

Religious Education

The aims and purpose

Living Difference III, as the Agreed Syllabus for Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight, is the legal document to be followed for the teaching of religious education in Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Isle of Wight schools. It seeks to introduce children and young people to what a religious way of looking at and existing in the world may offer in leading one's life, individually and collectively.

It recognises and acknowledges that the question as to what it means to lead one's life with such an orientation can be answered in a number of qualitatively different ways. These include the idea that to live a religious life means to subscribe to certain propositional beliefs (religion as truth); the idea that to live a religious life means to adhere to certain practices (religion as practice); and the idea that to live a religious life is characterised by a particular way of being in and with the world: with a particular kind of awareness of and faith in the world and in other human beings (religion as existence). These three ways of conceptualising religion also relate to different theological positions and may be found as overlapping to different extents within any particular religious tradition. Religious education intends to play an educative part in the lives of children and young people as they come to speak, think and act in the world. This entails teachers bringing children and young people first to attend to their own experience and that of others, to engage intellectually with material that is new and to discern with others what is valuable with regard to living a religious life or one informed by a non-religious or other perspective. This approach to religious education is consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly Articles 12, 13, 14 and 30, and supports the work of rights respecting education (RRE).

Teaching learning and planning

Living Difference III takes as its starting point as an exploration of what it means to exist in and with the world. The enquiry process, therefore, begins with attention to aspects of the children's own experience, before they look at and respond to ways in which human existence have been conceptualised and lived out by other people in particular situations.

Foundation Stage (Year R) children engage with aspects of Christianity and the other religion being explored in Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 1 children are required to study Christianity and one other religion. At Key Stage 2 children are required to study Christianity and two other religions

A long term plan is in place with a two year rolling programme as we have vertically grouped classes. Class teachers set out their medium term Religious Education planning using the process of enquiry, through the cycle of enquiry. This approach to enquiry, through the cycle, has five key steps:

- at the Communicate and Apply steps children explore their own, and others' experience in relation to theirs and begin to look more at others' responses in different situations, but those still familiar to them.
- at the Enquire and Contextualise steps children look at ideas that may be new to them recognising that there are many different ways of looking at things
- at the Evaluate step they discern value for others and themselves in a way dependent on the context of the enquiry.

The Cycle may be started with Communicate or Enquire. It can sometimes be best to begin the cycle at Enquire when the concept is beyond the experience of most of the children or the concept is particularly complex.

With regard to learning, children know that discussion and questioning lead to a deeper understanding and are encouraged to question and respond openly. The children know that they have a voice: That their questions, answers and opinions will be listened to and taken seriously. Reflection is very important and plays a large part in the RE curriculum. Big questions, where the concept of the answer is big, are used to help develop children's spirituality.

A comprehensive selection of written resources and a wide range of artefacts are used to enhance the teaching of RE. Our children innately respect artefacts and books that help explain, and aid worship for the faiths we explore.

Teachers plan carefully, employing a range of teaching styles and media. Children express their ideas and respond in Religious Education through the spoken and written word, Art, D.T. Drama, Dance, discussion and through the depth of their questioning. Time is given for discussion, questioning and reflection and for the children's own spirituality to develop. Questions used to develop the children's spiritual literacy are deliberate and challenge the children's thinking about themselves, others, our world and beyond.

Assessment

Assessment is in place devised from the Primary RE 'Making judgements about progress in RE'. Clear, simple and informative in establishing the understanding and performance of each child within the conceptual steps. This assessment informs the present and following teacher of the child's understanding and ability within each step of the cycle and where strengths are, or areas for future foci. Assessment is planned into the activities in each topic and is not an add-on. Performance against the AREs is reported on in the child's annual report. Progression is measured through pupil-teacher interviews and work sampling.

We have adapted and use the Ricketts Grid to record what we are doing to develop the children's personal spirituality. This is updated regularly.