

Faith and Belief in School

Guidance for RE, assembly
and religious practice in
Integrated primary schools

Council for
Integrated
Education

Learning Together
for a Shared Society

ief integrated
education fund

APTIS
Association of Principal Teachers
in Integrated Schools

Foreword

Northern Ireland is an increasingly diverse society and, consequently, schools are more ethnically and culturally rich. In addition, there have been significant shifts in how individuals in Northern Ireland are describing their Faith and Belief identity. Census data reflects a marked increase in those declaring themselves to be of ‘no religion’.

In March 2022, The Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022¹ expanded the legal definition from The Education Reform Order (NI) 1989² definition, which simply referred to ‘Protestants and Roman Catholics’ to state that

‘Integrated Education means the education together, in an Integrated school, of

- a. those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons;

- b. those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not; and
- c. those of different abilities’.

In the High Court in Belfast in July 2022, Justice Colton ruled³ that the ‘86 and 2006 Education Orders, where they relate to the provision of religious practices in schools, and the 2007 RE syllabus were in breach of the human rights of the child and father in question. The Department’s Appeal⁴ of the ruling was partially upheld, stating that the parent’s right to withdraw the child meant that human rights had not been breached. However, the judge upheld the finding that the present RE curriculum is not objective, critical or pluralistic and recommended that this should be reviewed to take into account the complexion and changing needs of our modern society.

In November 2022, NICIE and IEF representatives met to discuss the challenges facing Integrated schools in relation to Faith and Belief practices in light of the changing cultural context here. The IEF Board had formed and launched an ‘Inter Faith Forum’, which aspired to engaging religious representatives in discussion around Religious Education. NICIE had

1 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ni/2022/15/contents/enacted>

2 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1989/2406/contents>

3 <https://www.judiciaryni.uk/files/judiciaryni/decisions/Summary%20of%20Judgment%20-%20Court%20delivers%20decision%20on%20the%20challenge%20to%20teaching%20arrangements%20for%20religious%20education.pdf>

4 <https://www.judiciaryni.uk/files/judiciaryni/2024-04/Summary%20of%20judgment%20-%20In%20re%20JR%2087.pdf>

Foreword

participated in a new group, called the Coalition for Inclusive Education in the Autumn of 2022. At the same time, school Principals in conversations at APTIS meetings, were expressing multiple layers of complex challenges they were facing in relation to Faith and Belief practices and policies in school.

It was clear this was an issue that required attention. The three organisations came together and formed a steering group, focusing on 'RE and The Integrated Ethos', which met for the first time in March 2023. The steering group comprised the following participants:

Jessica Blomkvist

- *IEF Senior Outreach Officer*

Hilary Crichton

- *Cedar IPS Principal*

Teresa Devlin

- *Bridge IPS Principal*

Roger Irvine

- *Kircubbin IPS Principal*

Lynn Johnston

- *NICIE Senior Development Officer*

Julie McAuley

- *Braidside IPS Principal*

Claire Mulholland

- *Carnlough IPS Principal*

Patricia Murtagh

- *IEF Director*

Clíodhna Scott-Wills

- *NICIE Senior Development Officer*

June Wilkinson

- *IEF Director*

Tony Young

- *Crumlin IPS Principal*

The group agreed that they wanted to provide support and guidance to established and newly Integrated primary schools, as to how they might best balance inclusive approaches to Faith and Belief within school, in the context of the Integrated ethos, and within the Christian-focused statutory RE syllabus and legislative frame. The challenge for Integrated schools is how to best manage the varied needs and expectations for their stakeholders.

Whilst the conundrum initially felt insurmountable, the group applied their collective energy and was able to lever joint funding from NICIE and IEF, with thanks to the Northern Ireland Office and a private donor, to commission research, writing, design and print of this guidance.

We are deeply indebted to Dave Thompson of Confluence Facilitation, who conducted the research and was the principal author of this guidance. We are also grateful to all those who participated and shared their experience. We hope the outcomes of this project offer overall guidance, curriculum content and stimulate debate and conversation.

Patricia Murtagh

Steering Group Chair

February 2025

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Introduction

1. Introduction

The Integrated Education Fund (IEF) in collaboration with the Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and the Association of Principal Teachers in Integrated Schools (APTIS) commissioned research in February 2024, to explore Religious Education (RE) and related practice in Integrated primary schools. The research was set in the context of the legal requirements for RE and related practice (such as assemblies and collective worship), the ethos of Integrated schools and a changing society in Northern Ireland. The aim of this research was to inform the creation of a framework for teaching RE, and guidance for religious aspects of school life in Integrated primary schools.

The following guidance, including the 'Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools' are based on research for a literature review (which covered the background to, and legal requirements for RE and collective worship and how Integrated schools deliver these) as well as qualitative research with principals, other school leaders including RE coordinators, pupils, parents / carers, Alumni and governors, in April and May 2024.

This qualitative research covered:

- How RE was managed in Integrated primary schools
- What was working well, or not working well, relating to the teaching of RE
- How collective worship was managed and delivered
- What was working well, or not working well, through the provision of collective worship
- How a 'Christian ethos' was considered
- What assistance or guidance was needed for developing RE and collective worship

The research demonstrated how this area is managed and delivered is complex and nuanced. It is worth noting some of the findings from the research, as this sets the context for the Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools and other guidance. The paragraphs that follow in this section summarise the high-level

findings from this research in the manner opinions were expressed at that time.

How is RE managed in Integrated primary schools?

- There was no single pattern for the delivery of RE in Integrated primary schools. Schools considered a variety of factors (such as, allowing for preparation for the sacraments, available staffing, and ensuring a class experiences RE together) but arrangements differ enormously depending on the context
- Because the RE Core Syllabus is a series of topics, rather than a scheme of work, teachers were not always clear about whether it was being adequately covered
- World religions other than Christianity were often studied in a structured manner. It was common for each year group (especially from Years 3 to 7) to study one world religion, and for world religions to be part of class topic work and assemblies

What is working well, relating to the teaching of RE?

- RE, when well delivered, helps pupils understand culture and the impact of faith on people's lives
- School staff saw a clear link between the teaching of RE and the development of respect for others
- RE can create an opportunity for pupils to learn about each other's traditions and perspectives

- Teaching staff regard RE as a subject to be taught, as opposed to encouragement or instruction towards religious practice (unless this was specifically requested by parents)
- Parents were positive about the teaching of RE - when it is clear it is about education and not instruction

What is not working so well, relating to the teaching of RE?

- Many schools found it challenging to manage the delivery of RE, particularly arranging the timetable to cover the required provision
- The lack of detail in the RE Core Syllabus means school staff are often uncertain about what content needs to be covered. As a result, there is often an unstructured approach. There were questions about how often RE should be taught, the level of depth required, progression, and how links might be made to other curriculum aspects
- The lack of an agreed scheme means 'confessional' resources (written from a perspective of developing faith) are being adapted for use in class. Many schools would like a more coherent primary RE resource
- Teaching staff can lack confidence when delivering RE; training would be helpful to deepen staff knowledge, especially with regards to world religions
- Some parents have concerns about the 'Christian ethos' of Integrated schools and how RE is taught.

While they were supportive of it being delivered on an objective basis, there were reports of instances where this had not been the case

- Pupils thought some RE activities to be repetitious and activities were sometimes not considered engaging or challenging enough

How is collective worship managed and delivered in Integrated primary schools?

- The number, content and type of assemblies, varied greatly. Almost no two schools were the same. Variations occurred in the number of assemblies, visitors, topics for assembly, who was leading, and whether or not prayers or religious songs were used
- Prayer most commonly happened in assembly, and at times in other classes. Christian-based, or explicitly Christian songs were widely used, but to varying degrees. The number and type of visitors to school assemblies varied widely

What is working well through the provision of collective worship?

- Assemblies allow pupils to experience being together and develop a sense of the school as a community. Assemblies often covered a wide range of topics and gave opportunity for inclusion and participation
- Greater diversity of belief was evident in assemblies. The majority of schools commented on the inclusion of festivals from world religions other than Christianity, often based on class work from RE lessons or a World Around Us topic
- Prayers in assembly very often came with an invitation to join in, and the option of not joining in. Sometimes, songs in assembly were chosen for their inclusivity
- Visitors to assemblies were sometimes given guidance regarding topics and approach. Some schools had actively communicated information to parents, regarding assemblies, visitors and the approaches taken in school



What is not working so well regarding the provision of collective worship?

- Many school staff were uncertain about the place of prayer in school life. Some staff recognised parents' rights (and sometimes their own rights) not to have their children become part of a religious practice. Some staff (and sometimes the same staff) also felt a sense of loss when prayer was removed, or lessened
- Parents had mixed perceptions about what prayer is and the place of prayer in school. Parents had a wide variety of opinions on the place of prayer in school
- There were some concerns about the overtly Christian content of songs sung in school
- School staff found the content and delivery of some visitors was not in keeping with the school's Integrated ethos and approach. Some parents had concerns about the objectives and approach of religious visitors invited into schools

How is the 'Christian ethos' of the school considered?

- Most school staff could not define what was meant by (a stated) 'Christian ethos' and responses mostly related to practice, particularly Christian elements in RE and assemblies
- There was recognition of how society in Northern Ireland is changing, and

in this context, whether or not the term 'Christian ethos' was helpful

- There was agreement that the values inherent in the ethos of an Integrated school, however expressed, were about diversity, inclusivity and understanding

What assistance or guidance is needed for developing RE and collective worship?

- School staff often expressed a desire for a level of commonality across Integrated schools rather than every school working out its own practice independently
- School staff want to be clear about what they are meant to be delivering. There was a desire for a rationale for teaching RE and a comprehensive framework, with progression through the year groups
- School staff thought development of guidance for improving communication with parents would be helpful. Although many schools thought they were trying to improve communication with parents, there was recognition more could be done
- Some school staff wanted guidance for visitors
- There was some expression from school staff that it would be beneficial to have space to discuss their personal perspectives on RE and related practice, as well as opportunities for professional development





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2. Faith and Belief in Integrated primary schools

In the context of this guidance document, it is assumed people may have religious faith (with accompanying beliefs), but also that everyone has beliefs, in the sense that everyone has values, attitudes and ideals about who they are and the world they live in. In this guidance, the phrase 'Faith and Belief' has been repeatedly used, to mean both religious faith, and beliefs that do not include religious faith, so as everyone is included and 'pupils will learn together all that can reasonably be expected for them to learn together'⁵

Before making changes to RE, practice about prayer, assemblies or any other 'religious' aspects in school, it is worth recognising the place of religion, Christianity in particular, in the development of Integrated schools, and how Northern Irish society has changed in the last two or three decades. It is also worth noting how the development of these areas in Integrated schools sits within the wider Integrated ethos, especially the Statement of Principles for Integrated Education.

2.1 The context of religion in Integrated schools

The historical context of Christianity in Integrated schools

This is not the place for an in-depth examination of Christianity in schools in Northern Ireland. It is important, however, to recognise the central role of Christian churches in the historic development of education and provision of Religious Instruction (which became Religious Education) because Integrated schools began in this context. The original intention for Integrated schools in the 1970s and 1980s, was to bring together a divided community, in which denomination played a significant part. The aim was for children and young people, who in many cases might not otherwise meet, to be educated together without dilution of their identity. In this context, Integrated Education offered the possibility for a pupil to be as Catholic or as Protestant (in purely religious terms) in an Integrated school, as they would be in a Catholic, or commonly perceived Protestant school. This aim of recognising diversity, not neutrality, remains at the core of Integrated practice, even if the context of Christianity in contemporary society has changed.

⁵ The Statement of Principles for Integrated Education, Faith & Values.

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Identity in Northern Irish society has changed, and is changing

Integrated schools' approach of educating predominantly Catholic and Protestant pupils together was innovative and revolutionary at the end of the twentieth century. In many contexts, it remains so today, however, Northern Ireland has also experienced much societal change since the end of the Troubles in the mid-late 1990s. While this change has not been geographically uniform, there is evidence to suggest there is now much greater social movement than there would have been during the years of the Troubles, creating a less divided society.

As Northern Irish society has become more 'mixed', it is arguable that, for many people, their sense of identity has changed, sometimes with a desire not to be labelled as Protestant and Catholic, or Unionist and Nationalist - or at least not only in those terms. The impact of this on Integrated schools, founded on bringing together people who were 'Protestant, Catholic and Other', is complex - but it provides an important context for considering RE and religious practice in school. Obvious and acceptable markers thirty years ago are now the subject of debate. Arguably, it seems disrespectful to consider anyone not Protestant or Catholic, as 'Other' - even though this language was originally an attempt to recognise that Northern Ireland wasn't solely comprised of two Christian denominations. The phrase 'all faiths and none' is now similarly problematic as it can be perceived to be

labelling people who are not part of a religious faith as having 'nothing' when all people have beliefs and values, even if these don't have a religious basis.

The role of Christianity in Northern Irish society has changed, and in this context, a re-examination of the place of religion in Integrated schools is needed

There is evidence to show how, across denominations, there is decreasing practice of Christianity in society - at least in terms of church attendance. If this can be taken as a marker for society becoming less religious, then the context for Integrated schools is slowly changing. There is, arguably, less expectation for a pupil to be as Catholic or as Protestant (in purely religious terms) in an Integrated school, as they would be in other schools.



For some people, certain 'religious' elements of Integrated Education seem dated, or out of place, for example, some parents and teachers are less tolerant of previous religious practice, such as prayer, or Christian songs. The concept of an Integrated school having a 'Christian basis'⁶ (or, as sometimes expressed, a 'Christian ethos') can be jarring - not least when there is not always clarity in the term. Although not intended to be, it can be heard negatively as a desire for children to be Christian, or for there to be religious practice everyone must accept.

Many people are unfamiliar with the origin of Integrated schools and see a

6 As written in the 'Faith & Values' section of the Statement of Principles for Integrated Education.

'Christian basis' as being at odds with an *Integrated* ethos. In this context, there is a need for Integrated schools to clarify how they emerged from and are guided by Christian values and principles - values and principles that are often shared with others of various faiths and beliefs. This section of the guidance aims to assist schools in discussing and clarifying the place of religion in Integrated schools, which underpins any development of RE and religious practice in school.

The legal requirements for RE

The current legal requirements for RE are based on the Education Act (NI) 1947, added to by the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, and further developed by the Education (NI) Order 2006. This last Order legislated for a new RE Core Syllabus, as an update to the initial syllabus, legislated for in 1989. A review was then carried out between 2003 and 2006, by the same four Christian denominations that had written the original document.⁷ The new RE Core Syllabus⁸ was approved and then implemented in 2007. It remains the current requirement for teaching RE. There have, however, been calls for the Northern Ireland Curriculum to be more coherent, with RE listed as a specific topic for review.⁹

7 Church of Ireland, Methodist Church of Ireland, Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic Church

8 <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/religious-education-core-syllabus-english-version.pdf>

9 Independent Review of Education, 2023, Investing in a Better Future: The Independent Review of Education Northern Ireland Volume 1. <https://www.independentreviewofeducation.org.uk/files/independentreviewofeducation/2024-01/Investing%20in%20a%20Better%20Future%20-%20Volume%201.pdf>



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Regulations for primary schools, created by the Education Minister in 1973, stipulate that Religious Instruction (as it was then) should last one half hour each school day (or its equivalent within a week).¹⁰ It is unclear if these regulations are still active, given how Religious Instruction has been replaced by Religious Education, and the primary curriculum has since been reviewed many times. Research is required in this area, but it seems unlikely that the majority of schools are currently fulfilling two and half hours of RE per week. Also, where Religious Instruction and collective worship might be considered to overlap, Religious Education and collective worship are distinct areas that should not be considered together.

¹⁰ Regulations for Primary Schools No.402 (1973), Section 21, subsection 4. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisro/1973/402/pdfs/nisro_19730402_en.pdf

2.2 The context of a wider Integrated ethos

When making changes to RE, assembly or aspects of religious practice in school life, it is important to recognise how these aspects are nested within the wider context of a school's Integrated ethos. Three supporting documents / processes should be taken into consideration.

The Statement of Principles for Integrated Education

This guidance document has been prepared in the wider context of the Statement of Principles for Integrated Education.¹¹ Originally written in 1991, and reviewed in consultation with stakeholders in 2008, this document underpins practice in Integrated schools.

The Statement has four core principles:

- Equality (between and within the diverse groups that compose the school community)
- Faith and Values (where those of all faiths and none are respected, acknowledged and accepted)
- Parental Involvement (effective parental involvement is encouraged and sustained in the life and work of the school)

¹¹ NICIE (2008), Statement of Principles for Integrated Education <https://nicie.org/what-is-integrated-education/integrated-ethos/sop/>

- Social Responsibility (the curriculum is delivered on an all-ability and inclusive basis).

The Faith and Values principle is of particular importance as it states:

The Integrated school provides a Christian based rather than a secular approach. It aspires to create an environment where those of all faiths and none are respected, acknowledged and accepted as valued members of the school community.

In this context:

- a. pupils will learn together all that can reasonably be expected for them to learn together;
- b. the school will facilitate specific provision, where necessary, for Catholic pupils whose parents wish them to undergo sacramental preparation. It will also seek to acknowledge significant religious and cultural celebrations which are representative of other faiths;
- c. the school will encourage religious and community leaders to visit and participate in school activities;
- d. pupils will be introduced to the ideas, beliefs and practices of the major world religions and humanist philosophies, in a manner appropriate to their age and ability, and in line with the NI Curriculum; and
- e. alternative provision will be made for those pupils whose parents do not wish them to participate in any religious activities or classes

Anti-Bias in Education

Integrated Education has been a long-standing advocate for an anti-bias approach in education. The most recent NICIE publication is 'Bias Busting for Beginners'.¹² Part One of this document outlines the origins of Integrated Education and the development of an anti-bias approach. It outlines the concepts of bias and anti-bias, including the four core goals of Anti-Bias in Education: identity, diversity, justice and activism.

Part Two of the document considers eight common forms of bias, the first of which is sectarianism and religion. This section notes the legal requirement for teaching RE and recognises the rights of parents to opt their children out of RE, while also noting how 'if they are reassured that there is no intention to change existing beliefs, they may agree to let their child take part.'

Further advice to schools includes:

- developing an RE policy through consultation with the wider school community
- recognising the difference between Religious Education and Religious Instruction
- teachers being cautious about how their personal beliefs might be

¹² NICIE, (2021), Bias Busting for Beginners: An introduction to anti-bias in education <https://nicie.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/42405-NICIE-Anti-Bias-Resource-Booklet-Online-Version.pdf>

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- communicated in the classroom
- teachers and pupils having space to explore issues related to religion in school and to talk about their own religious identities
- considering RE as a means to explore meaning in life
- being aware of how visitors can exhibit blatant bias and so may not always be appropriate in a religiously inclusive school
- readings and reflections / prayers should include those who have no religious belief
- meaningful provision for pupils whose parents do not wish them to participate in any religious activities or classes
- provision of access to specific religious observances
- induction for new staff members to ensure they understand, and are supported, to contribute to the school's Integrated ethos and practice in relation to faith and values
- staff training about religious and cultural practices which are different from those of leaders, teaching and support staff

Excellence in Integrated Education Award (EIEA)

The EIEA is an auditing tool, based on the Statement of Principles for Integrated Education, which allows schools to reflect on and evaluate their Integrated ethos.¹³ As with the Statement of Principles, Section 2 of the EIEA is about Faith and Values, with three sub-sections (Leadership & Management; Ethos; and Teaching & Learning) schools are asked to give evidence for.

