

**Targeting the GCSE  
D/C Boundary  
in  
Religious Education**

# Targeting the GCSE D/C Boundary in Religious Education

In order to ensure that pupils who are able to achieve between A\* -C in their GCSE results achieve their full potential in RE, the following notes have been prepared to suggest ways in which pupils' can be supported in developing consistent C and /or C+ results.



## 1. Advice which could relate to all subjects:

### A. Targeted pupils

- Target pupils during KS3 and throughout KS4, review the group regularly and talk to them about their standards of work.
- Take into account gender variations in national, local and school performance.
- Target these pupils (not necessarily exclusively) in Easter revision classes and February half-term revision "club"
- Develop pupils' strategies to organise and remember what they have learned.
- Keep in touch with other departments in the school, form tutors or other staff, e.g. learning Mentors, to keep aware of changes to individual circumstances e.g. home problems, anxieties, relationship or health issues which may be influencing students' work and to which you need to be sensitive.
- Encourage targeted pupils - build up their confidence and the mindset that they are going to do well.

### B. Sharing knowledge, insights and expertise

- Make clear to pupils the difference between performance at D level and C level and how to move from one grade to the other.
- Include these definitions in lessons and in learning objectives.
- Share this knowledge with parents.
- Set clear and precisely focused targets based on these definitions.
- Teach pupils to assess their own work against grade criteria. Begin training pupils in this approach as early as is feasible in Key Stage 3. Develop peer assessment from Year 7.
- Include precise, detailed, subject-specific assessment criteria in pupils' workbooks / planners / diaries and refer to these in lessons, particularly in plenary sessions.
- Maintain portfolios of previous pupils' work, by grade as exemplars and use these with pupils before key pieces of work.
- Use the QCA exemplification materials with staff and pupils.
- Use trial papers over a protracted period, not just before the exam, in order to develop exam technique and insight into question choice.
- Use paired and group activities to analyse examination questions and answers.

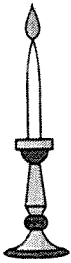
- Use pupil/pupil mentoring (e.g. support from an older pupil who followed the same course or a more able pupil in the same year group).
- Encourage use of the Internet as a home study resource through focussed task setting.
- Make use of relevant trips and other experiences for motivational purposes and make explicit links to the course / examination so that pupils apply understanding in other contexts.

### **C. Planning and time usage**

- Plan explicit "progression ladders" between KS3 experiences and the Key Stage 4 course and share these with pupils, e.g. in lesson objectives and plenaries.
- Be precise, realistic and unbending about coursework submission dates (including interim dates for feedback on progress). Lay down the principles of this regime in Key Stage 3.
- Consider using a lesson by lesson monitoring sheet so individual pupils can chart their own progress through longer pieces of work.
- Where possible keep pupils in school up to, and throughout, the exam period - do not adopt "revision at home" approach.
- Keep pupils revising right up to the exam.
- Prepare short, lively revision sessions tackling significant areas of the course.
- Provide home study for pupils who have difficulty in regular attendance due to personal, physical or mental health problems and offer encouragement to boost confidence that they can still achieve at a high level.

### **D. Teacher skills**

- Choose the syllabus most likely to maximise your pupils' results and make use of websites / additional support offered.
- Consider how the use of tiered papers might impact on D/C borderline pupils.
- It helps if teachers can gain experience as examiners, markers, and moderators.
- Teachers (or an external person with experience, e.g. Head of Department or AST) talk directly to pupils about the examiner's role, and how to show themselves in the best light.
- Teachers ensure they keep up-to-date on syllabus information.
- Teachers read subject examiners' reports and feed back implications to pupils e.g. sample answers at different grades.
- Teachers should regularly moderate their own perception of levels.



