NATIONAL BOARD OF RELIGIOUS INSPECTORS AND ADVISERS

Guidance and Principles for Assessment in Religious Education

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Introduction

Guidance and Principles for Assessment in Religious Education **offers guidance. It is not to be seen as a 'rule book' to create identical assessment across all schools. Instead, it is intended to give context to the rest of the Toolkit. It explores the role of assessment in RE, the expectations and content of the RED, and the role of assessment in wider teaching pedagogy.**

Assessment in Religious Education

The RED states: ***Knowledge lenses*** *set out the object of study for pupils; they indicate what should be known by the end of each age-phase. They are referred to as lenses, since they are the things we are looking at and they divide the content of the programme of study into four systematic sub- sections for the study of Catholicism and two additional lenses for the study of religions and worldviews, which together comprise the six knowledge lenses of hear, believe, celebrate, and live (the study of the Catholic religion), dialogue, and encounter (the study of other religions and worldviews).*

Ways of knowing *set out the skills that pupils should be developing as they progress through their curriculum journey. Whenever we know something, we always know it in more than one way: we remember it, we critically assimilate it, and we put it into practice. All three are ways of coming to know the things that are the object of our study. The ways of knowing are an evolution of the Age-related Standards in Religious Education, which were themselves an evolution of the Levels of Attainment in Religious Education. The three ways of knowing are: understand, discern, and respond. They are represented in the programme of study by icons: head (understand), heart (discern), and hands (respond).*

Expected outcomes *are a synthesis of the content outlined in the knowledge lenses and the skills described in the ways of knowing. Each age-phase will have a prescribed set of outcomes that will indicate what pupils are expected to know, remember, and be able to do, using the language of the ways of knowing and applying it to the discrete knowledge within each lens…* (RED p20)

…It is against these expected outcomes that schools will assess pupil progress, both formatively and summatively. This directory does not prescribe a particular approach to assessment but does provide clear expectations for each age-phase that will allow meaningful assessment to occur.

These age-related expectations also provide a basis for consistency of expectation in all schools across England and Wales. In turn, this will allow the Catholic Schools Inspectorate to make judgements about the quality of religious education in each school inspected under the National Framework for the Inspection of Catholic School, Colleges and Academies…

While the model curriculum branches are not mandatory, the knowledge lenses and the ways of knowing must be a feature of any curriculum or scheme. Therefore, in addition to the end of age-phase outcomes listed as prescribed here, any curriculum that is not based on the model curriculum must include a wide range of opportunities for pupils to engage in creative and critical thinking (discern) and personal reflection (respond) and to make meaningful connections between scriptural texts (hear), Catholic beliefs (believe), prayer and liturgy (celebrate), and the relationship of faith to life (live). In this last lens, students must also experience a mix of philosophical and ethical issues, artistic expression, and lived religion elements in each year of their study. (RED p40)

There are no expected outcomes for EYFS so schools can look at the Religious Education Early Learning Goals in the RED (p71-77 RED) for guidance as children should be making progress from the beginning to the end of the EYFS in line with the Early Learning Goals. Statutory guidance on EYFS is available via the links below for England and Wales, respectively.

England:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f68b0eb8fa8f50763644e5e/Early_adopter_schools_EYFS_…

Wales:

https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-07/early-years-outcomes-framework.pdf

NB: The expected outcomes that are prescribed in Part 2.3 of the RED only relate to the *Understand* way of knowing. However, the *Discern* way of knowing is mandatory, and the RED expects evidence of progression of this skill.

The Outcome of Religious Education

When beginning any conversation about assessment in RE, one must always bear in mind the purpose of RE in our Catholic schools (RED pp13-15) and the outcome of RE. When our young people leave us in Y11 or Y13, what is the expectation of their accumulated learning in RE?

The RED states the following in Article 3 – outcome of religious education:

'The outcome of excellent religious education is religiously literate and consciously 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 recognise the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.'

(RED p6)

Whilst the RED identifies expected outcomes it is important that the wider outcome of RE outlined above remains the goal for learning in RE, and how that learning speaks to the rest of the curriculum and the wider Catholic life and mission of the school. This will be possible, in part, by considering the aims of RE as stated in the RED (p6) and referencing them against the structural elements of the RED as in the table below, which offers a context for assessment in RE.

	Article 2 – Aims of religious education	**How is this realised in the Model curriculum?**
1.	To engage in a systematic study of the mystery of God, of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the teachings of the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold, the basis for them and the relationship between faith and life	Taught in Branches 1-5 through the lenses of *Hear, Believe, Celebrate, Live* Taught in Branch 6 through the *Dialogue* lens
2.	To enable pupils continually to deepen their religious and theological understanding and be able to communicate this effectively	As above Learning opportunities to engage with the *ways of kno*wing within the progressive curriculum will enable this
3.	To present an authentic vision of the Church's moral and social teaching to provide pupils with a sure guide for living and the tools to critically engage with contemporary culture and society	Through the w*ays of knowing*: *Understand* the Church's moral and social teaching *Discern* how this teaching speaks to culture and society *Respond* in a way that is transformational
4.	To give pupils an understanding of the religions and worldviews present in the world today and the skills to engage in respectful and fruitful	Taught in Branch 6 through the lenses of *Dialogue* and *Encounter*

	dialogue with those whose worldviews differ from their own	
5.	To develop the critical faculties of pupils so to bring clarity to the relationship between faith and life, and between faith and culture;	Creative and critical thinking are foundational to *Discern*
6.	To stimulate pupils' imaginations and provoke a desire for personal meaning as revealed in the truth of the Catholic faith	*Respond* provides a space for children and young people to explore possibilities as they develop their own worldview
7.	To enable pupils to relate the knowledge gained through religious education to their understanding of other subjects in the curriculum	*Ways of knowing* are skills for life, not simply for the RE classroom

Assessment will demonstrate that the learning has taken place. The learning that has taken place should reflect these aims above.

