

### Express

Pupils should be given the opportunity to share their knowledge and views in a creative way. This could be through a cross-curricular task and could involve an arts activity (such as a dance, play or sculpture), a presentation, a written task, ICT etc. Through these tasks children should be able to demonstrate their insight and discernment about the key concept/belief.



### Tips for Enquiry Cycle Planning

Unpack the key theological belief/concept – be clear about what you want the children to learn

Frame the unit of work as a question – a key question that links to the key concept being studied. A question that takes children to the heart of the subject and has significance!

Think in advance about the key enquiry questions and the supplementary (operational) questions – decide what you want to find out about over the course of the unit of work linked to answering your key question. Questions should focus simply on the object of study – keep it straightforward in order to elicit the key learning. Questions should be rooted in core beliefs, core concepts and core commitments.

Don't forget to teach about the key concept/idea. In some units of work and some classes the children will have a good knowledge base, be skilled enough to generate high quality enquiry questions for themselves and to research the answers. (This may be the case in classes where pupils are used to a 'community of enquiry' approach and the teacher acts as facilitator) However, this is not always the case and you will usually need to do some straightforward teaching!

Find ways to relate the key concept to pupils' own experiences

Make sure you plan in the opportunity to find out what the children already know! – be clear about how the topic will build on prior learning and what new learning will take place. Providing opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their knowledge base can easily be incorporated into the 'engaging' stage.

Make the learning relevant to the modern world – RE is not just a historical subject, although it will involve teaching some history as part of some units of work

Set high expectations – be clear about the progression of learning within units, year groups, key stages and make sure you do not set a lid on what learning pupils can demonstrate through the activities you choose.

Check what learning is taking place during the unit of work and at the end of the unit – interviewing pupils is a very good assessment tool!

Allow pupils to develop their own thinking and ideas through discussion, questioning and deep thinking activities

Don't be afraid of difficult questions – they are an essential part of RE learning and you don't need to have all the answers!

# Enquiry Cycle-planning in RE

## Guidelines for Religious Education



## Introduction

The National Curriculum Framework for RE expresses the purpose of RE in three aims:

- Know about and understand a range of religions and world views
- Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and world views
- Gain and deploy skills needed to engage seriously with religions and world views

When planning RE to meet these aims the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) guidance stresses the importance of balancing enquiry, content and curriculum design: coherent enquiries and coherent content need to be built around key areas of knowledge and understanding.

‘Enquiry’ is therefore a key feature of good RE learning and an ‘enquiry model’ for planning and teaching RE was also recommended in the 2013 Ofsted report into RE (Realising the Potential) and the National Society 2014 report (Making a Difference?).

The ‘enquiry cycle’ enables pupils to deepen their understanding, make connections and use higher level thinking skills.

## What is Theological Enquiry?

Religious enquiry is more than just gathering factual information about a particular religion or world view. It is also about theology: exploring fundamental questions about God; engaging with core beliefs of different faiths; learning about core concepts of religions; exploring their meaning at a deep level and interpreting a range of texts.

## Theological Thinking

Theology is the study of God. Christian theology is the study of God as revealed through the Bible, the traditions of faith and through the experience of Christians (living faith). Good learning about Christianity will therefore involve studying the Biblical narrative, the church and Christian living. Thinking theological-ly about other faiths will involve studying beliefs about God through the appropriate sacred texts, through the traditions of each faith (commitment and practice) and through the experience of believers of each faith. Theological thinking therefore involves pupils in unpacking a particular set of beliefs, thinking about where these beliefs come from, why they are held and how they inform the actions and behaviour of people of faith.

## The Enquiry Cycle

An enquiry cycle involves a number of steps:

- Engaging
- Enquiring
- Exploring
- Evaluating
- Expressing



## Engage

Pupils engage with the key concept/religious idea at the start of the unit of work. This connects the pupils’ own experiences with the key theme of the unit. A number of different stimuli can be used to excite and interest pupils in the key concept to be studied, including art work, stories, artefacts, a dilemma etc. Whatever activity is used, the aim is to draw children into thinking about the key concept by relating it to their own experiences and current knowledge (although some imaginative activities might involve pupils thinking beyond their own personal experiences). As pupils engage, they should begin to unpack the meaning and significance of the key concept. The teacher can evaluate the limits of the children’s experience and knowledge at this point and deal with any misconceptions.

## Enquire

A ‘key question’ is used as the basis for all subsequent study. In the enquiry stage the teacher and pupils construct the question they will explore and answer in the unit of work. Depending upon the children’s age and knowledge the teacher may model the key question and the specific enquiry questions (operational questions) related to it. At other times, the questions will be generated by the children themselves. Pupils will need experience of generating good questions and may need quite a bit of guidance to map out the learning journey. The enquiry questions are ‘operational’ questions – dictating the learning that will take place during the unit of work. At this stage the assessment criteria should also be introduced so pupils are clear about where the learning is going and the purpose of study.

## Explore

At this stage of the cycle the main teaching and learning takes place, as the children are taught and investigate the key ideas underpinning the enquiry questions. The activities should involve interpreting texts, provide opportunities for extended writing and sustained research, be authentic experiences etc. and should enable pupils to ‘dig deeper’. Activities will sometimes be child led and sometimes will be teacher led. Investigation may be individual, group or class based and a range of pedagogies and approaches should be used. At this stage, the focus on learning is mainly on AT1 learning about religion or Aim A (Know about and Understand a range of Religions and World Views). Regular reference should be made, over the course of a series of lessons, to the main enquiry question and supplementary questions are useful to assess progress in learning and understanding (formative assessment).

## Evaluate

Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on their learning. This reflection should be based on the key concept and should involve critical-thinking skills as well as shaping more personal views and responses. This links to AT 2 Learning from Religion and Aim B (Expressing ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions). Pupils may be considering the big idea behind a story, the importance of the story today, what a story might tell us about religious beliefs about God etc. At this evaluation stage pupils should be given the opportunity to engage in robust discussions with each other and the teacher, to help shape their own views and opinions. Reflection should consider the answers to big questions like what does this really mean? What do I think about what it means? Who believes this? What difference does it make? What if I believe this? What difference would it mean to me?

At this point in the cycle children should be able to answer the key enquiry question, but may also pose new questions for further study which might be undertaken in other units, or more immediately, in a personal research project or homework.

This stage of the cycle is where a summative assessment activity might be set. However, the ‘express’ part of the cycle is also a very important assessment opportunity.