## 2. Religious Education specific input

- Raise the status of the subject with pupils.
- Ensure that students are given access and opportunities for field trips in RE with clear follow-up activities linked to assessment opportunities.
- Invite visitors and faith community representatives with expertise to make a specific and targeted contribution to relevant areas of the syllabus, e.g. as a revision aid.
- Raise the profile of RE with parents and the community, e.g. through school newsletters and displays.
- Inform parents of the requirements of the syllabus so that they recognise the benefits of studying RE in a pluralist society.
- Ensure that there is enough curriculum time for the course to be delivered (entitlement and equal opportunity issue).
- Ensure that wherever possible students are taught by or have access to specialist staff.

### Progression between KS3 and 4

If departments use the QCA non-statutory 8 level scale in Key Stage 3, schools should be able to predict more accurately expected levels of attainment and to map continuity and progression. Pupils should also be able to see how their progress in RE relates to their other subjects.

Departments often feel obliged in Key Stage 3 to make up for what students may not have done at Key Stage 2. This should be discouraged so that Departments are teaching the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus at Key Stage 3.

Departments need to ensure that the examination course chosen at Key Stage 4 offers continuity from work carried out in RE at Key Stage 3. This may mean reordering the Key Stage 3 curriculum offer in order to provide a better foundation and link to the Key Stage 4 examination syllabus.

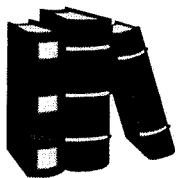
### Address different learning styles

- Right from the start of year 7 pupils should be developing strategies which encourage the development of good learning styles in RE at GCSE and beyond.
- Use a variety of resources for R.E: visual, artefacts, and ICT for extension tasks.

- Draw on a range of textual resources for RE that are differentiated and draw on suitable illustrated books, art books, calligraphy or encyclopaedias, as a resource.
- Use co-operative learning strategies to support all learners. Mix pupils into main and sub-groups with good readers in the groups to raise the performance of all.
- Use Literacy across the Curriculum materials to support oracy and group work.
- Give students opportunities for kinaesthetic activities in RE through drama, role-play and the use of empathy.
- Relate work in RE and other subjects e.g. with D&T such as designing artefacts such as 'sacred text' rests / storage.

### **Incorporate a range of teaching styles**

- Ensure that teaching tasks in RE in Key Stage 3 relate to the two attainment targets of the Agreed Syllabus.
- Develop thinking and analytical skills with students to familiarise them with analysis of key concepts in RE. Publications such as Thinking through Geography and History may offer useful strategies.
- Focus on questioning in the classroom to stimulate thinking, promote reasoning and the ability to produce extended / sustained responses.
- Use appropriate strategies like guided imagery, meditation, and reflection for aspects of RE. Relate teaching to pupils' experiences.
- Give pupils ample opportunities to explore Attainment Target 2 - Learning from religion.



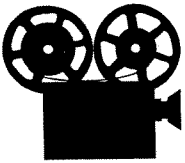
## **Literacy in RE**

- Focussing on literacy can raise standards in terms of the development of religious concepts, the acquisition of appropriate vocabulary and the development of the ability to clearly express knowledge, understanding and evaluation.
- Terms in RE can be unfamiliar, particularly those from a range of religious traditions so vocabulary development must start in Ensure that teaching tasks in RE in Key Stage 3 relate to the two attainment targets of the Agreed Syllabus. 3.
- Display words and key concepts around the classroom to support students and refer to them in lessons.
- Encourage students to keep an A-Z of religious terms and concepts in their exercise books to explore and find out definitions and make frequent reference to them.
- Encourage the exploration of spiritual literature.
- Use methods that help students to understand how to interpret texts that are sensitive to a religious tradition, for example, using the Jewish method of interpretation by giving students a quote from the Talmud placed on the centre of A3 paper. Giving individual students a postcard on which to write and explain their interpretation and understanding of the quote and placing this above the quote. Other students are then invited to place their comments about the interpretation of the quote above the student's individual interpretations.
- Use writing frames to support pupils who find it difficult to get started and to structure and format their answers.

- Develop a range of scaffold with pupils to support notetaking, research and the production of extended writing, e.g. discursive writing (see L.A.C materials).

