

Using the syllabus to plan RE in schools

When planning RE units of work in school, several elements have to be taken into consideration.

There are two main strands to RE: learning about religion and learning from religion

Learning about religion: This syllabus sets out areas for exploration in terms of key questions interpreted in relation to each of the principal religions which represent the required minimum for an RE course in each key stage. These questions need to be 'chunked' into focused areas of exploration and may be combined to create coherent units of study. Questions have been grouped to illustrate how religions can be understood to be about not only what people believe but how these beliefs inform behaviour and shape people's sense of belonging and what they do to show this. This notion reflects the strands of *Learning about religion* within the level descriptions as set out in the grid on pages 20 and 21.

Learning from religion: It is important to say that learning from religion is not something to be tacked on to learning about religion. This aspect of RE is about pupils both

- interpreting their personal experiences in the light of their knowledge and understanding of religion. (This helps them in their attempts to make sense of life, themselves and issues of right and wrong)
- evaluating critically the truth claims made by religions and belief systems.

Professor Michael Grimmitt was the first person to articulate these ideas which he referred to as 'personal' and 'impersonal' ways of evaluating religious learning.

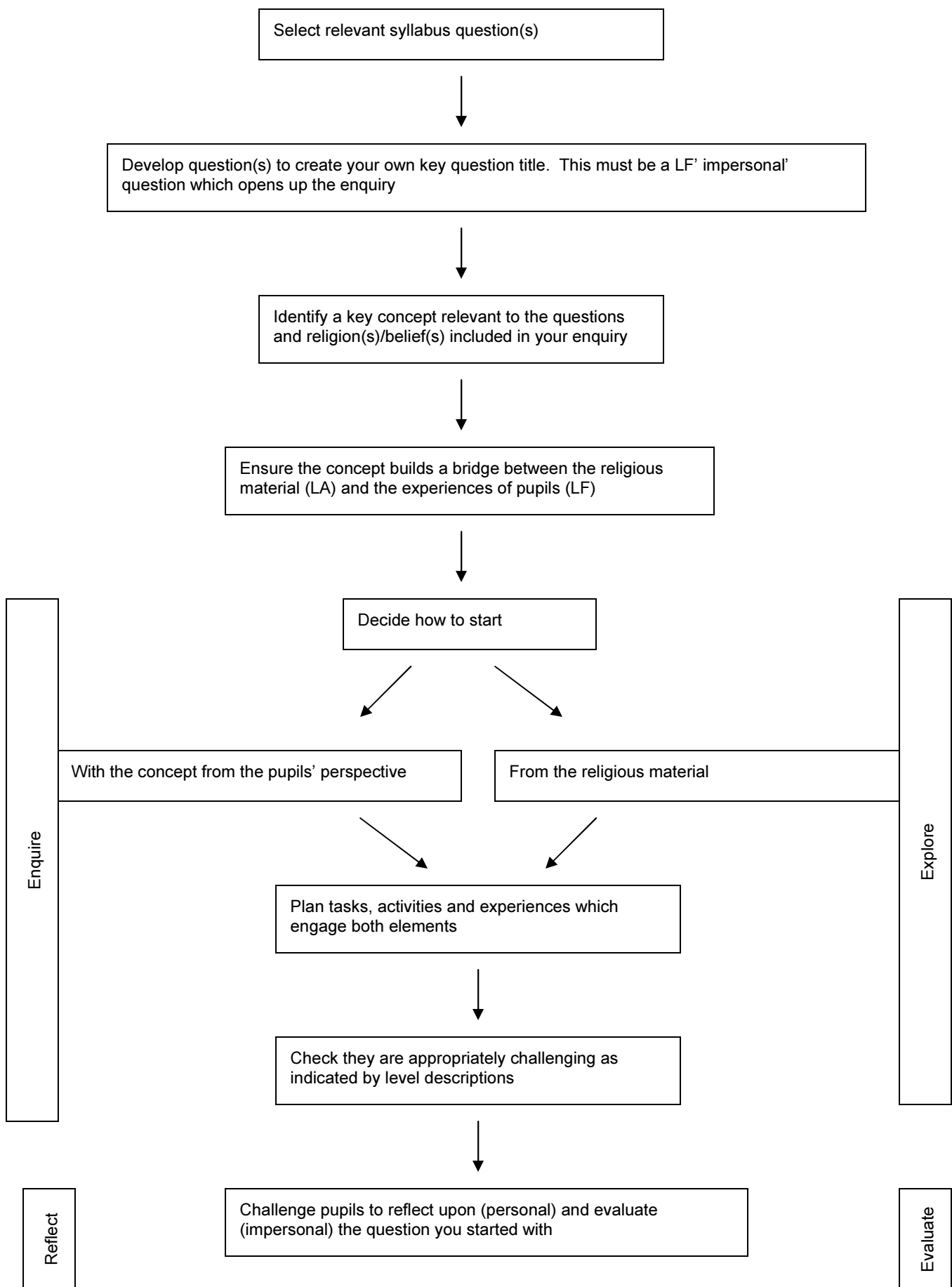
Level descriptors help teachers to plan RE that is appropriately challenging

