

Religious Education in the Foundation Stage

The material below is summarised from The Agreed Syllabus 2002, which incorporates material from Appendix 2 of the Footsteps Document (Cambridgeshire Curriculum Guidance for Foundation and Early Years). The grid that follows is from the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus 1997, which remains unchanged in the 2002 document, and is non-statutory.

The provision of religious education is statutory for children in reception classes. Religious education does not have to be provided for children in nursery schools, or nursery classes in maintained schools, but practitioners may choose to make use of the material from the Agreed Syllabus.



- RE can make some contribution to the Early Learning Goals, but has particularly strong links with 'Knowledge and Understanding of the World' and 'Personal and Social Development'.
- RE at the Foundation Stage should contribute to a rich accumulation of experiences, integrated into the child's learning activities and environment.
- Progress at this stage is cumulative rather than sequential; it should include some sense of things spiritual and their worth.
- The role of RE is to widen and deepen the range of experience for all children, whatever the home religious or philosophical background, as well as helping them to develop their ability to reflect and respond.



The basic principle is to start with the families represented in the group or setting.

Religious Education teaching will, therefore,

1. Draw on and contribute to children's experience of religion, especially in relation to events, people and places in their immediate environment.

Most children will have celebrated Christmas and birthdays, and many will have other special times that include family gatherings, food, clothes, cards, presents, stories, music or other features. There is no suggestion that all festivals should be recognised, nor that all celebrations are religious,



but practitioners will need to plan what is most appropriate for the children concerned. All children need to feel that their experiences are valued, and have opportunities to participate.

2. Recognise and take seriously children's questions and ideas about profound, puzzling and difficult areas of life.

Young children do not demonstrate progress by asking increasingly complex questions, but they do need to feel absolutely comfortable about asking.

This requires practitioners to

- make it clear that questioning is valued
- give children opportunities to suggest their own answers
- acknowledge difficult questions
- make it clear that lots of big questions do not have definite answers, and prepare children for uncertainty
- be prepared to try out answers of their own that will be incorrect.



3. Recognise, value and encourage children's capacity to wonder at and enjoy aspects of their experience.

Creative and Physical Development are particularly important here, as is the opportunity to link in the science aspect of Knowledge and Understanding of the World.

Practitioners should:

- make time for children to enjoy, and where appropriate, wonder at what they are doing
- resist the pressure to squeeze it out of the curriculum in favour of the more measurable
- respond to pupils' interest and curiosity
- encourage them to talk about their responses.



4. Contribute to children's growing sense of themselves as individuals, and as members of communities to which they belong.

We need to affirm aspects of children's cultural and religious identities, working with parents to promote children's confidence and self-esteem, and include the community and local environment as a source of learning.