### Religious literacy in the symbolic and expressive aspects of religion

- Give students a range of visual material to help them to identify and interpret the expressive and aspects of religion.
- Sensitise students to the depth in religious symbols and help them to go beyond the symbol to what it conveys and reveals.
- Explore artefacts and their iconography and meaning. Offer students a range of resources that help them to decipher iconography - especially Hindu and Buddhist
- iconography that may be unfamiliar.



### Use video resources

- Support this by key words/concepts that are circled as students explore the video example.
- Test students' understanding of the information they have gleaned from videos by re-showing the video with the sound turned off and asking them to write or provide an oral commentary on specific aspects/concepts to test their literate and symbolic understanding.
- Use scaffolds to aid effective capturing of key points from videos.



### ICT in RE

- There are a number of ICT packages and useful websites that can be accessed for RE. Encourage the use of digital cameras to record religious celebrations, interviews, rites of passage and visits to places of worship.
- Ensure these images are annotated and developed fully.
- Encourage the use of websites for home study or research.
- The following are 'gateway sites' which will lead to many others:

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| The RE Exchange                   | <a href="http://re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/schools/">http://re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/schools/</a>                     |
| The RE Site                       | <a href="http://www.theresite.org.uk/">http://www.theresite.org.uk/</a>                             |
| The RE Site (alternative address) | <a href="http://www.allre.org.uk/">http://www.allre.org.uk/</a>                                     |
| RefIT (RE from IT)                | <a href="http://refit.ucsm.ac.uk">http://refit.ucsm.ac.uk</a>                                       |
| Andy Bird's RE Site               | <a href="http://www.ajbird.demon.co.uk/">http://www.ajbird.demon.co.uk/</a>                         |
| The RE Net                        | <a href="http://www.cant.ac.uk/renet/">http://www.cant.ac.uk/renet/</a>                             |
| Strathclyde Uni's RE pages        | <a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/Social">http://www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/Social</a> |
| <u>Studies/RE</u>                 |   |
| Ontario Religions Site            | <a href="http://www.religioustolerance.org/">http://www.religioustolerance.org/</a>                 |
| The Religious Archive             | <a href="http://lysator.liu.se/religion/index.html">http://lysator.liu.se/religion/index.html</a>   |

The BBC RE Site <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion>  
 Re-Quest <http://www.request.org.uk>  
 VTC Resources <http://vtc.ngfl.gov.uk/resource/cits/re/resources/sites.html>  
 Canterbury Christ Church College <http://www.cant.ac.uk/renet/>  
 BBC World Service 'Guide to Religions of the World'  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/world\\_religions/index.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/world_religions/index.shtml)

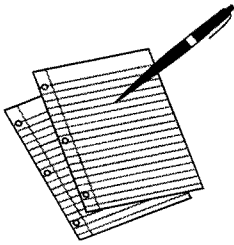
- Explore the use of animation for students to develop and animate their own stories/research for R.E.
- Explore the use of web cams for particular places of worship - e.g. Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.
- Explore a list of useful ICT resources for Christianity and the principle religious traditions and encourage pupils to share their views on these.
- Encourage and develop the use of video cameras to record visits and religious events and to develop a commentary / guided tour to accompany these.
- Use websites for revision or study support:

## GCSE RE

The GCSE Revision Site <http://www.hopkins.ndirect.co.uk/revision/>  
 The GCSE Coursework Site <http://www.hopkins.ndirect.co.uk/coursework>  
 BBC Bitesize <http://db.bbc.co.uk/education-bitesize/>  
 NEAB <http://www.neab.ac.uk/>  
 CCEA <http://www.vvea.org.uk/gcse.htm>  
 Edexcel <http://www.edexcel.org.uk/>  
 OCR <http://www.ocr.org.uk/>  
 AEB/SEG <http://www.aeb.org.uk/>  
 WJEC <http://www.wjec.co.uk/>  
 Damaris Organisation <http://www.relessononline.com>  
 Exit <http://www.euthanasia.org/>  
 Religious & Moral Education Project  
[www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/SocialStudies/RE/Database/index.html](http://www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/SocialStudies/RE/Database/index.html)

