

What's in a name?

The name 'People of God – Called to Serve' vividly recalls the language of Vatican II used to describe the Church. Before speaking of pope, bishops or priests, the Vatican II Constitution on the Church reminded us that all the baptised are the Church, the people of God, whatever our age, gender, or mission in life. 'Called to Serve' expresses fully the mission of the people of God, the followers of Jesus who came to serve, not to be served. We can apply to ourselves the words of Pope Francis to a group of young students: "be men and women with and for others: true champions at the service of others".

Religious Education in the Catholic School

The *Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools and Colleges in England and Wales* (RECD) [2012] identifies that the outcome of excellent Religious Education

'is religiously literate and engaged young people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills – appropriate to their age and capacity – to reflect spiritually, and think ethically and theologically, and who are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life'. (p. 6)

At the heart of Catholic education lies the Christian vision of the human person. This vision is expressed and explored in Religious Education. Therefore, Religious Education is the foundation of the entire educational process. The beliefs and values studied in Religious Education inspire and draw together every aspect of the life of a Catholic school. All pupils have the right to receive an overall education which will enable them, in the light of the faith of the Church, to engage with the deepest questions of life and the reason for the hope which is within them (1 Peter 3:15). This is why Religious Education is the core subject in a Catholic school.¹

The RECD clearly states the overall aims of Religious Education. In a Catholic school there will be a comprehensive and systematic study of the mystery of God, the teachings of Jesus Christ, the teachings of His Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold and the basis for them and the relationship between faith and life. This should be taught in a manner which encourages investigation and reflection by pupils, and the development of appropriate skills and attitudes, promoting a free, informed and full response to God's call in everyday life.

The specific contribution to the life of the Catholic school of Religious Education is primarily educational. Excellence in Religious Education will be characterised by clear religious learning outcomes and key content. Consequently, this should be supported by appropriate methodologies, rigour, richness of resources and accurate methods of assessment. This process will be inclusive of the particular needs of all pupils.

Those responsible for Religious Education in the Catholic school are called to share in the teaching office of the Church exercised in the person of the local bishop. They should fulfil their professional responsibilities with regard to all that develops and enhances the life of the school by giving living witness to what they teach, taking seriously the duty of every Catholic to form his or her own conscience. This means that those responsible for Religious Education ensure that 10% of curriculum time, required by the Bishops' Conference, is devoted to Religious Education. Schemes of Work/ Programmes of Study are planned and taught so that all pupils may progress appropriately in their knowledge and understanding of the faith, and that the educator has high expectations of pupils.² When Religious Education displays these educational characteristics, then its specific contribution to the life of the Catholic school becomes apparent.

1 Based on the statement, Religious Education in Catholic Schools, by CBEW May 2000

2 Religious Education Curriculum Directory, p. 5

The Framework

This nationally developed framework is deliberately mapped against the revised RECD of the Bishops' Department of Catholic Education and Formation. The brief given was to provide a framework that would guide teachers of varied experience in a diversity of schools and it is intended to provide an inspirational and rigorous progression between different educational stages. The purpose of this Framework is to provide the basis on which to develop Schemes of Work/Programmes of Study.

The Process

*'It is necessary, therefore, that Religious Education in schools be regarded as an academic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge. However it should not simply be regarded as one subject among many, but rather it should engage in interdisciplinary dialogue. ... Religious Education in schools underpins, activates, develops and completes the educational and catechetical activity of the whole school.'*³

In Religious Education pupils acquire knowledge and understanding through study, discussion and reflection. This leads them into critical reflection on their own experience, appreciation of the Christian story and a dialogue between these two. It is recognised that many schools will have pupils of other religions present in their schools and so:

*"When pupils of other faiths are present in a Catholic school the task must be to promote their human growth in such a way that they can integrate their particular faith with every aspect of their lives."*⁴

The Religious Education Curriculum Directory presents the Areas of Study and content of Religious Education. The Framework is structured according to the requirements of the Catechism of the Catholic Church which seeks: to address the human search for meaning; God's initiative in Revelation who comes to meet us; and our response of faith.⁵ Consequently the process is threefold: Research, Revelation, and Response. This process provides a methodology and structure for learning and teaching. It engages pupils in the continuing journey of learning about and learning from the Catholic vision and understanding of life, irrespective of their own beliefs.

RESEARCH introduces the pupils to the area of work being studied:

- It raises questions about meaning and what is involved
- It starts from where the pupils are
- It takes aspects of the area of work being studied and links them to pupils' experiences and previous learning
- It invites enquiry and reflection on the area of work being studied
- It offers glimpses of new horizons
- It challenges pupils to reflect critically on their own experience
- It leads pupils into the second part of the process.

REVELATION leads pupils into the heart of the area of work being studied:

- It deepens their knowledge and understanding of the Word of God as it is welcomed, believed, celebrated, lived and prayed by the Church
- It enables them to reflect on the reality of God in everyday experiences
- It offers them the authentic richness of the Christian story
- It invites, encourages, and challenges them to critically engage in personal dialogue with the Christian message
- It challenges them to appreciate the call to faith in Christ
- It enables pupils to understand and appreciate, through study of other faiths and religions, the common human quest for meaning, truth and happiness and God at work in human lives.