Overarching Principles of Assessment in Religious Education

RE should be assessing both skills and content as set out in the RED in order to achieve the outcome of RE (RED p6).

1. **The RED requires a progressive and sequential curriculum** (see *Expected end of age-phase outcomes* RED p41-60).
   It relies on the accumulation of knowledge and development of skills. Schools where pupils are teaching the model curriculum are enabled to make links between branches and prior learning from previous years. The introduction to the year of learning and the 'Notes for teachers' at the start of each branch within the RED make reference to some of the progression and links that can be made. However, teachers will need to identify how and where content and skills build on learning from earlier year groups, and where it will develop in future years.

   However, as the model curriculum is not mandatory, if schools are creating their own curriculum, they must be mindful that the RED states, *'The model curriculum offers an ambitious and detailed programme for pupils from Early Years to the age of 14. It fulfils the requirements of the Catholic Schools Inspectorate framework. **Schools that offer an alternative curriculum based around these ends of age-phase outcomes must ensure that it provides a similar level of rigour and progression and meets the requirements of their diocesan Bishop.** The six-branch framework is malleable and could be offered in different ways. However, **schools that do this should still ensure learning is sequential, progressive, and meets the same outcomes as the model curriculum*** (RED p40).

   NB: The progression of skills for each age-phase described by the *ways of knowing* can be found in the RED (pp35-39).

2. **Assessment is one element of the wider endeavour of teaching and learning.**
   It should always be of benefit to pupils studying RE, and it should always be part of the planned curriculum. There are different ways to assess learning in RE, and each way has its place. For example, formative assessment is essential for adaptive teaching as it enables the teacher to assess what learning has taken place, if there are any misconceptions and whether further input is required. Both summative and formative assessment enable teachers to check progress '*when measured against the planned curriculum by knowing more, remembering more and doing more'* (CSI Inspection Handbook v.4.0 (p51). Assessment must be purposeful and useful.

   NB: Assessment forms part of the process of curriculum design at the planning stage: what do you want the children and young people to learn? How are they going to learn it? How will teachers assess that the learning has taken place?

3. **The *Discern* and *Understand* ways of knowing must be formally assessed.**
   In the RED, *Understand* outcomes are prescribed and, therefore, must be assessed. *Discern* outcomes in the RED are examples, so it is not essential that these specified outcomes are taught. However, pupils must be given the opportunity to discern, and this discerning must be assessed. Therefore, if you are writing your own *Discern* outcomes they must demonstrate the same level of challenge as in the given examples.

   There is some *knowledge lens* content that is only referenced in a *Discern* exemplar. It is advisable to deliver this *Discern* outcome so the *knowledge lens* content is included in the learning and assessment.

Although *Respond* is not formally assessed, RE must offer regular invitations for pupils to respond. This is an essential element of learning in RE that will nurture '*consciously engaged young people*' who can '*reflect spiritually, and think ethically and theologically*' (RED p6).

4. **Planning should reflect that all the expected outcomes are evidenced at an appropriate point and in a variety of ways appropriate to a pupil's age and capacity.** Whether these outcomes are assessed, for example, in class, in a mid-term/end of term assessment or in an end of year assessment, pupils should have the opportunity to show whether they are meeting the expected standard.

   NB: For pupils in the primary phase, there are age-related expected outcomes for the *ways of knowing* in the form of 'end-of-year summary statements' at the end of each year's content: for example, for pupils aged 6, these learning outcomes can be found in the RED (p95). These may be particularly useful in planning curriculum for mixed-age classes.

5. **Summative assessment should require pupils to demonstrate the expected knowledge and skills independently in an age-appropriate manner.**
   Especially when used for reporting and accountability, whether at the end of a sequence of learning, at the end of a branch, at the end of a number of branches or at the end of a year, summative assessment should require pupils to demonstrate the expected knowledge and skills independently in an age-appropriate manner. For example, a stimulus/image/prompt/scaffold may be used appropriate to the age and capacity of pupils, but it should not be an 'open book' exercise or a homework task.

6. **To protect the integrity of each age-phase (and year group), outcomes in each branch within the model curriculum set a standard by which pupils should be assessed.**
   Pupils should not be expected to demonstrate skills beyond those set out in the model curriculum in their given year group (or in the case of mixed age classes, their age-phase) in order to meet expected outcomes.

   The RED expects a progression of skills. For example, the model curriculum for pupils aged 5-7 requires pupils to 'recognise' and 'retell' scripture passages; 'understanding' of scripture and 'making links' is a skill introduced at age-phase 7-9.

   Similarly, Year 7 pupils are expected to 'consider the view…and construct a Catholic response to that view' (D7.1.2). Year 8 pupils are then expected to 'present arguments for and against the claim… weighing the strengths and weaknesses of the argument' (D8.1.2). And Year 9 pupils are asked to 'arrive at a judgement supported by an effective evaluation of the arguments' (D9.1.1).

   Therefore, 11–14 year-old pupils should not be expected to demonstrate the skills and standards required at GCSE and so it is unlikely to be appropriate to use GCSE style assessments in 11-14 RE.

   For schools not following the model curriculum please see Principle 1, above, with regard to progression.

   NB: *The RED offers expected outcomes only. At this stage greater depth cannot and should not be assessed.*