Key aspects from Leadership & Management include:

- explanation of the purpose and teaching of RE to parents and pupils in order to encourage participation in RE as a means of developing diversity and mutual understanding in the school community

¹³ <https://nicie.org/what-we-do/supporting-integrated-schools/ethos-development/eiea/>

Key aspects from Ethos include:

- nurturing of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, self-respect and self-awareness within all pupils and staff
- staff members show a strong commitment to the care and welfare of all pupils
- strategies and processes ensure pupils believe their concerns will be listened to and appropriate support provided
- pastoral support structures established for staff members
- staff members supported to work positively through conflicts within, and other challenging issues impacting on, the school community
- pupils and staff are helped to engage with the use of non-violent means of conflict resolution

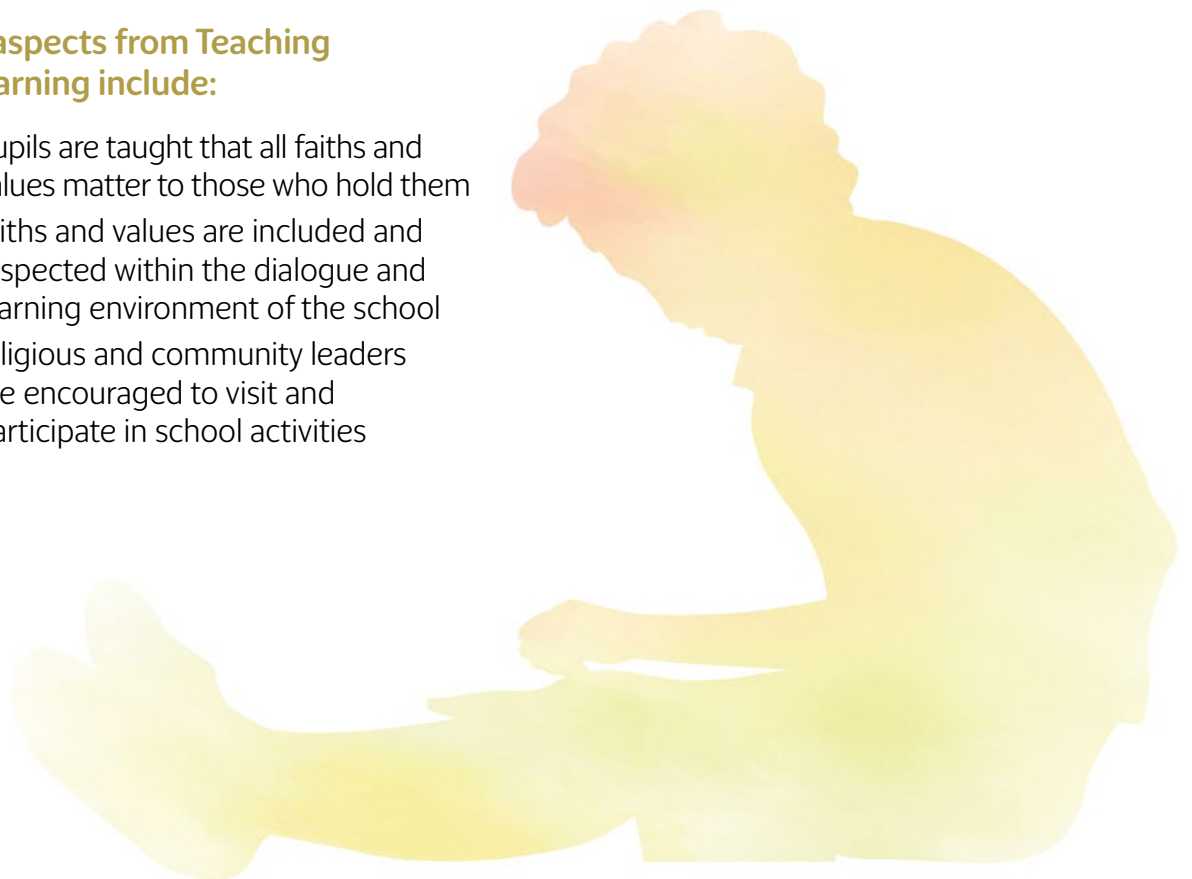
Key aspects from Teaching & Learning include:

- pupils are taught that all faiths and values matter to those who hold them
- faiths and values are included and respected within the dialogue and learning environment of the school
- religious and community leaders are encouraged to visit and participate in school activities

- opportunities are provided for Protestant and Catholic pupils to learn about days, events and sacraments which are important within each other's traditions

2.3 Development and definition of the Christian basis for Integrated schools

In the research for this guidance, it was noted how Integrated primary schools often spoke about having a 'Christian ethos.' There was also some discussion about having an 'Integrated ethos', rather than a primarily Christian one. The Statement of Principles for Integrated Education notes that 'the Integrated school provides a Christian



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based rather than a secular approach,' and also describes Integrated schools as being 'Christian in character'. It is perhaps better to consider Integrated schools as having an *Integrated ethos, stemming from a Christian basis*. This 'Christian basis' can however be heard in both negative and positive ways, and it is worth clarifying what is meant when the word 'Christian' is used in reference to an Integrated school.

Below are some initial questions for discussion with the school community generally:

- What is meant by 'ethos'? [There are a variety of definitions, however, in this context it might be helpful to think about the values, attitudes, beliefs and culture of the school that affect 'how things are done']
- Can you give examples of the school's ethos affecting actions? [For example, 'because we believe x / because we value y, we decided to...'] This might include decisions about a wide range of aspects of school life, for example, the curriculum, assemblies, displays, positive behaviour, parent-school relationships, local community connections...]
- If your school states it has a 'Christian ethos' or a 'Christian basis' for the school ethos, what is meant by that?

How is this expressed? [Think in terms of the values, attitudes, beliefs or culture that might be considered Christian (for example, 'each pupil is valued', or 'everyone belongs here'), as well as faith practice (prayer, Christian songs, Christian visitors etc)]

- Can this use of the word 'Christian' be heard negatively? Why is that?
- Are any 'Christian' values and attitudes, ever in tension with an Integrated ethos? [For example, a Christian value might be that everyone is valued and has the choice to participate, which might be considered in tension with the expectation everyone will pray together in assembly]
- Are there any values, attitudes and beliefs that are solely Christian? Or are these shared with people of other faiths and beliefs? [There may be, but it is also likely there is much in common, in which case it might be helpful to consider if 'Christian' and 'secular' at times overlap, rather than considering them to be polar opposites]
- How is a 'Christian basis' expressed within the wider context of an Integrated ethos? How is this communicated, particularly to staff and parents?

To help development and definition of a Christian basis, some sample language for discussion has been added below about how this might be communicated.

When we say that our school has a Christian basis, we mean that:

- Our school grew out of the Christian belief that our community should not be segregated and that Protestant and Catholic children, as well as children not from those backgrounds and beliefs, should have the opportunity to be educated together
- Everyone is valued, and everyone is deserving of love. At the centre of everything we do is the belief that everyone in the school community is appreciated, respected, and celebrated

Everyone's culture, Faith and Beliefs are important

- Our pupils should understand and develop love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Although this is how Christians believe God causes people to grow and live well, we think these attributes provide a healthy basis for the development of our pupils. We recognise they are also valued by many others from different Faith and Belief traditions
- Our school is welcoming and inclusive. We aim to ensure no pupil is forced to adhere to a belief or take part in a religious practice
- We care for each other, and, where possible, pupils, staff and parents are supportive of each other



- We are inclusive, we want everyone to feel they belong in our school and to share positive learning experiences together

Expressions of our Christian basis can be seen in:

- our celebration of everyone's culture, faiths and beliefs. We believe that what is important to one pupil is important to everyone and so, through the curriculum, class discussion, assemblies and displays, we find ways to celebrate the culture, Faith and Beliefs of all of our school's families
- our RE curriculum, which covers Christianity in greater detail because it has been the most common faith in Northern Ireland, also includes many other faiths, traditions and beliefs

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- *our assemblies. We aim to provide collective worship that everyone can take part in together. Prayer is an invitation; songs are chosen so as they can be enjoyed by everyone*
- *our celebration of Christmas and Easter as key times in the calendar. We try to celebrate these festivals inclusively*
- *our positive behaviour policy, where we state that although sanctions are sometimes needed in response to a pupil's behaviour, their value as part of the school community is not diminished, and we desire to see them play a full part in school life*
- *church visits, and visits to school from local churches who lead assembly x times each month / year. We consider some of our local churches to be community partners, and we believe, along with many other visitors, they have a role in the life of our school*

2.4 Staff responses to RE and religious practice in school

The Statement of Principles for Integrated Education states that each Integrated school subscribes to 'supporting the personal and professional development of all members of staff, with particular emphasis on enhancing the Integrated learning experience of each pupil.'¹⁴

The attitudes and understanding of school staff, especially, but not exclusively, teaching staff, underpin the delivery or development of RE or religious practice in school. Schemes can be written, and resources can be created or purchased, but it is also critically important staff share a common purpose in delivery, as well as having opportunity to express their own views, questions and concerns.

The research for this guidance material noted how staff were often uncertain not only about adequately covering the curriculum, but about having the confidence to deliver what is a nuanced and, at times, controversial area. Schools should therefore consider allowing space and time for staff development on both personal and professional levels.

Staff personal development

It is important to recognise that Faith and Beliefs (including non-religious beliefs) are a personal matter, and not something everyone feels comfortable about sharing. Nevertheless, Faith and Belief very often inform our values, and colour how we approach aspects such as prayer, religious celebrations / events and teaching stories of faith. Before approaching development of RE, collective worship or any other religious aspects of school life, staff might be given the opportunity to express aspects of their own Faith and Belief. While there may be some discomfort, there is a need for staff to have the opportunity for these conversations, in order to become comfortable with this area.

¹⁴ The Statement of Principles for Integrated Education, Equality.

A relaxed setting, possibly out of the school buildings, might help.

Conversation might take place within the parameters of:

- Consideration (everyone has the opportunity to speak without interruption or contradiction, while also remembering not to over speak)
- Curiosity (it's ok to gently ask questions to find out more - there's no need to be over considerate)
- Confidentiality (names and specifics stay in the group, so that people feel they can share more freely)
- No one has to contribute if they do not wish to

Staff might respond to (choosing from):

- What was your own experience of religious faith, or belief (including non-religious belief) growing up? Was it part of the family / community / school you grew up in? Maybe share one or two aspects...
- How was faith and / or belief developed in you? Were there significant people, or significant groups?
- Thinking beyond your upbringing, has your faith, or any of your beliefs (including non-religious beliefs) changed over time? In what ways?
- If you had to sum up your Faith and Beliefs in three words, what would you choose / say? (You might, if there is time, add a little explanation)
- How do you think the Faith and Beliefs you hold connect with your role in school generally? For example, do your faith or beliefs impact on how you teach, or interact with the pupils / staff / parents?
- How do you think the faith and / or beliefs you hold interact with RE / collective worship / religious aspects in school, generally? What sits easily with you? Is there anything that doesn't sit easily with you? Why is that?



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- What aspects or issues would you like to explore / consider when development of these areas is happening?

School development

The research for this guidance showed that many schools found timetabling RE to be challenging, and the arrangements for its delivery varied greatly. Unfortunately, there is no 'one size fits all' way to do this, as schools have different levels of staffing, timetables, and requirements (for example, some schools may have quite large groups of pupils being prepared for the sacraments, but in other schools, numbers of pupils might be quite small).

When reviewing arrangements for the delivery of RE, a range of aspects should be considered before any changes are made to schemes, resources or approaches. The suggested approach below (Table 1), offers four types of questions for discussion about the delivery of RE. This approach starts with some open questions, before narrowing to more focussed questions about making decisions.

- Objective questions establish the parameters to the discussion
- Reflective questions allow people to talk about their experience, and their level of investment
- Interpretive questions consider possible options and their consequences
- Decision making questions consider how changes will be managed

The answers to these questions should inform the decisions taken about the best arrangements for the delivery of RE in a school's own context.



Table 1: Questions for staff discussion regarding development of RE

Types of question	Examples of questions for school development
Objective questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What specific aspects in school are under review? Is it everything 'religious', or specifically RE? Does this include assemblies, school prayer, or a 'Christian basis'?
Reflective questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the current practice in these areas? (An audit / survey might be helpful as a starting point, to inform discussion) - What previous development has taken place (why, and when)? - What has gone well? What has gone less well? - Who feels strongly about these aspects? In what way? Why is that? (This might relate back to aspects of discussion raised in staff personal development - see previous section)
Interpretive questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you think should be the desired outcomes of RE and religious practice in school? What are the key skills / learning? - How do these outcomes connect with wider Integrated practice? Specifically, is it possible for all pupils to be accommodated? How so? - Are there any gaps in provision / practice? - What changes might be made to improve the impact of this activity? - What resources do you have to enact change? (There is often a tension between desired change and capacity for change - not least with regard to staffing)
Decision-making questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What changes are we going to make? When, and over what time frame? - Who is going to be responsible for those changes? - How are we going to monitor change? - What professional development are staff (potentially all staff) going to need to make these changes? (For example, development of knowledge of religions, further discussion of approach, peer observation, partnership with other schools) - How will other people, parents in particular, be informed of these changes?

A wider discussion regarding RE and 'Issues for Staff Development' can be found starting on page 91 of the Non-Statutory Guidance Materials for Primary RE (CCEA 2014).¹⁵

¹⁵ <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/religious-education-primary-school-non-statutory-guidance-materials>

Faith and Belief in Integrated primary schools

2.5 Pupil responses to RE and assemblies in school

In keeping with the Statement of Principles for Integrated Education's desire for 'enhancing the learning experience of each pupil,'¹⁶ primary pupils might also be given opportunity to respond to their experience of RE and assemblies in school. The main elements for consultation with pupils might include:

Explanation for the reason for the questions

- In school, we want to know what you think about RE and assemblies so we understand what you enjoy, what you don't like, or like less, and ways these aspects might be improved
- We're looking for opinions - what you think - there are no right or wrong answers

Warming up

- (Depending on the nature of relationship between the person asking the questions and the pupils) ask pupils for something simple to get them talking, like their favourite thing in school / or the best thing that has happened recently in assembly

Questions about RE

Pupils might respond to (choosing from):

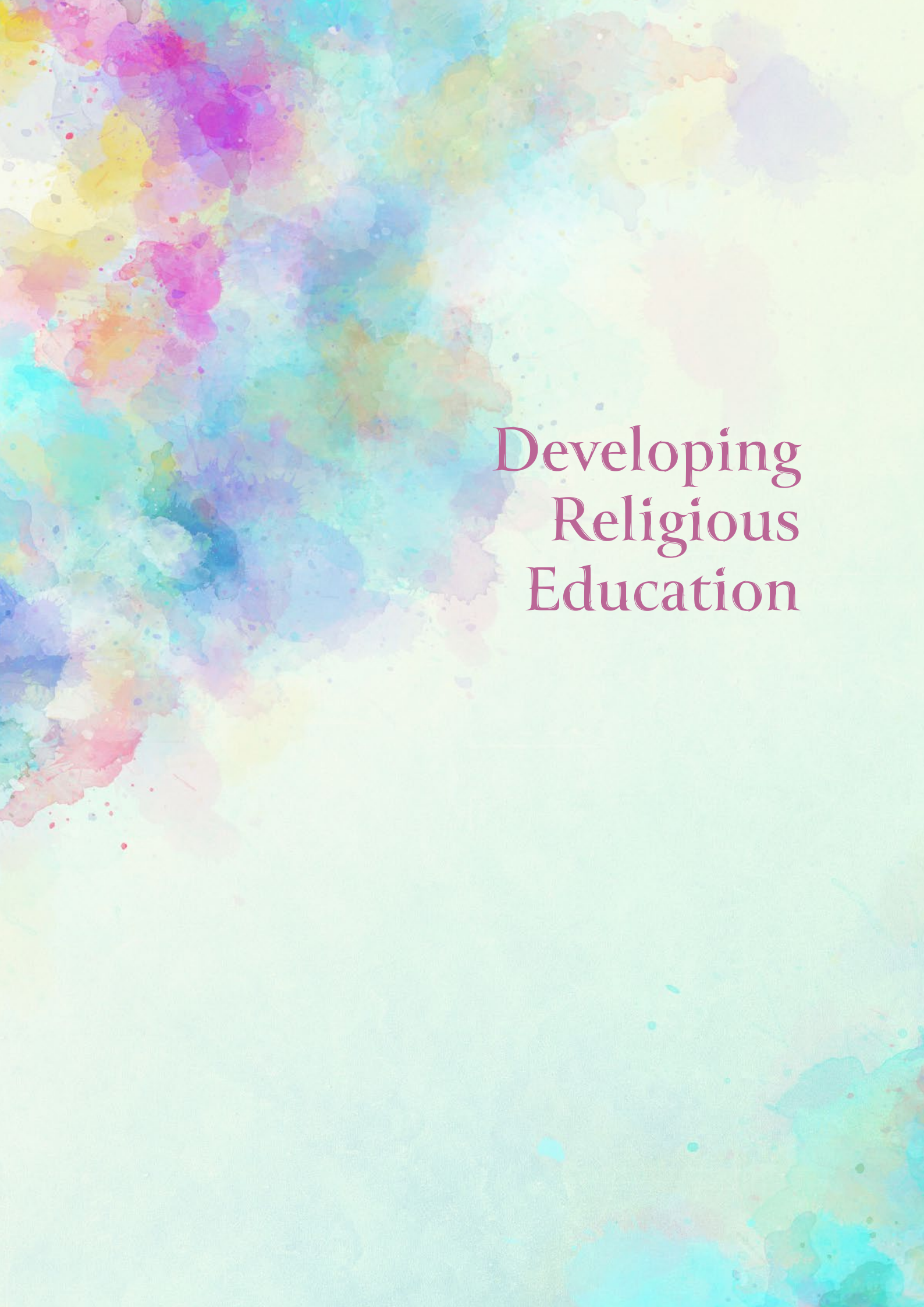
- What RE lessons have you had recently? What topics / lessons can you remember? How were those lessons taught? What types of activities were there?
- What do you like / enjoy about RE? What type of topics? What type of activities?
- What is not working so well? What do you not enjoy? What type of topics? What type of activities?
- What might be improved? (This might include topics and activities - but might also include when RE takes place, or where they are for RE)
- Is there anything else you'd like to say about RE?

