

A GUIDE TO ASSESSMENT

In religious education, just as in other subjects of the curriculum, it is important to let pupils know how they are doing and what they must do next to make progress. As well as *knowledge*, *understanding* and *skills*, it is a key part of this syllabus that pupils' *positive attitudes* should be encouraged and praised.

A list of the [attitudes](#) to be promoted in AMV.

In making assessment of pupils' work it is important to distinguish between:

- a) Assessment *for* Learning and
 - b) Assessment *of* Learning.
- a) **Assessment for learning** involves the use of classroom assessment to *improve learning*. It involves:
- gathering and interpreting evidence about pupils' learning; and
 - learners and their teachers using that evidence to decide where pupils are in their learning, where they are going and how to take the next steps.

QCA and the Assessment Reform Group, 2001

An important part of assessment for learning is pupils' self-assessment. As Black & Wiliam say, 'Pupils should be trained in self-assessment so that they can understand the main purposes of their learning and thereby grasp what they need to do to achieve'.

'Inside the Black Box', 1998, Kings College, London

- b) **Assessment of learning** simply measures what learners know or can do.

The following notes, adapted from previous agreed syllabus guidance, are intended to help the teacher make reliable judgements about pupils' progress in RE and to help pupils improve their knowledge, understanding and skills in the subject.

1.1 What is the purpose of Assessment in RE?

- helping teachers to find out whether pupils have learnt what they have been taught;
- helping pupils know how they are doing;
- helping teachers to plan to meet pupils' learning needs, e.g., in matching tasks to pupils' abilities;
- encouraging pupils to make progress;
- ensuring standards are maintained in RE, so that by the end of each stage, the vast majority of pupils are reaching the expectations indicated in the [Learning Outcomes](#);
- raising standards in RE, by ensuring that pupils of all abilities are challenged to do as well as they possibly can;
- improving pupils' learning experiences;

- supporting the school's overall strategy in providing a broad and balanced picture of individual pupils' educational progress.

1.2 How do you do Assessment in RE?

Assessment may be done with whole class(es), smaller groups or individual pupils:

- a) as an integral, ongoing and informal part of teaching, through, for example:
 - conversations with pupils about what they know and can do;
 - questions differentiated to provide opportunities for pupils of differing abilities to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding;
 - gathering information from pupils' self and peer assessment activities.
- b) as a formal, planned activity, through, for example:
 - an initial assessment of what pupils already know and can do, e.g., through a mind-map;
 - differentiated tasks linked to the Learning Outcomes in the syllabus;
 - summative tests;
 - pupil interviews.

1.3 How do you make Assessment in RE manageable?

- conduct interviews with a sample of pupils representing different ability levels to assess their learning over a longer period of time;
- ensure that learning objectives are clear in advance of each assessment activity, so that pupils responses can be easily related to those objectives;
- be very focused on what it is you are assessing, e.g., by limiting the number of objectives to be assessed;
- be flexible about classroom organisation so the majority of the class may be working while you assess a small group or individual pupils;
- instead of recording every pupil's achievement, record only those which failed to meet or which exceeded the expectation;
- be aware that there are a variety of ways in which pupils can demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding and teachers can record their achievements – see 1.6 below.

1.4 When do you do Assessment in RE?

Ongoing assessment is part of every lesson and helps to build a picture of pupils' abilities and the appropriate challenges that need to be set. It is suggested that pupils' work is assessed formally and recorded three times per year.

Planned assessment can take place at any time. Schools could consider:

- an initial assessment at the beginning of a unit to establish a baseline;
- a formal assessed task towards the end of the unit to provide information about progress and standards being achieved. This will allow time for pupils to reflect on what they have learnt and for teachers to adjust their planning appropriately;
- temporary changes to the timetable so that sufficient time is given to a particular RE assessment activity, e.g., ‘blocking’ time.

1.5 What counts as evidence of attainment in RE?

Evidence of pupils’ attainment in RE can be gathered from the whole range of learning experiences, for example, writing, art work, oral responses to reflective experiences, hot-seating, ‘diamond nines’, checklist activities, role plays, mind maps, circle-times and debates, surveys, matching activities and so on.

It should be noted that the list of [‘Learning Outcomes’](#) noted in this RE syllabus is an artificial tool to help teachers and learners reflect on their achievements and plan further progress. They are not the ‘be all and end all’ of learning! Attainment in RE is also about the development of positive [attitudes](#) such as those listed in this syllabus.