## SHORT COURSE RE

Commission for Racial Equality <http://www.cre.org.uk/>  
 Black Britain <http://www.blackbritain.co.uk/>  
 Equal Opps Commission <http://www.eee.eoc.org.uk/>  
 Greenpeace <http://www.greenpeace.org/>  
 The United Nations <http://www.un.org>  
 The Holocaust <http://shamash.org/holocaust/>



## Marking, assessment and testing

Assessments and the use of appropriate criteria need strengthening in RE which has lagged behind other subjects from Key Stages 1-3. Schools need to relate pupil achievement to the QCA levels.

Marking needs to be done regularly and it needs to be formative, reassuring pupils that their work matters to their teachers, affirming successes, challenging lack of effort and supporting the pupils' knowledge of how they can improve.

Regular opportunities should be planned to test students in a variety of ways on aspects of the syllabus and of key religions.

The Key Stage 3 Training materials folder for foundation subjects contains useful strategies within its 14 modules and is accompanied by a series of videoclips. Module 2 is about the formative use of summative assessment based on an RE lesson.

### Targeting the less able students

- Review examination choices and if necessary introduce a different syllabus for some pupils.
- Know which students need support. Be aware of their needs and targets that have been set for them (e.g. in IEPs).
- Ensure that work set for them is appropriately pitched and enables them to achieve.
- Ensure lessons are planned to challenge and engage pupils.
- Make sure that instructions are clear and that students understand what is expected of them.
- Use differentiated resources, e.g. foundation level texts.
- Use visual materials, spiritual quotes and activities which give them experience in sequencing events.
- Include ongoing tasks like the development of an appropriately pitched the A-Z of RE terms / individual glossary to improve literacy and attainment in R.E.
- Support students with appropriately developed writing frames /scaffolds.
- Group students for some activities so that they are stretched by working with other more able students.
- Gather and keep a data base of visual materials, key words, labels, spiritual stories and artefacts for students to explore. Their use can help to support all students.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to talk about their learning in RE and use their ideas when planning units of work.



QCA Annual Conference for SACRE representatives

Thistle Hotel, Victoria

2<sup>ND</sup> December, 2002

Theme: Better RE Better Communities

1. Introduction: John Keast, QCA

Issues that will inform or be addressed during the day:

The Social curriculum includes

- RE
- PSHE
- Citizenship
- School/community interfaces
- The role of SACRE

Religions in society / schools

- Have a role as social capital or as divisive force
- Perceptions by staff, parents, pupils, media
- Interfaith issues in school and community
- Secularism
- Skills in RE

The European and international dimension

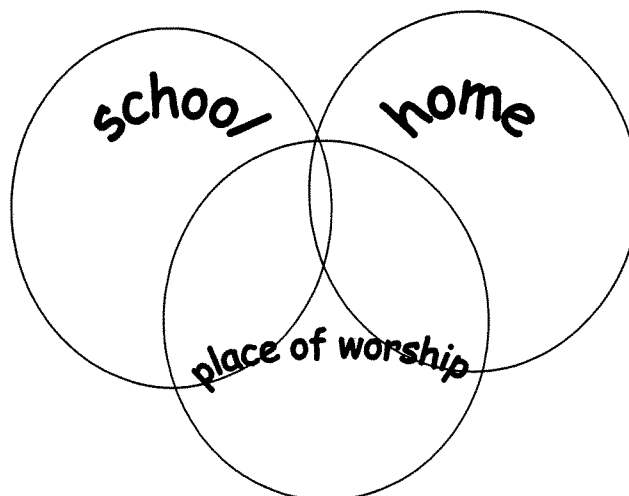
- There are issues and concerns in common between countries
- Diverse traditions, histories, systems and structures
- Council of Europe Project

2. Keynote speech - Right Honourable John Battle MP  
'Schools and Interfaith Dialogue'

He reflected on his work, drawing on quotations from a number of sources and interspersed with some stories of his own experiences, particularly relating to work in East Timor and Indonesia.

