F08 GUIDANCE ON APPROPRIATE TEACHING FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF LEARNING DIFFICULTY

Awareness, Mystery and Value provides a broad and balanced religious education curriculum for **all** pupils, including those with a special educational need.

SACRE recognises that young people with different kinds of learning difficulty have varied needs. The provision of additional support can be complex. SACRE expects that schools and teachers will create appropriate learning experiences by differentiating tasks, adapting teaching materials and identifying suitable technologies to enable full and successful participation in Religious Education.

Assessment then should be inclusive of all abilities and offered at an appropriate or earlier level to meet individual needs. Progress of pupils needs should be considered relative to their starting points and alongside their specific learning difficulty. This can be done by following the study units in Key Stages and adapting the assessment as appropriate.

Staff can:

- choose material from earlier key stages to adapt;

- consolidate, review and reinforce previous learning;

- focus on fewer learning opportunities from the programme of study;

- engage with explicit religious material and gets responses to it;

- use the D/E/F areas of enquiry to link with pupils own knowledge and previous experience and what they bring with them to the classroom;

- use a range of sensory materials to explore religious narratives and concepts;

- use images and the arts to express and assess key ideas;

- create moments of awareness, mystery, and wonder as well as their responses;

- show a video clip or film with the sound on and then show the same video or film clip with the sound off to assess an aspect of knowledge or understanding;

- celebrate achievements in experiencing an activity, using the senses in different ways, and sharing their responses to the activity.

While it is important to consider every pupil's needs, the following *general strategies* are recommended in relation to certain types of difficulty:

- For pupils with **cognition and learning difficulties** the learning opportunities in the AMV programmes of study may be covered in less depth and may need revisiting to reinforce learning.

- For pupils with **physical or sensory difficulties** maximum access to the RE programmes of study should be provided through alternative activities as listed in the more specific guidance below.

- For pupils with **behaviour, emotional and social difficulties** SACRE recommends that differentiated activities be provided which make connections with pupils' own concerns and interests. Pupils concerns can be discovered and linked to the [D/E/F areas of enquiry](#) for each Key Stage of the syllabus that draw on human experience.

- For some pupils with **very severe or profound communication and interaction difficulties** planning for and assessing progress in religious education may present particular challenges. This must take account of their starting points and recognise the progress made.

The wide range of special educational need is superficially covered in the descriptors: 'cognition and learning, physical and sensory, behaviour, emotional and social, communication and interaction', and cannot capture the range of complexity, degree or individuality of each child's needs.

Responding to pupils' needs when teaching religious education

Religious Education is a subject which lends itself to many avenues of exploration, methods of teaching, styles of learning and sensory resources. Teachers of children with learning difficulties will be looking in particular at pupils' ability to retain such experiences and the degree to which pupils can offer a response and / or explanation of such experiences. All work, including homework, should be differentiated to take account of these abilities.

Teachers can, through Annual Review and in more detailed planning, adapt the school's scheme of work to produce targets that match the individual needs of pupils.

The principles of good teaching apply equally to all pupils. While it is necessary to identify a particular pupil's special need and offer appropriate strategies, it is vital to consider all pupils as **individual** and not in terms of a category or 'label'.

Recommended suggestions and strategies for meeting individual needs and targeting personalised support

a) Cognition and learning difficulties

- Present information visually where possible using diagrams, pictures, video and film.

- Break work down into small chunks, reinforced with visual clues, followed by checking for understanding.

- Provide opportunities to reinforce learning.

- Use role-play, drama or 'freeze frame' activities.

- Use real objects / artefacts and ask pupils to match with the right label.

- Help pupils to use a CD-ROM in small groups.

- Use peer support to help pupils understand complex text.

- Provide a variety of ways of recording work such as video, audio-cassette, diagrams, sequencing exercises, charts or paintings.
- Use writing frames and mind maps to support written work.
- Provide access to a laptop to complete all free written work.
- Produce individual 'survival pack' for topic being studied.

b) Physical and sensory impairments

i) Visual

- Ensure that written materials, worksheets, religious texts and pictures are of sufficient size and clarity. Be aware of the minimum print size required for individual pupils.
- Use the Widget Software 'Writing with symbols.'
- Seat appropriately to ensure that the pupil can see clearly and avoid light glare.
- Produce worksheets on suitable colour according to pupils' needs.
- Use bold colour pens when writing on white boards.
- Make use of tactile and audio materials, e.g., artefacts, religious music.
- Produce individual materials, especially if using whiteboard or OHP.
- When using video programmes with text produce a transcript for the individual pupil.
- Encourage oral participation, especially useful when discussing moral issues.
- Encourage use of magnifying word processor to complete all free written work.
- Provide large electric magnifier for use in the classroom.

ii) Hearing

- Seat appropriately to ensure that the pupil can hear accurately.
- Explore possibility of using microphone but remember not to use raised voice.
- Provide transcript of video programmes being used.
- Produce key vocabulary lists for pupil.
- Provide the pupil with a variety of ways to express understanding.

- Use peer support when on school visits.
- Present information visually to assist with the learning.

iii) Physical

♦ Provide a suitable, safe environment.

♦ Ensure easy access to the learning environment.

♦ When organising a visit to, e.g. church, synagogue, check accessibility.

♦ Adapt materials for creative work, e.g. spring loaded scissors, jumbo pencils.