16 Core principle 1: Equality

Questions about assemblies

Pupils might respond to (choosing from):

- What assemblies have you been to recently? What was happening in them? Who was leading them?
- What do you like about assemblies in your school? (Prompts might include: sense of unity; space for key themes in ethos; pupil participation; visitors; length of time)
- What do you not enjoy about assemblies?
- What might be improved?
- Is there anything else you'd like to say about assemblies?



Developing Religious Education

3. Developing Religious Education

3.1 Rationale for teaching RE in Integrated primary schools

An important question to consider is *why do schools teach RE?* The answer is not always immediately clear. Sometimes, perhaps depending on how we experienced RE, it can seem as if RE is a left-over practice from previous generations. In its best practice, however, RE should be *learning about religions and beliefs*, and how these affect the contemporary world.

It is worth stating what RE is not. It is not about indoctrination. The school's approach is about *Religious Education* rather than religious *instruction*.

An Integrated primary school may provide lessons through which faith is encouraged and developed (most commonly for Catholic pupils being prepared to receive the sacraments) however this approach is chosen and has parental consent. The approach outlined in this section is about delivery of RE to all pupils in a way that is inclusive of all faiths and beliefs.

RE should be seen as another element in the curriculum that provides opportunity for the development of skills - not least Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities, one of the four cross-curricular skills in the primary curriculum in Northern Ireland. Thinking Skills is broken down into five key areas:



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Managing Information; Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making; Being Creative; Working with Others; and Self-Management. All of these can be developed through the teaching of RE.

An extensive rationale for the study of RE on educational grounds, as part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, can be found in the Non-Statutory Guidance Materials for Primary RE (CCEA 2014).¹⁷ This document defines RE as 'being about developing children's awareness and understanding of religion' in the context of 'a religiously and culturally diverse local and global society.' This awareness and understanding of religion should help children to better understand the world around them, understand the Faith and Beliefs of others, and to consider and develop their own attitudes and values.

A summary of the rationale for teaching RE, has been added below, based on the CCEA guidance, with elements from the research carried out for this guidance.

The reasons RE should be included in the primary curriculum in Northern Ireland are perhaps best expressed as learning outcomes. RE is part of the curriculum so that pupils better understand:

- the broad range of beliefs and practices in their school and their local community, as well as globally

- the importance of religious practices in people's lives
- how religious festivals or customs are often used to mark key times such as weddings, funerals and rites of passage
- the place of religious writing, artefacts and buildings in their local environment
- their own beliefs, attitudes and values
- how ethical and moral choices are made
- religious references in popular culture, as many stories, songs, films, paintings and plays include references to religious stories, practices and ideas

More generally, through their learning in RE, pupils will have the opportunity to develop their understanding of themselves and others, through:

- recognising their own needs and the needs of others through a recognition of their own worth
- celebrating life, becoming increasingly aware of personal events, festivals and celebrations and exploring the common elements of Faith and Belief
- communicating their awareness and understanding of Faith and Belief in a variety of ways, for example, through talking, writing and the arts
- reflecting on their own life and others' lives with aspects such as opportunities for stillness, awareness of belonging, and awareness of others' needs

¹⁷ <https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Curriculum/Religious%20Education%20in%20the%20Primary%20School%20-%20Non-Statutory%20Guidance%20Materials.pdf>

- being helped to manage emotions and behaviour
- encouraging active engagement in learning

The study of Faith and Belief can also be another aspect of the curriculum through which pupils can more widely develop:

- 'mutual respect and understanding towards others... tolerance and trust of those who are different'¹⁸
- an inclusive, caring ethos within a school
- celebration of diversity
- empathy
- thinking skills (including inquiry, evaluation, analysis and reflection)
- the ability to express ideas and opinions
- self-confidence and self-esteem
- responsibilities and the consequences of actions
- wonder and curiosity about the world
- understanding of what makes life better for other people

3.2 Approach to teaching RE

How then, in the above context, should RE be taught in Integrated primary schools? What follows is four key points for consideration of an inclusive approach to RE that develops pupils' awareness and understanding of Faith and Belief in the context of a diverse society.

RE has been underdeveloped

Before developing RE, it is important to recognise the limitations of past methods of delivery and the consequences of this. The current RE Core Syllabus in Northern Ireland has been problematic to deliver because it does not set out RE in the same manner as other subjects. The Non-Statutory Guidance Materials for Primary RE (CCEA 2014)¹⁹ have developed this in some detail, however, because they are building on the Core Syllabus, they are still very Christian in focus. Integrated primary schools have been taking a much wider approach to RE for some time.

In addition, RE at primary level has not been properly resourced. There are many resources available, however, they are often not comprehensive and in many cases they are 'confessional', in that they are specifically designed for faith development. Their use is acceptable when faith development has been requested and consented to by parents, but they are not a suitable approach (at least, not without adaptation) for an inclusive approach to RE.

Stemming from this, RE can sometimes seem separate to the rest of the curriculum - both in the manner in which it is taught, and by how it does not always link to other aspects of the curriculum in the way other subjects do. The research for this guidance material demonstrated how teachers often felt they didn't have enough guidance about teaching RE and were often uncertain about what they should be teaching.

¹⁸ The Statement of Principles for Integrated Education, Social Responsibility.

¹⁹ <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/religious-education-primary-school-non-statutory-guidance-materials>

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There is a need to develop RE through a clear rationale, approach and structure.

RE is about information, seeing similarities and differences, and reflection

Best practice for delivery of RE in Integrated primary schools is about objective teaching that allows pupils to *learn about religions*. It is not just about transmission of diversity of Faith and Belief however, RE is also about understanding similarities and differences, and, in age-appropriate ways, allowing for reflection on beliefs and practices.

Stemming from the research on how RE is taught in Integrated primary schools, the following model (Table 2) might be helpful. The first section of the model (in amber) considers how RE should *not be taught* to everyone in a manner promoting faith development. The following sections consider how RE might be taught in ways that increasingly broaden pupils' understanding. Beginning with covering the RE Core Syllabus in an objective manner, the model develops to covering both the RE Core Syllabus with reference to world religions, before further developing to provide opportunities for pupils to reflect and discuss connection points between faiths and beliefs, in an age-appropriate way.



Table 2: Model showing the range of practice in teaching RE (from less inclusive to more inclusive approaches)

<p>RE is taught from a Christian perspective, and sometimes in a confessional way</p>	<p>Even though the teaching in primary schools should be Religious Education and not (as it was initially) Religious Instruction, Christian stories, beliefs and practices can be taught in a manner that encourages the whole class towards faith development (without parental consent for this to happen). This approach assumes everyone is, or should be, Christian, and is <i>not a suitable approach for teaching RE</i>. Aspects of this approach can be detected through a teacher's use of 'we believe...', or the teaching of a faith perspective as a fact, such as 'This is what God is like...' or 'This story tells us about how the earth was made...' This might also include the use of aspects such as prayers or memory verses.</p>
<p>Christian content from the RE Core Syllabus is taught in an objective way ('Christians believe...')</p>	<p>The minimum requirement in the RE curriculum is for coverage of the exclusively Christian content outlined in the RE Core Syllabus (2007). There is no requirement in the Syllabus for <i>how</i> this content should be taught, (or reason <i>why</i> it should be taught) however the Non-Statutory Guidance Materials for Primary RE (CCEA 2014) are helpful for developing these aspects. The most notable drawback to this approach is the absence of a detailed approach to teaching about other world religions and other beliefs. Given Integrated primary schools' desire to develop diversity and mutual understanding in the classroom, this is not a suitable model for delivery, even though the content is being taught in an objective way ('Christians believe...') and not confessional way ('we believe...').</p>
<p>Christianity, other major world religions and other beliefs are taught in an objective way</p>	<p>An inclusive approach to RE is to teach aspects of Christianity (in keeping with the RE Core Syllabus) in each primary school year, but also to include the study of the other major world faiths and beliefs (most commonly Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Humanism). Attention should also be paid to other religions present in the school and / or local community. One approach to this is to focus on one world faith (other than Christianity) in each / most year groups, as well as celebrating religious festivals through assemblies or displays. While this is more inclusive, a drawback to this approach is that it can (unintentionally) appear that Christianity is 'normal', or more important, and that other religions are 'unusual' or less important.</p>
<p>Christianity, other major world religions and other beliefs are taught in an objective way, with consideration of connection points, with space for reflection on and discussion of belief</p>	<p>Building on the previous approach, teaching RE should, where possible allow for connection points between faiths to be seen in <i>simple</i> ways. This is not to deny difference, but to allow for similarities to be acknowledged. This might include practices / ceremonies about growing up, festivals and celebrations, and approaches to prayer. Pupils can then become aware of how practice of faith might be different, but religions often share themes. This approach takes time to develop knowledge and understanding of each one, however.</p> <p>Another helpful approach to teaching RE is to allow pupils to have space not just to know and understand what others believe, but to reflect on and respond to these beliefs and practices. While many pupils may not practice any faith, the study of religion prompts questions about human experience generally, which might be (age-appropriately) explored in class. These include, for example, aspects such as life and death, the treatment of others, and looking after the world around us. The teaching of RE might begin with a story or a practice of a certain (often minority) group, but it should aim to include all pupils through discussion of the inherent themes.</p>

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The teaching of RE should encourage everyone to participate

An inclusive approach to RE should provide opportunities for 'pupils [to] learn together all that can reasonably be expected for them to learn together'²⁰ and allow for 'equality in sharing between and within the diverse groups that compose the school community'.²¹ The curriculum should also 'respect the uniqueness of every pupil and acknowledges his / her entitlement to personal, social, intellectual and spiritual development'.²²

RE can be seen as a funnel that both focuses in, and opens out. Sometimes it is about teaching content and the lesson leads to a direct point. (What is this religion? How is it practised?) At other times, RE should open up conversation, and allow for discussion and questioning, in age-appropriate ways. (What do you think? How do these themes / ideas connect to your understanding / experience?) Teachers therefore have a dual role, being both a source of information and direction, but also a facilitator who prompts pupils to reflect on what they have seen and heard.

The teaching of RE should be comparable to other methods of curriculum delivery

RE should be taught in a manner comparable to the delivery of other subjects in the curriculum.

The following Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools is based on the approach outlined above and assumes its delivery of the curriculum will be in keeping with the approaches used across the rest of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, and not based on a specific resource. In many places, teachers are encouraged to help pupils 'explore' aspects of Faith and Belief. Examples of this 'exploration' are included in the suggested activities in the appendices.

3.3 Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools

The following Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools outlines how an Integrated primary school might approach RE, taking into consideration:

- the RE Core Syllabus in Northern Ireland (2007)
- the Non-Statutory Guidance Materials for Primary RE (CCEA 2014)
- the need to include religions beyond Christianity
- an approach that aims to include all pupils, irrespective of Faith and Belief (where 'belief' includes something believed or valued that can be separate to religious faith)

²⁰ The Statement of Principles for Integrated Education, Faith & Values.

²¹ The Statement of Principles for Integrated Education, Equality.

²² The Statement of Principles for Integrated Education, Social responsibility.

The context of the Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools

RE in Integrated primary schools is delivered in a number of ways, taking into consideration:

- allowing time to prepare Catholic pupils for the sacraments
- providing 'balance' in faith development classes
- available staffing
- ensuring a class experiences at least some RE together

In the early years of school, up to Year 3, RE is most commonly taught by the class teacher on a weekly basis. However, arrangements can differ greatly from Years 4-7. The following options are prevalent in Integrated schools:

- RE is taught at a set time (usually in the afternoon) when pupils go to different classes for Catholic RE, Protestant RE and Social and Moral studies. 'Class RE' happens at another time in the week when topics are studied together
- RE is taught at a set time (usually in the afternoon) when Catholic pupils go to Catholic RE (Years 3 to 7) or are prepared for the sacraments (Years 3, 4 and 7). Other pupils study RE together in a non-confessional way. 'Class RE' may happen at another time in the week when topics are studied together
- RE is always taught to the whole class together, with Catholic pupils being prepared for the sacraments by withdrawal from class at certain

times (for example, preparation as a group in an RE class, after school or out of school altogether)

As noted in Section 2, there is no 'one size fits all' approach for schools, and so the Framework sets out a series of six themes and two sub themes across year groups that can be adapted to schools' own contexts.

The content of the Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools

Currently, the minimum requirement for teaching RE is outlined in the RE Core Syllabus (2007). This is summarised in Table 3 below.

It is understood this syllabus is to be revised.²³ In 2014, CCEA published the Non-Statutory Guidance Materials for Primary RE²⁴ which were developed with consideration of the RE Core Syllabus. Where this Syllabus has three broad areas for study in primary schools, the CCEA Guidelines unpack these into seven broader themes:

- The Bible
- Jesus
- Church
- Festivals
- Moral and Spiritual Values
- The Natural World
- Judaism (Key Stages 1 and 2)

²³ And therefore the proposed Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools should be reviewed and, if necessary, revised in the light of that revision.

²⁴ <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/religious-education-primary-school-non-statutory-guidance-materials>

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Table 3: Overview of the RE Core Syllabus (2007) at primary level

Key Stage	Learning objective 1: The Revelation of God	Learning objective 2: The Christian Church	Learning objective 3: Morality
Foundation Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God's word - God's care for creation - The birth of Jesus - The ministry of Jesus - Jesus' death and resurrection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belonging - Worship and prayer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respect for self - Respect for each other - Respect for God - Respect for the environment
Key Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God's word - God's care for creation - The birth and boyhood of Jesus - The ministry of Jesus - Jesus' passion, death and resurrection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belonging and growth - Worship and prayer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respect for self - Respect for each other - Respect for God - Respect for the environment
Key Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God's word - Creation and fall - God's covenant with his chosen people - God's son - The birth and boyhood of Jesus - The ministry of Jesus - Jesus' passion, death and resurrection - Ascension and Pentecost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beginning and growth - The early church to the present - Worship and prayer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respect for self - Respect for each other - Respect for God - Respect for the environment

The following Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools (Table 5) ensures topics from the current RE Core Syllabus have been covered, but with some age-appropriate adjustments to topics at Foundation Stage. The Framework further develops the seven themes of the Non-Statutory Guidance Materials

for Primary RE, into six main themes and two sub themes, so as to better reflect the more inclusive approach Integrated primary schools desire to take. The following table (Table 4) outlines the rationale for these themes. Table 6 outlines links from the Framework to other themes and curriculum areas.

Table 4: Rationale for the suggested themes in the Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools

Theme	Description
Main theme 1: Religious Writing	Recognising the Bible as central to Christian belief, but widening the theme to include the religious writing of religions other than Christianity, pupils explore the nature of the Bible as well as other texts important to people of faith. The examination of religious texts per se, are not included at Foundation Stage.
Main theme 2: Jesus	Recognising the centrality of Jesus to Christian faith, and with consideration of how the stories of / about Jesus are arguably more accessible to primary school age children, pupils explore the life of Jesus (with the option at Key Stage 2 of considering events stemming from his life in the book of Acts).
Main theme 3: Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures	While the current RE Core Syllabus makes few references to stories from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), some consideration of key stories would allow pupils to develop a wider understanding of the Bible and stories common to Jews and Muslims, as well as Christians. This would also create opportunity for discussion of belief, choices and morality. The research for this guidance showed some evidence these stories can be misunderstood by pupils in the early years of school, and so, with more focus on the stories of / about Jesus, 'Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures' is proposed for Key Stages 1 and 2.
Main theme 4: Places of Worship	Developing the RE Core Syllabus theme of 'The Christian Church', 'Places of Worship' broadens this theme to allow pupils to consider how a variety of faith communities gather to practise their faith (and also recognising religious and belief practices that do not require a dedicated building).
Main theme 5: Festivals and Special times	Expanding on Christian festivals, pupils explore festivals from a variety of faiths. Including 'special times' also allows recognition of important occasions that may / may not be celebrated in a religious way, for example the birth of a baby or certain rites of passage.
Main theme 6: World Religions and Worldviews	Adding a wider dimension to RE (which is likely to be added to any new RE Core Syllabus) pupils explore the basic beliefs and practices of other major world faiths, as well as faiths and beliefs present in school, or in the local community. Given the complexity of beliefs and practices, it is proposed this theme is developed from Year 3, however, Foundation Stage pupils are encouraged to explore a variety of religions through festivals and recognising Faith and Belief practices in their class.
Sub theme 1: Moral and Spiritual Values	Pupils explore how Faith and Belief can shape the moral choices people make - linking to Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU).
Sub theme 2: The Natural World	Pupils explore how Faith and Belief can be connected to understanding and experience of the natural world - linking to World Around Us.

