to the work being explored
- is appropriate for children and young people.

We are not responsible for the content or reliability of the websites or organisations noted. Listing should not be taken as endorsement of any kind.