Using level descriptors to mark and assess pupils' work is relatively pointless unless teachers have given some consideration to them when devising tasks. Work set should invite/enable a range of performance relevant to the pupils being taught. In making suggestions about questions and content this syllabus is set out with examples of the levels of attainment that might be expected of pupils in Key Stages 1-3. These will need to be appropriately amended to match work planned in individual schools..

Planning units of study

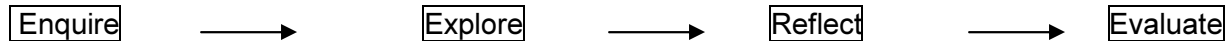
Studying the beliefs of a religion without exploring how they are put into practice can be a challenging abstract endeavour. On the other hand, exploring how religious people live their lives without reference to their beliefs makes no sense. It makes planning a great deal easier, therefore, if schools see the questions about 'believing' as questions which run through every unit of work and give meaning to questions about 'behaving' and 'belonging'. Planning might start with questions about 'behaving' or 'belonging', grounding all enquiry in human experiences, whilst referencing all these experiences to beliefs which underpin lives of faith and belief.

The following flow chart is set out as the intended method of planning in response to this syllabus. It will ensure that pupils both learn about and from religion/beliefs in contexts that have relevance for them and at appropriately challenging levels of difficulty. In preparation, teachers will need the level descriptions and key questions for their key stage to hand.



Learning in RE

Alongside the suggested planning process, this syllabus recommends the use of the following approach to learning:



Version 1

- Enquire into the religious material chosen for study and sharing initial thoughts and questions about it and relevant key concept(s). Unpack meanings and applications of the key concept(s) in relation to the religious material.
- Explore the question(s) and concept(s) to the experiences, understandings and responses of members of the religious tradition(s) being studied and consider whether others might have different understandings, experiences, interpretations.
- Reflect on the relevance and importance of the question(s) and concept(s) to pupils in relation to their own experiences and understandings.
- Evaluate the significance of the concept(s), question(s), truth claim(s) explored for religious believers; develop and articulate opinions about the value of them to religious believers; compare with the value and relevance to themselves.

Version 2

- Enquire into pupils' experiences and understandings of and responses to a key concept which has relevance in the lives of pupils and will also be central to the focus on religious material later. Unpack the meaning and significance of the concept and questions; how do they apply to the lives of pupils?
- Explore the concept to the religious material to be studied – significance, understandings and interpretations.
- Reflect on what has been learned from the religious material and its relevance to pupils.
- Evaluate the significance of the concept(s), question(s) and truth claim(s) explored for religious believers; develop and articulate opinions about the value of the concepts to religious believers; compare with the value and relevance to themselves.

Consider how this process might look in relation to specific topics and how the focus on both strands of RE can help to fulfil Michael Grimmitt's aspirations for pupils' learning and personal development.

Key Stage 1 topic: Christmas

Question title: How and why do Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus? (Belonging and believing)

Key concept: Celebration. This will work as a bridging concept because all pupils have experiences of celebration.

Starting where the pupils are: what does it mean to celebrate? Do you like celebrations? What do you celebrate? What sorts of things do you do when you are celebrating? Begin to extend this to include experiences of others eg Can you think of celebrations other people have? How do they celebrate them? (Using all the ideas gathered, pupils could plan a celebration including appropriate food, gifts, cards etc).