Table 5: Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools

Topics	Foundation Stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
<p>Overall outcomes</p> <p>Pupils will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recognise how people have different faiths and beliefs - understand how some people have stories special to them because they believe these stories tell them about God, and how they should live - understand how some people have religious practices - begin to understand the concept of worship - understand how religious people have special times relating to their faith - develop experience of religious stories, festivals, appropriate religious artefacts, and religious buildings - communicate their awareness and understanding of Faith and Belief in a variety of age-appropriate ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recognise how there is a broad range of Faith and Belief - widen their understanding of Faith and Belief, especially in their school and local contexts - understand how Faith and Belief are very important to many people and affect how they live - develop experience through a variety of source material, including the Bible and other religious books, religious artefacts, religious buildings in the local environment and people sharing their experiences of Faith and Belief - communicate their awareness and understanding of Faith and Belief in a variety of ways - be able to reflect on their learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recognise the diversity of Faith and Belief and their expression, extending pupils' range of specialist vocabulary - appreciate some similarities and differences in religious practice - recognise different viewpoints, and accept and respect differences in Faith and Belief, while also being able to ask questions about them - understand how Faith and Belief affect how people live - develop experience through a variety of source material - recognise the challenges involved in distinguishing between ideas of right and wrong - communicate their awareness and understanding of Faith and Belief in a variety of ways - be able to reflect on their learning

Topics	Foundation Stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
<p>Main theme 1: Religious Writing</p> <p>Pupils explore the nature of the Christian Bible as well as other texts important to people of faith</p> <p>Pupils will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop concepts of religious writing through the themes of Jesus, Festivals and Special Times and Places of Worship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - talk about books they like and how stories / writing can be important to people - begin to understand the Bible as one source of religious stories and teaching, important to people of many different faiths and beliefs - understand the Bible as a collection of writing gathered over a long time - understand how other religions have different religious texts - begin to understand how people of faith value religious writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand the Bible is a collection of different types of writing - understand the Christian division of the Bible into New and Old Testaments - develop a basic chronology of the Bible - explore how people of faith talk about the importance of religious writing to them - use religious texts to discuss what they mean to people of faith, as well as moral and spiritual meanings they might have for everyone
<p>Main theme 2: Jesus</p> <p>Pupils explore the life of Jesus</p> <p>Pupils will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - begin to understand that Jesus is a special person to Christians - explore simple elements of the historical setting he lived in - explore easily accessible stories of and about Jesus, including his birth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - further understand the historical context of Jesus including dress, diet, language, buildings - explore stories of and about Jesus, including parables and miracles - further develop understanding of the stories of Jesus' birth, and begin to consider stories about his death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - further develop understanding of Jesus through the main events of his life - begin to understand the overall shape of Jesus' life and teaching; and understand why it is valued by people of different faiths - begin to understand the symbolic nature of the stories of Jesus - understand how Jesus is special and important for Christians, and how many faiths and beliefs have special and important people - (option of considering events stemming from his life in Acts)

Topics	Foundation Stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
<p>Main theme 3: Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures</p> <p>Pupils explore key Bible stories from the books of the Hebrew Scriptures (or what Christians call the 'Old Testament')</p> <p>Pupils will:</p>	<p>Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures are developed from Year 3 – Year 7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explore ancient stories from the Bible, including creation, the flood and Abraham and his children - understand how these stories are important to Christians, Muslims and Jews - understand that people of all faiths and beliefs read these stories differently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explore ancient stories including Joseph, Moses and the Exodus and aspects of the Hebrew prophets' calls for justice and fairness - understand the importance of these stories to different faiths - begin to understand how people of all faiths read these stories differently - consider what the themes of these stories might say not only to people of faith, but to people generally
<p>Main theme 4: Places of Worship</p> <p>Pupils explore local churches and places of worship, as well as recognising religious practices that do not require a dedicated building</p> <p>Pupils will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visit a place of worship either physically or virtually - discuss what the building is used for and what happens there - begin to develop understanding of what is meant by worship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visit a place of worship and learn about its purpose, its activity and what it means to people of faith - develop an understanding of religious practices such as prayer, worship through music, the reading or reciting of religious writing - begin to develop some understanding of special religious practices, such as baptism or communion - understand how a building can be a church, but a faith community is also a church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visit a place of worship and develop an understanding of some of the religious practices that take place there, as well as how it can be a meeting point for various groups of people - further develop an understanding of worship as an internal attitude - learn about the history of places of worship in the locality

Topics	Foundation Stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
<p>Main theme 5: Festivals and Special Times</p> <p>Pupils explore festivals from a variety of faiths</p> <p>Pupils will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - talk about pupils' own special times - explore the key meanings and traditions around Christmas and Easter, as well as other festivals and special times that are important to pupils in class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - further develop knowledge and understanding of the Christmas story and associated Christian traditions - begin to explore the key elements of the Easter story and some of the associated traditions - learn about the importance of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion in the Catholic tradition - explore Hindu and Buddhist festivals (or festivals relating to whichever world religions are studied in KS1) - explore activities relating to festivals and special times for other faiths and beliefs based on other faiths represented in class, or evident in the local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - further develop knowledge and understanding of Christmas, including aspects like traditions, commercialism, and the concept of God becoming human - begin to explore the key elements of the Easter story and associated aspects such as traditions, or religious artwork - learn about other Christian festivals such as St Patrick's Day, Pentecost and Harvest - explore Muslim and Jewish festivals (or festivals relating to other world religions studied in KS2) - explore festivals and special times for other faiths and beliefs represented in class or evident in the local community
<p>Main theme 6: World Religions and Worldviews</p> <p>Pupils explore the basic beliefs and practices of other major world faiths and worldviews, as well as faiths present in school, or in the local community</p> <p>Pupils will:</p>	<p>Specific study of the beliefs of religions occurs from Year 3 - Year 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - begin to know about and understand faiths and beliefs other than Christianity, through Festivals and Special Times, as well as Places of Worship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explore the beliefs, symbols, worship and festivals of Hinduism and Buddhism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explore the beliefs, symbols, worship and festivals of Islam and Judaism - (in Year 7) explore the various 'rites of passage' used by different religions - explore non-religious beliefs such as Humanism

Topics	Foundation Stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
<p>Sub theme 1: Moral and Spiritual Values</p> <p>Pupils explore how Faith and Beliefs can shape the moral choices people make – linking to PDMU</p> <p>Pupils will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hear and respond to stories of belonging and how people relate to each other - hear and respond to stories that have moral meanings or that examine consequences of actions - understand emotions and begin to develop emotional language - reflect on what is needed for class and school to be a healthy caring environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consider the Christian belief that everyone is unique and valuable to God with activities that encourage pupils to recognise worth in themselves and others - hear and respond to stories that have moral meanings or that examine consequences of actions - understand emotions and develop emotional language - reflect on what is needed for class and school to be a healthy caring environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - engage in activities designed to deepen the ways pupils talk about moral choices - understand emotions and develop emotional language - explore how behaviour affects ourselves and other individuals, as well as communities - understand how moral choices extend to choices we make about the environment, as well as looking at the lives of people who have made moral choices
<p>Sub theme 2: The Natural World</p> <p>Pupils explore how Faith and Beliefs can be connected to understanding and experience of the natural world – linking to World Around Us</p> <p>Pupils will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explore the variety and beauty of the natural world, with opportunities for responding to this - find ways for pupils to express gratitude for the natural world around them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explore the variety and beauty of the natural world, with opportunities for responding to this - find ways for pupils to express gratitude for the natural world around them - understand how Christianity and other faiths and beliefs link the idea of the world being created, to appreciation of the natural world - begin to understand how people of different faiths and beliefs consider caring for the natural world to be important, and that human beings have responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use the natural world as an impetus for pupils to respond creatively - consider our role in looking after the environment, including concerns about the environment globally, and what can be done to address these - explore and respond to aspects of the natural world such as simple ecosystems, weather systems, or migratory patterns - explore links to World Around Us commonly studied at Key Stage 2, and ways to appreciate these aspects

Table 6: Links from the Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools to other themes and curriculum areas

Topics	Links to other themes in the Framework	Links to other aspects of the curriculum
<p>Main theme 1: Religious Writing</p> <p>Pupils explore the nature of the Christian Bible as well as other texts important to people of faith</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - obvious links to the texts used in Jesus, Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures and World Religions - may link to any texts used in Places of Worship or for Festivals and Special Times - texts may be the basis for discussion of Moral and Spiritual Values as well as consideration of how the Natural World might be treated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from P4 upwards, when pupils' concepts of genre are being developed, there is a clear cross curricular link to the different genres of religious texts
<p>Main theme 2: Jesus</p> <p>Pupils explore the life of Jesus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - obvious link to Religious Writing as the stories of Jesus are designed to communicate who he was - there is opportunity at Christmas to consider passages in the Hebrew Scriptures Christians sometimes attribute to being about Jesus - obvious links to the story of Jesus present in many Christian places of worship, as well as to Christmas and Easter - the teaching of Jesus is acknowledged by other religions, beyond Christianity - the teaching of Jesus, parables especially, can be the basis for discussion around Moral and Spiritual Values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - obvious links to Christmas and Easter traditions - clear links to Communication and The Arts if stories of / about Jesus are used as the basis for drama, art, writing etc - links to World Around Us as understanding stories requires a basic knowledge of what life was like 2000 years ago, including climate, development of settlements, transport, agriculture, occupation of the Roman Empire

Topics	Links to other themes in the Framework	Links to other aspects of the curriculum
<p>Main theme 3: Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures</p> <p>Pupils explore key Bible stories from the books of the Hebrew Scriptures (or what Christians call the 'Old Testament')</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - obvious link to Religious Writing as these are considered sacred stories in a number of faith traditions - link to Jesus as these stories provide some level of background to the Jewish faith Jesus was brought up in - link to Places of Worship as these stories would be stored in and read out in a synagogue - obvious link to Judaism, and to Festivals, for example if Passover is being covered - link to Moral and Spiritual Values as many of these stories can be the basis for discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clear links to Communication and The Arts if stories from the Hebrew Scriptures are used as the basis for drama, art, writing etc - links to World Around Us as understanding stories requires a basic knowledge of what life was like in the Ancient Near East, including climate, transport, nomadic existence, agriculture, enslavement
<p>Main theme 4: Places of Worship</p> <p>Pupils explore local churches and places of worship, as well as recognising religious practices that do not require a dedicated building</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - likely links to Religious Writing, if a religious text is read from or prominent. In a Christian setting there will be links to Jesus and Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures. In a synagogue there will be obvious links to Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures - likely links to Festivals and Special Times - links to World Religions if a place of worship is being visited from a faith other than Christianity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - links to World Around Us and local history - potential links to The Arts in the design and decoration of a building, as well as any music used in worship
<p>Main theme 5: Festivals and Special Times</p> <p>Pupils explore festivals from a variety of faiths</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - likely links to Religious Writing, Jesus, and Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures as many contemporary festivals have their roots in religious texts - Festivals should be inclusive of a wide range of faiths and link to World Religions - likely link to Moral and Spiritual Values as many festivals have a moral base or spiritual practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - potential links to The Arts as festivals may include music, costume and decoration - strong links to PDMU as there is understanding of the beliefs and culture of others - likely links to Communication and The Arts if festivals have stemmed from religious / traditional stories

Topics	Links to other themes in the Framework	Links to other aspects of the curriculum
<p>Main theme 6: World Religions and Worldviews</p> <p>Pupils explore the basic beliefs and practices of other major world faiths and worldviews, as well as faiths and beliefs present in school, or in the local community</p>	<p>- this theme might reasonably encompass all the other themes, with the exception (in some cases) of Jesus and Stories of the Hebrew Scriptures</p>	<p>- strong links to PDMU as there is understanding of the beliefs and culture of others (not least in seeing some of the connections between Christian denominations and cultural and political perspectives)</p> <p>- links to Communication and The Arts through religious / traditional stories</p>
<p>Sub theme 1: Moral and Spiritual Values</p> <p>Pupils explore how Faith and Beliefs can shape the moral choices people make</p>	<p>- this theme encompasses all of the other themes as they all contain elements of morality and spirituality</p>	<p>- strong link to PDMU as pupils consider how theirs and others' moral choices are made</p>
<p>Sub theme 2: The Natural World</p> <p>Pupils explore how Faith and Beliefs can be connected to understanding and experience of the natural world</p>	<p>- probably the theme that links least to the others, however, the basis for valuing the natural world may come through Religious Writing, may have some connection to Festivals (for example Spring festivals / Easter) and there is a strong Moral and Spiritual Values connection through preserving the Natural World (and the planet in general)</p>	<p>- strong links to World Around Us and topics such as conservation and the effects of global warming</p>

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Further notes on the Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools

Christianity remains the largest area of focus

In the Framework, Christianity (and its origins from Judaism) remains the largest area of study. This does not mean Christianity should be presented as 'normal' or more important than other religions, but more time is spent exploring Christian stories, beliefs and practices to cover the current RE Core Syllabus, and also because of Christianity's position as the most common religion in Northern Ireland, which has shaped culture more widely.

The Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools contains more content than necessary

- The legally required content for RE is currently what is summarised in the RE Core Syllabus (outlined previously).²⁵ The Framework includes more content than necessary so as:
- faiths and beliefs other than Christianity are included
- teachers can make choices about the stories they use (for example, the RE Core Syllabus asks pupils to 'study the teachings of Jesus through a selection of parables and central sayings'.

The suggested activities for the Framework (see appendix) provide specific options - but not everything listed needs to be covered)

- teachers have access to content that could be used to cover classes such as Social and Moral studies
- links can be made to other aspects of the curriculum through overlaps in content

If teachers are concerned about what they need to cover, they should check back to the RE Core Syllabus.²⁶

The content at Foundation Stage has been limited

The current RE Core Syllabus was published in 2007, the same year the Northern Ireland Curriculum was introduced.²⁷ Understanding of using play-based learning to develop skills, curiosity and creativity at Foundation Stage (Years 1 and 2) was, for many (if not most) schools, only developing at this point. It is arguable that the content included in the RE Core Syllabus did not take this wider change into account. As previously noted, the research for this guidance found some evidence of how it can be difficult to teach complex areas of Faith and Belief at such a young age, without misunderstandings occurring.

²⁵ The original document obviously provides more detail.

²⁶ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/religious-education-core-syllabus>

²⁷ At that time, referred to as 'the Revised Curriculum'.

Three themes (Religious Writing, Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures and World Religions) have not been included for Foundation Stage, though pupils will develop understanding of religious stories and practices from the three other main themes (Jesus, Festivals and Places of Worship).

Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures are optional, but may be useful for context and discussion

As previously noted, the current RE Core Syllabus makes few references to stories from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). The Genesis creation account²⁸, or what many Christians refer to as 'the Fall', and the stories of God's covenant with Moses and the children of Israel are the main references. However, some stories might be included in primary school because:

- they can assist pupils to develop a wider understanding of the Bible
- they can help pupils understand how there are many stories that Jews, Muslims, Christians and people of other faiths, have in common
- references to these stories often appear in popular culture, as well as classic literature, art, theatre etc
- they can be used to create opportunity for discussion of belief, choices and morality

The suggested stories from the Hebrew Scriptures have been limited

to collections of stories and narrative arcs (ancient stories, Abraham, Joseph and Moses) in Years 3-6, with some reference to the Hebrew prophets in Year 7. This is to avoid the complexity of teaching these stories at Foundation Stage, as well as including stories important to Judaism and Islam. This approach has omitted well known Bible stories (such as David and Goliath, Jonah and Daniel) however teachers may include these stories if they wish. It is worth noting the moral and spiritual themes of these stories – *they can be read and discussed in the same manner as any other literacy text*, and so could be considered for use in any Social and Moral class (see section 3.4 for resourcing ideas).

The two sub-themes overlap with other aspects of the curriculum

The Natural World and Moral and Spiritual Values have been considered as sub-themes, not because they are less important, but because they overlap with World Around Us and PDMU respectively. Moral and Spiritual Values should also be considered as a theme running across each of the other themes.

'World religions' studied in school should reflect the school and local community, as well as the main religions across the world

'World religions' is the commonly used phrase to refer to religions other than Christianity. It is, in some ways, an unhelpful phrase as Christianity is also a

²⁸ Or accounts.

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world religion, and the 'world religions' referred to are not 'out in the world' so much as present in school and the local community. Nevertheless 'world religions' is a shorter version of saying 'religions other than Christianity'!

The suggested world religions (and the suggested activities in the appendix) include Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, in Years 3 to 6, with space left in Year 7 for some study of rites of passage. Schools should, however, consider what world religions should be studied in the context of their locality.²⁹ Sikhism, for example has not been included, however, if there was a Sikh community living near the school, or part of the school community, then Sikhism should of course be included.

Schools should also give thought to how, if a world religion is covered in Year 3 or 4, this understanding might be developed in the following years, even if that religion is not a particular focus. For example, if a Year 4 class studies Islam, it would be preferable that pupils don't leave school three years later with a Year 4 understanding of Islam. Further understanding might be developed through celebration of Eid in an assembly; connection points for religions in Year 7; news stories that feature Muslims' faith and practice; or inclusion of Islam in other multi-cultural activities.

²⁹ In keeping with the Statement of Principles for Integrated Education which states 'the subjects and activities offered, and the resources complementing their delivery, should reflect the diversity within the school's own pupil population'.

Suggestions for activities are largely based on the Non-Statutory Guidance Materials for Primary RE (CCEA 2014)³⁰

Brief suggestions for activities and / or stories for year groups to explore across each of the themes have been included in the appendix. These suggestions have, for the most part, been adapted from the 'Children should have opportunities to...' sections in the CCEA Guidance. Similarly, the accompanying learning outcomes for each theme (further developing the broad outcomes for RE set out in Section 3.1) have also been based on the 'Focus for Learning' sections in the CCEA Guidance. The suggestions for activities in the appendix should also be read in the context of the next sections (3.4 and 3.5 Resourcing the Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools).

3.4 Resourcing the Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools: Ways to explore religious stories

Rather than starting with published resources or worksheets for teaching RE, engaging approaches can be employed that are already in use in other areas of the curriculum.

³⁰ <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/religious-education-primary-school-non-statutory-guidance-materials>

The approach outlined below suggests looking at how pupils can respond to stories creatively, and often through discussion (taking into consideration how RE can often be taught late in the school day).

Three key questions are suggested here, in keeping with the rationale for teaching RE, and the summaries of the key outcomes at the relevant key stages.

1. What's happening in the story? (Pupils engage with and more fully understand the text.)

Taking into consideration certain sensitivities, the text of a religious story can be considered in the same way as a text used in a Literacy or World Around Us lesson. The same processes and activities can be employed. These might include:

- activities about the narrative, such as storyboarding, acting the story out / reading a dramatized version of the story (for example, from a dramatized Bible)
- questions about the characters, considering their actions and motivations, such as what is each person / group seeing? What are they feeling (at different times)? What do they need? What are they requesting?
- drama approaches such as hot seating (pupils answer questions as though they were the character); conscience alley (pupils add

thoughts of a character at key points in the story); developing simple dialogue from parts of the story that are not written; creating a freeze frame or tableau

- retelling the story in a different way through, for example, a picture / painting; clay / plasticene; telling it from a different point of view; telling it from a modern point of view; telling it with a different ending; telling it in a different style
- questions about the pupils' perspectives; what would they have done in the circumstances of the story? What options were available? Who do they identify with most in the text? What advice would they give to a character?

2. What does it mean for different people of faith?

(Pupils develop understanding of what the story can mean from a faith perspective.)

This might take a *little* research to find out how the meaning of a particular story is viewed by people of faith. Remember, there is no one *right* answer. There is most likely a variety of answers. People of faith, even from the same religion, may view a religious story or text very differently. Chapters in Genesis, for example, will be interpreted in many different ways by Christians, as well as by Jews and Muslims.

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3. What does it mean for you / us? (Pupils reflect on what they might take away from the story.)

Having fully examined and investigated a story, and considered what it can mean for people of faith, pupils can begin to reflect and comment on what they think is important in the story. Helpful questions might include:

- What do you think is the most important part of this story?
- People of faith think about the meaning of this story in this way / different ways. Do you think about it in similar ways? Or different ways?
- Are there parts you really like?
- Are there parts you really don't like?
- What questions do you still have?
- What else would you like to know?
- Group work with plenary, might be the best approach for these activities.

Example

An example of this approach (at Key Stage 2) is given below (Table 7), based on the story of Jesus healing a paralysed man (based on Luke chapter 5).

One day Jesus was teaching people, and the Pharisees and teachers of the law were also there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. Jesus was healing people who were sick. Some men came carrying a paralysed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way

to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this person? He speaks badly about God. Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?'" He said to the paralysed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."

Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and they too gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."



Table 7: Example of ways to examine what is happening in a religious story

Key question	Possible activities (choose from...)
<p>What's happening in the story? (Pupils engage with and more fully understand the text.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in small groups, the class have time to read the story again, but using a dramatized version of the text - give each small group a perspective (Jesus, the paralysed man, the man's friends, the Pharisees, the onlookers). Ask each group to discuss and then answer these questions from that perspective: What do you think each person / group was thinking at each stage of the story? How do you think they felt? What questions do you think they had? - in small groups, create a freeze frame for one part of the story - ask pupils to write from the perspective of the paralysed man or an onlooker about the events of that day. This might take the form of a diary entry, or an interview with a journalist - discuss what the friends of the paralysed man might have been thinking as they planned to help their friend - 'hot seat' one pupil who will answer from the perspective of the paralysed man. The rest of the class prepare and ask questions
<p>What does it mean for different people of faith? (Pupils develop understanding of what the story can mean from perspectives of faith.)</p>	<p>Pupils might consider the following perspectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the story is from the gospel of Luke - a record of Jesus' life (see Luke 1:1-4) - Christians see Jesus at the centre of their faith. This story demonstrates Jesus' power to heal people, but also Jesus' ability to forgive people - The story is an example of how religious leaders can disrupt / challenge people's beliefs
<p>What does it mean for you / us? (Pupils reflect on what they might take away from the story.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupils consider what they think is the most important part of this story - Pupils consider what they think about sin in the story. Why does Jesus talk about this? What is sin? What do they think about this idea? - Pupils consider any other questions they have, or anything else they would like to know

The final section (in Table 7) allows space for pupils to raise questions about a story, not least questions about whether or not the story is 'true'. This approach allows the teacher to answer a question like that from various perspectives.