3 Religious Education Curriculum Directory, p.3

4 Catholic Schools, Children of Other Faiths and Community Cohesion: CES & Bishops' Conference, p.7

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RESPONSE leads pupils into consolidation and evaluation of their learning:

- It encourages and challenges them to relate faith to life and life to faith
- It provides opportunities for assessment, recording and reporting
- It engages pupils in a dialogue between their own experience and the Christian story and Tradition
- It offers opportunities for growth and development in learning about and learning from their study
- It invites and provides opportunities for reflection on possible action that might follow learning.

How to use a Unit of Study

Each unit of study consists of:

- Theological notes
- Big Question and specific focus
- Glossary
- Content
- Learning objectives and outcomes
- Suggested Scripture passages
- Suggested Church teaching
- References to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory
- Core religious vocabulary and other religious sources

Theological notes

Each unit is introduced by brief theological notes which direct the content. These notes have been taken from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and various Church documents. They provide the rationale to enable teachers to identify the precise challenge of the unit. The theological notes are not intended to provide the content to be taught to pupils.

Big Questions and Specific Focus

Each unit asks a Big Question about life to engage pupils. These questions provide the context into which the theological content will sit. There is also a specific theological question that directly relates to the content of the unit. For example in Year 7 Unit 1, the Big Question is 'How can we know what is true?' This leads us to the specific theological focus, 'Who is God?'

Glossary

Each glossary contains selected key words from the units. They are supported by careful definitions that offer guidance to the teacher. The glossary is for teachers; the core religious vocabulary is for pupils.

Content

The content of each unit is the basis of a good theological Religious Education, meeting the requirements of the RECD. The structure of the Content follows the cycle of Research/Revelation/Response but there is no prescribed amount of time allocated to each of these. Teachers have the flexibility to structure their Schemes of Work/Programmes of Study.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

Each unit has four Learning Objectives. The first relates to the pupils' experience - research; the next two refer to revelation and the final objective refers to the pupils' response.

Learning Outcomes are also given for each unit, based on the content and drawn from the NBRIA Levels of Attainment. Levels are given that are appropriate to each year group; teachers can add extension levels if necessary.

The Framework does not give assessments because these emerge from developed Schemes of Work/Programmes of Study. It is expected that schools will assess pupils in relation to the NBRIA Levels of Attainment.

Suggested Scripture Passages

Scripture passages appropriate to the unit are listed, for guidance, so that teachers may select those most suited to their planning.

Suggested Church Teaching

Church documents are listed to inform the teacher how the unit content fits into teachings of the Church and for use as a teaching source when suitable.

References to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory

This section shows how the content of the unit is related to the Areas of Study in the RECD.

Core Religious Vocabulary and Other Religious Sources

Each unit identifies the core religious vocabulary to ensure that teachers use these words in the delivery of the content. Consequently they will be helping pupils to demonstrate knowledge and understanding in their learning.

Other religious sources illustrate aspects of the content, e.g. art, music, films, artefacts, etc.

World Faiths and Religions

Learning about and from world faiths and religions is an important part of Religious Education. Units on Judaism, Hinduism or Sikhism and Islam are included as part of the Framework. These units have been developed with members of these faiths and religions, using the same process and methodology as the other units. Other world faiths and religions should not be studied in a comparative or phenomenological manner.

CAFOD - Global justice

The Catholic Church consists of about 1.2 billion people throughout the world. Most Catholics live in Latin America, and the fastest growing continent of the Church is Africa. It is therefore important that pupils understand that Catholics living in England and Wales are part of a worldwide Church. An important part of Church teaching is Catholic Social Teaching. CAFOD has written resources that bring together these aspects of the Universal Church and refer to global justice issues throughout the units. Learning about other geographical areas of the Church and the issues facing it in different parts of the world becomes part of pupils' overall understanding.

These resources can be found at <http://cafod.org.uk/peopleofgod>

Induction period

Year 7 Unit 1, 'How can we know what is true? Who is God?' begins after the school's induction period. Schools are expected to provide induction for their Year 7 pupils, based on the individual school context. This induction might include a consideration of community, new beginnings, saints connected to the school and traditions of the school. An introduction to the basics of Catholicism, for example prayer, Mass and how to look up Bible references, might be considered, bearing in mind the intake of pupils.

People of God – Called to Serve - Website

There are a variety of resources provided to support the teaching of the Framework. These include:

- Images
- Videos
- PowerPoints
- Activities
- Interactive resources
- Links to external websites

The development of resources is an on-going process.

Liturgical year

This is referenced throughout the Framework; however, this should be reflected in the Catholic life and environment of the school.

Prayer and Reflection

Provision for prayer and pupils' spirituality is made within the Framework and should also be developed throughout school.

And finally...

From the outset all pupils must be able to access the curriculum so any approach must take into account the learning needs of all pupils. The curriculum must reflect a variety of learning styles and needs. It should be remembered:

The methods employed in Religious Education are always aimed at opening up for the pupil the mystery of God's saving action in Jesus Christ. RECD p8

