

## Assessment - Different models as a way forward

The 2007 Birmingham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education is radically different to the previous Agreed Syllabus. The main difference is the introduction of 24 dispositions. Each of the 9 faith groups in Birmingham have agreed that these dispositions are the attributes they would like to see encouraged and developed in their children. In Primary schools particularly, the emphasis is now on “learning from religion” rather than the more phenomenological (facts, figures and worksheets) approach previously adopted. (Ref p. 4) The range of faiths to be taught is to be decided by each individual school on the basis of the guidelines set out in the syllabus. (Ref p. 7)

This has an impact on how children are assessed in RE. There are many different models and combinations of forms of assessment which can be used depending on the school’s approach to RE:

### Approaches to Assessment:

Assessment **of** learning is also known as **summative** assessment.

Assessment **for** learning is also known as **formative** assessment.

The publication *Inside the black box* (1998) by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam identified four key factors which improve learning through assessment these are also crucial for good RE and assessment:

#### **1. Questioning**

- More effort has to be spent in framing questions that are worth asking.
- Wait time has to be increased to several seconds to give pupils time to think and everyone should be expected to contribute to the discussion.
- Follow-up activities have to provide opportunities to ensure that meaningful interventions that extend pupils’ understanding take place.

The only point of asking questions is to raise issues about which the teacher needs information or about which the pupils need to think.

#### **2. Feedback through marking**

- Written tasks, alongside oral questioning, should encourage pupils to develop and show understanding of the key features of what they have learned.
- Comments should identify what has been done well and what still needs improvement, and give guidance on how to make that improvement.
- Opportunities for pupils to follow up comments should be planned as part of the overall learning process.

To be effective, feedback should cause thinking to take place.

### 3. Peer and self assessment

- The criteria for evaluating any learning achievements must be transparent to pupils to enable them to have a clear overview both of the aims of their work and what it means to complete it successfully.
- Pupils should be taught the habits and skills of collaboration in peer assessment.
- Pupils should be encouraged to keep in mind the aims of their work and to assess their own progress to meet these aims as they proceed.

Peer and self assessment make unique contributions to the development of pupils' learning – they secure aims that cannot be achieved in any other way.

### 4. The formative use of summative tests

- Pupils should be engaged in a reflective review of the work they have done to enable them to plan their revision effectively.
- Pupils should be encouraged to set questions and mark answers to help them, both to understand the assessment process and to focus further efforts for improvement.
- Pupils should be encouraged through peer and self assessment to apply criteria to help them understand how their work might be improved.

Summative tests should be, and should be seen to be, a positive part of the learning process.

Good RE teaching practice should also include:

- **learning theory** – teachers need to know in advance what sort of feedback will be useful, i.e. they need to understand how their pupils learn;
- **subject differences** – teachers need to have an understanding of the fundamental principles of the subject, and understanding of the kinds of difficulties that pupils might have and the creativity to think up questions which can stimulate productive thinking; such pedagogical content knowledge is essential in interpreting response;
- **motivation and self-esteem** – learning is not just a cognitive exercise, it involves the whole person; learning for learning rather than for rewards or grades;
- **a learning environment:** principles and plans – teachers need to have forethought of how to teach in a way which establishes a supportive climate;
- **a learning environment:** roles and responsibilities – teachers need to help pupils become active learners who can take increasing responsibility for their progress.

### Models of Collating Evidence for assessment

The SACRE curriculum committee suggest that there are a variety of ways in which you can assess RE. Some of these follow below and could be used in any combination with each other:

#### **Portfolio**

Like Early Years Foundation Stage EYFS model – this could contain photographs, post-it note records of what children have said in discussion, art work and cross curricular links.

## **Self Evaluation**

Moving from the first attainment target (Learning From Faith) considering; what children already know, what they would like to find out about a particular disposition, what they thought after the work was carried out – this could be recorded in a reflective diary – children's responses to the learning from objective.

## **Must, Shoulds and Coulds**

For each cluster of dispositions, half term, statements could be generated so that a class can be assessed quite quickly in terms of whether they have met the objectives or not – like a traffic light system of red, amber, green. Assessment then becomes a matter of highlighting in three different colours. These statements could be used for end of term statements for report writing.

## **Summative Assessment tasks**

Tasks and activities which assess the child's attainment at a given point in time and should inform the next steps to learning – whether that is towards a different religious tradition or disposition.

**Whilst we appreciate that each school will have its own particular requirements for assessment the underlying principles can be shared. We encourage you to do so with this website.**