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Responding to a question such as 'Did Jesus really heal the paralysed man? Is that true?' teachers can say:

- many Christians believe this is a true story about something that actually happened
- some Christians might not believe this is literally true, but the story says something about the type of person Jesus was
- we are studying a religious story, and what people believe; you can decide for yourself if you think it really happened

It is also worth noting that pupils will ask questions the teacher cannot answer, and it is acceptable to say, 'I don't know the answer to that, but I'll try and find out.'

3.5 Resourcing the Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools: Ways to explore religious practices

Exploring a religious practice

Teaching about the religious practices of other people is a complex area. It can leave teachers feeling nervous because they want to ensure they are accurate in what they are teaching – and not inadvertently saying something misleading or incorrect. Even practices within the same religion

can have differences in meaning. In Christianity, for example, there are different interpretations about the meaning of baptism or communion. Similarly, other religions have different traditions or expressions, and so what might be said for one group within a religion, might not be true for others.

The following three questions suggest an approach for teaching about religious practices.

1. How do people of faith talk about what they are doing?

Rather than trying to explain what someone else's faith means to them, the best approach is to *allow people of faith to explain it themselves*. It's always good to have a visitor come into school and talk about their experience, but this isn't always possible. Online video clips (on BBC Schools and BBC Bitesize especially) are good ways of hearing how people of faith talk about their own practice. Other helpful resources might include descriptions of religious practices written by people of that faith, or using published resources where relevant people of faith have been involved in its writing.

It's also important to recognise how one web site / video clip / resource will never be able to answer every question from pupils. Extra information might be able to be researched, but it is also good practice for teachers to say, 'I don't think I can answer that because I'm not of that faith'.

This is an opportunity to teach how the practise of a faith is a nuanced area and how a practice appears to people outside of that faith, may be very different to those who are part of that faith, who can see the practice in a wider context.

2. What is the practice leading to?

Sometimes, an unfamiliar religious practice can seem quite strange to people of different faiths and beliefs. Religious activity is often not an end in itself however. For example, the purpose of communion is not simply to eat the wafer or drink the wine, it's about what this practice is believed to mean in the life of the person of Christian faith. To get beyond the 'phenomenon' of a different practice, it can be helpful to ask about what it is leading to, or what the person of faith is searching for.

A good example of this is prayer. Practices relating to prayer can include set prayers, candles, incense or offerings of flowers or fruit. Although these are very different practices, they are all means by which people try to connect with God. Other religions have prayers that are not about connecting with God (for example the Buddhist use of prayer wheels) nevertheless these practices share how a message is being communicated. Helping pupils see the intention behind the practice can make it seem less 'unusual' and easier to add to what they already know.

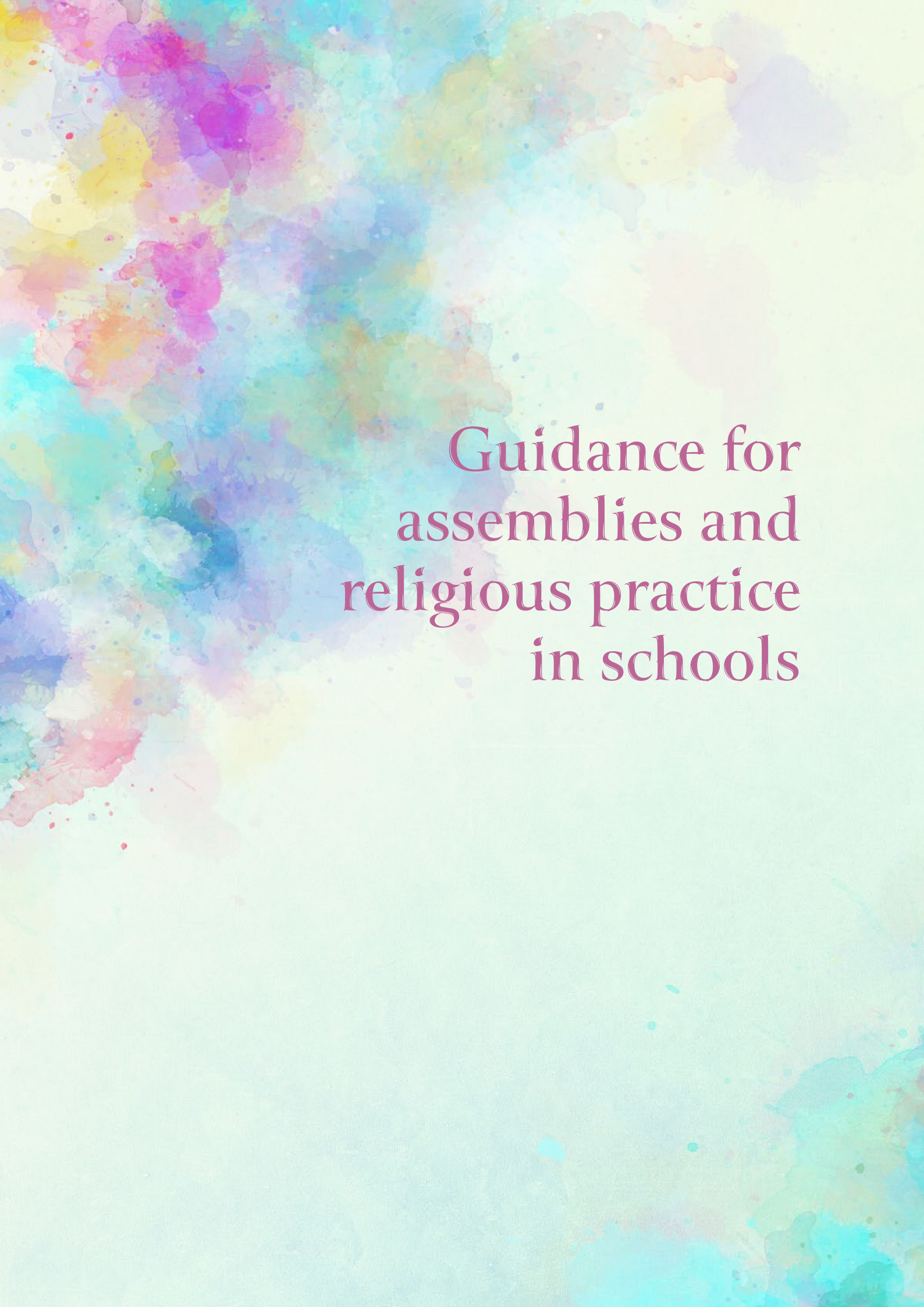
3. What are the themes everyone can share in?

It is now commonplace for many pupils not to have any formal religious connection - in that they do not regularly attend a religious gathering or have any religious practice. Learning about religious practices can sometimes seem to pupils that the topic is what other people do, separate to them. It is important to recognise that, at the heart of these practices are themes common to all people, no matter what their Faith and Belief.

Take these three examples:

- Tibetan prayer flags promote peace, compassion, strength, and wisdom
- a religious pilgrimage can be a search for meaning, purpose, values or truth
- fasting or giving something up can be about becoming closer to God, but it can also be about cultivating gratitude, restraint, and developing affinity for people who are poor and hungry

Although these are examples of religious practices, they are also themes common to human experience. Pupils at primary level will be forming their own perspectives on compassion, or wisdom or gratitude etc. RE lessons about religious practice should focus on learning about and understanding that practice, but also open up discussion and appreciation of the wider themes being expressed.



Guidance for
assemblies and
religious practice
in schools

4. Guidance for assemblies and religious practice in school

4.1 Legal requirements and current practice

The legal requirements for collective worship

The legal requirements for 'collective worship' in schools were first set down in the Education Act (NI) 1947. Collective worship was:

- to occur each school day
- to be for all pupils together (unless this was impracticable)
- not to 'be distinctive of any particular religious denomination'

'Collective worship' is undefined, however practice at the time (and for some schools still) is for a Christian act of worship, usually based around a Christian song or hymn, a Bible reading, with perhaps a short talk and a prayer. The Act does not explicitly specify that the collective act of worship is Christian, however, it is clear from the context, and reference to religious denominations, this is what was meant.

The Act also states parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective

worship, without giving a reason for this. The Act has not been significantly added to by any further legislation.

Current practice

In most schools, the legal requirement for collective worship is commonly expressed through 'assembly'. Practices differ across primary schools, but a daily act of 'collective worship', as outlined above, has often evolved into assemblies, occurring in collections of year groups, depending on the size of the school. It is unusual for assembly at primary level to be daily and is most often weekly or twice weekly (although a collective act of worship might also include a school prayer, or a prayer of gratitude said at break time).



Guidance for assemblies and religious practice in school

Primary assemblies do not always include an act of worship (or what might be considered as religious practice, such as a prayer, or a religious song), however, it is arguable this has sometimes been more widely interpreted to focus on school values or beliefs, which may ask for a collective or personal response.

Integrated primary schools have very different practices regarding assembly. Research for this guidance found that variations occurred in:

- number of assemblies per week / month
- visitors to assemblies (ranging from very few visitors to frequent visitors; religious visitors; no religious visitors; visitors from charities or other organisations; parents to talk about their work / Faith and Belief / charitable activity etc)
- whole school / Key Stages
- who leads assembly (principal, teacher, visitor, pupils)
- In terms of content, research for this guidance found that:
- there was a general trend to have a range of assemblies, and not just religious assemblies
- topics for assembly included Bible stories, religious festivals, values, class topic work, and key times of the year
- prayer most commonly happens in assembly (but occasionally at other times in class)
- Christian-based, or explicitly Christian songs are widely used (but to varying degrees)

4.2 Rationale for assemblies and religious practice in school

There are few recent resources regarding assemblies and / or collective worship in a Northern Irish primary school context. As with resources relating to RE, those that are published, are often written from a faith-based or faith-development perspective and do not always take into consideration how the school community is comprised of a wide variety of faiths and beliefs. It is important therefore, in developing assemblies and religious practice in school life, to first consider why these activities should be part of school at all - beyond the legal requirement to do so.

A rationale for assembly

The following points suggest a rationale for assemblies (of any kind), developed from the research for this guidance. The reasons for assemblies to be part of school life is because they offer opportunities for pupils to experience:

- being together and developing a sense of the school as a community
- inclusion and participation (through, for example, celebration of festivals and special times of the year, class-led assemblies, or the inclusion of visitors)
- recognising and respecting different beliefs and practices

- presentation of and reflection on the values of the school (for example, Integrated values, or values stemming from programmes such as PATHS® (run by Barnardo's) or the UNICEF programme, Rights Respecting Schools)
- communication of key messages (for example, firework, internet, or traffic safety)
- fun and enjoyment of being together (this might include games, quizzes, singing together etc)
- connection with the wider local community, and other people and issues in society, most commonly when visitors are invited

More widely, pupils might develop a sense of:

- belonging, not just in a class, but in school
- diversity, from all the varied backgrounds and beliefs that make up the school (and local) community
- values that are important to the school (and local) community
- respect for others
- awareness of their own safety
- awareness of the needs and welfare of others in society

A rationale for religious practice in school life

More difficult, is developing a rationale for offering religious practice in school. Different to RE, which can be taught objectively (unless otherwise requested), and different to non-religious aspects of assembly where pupils largely receive

information, activity such as prayer, or the singing of religious songs offers participation in a faith practice, or being present during a faith practice, in the context of the existing legislation. As has already been noted in Section 21, if it can be agreed society is becoming less formally religious, to the point that most people are not formally engaged in religious activity, how then can forms of religious practice be included in school?

It might be helpful to consider the legislation in context. The Education Act 1947 reflects the time it was written in, when Christian churches had a more central role in society and church attendance was high. Can it then be said that educational practice should reflect the needs of the society it is preparing pupils to belong to? Additionally, there has been massive societal change since 1947, which other educational development documents have taken into consideration, making reference to, for example, recognition of rights; the need for understanding of and respect for difference; the importance of different perspectives; and the need for schools to be welcoming and inclusive. These documents (some of which are referenced below) also require consideration.³¹

³¹ For example, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1.1.pdf) inform the work of organisations like the Northern Ireland Children's Commissioner (NICCY) (<https://www.niccy.org/what-we-do/childrens-rights/>), the Department of Education's Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education policy (CRED) (<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/cred-policy.pdf>) and the Northern Ireland's Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-30. (<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/final-executive-children-and-young-people%27s-strategy-2020-2030.pdf>). NICIE's Anti-Bias approach to Education should also be considered (<https://nicie.org/wpfd/file/bias-busting-for-beginners-anti-bias-in-education-nicie-2021/>)

Guidance for assemblies and religious practice in school

In this context, and based on the assumption that religious practice in school is not about trying to convert pupils to a religion, the reasons for religious practice to be part of school life might be because it offers opportunities for:

- simple practice of faith and / or reflection
- retaining the tradition of schools in Northern Ireland as places that recognise Faith and Belief as key aspects of identity
- the development of respect for and understanding of diverse Faith and Belief practice in the school community

4.3 Guidance for reviewing and developing religious practice in school

Before making changes to religious practice in school life, it may be helpful to ask some key questions about these practices (with a range of stakeholders, not just teaching staff). These might include:

- What is the current practice?
- What are pupils being asked to do?
- Is this forcing them to take part in a religious practice in some way?
- What options do they have?
- What options might be offered?
- What are the intended outcomes of this practice for pupils?
- What concerns (if any) have been raised about this practice?
- What is the wider context?

Below are some examples (Tables 8-10) as to how these questions might be answered. The responses are included *only as examples*, to help understanding of the questions. These sample responses should not be read as guidance. Guidance for each of these areas is included in the next section.



Table 8: Examples of responses to questions about prayer in school

Question	Example response (not guidance)
What is the current practice?	- There is a short prayer at the close of assembly. This usually reflects something about the content of the assembly
What are pupils being asked to do?	- Pupils are asked to close their eyes and bow their heads
Is this forcing them to take part in a religious practice in some way? What options do they have?	- Possibly. Obviously, nobody can force anyone to actually pray, but there is an expectation everyone will do this together - Pupils aren't presented with an option
What options might be offered?	- Pupils might be asked to join in if they want to - It might be recognised that there are lots of different faiths and beliefs in school and not everyone prays
What are the intended outcomes of this practice for pupils?	- Prayer in assembly allows pupils the opportunity to pray, which is a common belief / practice in society, even if most people don't regularly attend a formal religious gathering - Pupils learn about and develop respect for religious practices, even if they are not from a background of religious belief
What concerns (if any) have been raised about this practice?	- A small number of pupils are withdrawn from assembly, at the point when there is prayer, as parents don't want them taking part in this - A small number of teaching staff are uncomfortable with prayers in assembly and do not lead the prayer at the end
What is the wider context?	- We say our school has a Christian basis, but this has not been defined, so it is open to interpretation

Guidance for assemblies and religious practice in school

Table 9: Examples of responses to questions about religious songs in school

Question	Sample response (not guidance)
What is the current practice?	- Religious (Christian) songs are sung in assembly, usually one each assembly, however, we occasionally have 'song practice' where several songs might be sung
What are pupils being asked to do?	- Pupils are being asked to sing songs from a religious (Christian) perspective - Some of those songs might have specific messages about who God is
Is this forcing them to take part in a religious practice in some way? What options do they have?	- In some ways. Parents have the option of opting their children out of singing these songs if they want to
What options might be offered?	- We do try to avoid songs that have a very clear 'doctrinal' message, for example 'Jesus died for me' or anything about 'sin' - We look for songs that have more open messages, that might have Christian values, values that might be shared with people of other faiths or beliefs
What are the intended outcomes of this practice for pupils?	- Pupils love singing together, and it's good to sing about something meaningful, a value, like how we care for each other, or how we all have worth. We think there is a sense of belonging in this
What concerns (if any) have been raised about this practice?	- So far, no one has objected to the songs we sing, though we are aware that our school community has very diverse Faith and Beliefs, and this might happen
What is the wider context?	- We say our school has a Christian basis because of its history and that everyone is valued, appreciated, respected, and celebrated - We make it really clear to parents that our Christian basis doesn't mean we are trying to make everyone Christian

Table 10: Examples of responses to questions about religious visitors in school

Question	Sample response (not guidance)
What is the current practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Christian clergy and one local church youth worker visit our school assemblies about once a month - We usually have a couple of visitors (often parents) from other faiths, and one Humanist visitor, over the course of the school year
What are pupils being asked to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupils are asked to listen to a short talk from each visitor
Is this forcing them to take part in a religious practice in some way? What options do they have?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not usually. Most of our visitors talk about what they, or their faith community believes, in an objective way. They see themselves as communicating information to the pupils, albeit thoughtfully, for reflection, and different to how pupils are taught in class - We do have one minister who is more forceful in their presentation, and maybe forgets they are not in church. He often talks about what the pupils 'need' to do; it's not really in keeping with how we do things
What options might be offered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We think our visitors add a lot to our school; they are great community connections. We don't really want parents to starting opting their children out of assembly - Maybe we need some guidance for all our visitors, and look to change the presentation of the one visitor we are uncomfortable with
What are the intended outcomes of this practice for pupils?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupils get to hear about faith perspectives, in an inclusive way, from a range of people - Inclusive talks in assembly, give us all something to reflect on together, and it's nice to hear a fresh voice in school - Pupils also have a local community connection; our visitors are all community partners in some way
What concerns (if any) have been raised about this practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some of our parents have been concerned about the messages of speakers in assemblies. We have addressed these honestly, and most of our parents have accepted our approach and not withdrawn their children - We recognise, however, that this might change, if we have visitors who don't follow the objective approach we use in school
What is the wider context?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We say our school has a Christian basis because of its history and that everyone here is welcome - We try to make it clear that although we say we have Christian values, these values are not exclusively Christian, and can - we hope - be shared by people of all faiths and beliefs

Guidance for assemblies and religious practice in school

4.4 Guidance for assemblies that include religious practice

As previously noted, Integrated primary schools work to embrace a shared ethos and principles, however, religious practice in schools can vary. From the research for this guidance, there was strong agreement that Integrated schools are places of diversity (exploring and discovering each other's differences as well as similarities), not neutrality.

Sometimes this exploration means there will be challenges to pupils, staff and parents. Embracing diversity can be an uncomfortable space. From that perspective the following guidance has been provided to allow Integrated primary schools to consider a range of options. While there are certainly better approaches (and approaches to avoid), *there is no one right way* to include religious practices in school. Each school needs to consider what is most appropriate for them, in their own context and development.