Attitudes of curiosity and fairness, for example, are not necessarily covered in the Learning Outcomes, but are certainly worthy of encouragement and recognition. Some aspects of ‘attainment’ in RE may remain hidden. It is not the task of the teacher to grade pupils on their level of ‘spirituality’ for example. Teachers can only work with what is communicated, but should be sensitive to the variety of ways in which pupils may communicate their thinking.

1.6 How do you record pupils’ achievements?

In RE, pupils can show that they are achieving in any of the ways listed above, so more ways have to be found to record their achievements and progress than a simple grade in a mark book based on a piece of writing.

Methods of recording pupils’ work and progress include:

- using the sheets in the materials linked at the foot of this document to record names of pupils at either end of the achievement spectrum (rather than names of all the pupils who achieve the ‘majority class expectation’);
- using a mark-book with learning objectives listed in the columns;
- providing pupils with self- and peer-assessment sheets;
- making digital records, e.g., photos of a drama presentation, or a scribed record of key contributions to a discussion. These could be put on the school website;

- making 'floor books', using flip chart paper, to scribe comments from pupils as they contribute to a discussion or debate. These can then be laminated and displayed;
- making 'comment books', as 'floor books' above. These can be bound and displayed in the library or resource centre.

It is a good idea to keep portfolios of pupils' best work – carefully selected by both teacher and pupil and retained as evidence of progress.

1.7 How do you make use of the assessment information?

Activities which are designed to be assessed should provide information about what further experience pupils need and what they need to practice, as well as what they can do already. Remember that feedback giving guidance on how each pupil can improve, plus time to do so, is of more value than grading or giving marks.

(cf. Black & Wiliam, op. cit., 1998).

To some extent, the answer to this question is contained in the 'Purposes of assessment' section 1.1 above. In essence, teachers should use assessment information to inform their planning and target-setting to meet the needs of individual pupils and groups.

The information can also be used to help pupils understand how well they are doing and how they can improve. Methods of helping pupils to do this include:

- providing feedback on aspects of learning through marking, questioning of individuals and plenary sessions;
- listening and responding to pupils, encouraging and, where appropriate, praising them;
- recognising and handling misconceptions, building on pupils' responses and steering them towards clearer understanding, for example, by helping them to apply new learning to different situations;
- encouraging pupils to judge the success of their own work and setting targets for improvement;
- regularly sharing information about pupils' needs and achievements with parents/carers;
- taking full account of the targets set out in individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

More *formally*, assessment information might also be used to:

- plan the next stage of a class's work, taking account of the mix of ability within the class, and of the need to challenge **all** pupils to make progress;
- report on pupils' attainment and progress, using the ['Learning Outcomes'](#) statements as a bank of comments to guide pupils' learning.

1.8 How do you report on pupils' progress in RE?

There are no national statutory assessment requirements in religious education, but schools must report to parents on pupils' progress in the subject.

It is important to note that not all aspects of religious education can be assessed. For example, pupils may express personal views and ideas that, although integral to teaching and learning, would not be appropriate for formal assessment. However, it may well be useful to report on pupils' [attitudes](#) in RE.

For AMV 2016, make use of the [Learning Outcomes](#) to let parents and carers know how well their children are doing in relation to expectations and what more the children need to do next.

1.9 How do you design your own assessment activities?

The method used to design the activities for assessment contained in this document is as follows:

- select the unit of work from the syllabus to be assessed;
- use the AMV scheme of work to select a suitable point on which to focus the assessment activities;
- spend some quality thinking time (preferably with colleagues) to work out what sort of content will help pupils investigate the Core and Supplementary Questions;
- complete the 'context' sections of the [Assessment Exemplar Template](#), indicating the relevant learning that has already taken place;
- note the areas of focus for the assessment from the A - F '[Areas of Enquiry](#)' for the Unit as indicated in AMV 2016 [overview of the study units](#);
- work out one or two 'key concepts that will be the focus of the assessment activity';
- use the 'Learning Outcomes' statements to help design the assessment activity, bearing in mind the Core or Supplementary Question. Concentrate on the 'Secure' outcomes first, thinking about what exactly the pupils will do to demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of the key concept(s);
- move on to the 'developing' and 'Exceeding' statements, focussing on what pupils do to demonstrate increasing depth of knowledge and understanding.

The links below take you to further guidance on assessment in RE in relation to AMV 2016.

- [The AMV Learning Outcomes](#)
- [Performance \('P-scale'\) statements](#)

- [Driving words for skills progression](#)
- [Assessment Exemplars: Reception and Key Stage 1](#)
- [Assessment Exemplars: Key Stage 2 Lower](#)
- [Assessment Exemplars: Key Stage 2 Upper](#)
- [Assessment Exemplars: Key Stage 3](#)