♦ Provide alternative ways of recording information, e.g. audio tape.

♦ Encourage use of computers, if appropriate.

c) **Difficulties with communication and interaction**

♦ Use movement, mime, dance to develop and express a theme, e.g. using the natural environment to illustrate a religious theme such as the conflict between good and evil or creation.

♦ Use games or creative tasks to enable pupils to show understanding.

♦ Encourage pupils to draw religious artefacts or symbols or create their own symbols or pictures.

♦ Use the Widget Software 'Writing with symbols.'

♦ Use signs, symbols and photos.

♦ Encourage pupils to make/cook food to celebrate a religious festival.

♦ Use music, candles, pictures, video, to support guided reflection.

d) **Autism**

♦ Ensure repetition and routine.

♦ Use Picture Exchange Communication System (PECs).

♦ Ensure materials and tasks are visually clear.

♦ Use the Widget Software 'Writing with symbols.'

♦ Prepare carefully for new situations. e.g. visit to a place of religion[1].

♦ Provide a quiet, reflective environment.

♦ Be aware of individual needs and cultivate their strengths and interests.

♦ Produce structured tasks as abstract tasks can increase anxiety.

♦ Use signs, symbols, artefacts, persona dolls, music, photos and a range of sensory materials.

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[1] See the AMV Code of Conduct for Representatives of Religious Communities Working with Children and Young People.

- ♦ Allow for one to one activities rather than group activities.

- ♦ Use computers to record information.

e) Behaviour, emotional and social difficulties

   i) Low self-esteem

- ♦ Raise self-esteem through helping pupils to become more aware of their own beliefs and values.

- ♦ Use pupils' interests to encourage participation in activities.

- ♦ Provide opportunities for small group discussion and relaying views into whole class discussion.

- ♦ Encourage maximum participation through, e.g., role-play, art, music, reflection exercises.

- ♦ Use visualisation techniques to encourage feelings of self-worth and self-acceptance.

- ♦ Offer meaningful praise, reassurance and encouragement as often as possible to encourage self-esteem.

- ♦ Allow time for pupils to engage with learning and gradually increase the range of activities and demands.

   ii) Challenging behaviour

- ♦ Create a positive atmosphere.

- ♦ Select tasks and materials sensitively to avoid unnecessary stress for pupils.

- ♦ Encourage an awareness of self and others.

- ♦ Establish a set of rules amongst the group establishing positive examples rather than negatives.

- ♦ Use exercises which encourage empathy with others' situations.

- ♦ Focus discussions away from the individual by using, e.g., video, drama, role-play, 'third person' viewpoint activities.

- ♦ Explore values and beliefs that impact on people's responses to each other.

- ♦ Where appropriate, use 'time out' techniques which could involve moving about, e.g., take a book to a shelf, etc.

   iii) Disaffected

- ♦ Encourage involvement in pupils' own learning, through, e.g., self-assessment activities.

♦ Use pupil feedback from small group activities to help in planning future lessons and activities.

♦ Use pupils' own interests and link them to specific RE topics, e.g., the issue of sufficient facilities for young people could be planned into units on 'friends, belonging and the community'.

♦ Actively involve pupils in discussions by focusing on the issues that matter to them, e.g., rules, bullying, fairness, treatment of animals, etc.

♦ Concentrate on the positive aspects of RE via role-play, creative activities and use of ICT.

♦ Encourage the learning of useful skills that will benefit them in the world outside the classroom, such as being able to identify, interpret and show respect for different religious symbols, beliefs and other forms of expression.

♦ Use 'buddies' to help them process information and respond positively to their learning.

♦ Encourage an awareness of self and others within society, e.g., by exploring what it means to be part of a group and how to share with each other.

♦ Offer meaningful praise, reassurance and encouragement as often as possible to encourage self-esteem.

♦ Provide alternative methods of recording responses, e.g., inviting pupils to produce their own video programme, art, drama, rap, etc.

♦ Provide opportunities for cross curricular activities linking with favourite areas, e.g., drama, music, art, ICT, etc.

Further websites and resources

♦ A description of the main categories of Special Educational Need can be found at:
http://www.belb.org.uk/Downloads/senco_p_main_areas_and_responsibilities.pdf

♦ Special Needs Information Press (SNIP) provides useful advice, downloads and newsletters: http://www.snip-newsletter.co.uk/downloads.php

♦ Assessment for Learning in SLD Schools. This site has many useful downloads including: Assessment and Curriculum Support for Pupils working within P Levels 1-3:
http://www.aflinsld.org/category.php?category_id=1 Look under staff training and Learning Objectives and Success Criteria

♦ Storytelling Notes for people working with Young People or Children with Special Needs. These are useful examples for teachers to get ideas from. Looking at the process may help teachers to adapt religious stories: http://www.tracscotland.org/sites/default/files/18-specialneeds.pdf

- RE Resources for SEND:
  http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/13806/1/religiouseducationre.pdf

- Teaching RE in Special Schools by Anne Krisman:
  http://shop.natre.org.uk/re-downloads > 'Growing in RE'

- Think Piece: 5 Keys into RE by Anne Krisman:
  http://www.reonline.org.uk/news/5-keys-into-re/

- Liz O'Brien, Connecting with RE: RE and faith development for children with autism and/or severe and complex learning disabilities:
  www.amazon.co.uk/Connecting-RE-Liz-OBrien/dp/0715149849