Stories

Stories from the Bible, or other religious texts, as well as stories about faith, or people of faith, are common aspects in school - not least in assembly. A diverse approach can include stories from faith perspectives but might also consider what a story says to everyone, not just to people of faith. This way, everyone has a shared experience, listening to, and reflecting on a story with meaning, values or questions to consider.

Example 1: Jesus calms the storm

The story of Jesus calming the wind and the waves, speaks to the Christian belief that Jesus was more than just a person, he was lord over nature. However, it is also a story that tells us about fear and uncertainty, and how sometimes we need other people to help us.

Example 2: Yūsuf in Egypt

The story of Joseph, or, from a Muslim perspective, Yūsuf, includes how he was sold into slavery. While in Egypt, Yūsuf interpreted dreams and discovered a famine was coming. Yūsuf devised a plan to help Egypt make it through the famine, and he was reunited with his family after many years. This story speaks to Muslim belief that Allah gives wisdom, and that Allah has a plan for His followers. However, it is also a story that tells us about favouritism, jealousy and how trials and adversity might be overcome.

Prayer

Prayer has the potential to be a highly controversial practice in school. The research for this guidance demonstrated that, for some people of faith, it is a traditional, essential part of school life, and there is concern about its withdrawal, or its perceived dilution. Other people of faith don't see it as essential and are unconcerned about its removal.

For others of no religious faith, it can be highly inappropriate to include prayer in a school as it is a religious practice, and very different to learning *about* religions. Other people of no religious faith see it as innocuous and have few, if any concerns about it. Perhaps all that can be learned from this wide range of views, is that any change of approach needs to be carried out with sensitive consultation.

Based on the research for this guidance, the table below (Table 11) outlines a range of approaches Integrated primary schools can take regarding prayer in school – most commonly in school assemblies.



Guidance for assemblies and religious practice in school

Table 11: A range of approaches Integrated primary schools can take regarding prayer in school

Approach to prayer	Advantages and disadvantages
Prayers are said and everyone is expected to participate (there is no opt out, or recognition not everyone prays)	<p>Advantages: Prayer is included as part of an approach to diversity in school.</p> <p>Disadvantages: A religious practice is taking place, with the expectation that everyone will take part. This might be considered as undermining diversity, by not recognising it.</p>
No prayers are said	<p>Advantages: All controversy is avoided!</p> <p>Disadvantages: This might be considered as neutrality, rather than religious diversity.</p>
Prayers are said with an 'opt out' (pupils are reminded that they do not have to pray, if it is not part of their belief)	<p>Advantages: This is arguably more inclusive as diversity of belief is being recognised.</p> <p>Disadvantages: Depending on the prayer, this might still be considered divisive as it is the practice for some, but not all pupils.</p>
A thought or an 'affirmation' is said that can be interpreted as a prayer or a reflection	<p>Advantages: This might be a more inclusive approach as it allows everyone to experience a practice together.</p> <p>Disadvantages: This might be considered a dilution of Christian prayer. Depending on the practice, and the language used, it might also be open to misinterpretation, especially by younger pupils.</p> <p>An example from one Integrated primary school pupil council is:</p> <p>[Name of school] Reflection</p> <p>Let us join together this day.</p> <p>Help us be kind to all; to live good lives; help us believe in ourselves; achieve our life goals; to learn together for life.</p> <p>Help us to cherish and celebrate our differences in the [school] community.</p> <p>(We pause now to allow each one of us in our own way, to reflect on our day and on those who care for us.)</p> <p>Difference doesn't matter; united we are better.</p>
There is a non-religious thought / affirmation (this omits the word prayer completely)	<p>Advantages: This removes any controversy around a religious practice.</p> <p>Disadvantages: This might be considered as neutrality, rather than religious diversity.</p> <p>An example might be: We are grateful for the world around us, for the changing seasons, for the food we have to eat and for the shelter we have at home.</p>

One final point to consider is the context in which prayer is taking place. The examples above largely refer to assemblies, however, if a service is taking place in a church (at Harvest, Christmas or Easter for example), it's hard to see how a prayer can be anything other than a prayer. However, there might still be ways for it to be inclusive and reflective, recognising the variety of faiths and beliefs in the school community.

In keeping with how RE is taught, it might be helpful to avoid religious songs that are instructional in a religious way and look for the values everyone can share. The following table (Table 12) sets out a few examples of songs with religious themes or values and how they might be useful or problematic.

Religious songs

Like prayer, religious songs also have the potential to be controversial in school. Similarly, removal of all religious songs avoids controversy, but might also be considered as neutrality. Inclusion of religious songs can be tricky, however, as a sung religious sentiment might, in some ways, be considered a prayer. Research for this guidance showed that some schools are trying to include songs that are less religiously specific, but focus more on values and might therefore be considered more inclusive.



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Table 12: Examples of analysis of songs with religious themes / values

Example of lyrics	Advantages and disadvantages
<p>The Lord said to Noah: there's gonna be a floody, floody The Lord said to Noah: there's gonna be a floody, floody Get those animals out of the muddy, muddy, children of the Lord</p>	<p>This song uses religious language, (and yes, it's about a story where people drown) but it's also a song that, for the most part, tells a story without religious instruction (and it can be fun / funny to sing).</p>
<p>The wise man built his house upon the Rock (x3), And the rains came tumbling down. Chorus: The rains came down and the floods came up (x3), But the house on the Rock stood firm.</p> <p>The foolish man built his house upon the sand (x3), And the rains came tumbling down. Chorus So build your life on the Lord Jesus Christ (x3), And the blessings will come down. The blessings come down as your prayers go up (x3), So build your life on the Lord.</p>	<p>This song tells the story of Jesus' parable of the wise and foolish man. The first two verses simply tell the story, the third verse, however, is instructional, and is likely to be problematic in a school setting. If a school is going to use this song, maybe it's best to omit the third verse?</p>
<p>It's not a secret, It's not fairy tale, It's not made up, Jonah was in the whale, For three whole days, 123!</p>	<p>This song has a very catchy tune, but it may be problematic in that it is very definitely a song of <i>belief about the story</i> (and one that lots of Christians and Jews wouldn't hold to).</p>
<p>I've got peace like a river (x3) I've got peace like a river in my soul Verse 2: I've got love like the ocean Verse 3: I've got joy like a fountain</p>	<p>This is an old Christian song, and while God being the source of peace, joy and love is inferred, it is not explicit, and might then be considered as an inclusive song.</p>
<p>I can make a difference, You can make a difference, We can make a difference in this world of ours. I've got the power to do some good, I've got the power to change my attitude. I've got the power to say if I don't agree, I've got the power to dream what I'd like to be.</p>	<p>This song has faith values, but is a good example of a song everyone can sing. (It is written by Fischy Music who state, 'our roots are in the Christian faith - we provide resources suitable for use in religious and moral education and in church settings.')</p>

Example of lyrics	Advantages and disadvantages
<p>Once in royal David's city, stood a lowly cattle shed, Where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed: Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little child. And through all his wondrous childhood, he would honour and obey, Love and watch the gentle mother, in whose tender arms he lay. Christian children all should be, kind, obedient, good as he.</p>	<p>This is a well-known carol which, for the most part, tells the story of Jesus birth. There are certainly some statements of faith - though maybe there is more leeway for this at a carol service in a local church. The traditional third verse (included) might be problematic, however, as it states every child should be Christian. This is in the context of being kind, obedient and good - but is open to misinterpretation in a diverse community. It might be helpful to omit the third verse (there are still five others).</p>
<p>See him lying on a bed of straw, A draughty stable with an open door; Mary cradling the babe she bore - The Prince of glory is his name. O now carry me to Bethlehem, To see the Lord of love again; Just as poor as was the stable then, The Prince of glory when he came!</p> <p>Mine are riches, from your poverty, From your innocence eternity; Mine forgiveness by your death for me, Child of sorrow for my joy. O now carry me to Bethlehem, To see the Lord of love again; Just as poor as was the stable then, The Prince of glory when he came!</p>	<p>This is another well-known carol, which, for the most part tells the story of the birth of Jesus in simple, reasonably modern terms. The last verse is much more 'confessional', but again, maybe there is more leeway for this at a carol service in a local church.</p>

Guidance for assemblies and religious practice in school

Religious visitors

Local clergy, church workers (often youth workers) and people from faiths and beliefs other than Christian have been a regular feature of assemblies in most Integrated primary schools. While this is an established practice, it is worth considering the criteria for religious visitors in school before making an invitation or responding to a request.

Reasons to allow visits might include:

- pupils hear about a range of faith perspectives, directly from people of faith
- a visitor to assembly can provide a fresh voice, and add something for the whole school community to reflect on together
- religious visitors are part of a local community connection (the place of worship might be nearby; some of the pupils might be part of this faith community; some of the pupils might attend youth clubs / youth organisations run by this faith community)

Questions to ask about visitors might include:

- what is the intention of the visit? What does the visitor see as the purpose for the visit?
- what does the visitor know about your school? What do they need to know? (Especially about approaches in class and in assembly)

- how will the visitor be perceived by parents / carers? Is some explanation / communication needed?

Research for this guidance highlighted how these visits worked best when visitors understood how the context of their visit to an Integrated school, may be different from a visit to another school. It is also helpful when visitors take the same objective approach to religion, as in the teaching of RE, talking from a faith perspective about their belief or practice, and not assuming that everyone in the room believes the same. Visitors should ideally be taking the same approach to prayer as the school. Sample advice or guidance for religious visitors has been provided in the next section.

Religious services

Services, conducted in a (Christian) church building, are also a feature of many Integrated primary schools. These are most commonly at Christmas, but this might also include other occasions such as Harvest or First Holy Communion. It is important to see these as a separate category from assembly (assemblies are in school and occur frequently) as they occur out of school, require parental consent for pupils to attend, and happen infrequently. They also take place in a church, so, arguably, it seems reasonable there is more leeway for what can happen in this setting, than what might happen in an assembly in school.

Nevertheless, church services are events that the whole school is invited to and, if part of a Christian basis is to be welcoming, schools might consider how pupils, parents and community partners of other faiths and beliefs might feel included.

The following questions might be considered:

- How can the elements of the service be inclusive? Can songs, prayers and readings, for example, be done in such a way that they are (of course) Christian, but invite others in? (For example, explanation of a reading, or a belief might be appropriate, as a means of helping people not of Christian faith understand what is happening, as well as recognising that this is a school event, and there is a range of Faith and Belief in the school community. Sometimes the acknowledgement of difference is enough for people to feel part of an event, even if they don't feel completely comfortable)
- Are there themes everyone can identify with, even if not everyone shares the same beliefs? (For example, at Christmas, themes of belonging, peace, not being afraid, family, gratitude etc are all part of the birth of Jesus, and are of importance to everyone)
- What do people of other faith and no religious faith in the school community think about these events? How do they feel included or excluded?

Assembly content

As noted previously, prescribed 'collective worship' has evolved into 'assemblies', over the last few decades. Integrated schools conduct a wide range of assemblies, some of which are not overtly religious in content – though a prayer or religious song might be included.

Approaches to assembly can include:

- religious times of the year and festivals (some schools work from a multi-cultural calendar³²)
- presentation of classwork related to a topic
- school values (this might include Integrated Education Month, but also values through programmes like Rights Respecting Schools)
- current affairs (assemblies might respond to a topic in the news such as an election, a disaster, the Olympics, or local events)
- wellbeing (this might include road safety, internet safety, but also emotional literacy and aspects of programmes like PATHS®)
- school wide topics (such as ECO schools, Science week, or Maths week, World Book Day)
- societal issues and charities that address these (such as Storehouse, Dog's Trust, NSPCC etc)

³² An example from National PTA can be seen here: <https://www.pta.org/docs/default-source/files/runyourpta/2023/diversity-equity-inclusion/multicultural-calendar-2023-2024.pdf> Other examples can be found online (Twinkl for example). Festivals throughout the year are also available in book form, for example, 'A Year Full of Celebrations and Festivals: Over 90 fun and fabulous festivals from around the world!' by Clare Grace.

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4.5 Guidance for religious visitors / speakers

Each Integrated school 'has a duty to be open in its relationships with schools, learning partnerships, churches and other local institutions'.³³ In the context of visitors from religious backgrounds, research for this guidance suggested these visits work best when visitors understand what an Integrated school is, how RE is taught, how prayer is led and about any other relevant practices in class / assembly (depending on the setting for the visit). This section sets out sample language that might be helpful for communicating with (potential) speakers in school.

Guidance for religious visitors in [insert name of school]

Thank you for agreeing to visit [insert name of school]. We really enjoy people coming in and sharing their experience with us. You may not have visited an Integrated school before, and so we have provided some information that might be helpful for you to know before you talk to our pupils.

Integrated schools

Integrated schools now have the following legal definition:

“Integrated Education” means the education together, in an Integrated school, of:

- a. *those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons;*
- b. *those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not; and*
- c. *those of different abilities.*

An “Integrated school” is a school which intentionally supports, protects and advances an ethos of diversity, respect and understanding between those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none, between those of different socio-economic backgrounds and between those of different abilities

³³ The Statement of Principles for Integrated Education, Social Responsibility.



There are four core Principles of Integrated Education

- **Equality:** We aim to ensure school life reflects diversity in pupil intake, in our curriculum, or in our celebration of culture and identity
- **Faith & Values:** Integrated schools emerged from, and are guided by Christian principles, principles shared with people of other faiths and beliefs. We aim to create an environment where people of all faiths and beliefs are respected and valued. We encourage religious and community leaders to visit and participate in school activities so as pupils are introduced to the ideas, beliefs and practices of the major world religions and Humanist philosophies, in an age-appropriate way
- **Parental Involvement:** The support and commitment of parents is a fundamental element of our school
- **Social Responsibility:** We deliver the curriculum in a way that reflects the diversity of our school population, and to help every pupil develop personally, socially, intellectually and spiritually. Pupils are encouraged to develop mutual respect and understanding towards others, developing tolerance and trust of those who are different. Our school has relationships with other schools, learning partnerships, churches and other local groups

Our school

[Insert name of school] has been an Integrated school since [insert date]. There are currently [insert number of pupils] at [insert name of school]. [Insert any other basic information that might be relevant to a visitor.]

We want to offer our pupils (as well as staff and the wider school community) the opportunity to learn about each other, and other people in society.

Everyone is important, but everyone is not the same, and so we say our school is a diverse place, not a neutral place.

Talking to pupils

Because there is diversity in the faiths and beliefs in our school community, we ask visitors to:

- Speak from 'I' statements, or 'we' statements when talking about your faith / belief community or Faith and Belief practices. This is in keeping with how we teach Religious Education (RE) where pupils learn objectively about what people believe
- We're really keen to hear about what you believe; but please don't tell the pupils what they should believe
- Remember that our youngest pupils are 4 years old, and our oldest pupils are 11 years old, so try to talk about things they can easily understand

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- *We have a very wide range of families in our school. To include everybody, we would ask you to avoid talking about 'Mummy and Daddy', but to include everyone by saying 'parents and people at home' [or whatever language is commonly used in school]*
- *Try to find ways to help our pupils engage and understand what you do. Choose stories or topics that everyone can reflect on, whether they have a religious faith or not*
- *Assemblies have a broad range of pupils, if you are speaking in assembly, please, stay away from topics that are controversial or might be misinterpreted*
- *If you are visiting a class, and there are topics you want to talk about that you think might be controversial, please be aware there are likely to be a range of different views in the class and wider school community. Agree the topics you would like to talk to the pupils about with the class teacher beforehand*
- *If you are going to say a short prayer at the end of assembly, our school approach to prayer is to [school to insert] and we would like you to do this also. If this is something you are uncertain about, or uncomfortable with, a member of staff will be able to do this*

4.6 Guidance regarding pupils opting out of RE and / or collective worship

What is 'opting out'?

RE and Collective Worship, by law, must take place in school, however pupils' participation is not mandatory. Pupils under 18 cannot excuse themselves from RE and Collective Worship, but parents may request their children 'opt out'.

The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, Article 21 states:

(5) If the parent of any pupil requests that the pupil should be wholly or partly excused from attendance at Religious Education or collective worship or from both, then, until the request is withdrawn, the pupil shall be excused from such attendance in accordance with the request

Additionally, Regulation 6 and Schedule 3 of the Education (School Information and Prospectuses) Regulations (NI) 2003 requires schools to publish information in their prospectuses about RE provided at the school and any arrangements for the exercise by parents of their rights of withdrawal.³⁴

³⁴ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/statutory-curriculum#:~:text=Regulation%206%20and%20Schedule%203,of%20their%20rights%20of%20withdrawal>

Practical considerations for opting out

While withdrawal from RE and / or collective worship is a parental right, the research for this guidance found there are often practical difficulties for schools - most commonly in relation to physical space and staffing. Smaller schools, or schools that have outgrown their campuses, may struggle to find available space for pupils opting out. Similarly, schools with smaller staff teams, or more generally, schools where the staff team are fully committed, may struggle to find cover for supervision.

It is also worth noting how, while opting out is a legal right, it is not always a helpful solution for parents or carers. In the research for this guidance, the number of pupils opting out of RE or collective worship were not reported to be large in number. Some parents highlighted how opting out meant separating their child from whatever the rest of the class or school was doing - and not an option they chose lightly.

Inviting in

In the research for this guidance, some school leaders proposed that the best approach for Integrated primary schools was for RE and assembly to be as inclusive as they could be, so that few, if any pupils, were opted out. It is important to recognise that school activities can't always be chosen on the basis that no one will object. At the core of Integrated Education is exploration of diversity, and,

depending on the event / activity, this can be uncomfortable for some. However, there is merit in considering the basis on which parents are choosing to withdraw their children, and if more inclusive approaches can be taken - without limiting the exploration of diversity. There are not always easy or simple solutions to managing pupils who have been opted out (see below) and ideally school activities should seek, as far as possible, to invite in.

Guidance for provision of alternative activities when pupils opt out

Recent research³⁵ into activities offered to pupils who had been opted out of RE and collective worship included: reading, educational games, aspects of the curriculum such as Literacy, ICT or PDMU, 'fun' activities and helping a member of staff.

Being opted out of RE or collective worship should not lead to the pupil feeling they are being ostracised or punished.