Exploring a religious context: Christians have a special celebration at Christmas. What are they celebrating? What is the story they are remembering about Jesus? How do they remind themselves of this story? What do they do to celebrate the birth of Jesus? How are the things they do connected with the story of Jesus' birth? Why do Christians think it is important to remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus? (To explore this pupils could enact a nativity play, design Christmas cards with a Christian message, take part in a carol service etc).

Evaluation and reflection: Do you celebrate Christmas? Why/why not? How are your Christmas celebrations similar/different to/from Christian celebrations? What do you think is best about Christian Christmas celebrations and your Christmas celebrations?

Key Stage 2 topic: Pilgrimage

Question title: What is the value of religious pilgrimage?

Key concept: pilgrimage/journeying – developing the idea that journeys can be both physical and spiritual.

Exploring the idea of pilgrimage: look at photographs of Muslim (Makkah), Hindu (Ganges) and Christian (Jerusalem and/or Lourdes) pilgrims. What can be observed, what do we need to find out? Decide which questions to follow up. Research needs to cover the significance of the places of pilgrimage for believers and the motivations of people who make these pilgrimages. Consider a range of reasons eg duty (Hajj), healing (Lourdes, Ganges), spiritual growth (all examples). Interview pilgrims or watch film clips that clarify reasons for making pilgrimages. Consider the difference making a pilgrimage has made to these pilgrims and the similarities and differences in the impact of the experiences on pilgrims from different faith traditions.

Relate: explore how pupils have been changed by some experiences eg increased understanding, resolution of difficult situations, sense of having done the right thing etc

Reflect: discuss pupils' views on the value of pilgrimage for those who they've learned about. Are there any particularly meaningful, fulfilling, growing experiences pupils hope to have and why?

Concepts

'Concepts are essentially ideas which help us and our children make sense of our experiences of a great variety of things, objects, information, events and occurrences' (The Westhill Project RE 5-16, 1992). Concepts can be grouped, according to the Westhill Project, into three categories: shared human experience, general religious concepts, concepts specific to individual religions. Lists set out below are intended as examples of three categories of concepts. This is not an exhaustive list and teachers will think of additions to each selection.

Shared human experience	General religious concepts	Concepts linked with specific religions	
Authority	Asceticism	Christianity:	Islam:
Belief	Afterlife	Church	Akhirah
Belonging	Belief	Eternal life	Allah
Celebration	Ceremony	Fatherhood of God	Din
Change	Deity	Forgiveness	Ibadah
Commitment	Faith	Grace	Imam
Community	God	Heaven	Iman
Creation	Holy	Holy Spirit	Islam
Death	Initiation	Identity	Jihad
Devotion	Interpretation	Incarnation	Risalah
Evil	Martyrdom	Jesus the Christ	Shari'ah
Fairness	Miracle	Love	Shirk
Family	Monotheism	Mission	Sunnah
Forgiveness	Mysticism	Mother of God	Tawhid
Good	Myth	Repentance	Ummah
Growth	Orthodoxy	Resurrection	
Hope	Pilgrimage	Salvation	Judaism:
Identity	Prayer	Sin	Brit
Justice	Prophecy	Trinity	Covenant
Life	Revelation	Word of God	Elohim/Adonai
Love	Ritual	Unity	Halakhah
Loyalty	Sacred		Israel/Zion
Peace	Scripture	Buddhism:	Kashrut
Prejudice	Symbolism	Anatta	Mitzvah
Purpose	Worship	Anicca	Shalom
Relationship		Buddhahood	Tesuvah
Respect		Dhamma	Torah
Reward		Dukkha	Tzedekah
Sacrifice		Kamma	
Service		Metta	Sikhism:
Suffering		Nibbana	Ardas
Symbol		Sangha	Gurmat
Thankfulness		Tanha	Gurmukh
Trust			Guru
Truth		Hinduism:	Haumai
Uniqueness		Ahimsa	Hukam
Value		Atman	Ik Onkar
Welcoming		Avatar	Jivan Mukht
Wisdom		Bhakti	Khalsa
		Brahman	Langar

		Dharma Karma Maya Moksha Murti Nirvana Samsara Shakti Smriti Sruti Varana Yoga	Panth Rahit Sadhsangat Sat Nam Sewa Sikh Vand Chhakna
--	--	---	---