

RE for Beginners ~ Foundation Course Materials for Religious Education

This course has been designed for the non-specialist, teaching in either the Nursery/Playgroup setting, or in a Reception Class. It is divided into a two-year cycle, because so many small primary schools have Reception/Year 1 classes, at least in some years.

The course is based upon the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus, and fits together with the Key Stage 1 Cambridgeshire Programme as outlined overleaf. But it is also comprehensive to serve the needs of those teaching other Agreed Syllabuses in different areas, because it starts from the children's own experience, and takes common themes. As a result of trials, changes have been made to render the whole course as user-friendly as possible, both for the teacher and the pupil.

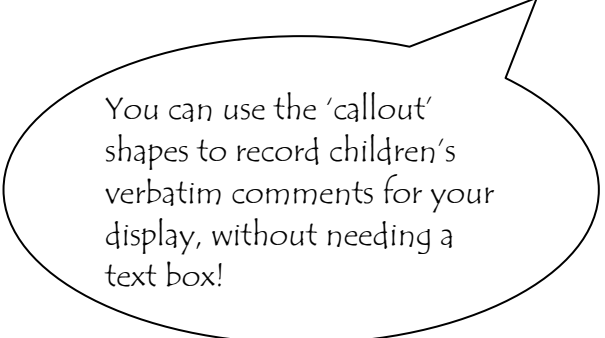
There are some important points to remember before starting to teach the course.

- Each unit has one session that appears in a double box. This has been designed to share with your link Nursery or Playgroup setting, and can stand alone. The Nursery or Playgroup would therefore have 1 session/half term, whilst the Reception Class would have 1 session/week.

- Most of the course is based upon books that will usually be found in the Foundation setting. Where this is not the case, the video suggested has been specifically produced for the Foundation age group. If I have recommended other books, they really are worth borrowing or buying.
- The course contains many practical suggestions, from which the practitioner will need to select the most appropriate and manageable. It is unlikely that you will feel able to tackle them all, although all have been tried out and found to be successful activities. It is important that, however integrated the Foundation curriculum, the Religious Education learning objectives are still respected. It is also important that we do not make the parental right of withdrawal difficult, by teaching RE in other curriculum time.
- Each of the Learning Objectives boxes contains at least objective linked to the Early Learning Goals, usually from Knowledge and Understanding of the World, or Personal, Social and Emotional Development.
- Units 1 and 6 will seem to be particularly overloaded for Reception-only classes, because this is the half term in which starting school is graduated in some way. However, I have let the units stand to accommodate those with Reception/Year 1 classes; those without will have to be particularly selective.
- Give time to reflection. It is not possible to produce tidy answers to the big questions in life, and we should not be afraid to allow space for the children to

explore their own thoughts, feelings and emotions, in order for them to grow spiritually.

- Be careful about assessment! The suggested activity is NOT what is being assessed, but an attempt is made to assess the child's understanding through them. In other words, I am not worried about Molly's representation of a cloud, but I am listening to her ideas about the Natural World as she paints, and shows me her work. There is a very simple sheet at the back of the booklet that I actually use during most half terms to record the children's development; just remember not to fill in too many boxes!
- Keep some evidence without worrying too much about what the children can get down on paper. Use lots of different methods ~ photographs, tape recordings, pictures, scribed comments. Take photographs of your displays.



You can use the 'callout' shapes to record children's verbatim comments for your display, without needing a text box!

It is sometimes helpful to leave planned gaps in your display, so that you can record children's responses later, as they consider their work. (see below)

- If you put your half term's plans into a simple folder together with anything else you produce, like worksheets or laminated pictures, it will help you to build the course into a valuable resource in your own school.
- Change things to suit you. This course is intended to be a launch pad, not a straitjacket.
- Have fun! I have not enjoyed anything so much as teaching these units in my own school to Reception children. And do let me know how these units develop in your own school; it is always good to share with other teachers.