Schools need to take into consideration:

- available resources, specifically space and staff
- the numbers of pupils being withdrawn
- the length of time pupils are being withdrawn
- the activity pupils are being withdrawn from

³⁵ Parents for Inclusive Education, 'On a Mission: Religious practices in NI primary schools', P.25

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- the needs of those specific pupils
- if pupils who are opting out of assemblies have missed any key information in their absence

Given these variations, it is important alternative activities respond to the context of the activity being opted out of. The following examples might be helpful to consider:

- regular (weekly) withdrawal from RE lessons will require more attention to preparation than withdrawal from a 'one off' activity
- an alternative activity to a 'fun' event (young people from a local faith community taking sports / games / quizzes, for example) might also be something 'fun'. The use of a standard curriculum activity seems an unfair alternative
- for withdrawal from a religious aspect in an assembly (which might be only a few minutes), reading a book, or playing a simple (short) game seems appropriate

The perspectives of parents who had withdrawn their children from certain activities, were included in the research for this guidance. The number of parents was much too small a sample to draw any firm conclusions, however, schools might consider the following aspects:

- recognise the needs of the individual pupil, or group of pupils. Some pupils will be completely unbothered by doing something different - others will feel very embarrassed by this
- consider how the alternative activity responds to the main activity. Helping a teacher might be an enjoyable activity (depending on the specific pupil-teacher relationship!) for a one-off fun event, or a short period of time, but not for regular replacement of a lesson
- communicate to parents what the school can offer. Help parents understand how school resources might be stretched, but also reassure them that the welfare of their children is important and how you want their time to be used meaningfully







Communication with parents

5. Communication with parents

Each Integrated primary school's RE and collective worship (or religious practice) policies should be written with the involvement of all stakeholders (particularly staff, parents and governors) 'so as they reflect and respect the diversity within the school community.'³⁶ Sample policies for RE and collective worship / religious practice have been included in the appendices. In addition, schools might also consider communication in the following areas.

The ethos of the school needs to be presented regularly

It is necessary to ensure 'parents are made fully aware of the school's Integrated ethos',³⁷ and so it might be helpful to take regular opportunities to remind parents of how the school is a diverse, not neutral, place. (The research for this guidance suggested this is a common misconception.) Diversity is the context for RE and aspects of Faith and Belief present in school life - and although this might be uncomfortable for some, there is an expectation that people will be part of a practice / event / celebration that isn't 'theirs' but is

important to others. For example, although they are not Catholic, they might attend First Holy Communion, to be supportive of those pupils and families who are. Or, although they are not royalist in outlook, they might attend (or permit their children to attend) a Coronation or Jubilee party, to be supportive of those pupils and families who are. It might also be helpful for parents to be assured that their attendance at or acceptance of an event, does not signify their wider support - only that they are respecting the culture of others.

There needs to be clarity that the school is not trying to convert or indoctrinate pupils

Although this should go without saying, it is worth considering that while teachers experience school life at close quarters, parents only experience certain parts. Traditional, but unexamined religious practices in school, or perhaps an overzealous religious visitor, can leave parents wondering if the school, or certain teachers within the school, want to promote Christianity. It is therefore worth being explicit about how the school respects all faiths and beliefs and does not want to convert pupils.

³⁶ The Statement of Principles for Integrated Education, Equality.

³⁷ The Statement of Principles for Integrated Education, Parental Involvement.

Communication with parents

Removing any sense of pupils being manipulated or indoctrinated may then result in greater acceptance of religious practices which, while not liked, might be tolerated as part of the diverse approach of an Integrated school.

Information regarding religious visitors or religious events could be shared

While it is accepted that visits from religious visitors can sometimes be made at the last minute, it might be helpful for schools to try to be more open and communicate not only who is visiting school, but where they are from, and why they are visiting. After the visit, it might also be helpful for a short update about their visit to be communicated through social media. Similarly, before a religious event (such as a church service, or the visit of a group of young people from a nearby faith community) it might be helpful for the school to communicate what these events will be comprised of, and how they fit within the ethos of the school. Both of these approaches would help to keep communication open, and perhaps lessen misinterpretation of what is taking place.







Appendices

6. Appendices

6.1 Suggested activities for the Framework for Teaching Inclusive RE in Integrated Primary Schools across key stages

The following activities have been developed from the 'opportunities for pupils' suggested in the Non-Statutory Guidance Materials for Primary RE (CCEA 2014)³⁸ with additional suggestions for activities based on the study of faiths and beliefs other than Christianity.

6.1.1 Foundation Stage

Overview of outcomes

Pupils will:

- recognise how people have different faiths and beliefs
- understand how some people have stories that are special to them, because they believe these stories tell them about God, and how they should live
- understand how some people have religious practices, and begin to develop the concept of worship
- understand how religious people have special times relating to their faith

- develop experience of religious stories, festivals, appropriate religious artefacts, and religious buildings
- communicate their awareness and understanding of Faith and Belief in a variety of age-appropriate ways, for example, through talking, questioning, artwork and play

Foundation Stage: Themes 1, 3 & 6 - Religious Writing, Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures, and World Religions and Worldviews

Suggestions for the above themes have not been added for reasons outlined in more detail in Section 3.3.

It is suggested that pupils' concepts of Religious Writing are developed through the use of religious stories, such as stories about Jesus, or stories from other religions, that may be part of the Festivals and Special Times theme, rather than considering the genre of religious writing in Years 1 and 2. Pupils' concepts of World Religions and Worldviews can also be developed through the Festivals and Special Times theme, as well as Places of Worship, with more focus on the components of a religion starting in Years 3 and beyond.

³⁸ <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/religious-education-primary-school-non-statutory-guidance-materials>

Foundation Stage: Theme 2 - Jesus

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- begin to understand who Jesus was
- learn about some of the main events in the life of Jesus
- understand some of the teaching of Jesus
- understand how Jesus is special and important for Christians, and how many faiths and beliefs have special and important people

Suggested basis for activities at P1

- talk about and describe people who are special to them (and perhaps people who have a special role in school)
- begin to talk about Jesus and appreciate him as a special person for Christians. An introduction might include how he lived a long time ago, in a different part of the world, and how he might have looked and dressed
- use simple, accessible stories about Jesus to convey the type of person he was. These might include teaching about not worrying (Matthew 6:25-27); feeding thousands of people (Matthew 14: 13-21); or Jesus and children (Matthew 19:13-14)
- explore the stories of Jesus birth, including the announcement by the angel Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:26-38); the journey to Bethlehem (Luke 2:4-5); the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:6-7); the shepherds, the wise men, and Herod (Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 2:1-12)

Suggested basis for activities at P2

- talk about people special to us; and Jesus as someone special to Christians. - develop understanding of Jesus as someone who taught / teaches people how to live, and how Christians often say they 'follow' Jesus by reading about him or praying to him. Within the knowledge of the class there may be examples of other people who are special in a religious way
- understand Jesus was part of a family, but he also gathered lots of people around him (Luke 2:42-52; and Matthew 4:18-22)
- use simple, accessible stories about Jesus to convey the type of person he was. These might include teaching about not judging others (Matthew 7:1-6); Jesus healing people (different examples in Matthew 8); Jesus calming the storm (Matthew 8:23-27)
- begin to understand how Jesus sometimes used stories (parables) to teach people. A simple example might be the wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24-29)
- recap the story of Jesus birth, including the announcement by the angel Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:26-38); the journey to Bethlehem (Luke 2:4-5); the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:6-7); the shepherds, the wise men, and Herod (Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 2:1-12)

Foundation Stage: Theme 4 - Places of Worship

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- begin to understand the concepts of faith and worship
- learn about places of worship in their locality, considering the activity that happens in them and what they mean to people of faith
- understand places of worship are meeting points for communities of people of faith
- begin to understand religious practices such as prayer, worship through music and the reading or reciting of religious writing

Suggestions for activities at P1 and P2

- ideally, each year group would have the opportunity for a visit to a place of worship, and to meet and talk to people (both men and women) who are active in that faith community
- a visit could be preceded by some discussion of what pupils will find in a place of worship, not least developing understanding of what is meant by 'worship' and 'faith'
- worship is when people make something really important. Discussion might begin with things pupils think is important (food, clothing, family etc) but move on to how worship is something more. In a religious sense, it is about love for God (or gods). Worship might also be thought of as showing gratitude - and people of faith use various ways to show what God means to them
- the visit might be followed by some discussion of what pupils saw / experienced, with opportunity to talk about any religious practices they saw / heard about, as well as aspects such as architecture, artwork, symbols, furniture etc

Foundation Stage: Theme 5 - Festivals and Special Times

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- consider their own 'special times' and why they are important
- begin to understand why people have 'special times' and why they are important
- become familiar with Christmas and Easter as special times for Christians, as well as other festivals and special times for classmates from other faiths and beliefs
- begin to consider how they can participate in and contribute to other pupils' / people's special times, even if they do not share the same faith or belief

Suggested basis for activities at P1 & 2

- talk about special times in general, such as birthdays, holidays, trips, visits or having visitors and recognise why special events are important to us
- talk about how there are often special occasions which are significant to lots of people - sometimes these have religious reasons or religious stories related to them
- begin to know the key elements of the Christmas story (see Jesus theme), and become familiar with some of the associated traditions (for example Advent calendars, Christmas trees, carols)
- begin to know the key elements of the Easter story, (without getting into the details of the crucifixion) perhaps as a time of new life and celebration, and how this can be marked through church services, holidays, Easter eggs
- activities relating to festivals and special times for other faiths and beliefs at Foundation Stage might be based on other faiths represented in class. Or, in the absence of other faiths in class, explore religious festivals that connect to topic work (such as Diwali, or Chinese New Year) and explore the key reasons, stories and activity around this festival or special time

Foundation Stage: Sub-theme 1 - Moral and Spiritual Values

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- understand that everyone, no matter who they are, is valued and special
- begin to understand that what they say and do is important and how they treat other people matters
- understand how people make their own decisions about what is right and wrong, and how to treat other people, but they can also listen to advice from others

Suggested basis for activities at P1 & P2

- use PDMU / Communication activities that demonstrate to the pupils how everyone is unique and important, in class, and to their family and friends, but also because every person has worth
- hear and talk about stories of belonging and relating to each other
- hear and talk about stories of how we can listen to the advice of other people
- explore stories in the Bible that articulate Christian belief that people are unique and valuable to God (for example the lost coin, or lost sheep)
- begin to understand that Christians believe that God loves everyone
- from the perspective that emotions are part of who we are, and for many people of faith God made created these emotions in people, pupils might begin to build simple, emotional language, and explore their feelings in various contexts
- reflect on what is needed in their classroom / school / home for it to be a healthy, caring environment
- explore stories that have moral meanings or life lessons. www.aesopfables.com has a long list of fables, with simple texts, which could be used for (non-religious) discussion about the consequences of actions. Better texts might be located elsewhere, but this web site is a useful overview. At Foundation Stage stories might include The Ant and the Dove; The Frogs and the Well; and The Hare and the Tortoise
- more contemporary stories might include books such as David gets in Trouble, Horton Hears a Who and What if everybody did that?

Foundation Stage: Sub-theme 2 - The Natural World

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- understand how different faiths and beliefs often promote appreciation of the natural world
- understand that no matter what faith or beliefs people have, human beings are creative
- begin to understand how people of different faiths and beliefs believe that caring for the natural world is important, and that human beings have responsibilities

Suggested basis for activities at P1 & P2

- explore the variety and beauty of the natural world, with opportunities for recognition of pupils' descriptions and feelings in response to it. This might best connect with a literacy or art lesson, where pupils respond to their collective experience - perhaps as part of a trip to the park or the school grounds
- develop awareness that sometimes people of faith believe that God created the world and cares for it and that people should care for it too
- pupils might be encouraged to explore and respond to aspects of the natural world such as insects and minibeads, any animals or birds in or near the school grounds, available flowers, plants and trees
- teachers might find ways for pupils to express gratitude for the natural world around them. This might be from a perspective of religious faith, or simply from belief that the natural world is important, and people are thankful for it. This might include a class gratitude list, paintings or other art work
- pupils might consider some of the ways they could look after the classroom, the school grounds and the environment around them, even if it isn't all 'natural'

6.1.2 Key Stage 1

Overview of outcomes

Pupils will:

- recognise how there is a broad range of Faith and Beliefs
- widen their understanding of Faith and Belief, especially in their school and local contexts
- understand how Faith and Belief are very important to many people and affects how they live
- develop experience through a variety of source material, including, for example, the Bible and other religious books, religious artefacts, religious buildings in the local environment and people sharing their experiences of Faith and Belief
- communicate their awareness and understanding of Faith and Belief in a variety of ways, for example, through talking, writing and art
- be able to reflect on their learning

Key Stage 1: Theme 1 - Religious Writing

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- become familiar with the Bible as one source of religious stories and teachings, important to people of many different faiths and beliefs
- understand the Bible is a collection of writing gathered over a long period of time
- understand how other religions have different religious texts such as the Qur'an, or the Tripitaka
- understand how people of faith value religious writing

Suggested basis for activities at P3

- talk about favourite books; pupils say why they like them. Link to stories they are already familiar with that might have a moral or a message
- talk about and recognise how important and influential writing / books are in many people's lives, linking to an example of a religious story some people value
- learn about how Christians often describe the Bible as the 'Word of God' because they believe it tells them about who God is (use an example of a story such as Moses and the Ten Commandments, or Jesus' teaching)
- learn how the Bible and other texts are used, for example, in a church / religious service or in personal readings
- hear a range of age-appropriate Bible stories or stories from other religious texts (linking to other themes); respond sensitively and ask questions about these stories

Suggested basis for activities at P4

- talk about different types of books pupils own, and different types of books in the library, linking to the idea of different types of genre, developing this towards considering how some writing is considered special in a sacred or religious sense. Consider books pupils are aware of that are considered special in some way
- explore how the Bible contains different types of writing including stories, poetry, letters and wise sayings and contains an account of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and that the life of Jesus is in the part of the Bible Christians call the 'New Testament'
- examine further how the Bible is an important book not just for Christians, but for other religions such as Judaism and Islam (perhaps use an example of a story all three religions share, such as a story related to Abraham)
- understand how stories in religious writing can be used as a guide to how to treat other people (stories might include Jesus teaching on loving your enemies in Luke chapter 6 - or an extract from another religious text)
- learn how Bible stories are used in Christian ceremonies such as a wedding, or at a baptism of a baby
- hear a range of age-appropriate Bible stories (linking to other themes) or stories from other religious texts; respond sensitively and ask questions about these stories

Key Stage 1: Theme 2 - Jesus

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- develop their understanding of who Jesus was
- learn more about the main events in the life of Jesus
- further understand some of the teaching of Jesus and why many of his teachings are valued and respected by people of other faiths and beliefs
- understand how Jesus is special and important for Christians, and how many faiths and beliefs have special and important people

Suggested basis for activities at P3

- recap on the idea of people who are special in some way. Develop understanding of Jesus as a real person who lived in Palestine two thousand years ago. This might include finding this on a map, and thinking about the language he spoke, how he dressed and how people might have lived at that time including diet and / or the type of homes they lived in
- expand understanding of the birth of Jesus to include the visit of Mary to Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-45); and Jesus being brought to Simeon in the temple (Luke 2:22-40)
- explore Jesus' teaching about love for neighbours (Matthew 22:34-40)
- explore Jesus' parables of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:10-14) and the talents (Matthew 25:14-30)
- explore the stories of Jesus changing water to wine (John 2:1-11); and raising a girl to life and healing a woman (Mark 5: 21-43)
- explore the death and resurrection in age-appropriate ways based on Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (John 12:12-16); the Last Supper (Luke 22:7-20); his betrayal and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:47-53); his death and burial (Luke 23:44-56); the resurrection and the empty tomb (Luke 24:1-12)

Suggested basis for activities at P4

- further develop understanding of Jesus in history, and how people might have lived at that time including diet, buildings, growing their own food. P4 might also be a good time to make the link to how Jesus' stories are always told in this context - and in the context of Roman occupation of Palestine
- expand understanding of the birth of Jesus to include the Roman census (Luke 2:1-3); the angel's warning to Joseph about Herod (Matthew 2:13); the flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:14-18); and the return to Nazareth (Matthew 2:19-23)
- begin to develop understanding of how Jesus taught his followers to pray (and his relationship to God as his father) (Luke 11:1-4)
- explore Jesus' teaching about how everyone is important to God (Matthew 6:25-44); and forgiving your enemies (Matthew 5:43-48)
- explore Jesus' parables of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32) and the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10)
- explore the stories of Jesus and the large catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11); and the healing of two blind men (Matthew 9:27-31)
- expand the story of Jesus' death and resurrection to include Peter's denial (Luke 22:54-62); and the trial and crucifixion (Luke 22:66-71, Luke 23:1-43)
- stemming from the stories of Jesus, begin to explore the Christian belief that Jesus is the Son of God
- stemming from the Easter story, explore the Christian belief that Jesus is alive today and 'following' Jesus is about acting as he would act

Key Stage 1: Theme 3 - Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- Become familiar with well-known stories in the Bible
- Understand how these stories are important to people of different faiths (particularly Christianity, Islam and Judaism)
- Understand that people of all faiths and beliefs read these stories differently, some people believe them to be events that happened as recorded, others see them as stories with a meaning (like myths, fables or parables)

Suggested basis for activities at P3

- explore ancient stories from the Bible beginning with the stories of creation. (chapter markers in the Bible have been included but a simpler text from a children's Bible would be better for Key Stage 1)
- explore the story of creation (Genesis 1 and 2). This account of creation might be linked to a simple classification of types of animals and plants; to the natural world RE sub-theme (see later in Framework); compare to one or more of the Hindu creation stories (if Hinduism is being taught at P3) or any other creation stories. Responses here might include artwork, music or drama
- explore the story of Adam and Eve and the apple (Genesis 2:4 - 3:24). This might include things pupils are 'tempted' to do, even if they are wrong, as well as how this story is part of how Christians understand not everything is right in the world - and people don't always make the best decisions
- explore the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-10). This is quite a dark story for Key Stage 1 and may not be something teachers want to cover. There is no necessity to do so - however it does link to the actions of Adam and Eve in the previous story. Pupils might consider themes of jealousy and anger
- explore the story of the Flood (Genesis 7-9). Again, this is a dark story of destruction. Pupils should recognise it is an ancient story (there are other flood narratives) and it tells something about how people thought about God at that time. It might also be linked to WAU aspects such as conservation and extinction

Suggested basis for activities at P4

- continue exploring ancient stories from the Bible with the stories of Abraham and his family
- although these are ancient narratives, and not always easily understood at Year 4, Abraham is a key figure in Judaism, Christianity and Islam (the stories of Hagar and Ishmael are remembered in the Hajj pilgrimage, for example). These stories also provide a link from the early stories of Genesis to Joseph and then to Moses and the exodus. The following is a list of several key stories
- chapter markers in the Bible have been included but a simpler text from a children's Bible would be better for Key Stage 1
- explore the story of how Abram leaves home and God's promise to him (Genesis 12:1-9). Pupils might consider the ideas of Faith and Belief in promises made, both within the story and in their own experience
- explore the story of Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16). It is worth considering what happens to Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis 21 and how they were looked after by God. This may open up conversation about different types of families; the importance of human life; or how children are looked after
- explore the story of the birth of Isaac and Abraham's testing (Genesis 21: 1-7, 22:1-18). Pupils might consider the celebrations in a family when a child is born, or what the story might be trying to say regarding the age of Abraham and Sarah

Suggested basis for activities at P3

- explore the story of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). Again, pupils might be encouraged to consider this as an ancient story about human development and human pride - not just languages. It might prompt some discussion about languages the pupils can speak / are aware of, and the similarities and differences between these