Some thoughts from his speech:

- 'Religion permeates everyday human life and for most of the world's peoples helps to construct the public realm'
- Tony Blair said 'the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will be the century of faith traditions and the relationship between them'
- To develop a participating democracy we must make space for faith communities...
- The UK is now the home to nearly all the world's faith traditions, it has a fuller and more diverse range and greater spread of faiths than anywhere else in the world.
- We have a responsibility to affirm the positive contribution of faith communities
- We must tackle crude stereotypes of faiths
- We need to understand differences as well as agree common ground and values - don't be afraid to explore differences.
- As well as our pupils, RE needs to educate adults. This interface is important and we must bear it in mind.



- Young people talking about their faith:  
 'religion gives meaning and structure to peoples' lives  
 'Society emphasises rights ver obligations, religion emphasises obligations over rights'  
 the debate is alive in the younger generation
- Do we know and engage with our societies? Are communities 'virtual' or real? We must move beyond 'introduction' activities to engagement activities, where all can and do participate.
- These issues are important and growing in importance - the government realises that RE has an important part to play in developing a cohesive and inclusive society.

### 3. Marion Agombar, Chair of NASACRE

- ◆ The structure of SACREs encourage them to be a local 'interfaith council'
- ◆ If we want pupils, to dialogue we must give them skills to dialogue and must model it
- ◆ The Shadow SACRE in Bradford is a local inclusion project for secondary pupils. They are frustrated that RE is not teaching them 'how to live next door to each other'. They ask and debate demanding questions, e.g. 'who should have the promised land?'
- ◆ We need to help teachers to address issues such as how do you enable discussions when pupils say 'if you don't agree with me you are damned'
- ◆ Don't put religions in boxes

- ◆ SACREs need to be better known, welcoming, encouraging, inclusive and make members feel their work has importance.
- ◆ RE is probably the only democratic subject on the curriculum

#### 4. Barbara Wintersgill HMI - News & Views from Ofsted

##### Ofsted findings:

##### Primary schools

consistent improvement

RE is holding its own with other subjects

##### KS3

teaching very good & excellent in many schools

##### KS4

Over half GCSE entries between A\*-C

Subject has one of largest entries

##### AS

Means more students are leaving with an RE qualification

Contributions to raising standards from teachers, advisers, ITT, good Agreed Syllabuses

There are however more 'unqualified' (in the subject) teachers teaching RE than any other subject

SACREs - many have extended their role beyond the statutory minimum

Monitoring in many ways and having interesting dialogues with Ofsted - to good effect.

NEWS: Ofsted will introduce a special inspection of LEAs to evaluate the work of SACREs - HMI to start after Christmas.  
Purpose: to consider what makes SACREs effective.

2 criteria - legal requirements

QCA - an effective SACRE - making a difference

Questions to be answered:

- Is the working relationship between the LEA & SACRE conducive to SACRE fulfilling its responsibilities?
- How well does the LEA work with SACRE in the production of a high quality Agreed Syllabus?
- How far does SACRE's partnership with the LEA enable teachers to improve the quality of RE teaching and raise standards in RE?
- In recognising that SACRE is of value to communities and schools, what work is the LEA enabling SACRE to do in areas such as social inclusion?
- Deciding if there is a sound case for including the work of SACRE in all LEA inspections in future

## 5. John Keast

a) Council of Europe Project:

Intercultural education and that challenge of religious diversity in Europe

This will include

- European seminars
- Compendium of good practice
- Teacher training
- National conferences

This interesting project has to encompass the different contexts of many countries

Next year's SACRE conference will be on this.

RE Updates will provide information about how the project is developing,

b) Non-statutory framework

Report went to the Secretary of State in May - events have rather held this up.

The current Secretary expects QCA to publish its feasibility study and will announce decisions in due course.

The Secretary of State wants to ensure initiatives have a positive effect on the spiritual and moral development of children.

More changes may be coming

If engaged in an Agreed Syllabus review advice to continue.