Suggested basis for activities at P4

- explore the story of Jacob and Esau falling out (Genesis 25, 27). Pupils might consider aspects of fairness in the story, as well as fairness in their own experience

- explore the story of Jacob's children (Genesis 29 and 30). This is a curious story - and potentially a difficult one for Years 4 pupils to make sense of - nevertheless, it does explain the children of Jacob and how there will, in time, be twelve tribes of Israel

- explore the story of Jacob meeting Esau (Genesis 33). Pupils might consider aspects of guilt, fear and forgiveness in the relationship between the two brothers. The generosity of Esau is a key aspect in the story

Key Stage 1: Theme 4 - Places of Worship

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- learn about places of worship, especially in their locality, considering their purpose, what happens in them and what they mean to people of faith
- develop an understanding of religious practices such as prayer, worship through music, the reading or reciting of religious writing and teaching
- also develop some understanding of special religious practices, such as baptism or communion
- understand the difference between a building used (sometimes called a church) and a faith community (which Christians also refer to as church)

Suggested basis for activities at P3 and P4

- talk about how 'worship' is when people make something really important. Discussion might begin with things pupils think is important (food, clothing, family etc) but move on to how worship is something more. In a religious sense, it is about love for God (or Gods). Worship might also be thought of as showing gratitude; people of faith use various ways to show what God (or Gods) means to them
- talk about how there are special days for different faiths. For example, for Christians (Sunday), for Jews (Friday into Saturday), and for Muslims (Friday). There might be some comparison about what the activities for each of these groups involves. Acknowledge how people of the same faith, will have different practices
- recognise places of worship in their locality (both obvious, for example a local church, and 'hidden' for example a Muslim prayer room). Ideally, each year group would have the opportunity for a visit to a place of worship, either in-person or virtual
- a visit could be preceded by some discussion of what pupils will find in a place of worship, and followed by some discussion of what they saw / experienced, including relevant practices such as prayer, worship through music, the reading or reciting of religious writing and teaching
- as a response to a visit (in-person or virtual), pupils might create their own: place of worship (pow) model; pow plan; or artwork relating to that faith
- on a visit, pupils might have the opportunity to experience and discuss the atmosphere of a place of worship, as well as aspects such as its architecture, artwork, symbols, furniture etc

Suggested basis for activities at P3 and P4

- recognise that key times are often important for people of faith and special events might happen at places of worship, for example baptism, communion or marriage. Pupils might begin to recognise some of the symbolism used on these occasions
- talk about the Catholic sacrament of reconciliation and what it means to pupils taking part in this, as well as what 'confession' might mean more generally
- talk about Holy Communion and what it means to pupils taking part in their first Holy Communion, as well as how communion might be celebrated in other Christian churches
- pupils can be given opportunity to explore their own thoughts and feelings about the importance of 'belonging', being welcomed and being part of a family or community



Key Stage 1: Theme 5 - Festivals and Special Times

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- become familiar with the main Christian festivals and special times and understand why they are important to Christians
- become increasingly familiar with other festivals and special times of importance to pupils of a variety of faiths and understand why they are important
- consider their own 'special times' in the year, and why they are important
- begin to consider how they can participate in and contribute to other pupils' / people's special times, even if they do not share the same faith or belief

Suggested basis for activities at P3

- explore the key elements of the Christmas story (see Jesus theme), and become familiar with some of the associated traditions (for example Advent calendars, Christingles or the Crib) - including traditions relating to Christian faith communities in other parts of the world
- explore the key elements of the Easter story (see Jesus theme), and become familiar with some of the associated traditions (for example hot cross buns, palm crosses, Easter Sunday dawn service) - including traditions relating to Christian faith communities in other parts of the world
- learn about the importance of the sacrament of Reconciliation in the Catholic tradition
- explore Hindu festivals (or festivals relating to whichever world religion is studied in Year 3). This might include Diwali, Holi, and Hindu marriage ceremonies (see World Religions theme)
- activities relating to festivals and special times for other faiths and beliefs at Years 3 and 4 could be based on other faiths represented in class, faiths evident in the local community and what is current (using a multi-cultural calendar)

Suggested basis for activities at P4

- explore the key elements of the Christmas and Easter stories (see Jesus theme), and become familiar with some of the traditions associated with each - including traditions relating to Christian faith communities in other parts of the world
- extending knowledge of other Christian festivals might also include Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday and Lent, which is often used by Christians as a time for preparing for Easter. The themes of denial and self-control allow for engagement from all pupils as 'fasting' is a common practice not just in other religions, but in societal experience, such as fasting from food (5:2 diet) or a digital 'fast'
- explore Buddhist festivals (or festivals relating to whichever world religion is studied in Year 4), such as Wesak, which celebrates the Buddha's birth, death and enlightenment. Celebrations include lamps, processions and firework displays (see World Religions theme)
- learn about the importance of first Holy Communion in the Catholic tradition
- activities relating to festivals and special times for other faiths and beliefs at Years 3 and 4 could be based on other faiths represented in class, faiths evident in the local community and what is current (using a multi-cultural calendar)

Key Stage 1: Theme 6 - World Religions and Worldviews

An overview of four world religions has been included for Years 3-6. The content included below (with information adapted from the RE section of the CCEA web site) is at a higher level than needed, allowing teachers / schools to cover different religions in other year groups if they wish. The content below on Hinduism, for example, is adequate for Year 6, but will need simplification at Year 3. It is assumed teachers are already using published schemes for world religions, as there are plenty available, both free (BBC material, for example) and through subscription.

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- understand how there are many religions across the world
- become familiar with the basic beliefs, practices and festivals of some of the main religions in the world
- understand, at a basic level, how Faith and Belief can shape how people live
- understand how there are many different types of Faith and Belief present in Northern Ireland and across the British Isles

Suggested content for activities at P3

- Introduction: Hinduism is the world's oldest living religion, originating in India; 800 million Hindus worldwide; no single founder of the Hindu traditions; the oldest of the Hindu scriptures, the Vedas, written between 1500 and 500 BCE. It has been suggested it is more accurate to speak of 'Hinduisms' rather than a single tradition. Activities might include creating a timeline, or finding out basic information from sources such as BBC Bitesize about Hinduism

Suggested content for activities at P4

- Introduction: Buddhism based on teachings of Siddhartha Gautama in India (6th century BCE); he became known as the Buddha - the enlightened one; over 300 million Buddhists, especially in countries to the east of India; several different Buddhist traditions. Activities might include creating a timeline, or finding out basic information from sources such as BBC Bitesize about Buddhism

Suggested basis for activities at P3

- Festivals: There are lots of Hindu festivals. One of the best known festivals is Diwali, a festival of lights which marks the New Year in some parts of India.

Holi, dedicated to Lord Krishna, is a joyful Spring festival. Traditional Hindu Marriage ceremonies, often conducted partly in Sanskrit, may last for several days. These often include the bride and groom taking seven steps together, led by the priest, around the sacred fire – a very ancient tradition symbolizing the importance of walking together throughout their married life. Activities might discuss what themes are being symbolised in these ceremonies, and how they are similar or different to other religious practices known to the class

- Pilgrimage: There are many places of pilgrimage throughout India, many of them associated with specific gods or a particular temple. Some Hindus travel on very long pilgrimages as a form of worship and may have saved up for most of their lives to do so. The most popular pilgrimage centre is the city of Varanasi, which is on the banks of the holy River Ganges. Pupils might consider the idea of pilgrimage and what it means to people of different faiths. There may be examples of adults related to pupils going on a pilgrimage

- Hindus in Northern Ireland: Immigrants from India began to arrive in Northern Ireland from the late 1920s and it is estimated that there are now more than 2,000 Hindus, particularly in the Belfast area. A Belfast Indian Community Centre was established in part of a former Methodist church near Carlisle Circus in 1979 and it includes a small Hindu temple with a full-time priest and daily services. There might be someone in the school /local community who is Hindu who could come and speak about their faith

Suggested basis for activities at P4

- Worship: Different styles of Buddhist shrines and temples, include stupas (often domed or bell-shaped) and pagodas (towers with an odd number of tiers). Every Buddhist temple has an image of the Buddha. Buddhists go to these shrines to pay their respects to the Buddha, to meet with others and to meditate together. Prayer for most Buddhists is not directed to a god but is a way of getting thoughts in tune with the teachings of the Buddha and is best understood as meditation. Prayers are often in short, repeated phrases (mantras), and some Buddhists write the mantras onto a scroll which is placed in a spinning prayer wheel. The spinning of the wheel represents the repeating of the mantras and their release into the world. Buddhist families often keep a statue of the Buddha in the home. Pupils might consider the idea of mantras, both in terms of Buddhism, as well as in many different aspects of life. Stupas and pagodas might also offer possibilities for artwork

- Festivals: Different Buddhist countries and cultures have their own festivals. In general, Buddhist festivals tend to be times of remembrance and reaffirmation rather than festivity. The best-known is Wesak, which celebrates the Buddha's birth, death and enlightenment. Lamps are lit and there may be processions and firework displays, with decorated statues of the Buddha. Pupil activities might include lamp making or prayer flags

- Buddhism in Northern Ireland: In Belfast and some other towns there are small groups of Tibetan, Zen and Samatha (Thai) Buddhists. The Potala Buddhist Centre, in south Belfast, provides a public information point through its 'World Peace Café'. In South Belfast. The 2001 Census suggested that there are about 500 Buddhists in Northern Ireland.

Suggested basis for activities at P3

- Beliefs: Hindu beliefs and teachings are diverse. Most Hindus believe there is one Supreme God or Universal Being, known as Brahman; the three best-known Hindu deities are Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver) and Shiva (the Destroyer). Hindus believe Brahman can be known in many forms, both male and female. These include Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesha and Hanuman (the monkey god). Krishna is the most popular of these manifestations of God for many Hindus. Hindus believe in reincarnation – the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

Because of the belief all living beings are spiritual by nature, and therefore should not be killed, Hindus who strictly follow their faith do not eat meat, fish or eggs and lead a non-violent lifestyle. Activities around Hindu gods and symbols might include art activities that use depictions of Hindu gods or cultural patterns

- Symbols: The most familiar symbol of Hinduism is the lettering for the word OM. It is used as a basis for meditation. The swastika is also found all over Hindu temples, signs, altars and pictures

- Worship: Hindu worship (puja) may take place in the temple (mandir), including the singing of hymns, ringing bells, the burning of incense and the reading of scriptures by priests, but it may equally take place in the home or at a roadside shrine. Hindu temples range from the small and simple to the very grand and elaborately decorated. Activities might include a virtual visit to a mandir, or watching aspects of Hindu worship, with discussion of what is similar (for example, hymn singing, bell ringing, incense) and what is different

Suggested basis for activities at P4

- Festivals: There are lots of Hindu festivals. One of the best known festivals is Diwali, a festival of lights which marks the New Year in some parts of India.

Holi, dedicated to Lord Krishna, is a joyful Spring festival. Traditional Hindu Marriage ceremonies, often conducted partly in Sanskrit, may last for several days. These often include the bride and groom taking seven steps together, led by the priest, around the sacred fire – a very ancient tradition symbolizing the importance of walking together throughout their married life. Activities might discuss what themes are being symbolised in these ceremonies, and how they are similar or different to other religious practices known to the class

- Beliefs: teachings of the Buddha concern the possibility of becoming free from endless suffering in order to find true peace – known as Nirvana; a state of full realisation and potential. Buddhists believe in birth and rebirth and the “cause and effect” of karma (actions). Buddhists believe all ethical actions (karma) have consequences. What a person does today will affect the kind of person one becomes in the future: ‘What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow; our life is the creation of the mind.’ Pupils might consider this in simple, age-appropriate terms; how do thoughts shape us?

- Scriptures: the Buddha’s teachings were first conveyed by oral tradition. Various councils later determined what the Buddha had actually taught, and this became known as the Tripitaka. A collection of sayings of the Buddha, the Dhammapada, is very popular with ordinary Buddhists. Pupils might explore one or more of the stories from the life of the Buddha

Key Stage 1: Sub-theme 1 – Moral and Spiritual Values

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- begin to understand the Christian perspective that everyone is valued and special
- and how this is shared by people with other faiths and beliefs
- begin to understand that what they say and do is important and how they treat other people matters
- understand that faiths and beliefs guide people to act in ways that treat other people well

Suggested basis for activities at P3 & P4

- linking with PDMU, and stemming from parts of the Bible that articulate Christian belief that individuals are unique and valuable to God (for example Matthew 10:29-31 or Matthew 6:26), consider activities that encourage pupils to recognise worth in themselves and others. For example, choosing adjectives / strengths to describe each other, perhaps associated with an artistic activity. This might also be a Circle Time activity where pupils have time to prepare something to say about what they are good at
- from the perspective that emotions are part of who we are, and for many people of faith God made people this way, pupils might explore their feelings in various contexts. There are plenty of PDMU resources to provide activities around positive ways of dealing with feelings
- pupils might reflect on what is needed in their classroom / school / home for it to be a healthy, caring environment, where they and others are well
- pupils might explore a story that considers the importance of telling the truth in the context of how this valued by people of all faiths and beliefs
- explore stories that have moral meanings or life lessons. www.aesopfables.com has a long list of fables, with simple texts, which could be used for (non-religious) discussion about the consequences of actions. Better texts might be located elsewhere, but this web site is a useful overview. At Key Stage 1 stories might include The Crow and the Pitcher; The Goose with the Golden Egg; The Peacock and the Crane; and The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing
- more contemporary stories might include books such as The Lorax, The Honest-to-Goodness Truth and Maddi's Fridge

Key Stage 1: Sub-theme 2 - The Natural World

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- understand how Christianity and other faiths and beliefs link the idea of the world being created, to appreciation of the natural world, and in particular ideas of creation and of creativity
- understand that no matter what faith or beliefs people have, human beings are creative
- begin to understand how people of different faiths and beliefs believe that caring for the natural world is important, and that human beings have responsibilities

Suggested basis for activities at P3 & P4

- explore the variety and beauty of the natural world, with opportunities for recognition of their feelings in response to it. This might best connect with a literacy or art lesson, where pupils respond to something in their collective experience - perhaps a time of year, like autumn or spring, or after snowfall
- develop awareness that Christians, and other people of faith, believe that God created the world and cares for it (though not necessarily through a literal six-day creation / other creation story) and that people should care for it too. It might be helpful to expand the discussion beyond religious belief, to ask why it is important for people to care for the natural world - including responsibilities to each other, if not also to God
- pupils might be encouraged to explore and respond to aspects of the natural world such as a simple lifecycle of an animal (like a butterfly), the growth of plants and trees either in the school grounds / locality, the parts of a flower, a simple eco-system, or the journey of birds who come to Northern Ireland at certain times of the year like Brent geese or puffins
- teachers might find ways for pupils to express gratitude for the natural world around them. This might be from a perspective of religious faith, or simply from belief that the natural world is important, and people are thankful for it. This might include poetry, music or artwork
- pupils might consider some of the concerns they have about their school / local environment, and what they can do / could be done to improve that, for example an anti-litter poster campaign
- linking to Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures, ask and respond to questions arising from the creation story in Genesis (or other age-appropriate creation story texts), reflecting on what it means to create something and begin to understand how we all have responsibility for the world and its creatures

6.1.3 Key Stage 2

Overview of outcomes

Pupils will:

- recognise how there is a broad range of Faith and Belief, extending their range of specialist vocabulary, and recognising diversity in religious belief and expression
- be able to appreciate how there may be differences in practice of religion, but there are also many similarities in faith, beliefs and values
- understand how it is important for everyone to recognise different viewpoints, and accept and respect differences in Faith and Belief, while also having the curiosity to ask questions
- understand how faiths and beliefs affect how people live, and develop a simple understanding of the difference between the actions of a religious practice and their meaning to people of faith
- develop experience through a variety of source material, including, for example, the Bible and other religious writing, religious artefacts, religious buildings in the local environment and people sharing their experiences of Faith and Belief
- recognise the challenges involved in distinguishing between ideas of right and wrong
- communicate their awareness and understanding of Faith and Belief in a variety of ways, for example, through talking, writing and art
- be able to reflect on their learning



Key Stage 2: Theme 1 - Religious Writing

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- become familiar with the Bible as one source of religious stories and teachings, important to people of many different faiths and beliefs
- understand the Bible is a collection of different types of writing (including law, history, poetry, prophecy) gathered over a long period of time
- understand the Christian division of the Bible into New and Old Testaments, and where the stories of Jesus are located
- understand how other religions have different religious texts such as the Qur'an, or the Tripitaka
- understand how people of faith value religious writing

Suggested basis for activities at P5

- explore how people of faith talk about the importance of religious writing to them; this might include how often a religious text is read, or how it is presented, or how the physical text is treated
- understand how the Bible is divided into two testaments, many books, chapters and verses
- learn how to use references to locate passages in the Bible
- understand that the 'Old Testament' is also the important sacred text for Jews - known to them as the Law, the Prophets and the Writings ('the Tanakh'), and the first five books of the Bible and the Gospels are important writing for Muslims
- use religious texts to discuss what they mean to people of faith, as well as any moral and spiritual meanings they might have for everyone

Suggested basis for activities at P6

- consider how people of faith might use a religious text to affect how they live
- understand that the Bible is a collection of books, which contain many types of literature, for example history, laws, poetry, prophecy, sayings, gospels and letters
- read examples of these types of writings, along with different types of religious writing from other religions
- use religious texts to discuss what they mean to people of faith, as well as any moral and spiritual meanings they might have for everyone

Suggested basis for activities at P7

- further explore the Christian understanding that the Bible is the 'Word of God' and how Christians interpret this in different ways (especially literal and non-literal interpretations)
- consider how Christians might interpret certain passages of the Bible very differently (for example, Genesis chapters 1 and 2)
- develop a basic chronology of the Bible, from the ancient stories, through to Abraham, Joseph, Moses, to the kings and then to Jesus and the stories of the early church
- use religious texts to discuss what they mean to people of faith, as well as any moral and spiritual meanings they might have for everyone

Key Stage 2: Theme 2 - Jesus

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- develop their understanding of who Jesus was through the main events of his life and the effect of his life on others* begin to understand the overall shape of his life and teaching (rather than seeing his life as disconnected miracles and parables)
- further understand the teaching of Jesus and why this can be valued and respected by people of other faiths and beliefs
- begin to understand the symbolic nature of the stories of Jesus, that can convey meaning beyond what is literal
- understand how Jesus is special and important for Christians, and how many faiths and beliefs have special and important people

Suggested basis for activities at P5

- recap on the stories around the birth of Jesus as needed, including how the main characters might have felt or the questions they might have asked (Mary, Joseph, shepherds, wise men etc)
- explore what a Palestinian town / homes might have been like in the time of Jesus, in contrast to their own homes
- explore Jesus' parables of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) and the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32)
- explore the stories of Jesus healing the paralysed man (Matthew 9:1-8); and the man at the pool at Bethesda (John 5:1-9)

Suggested basis for activities at P6

- recap on the stories around the birth of Jesus as needed, including consideration of the time such as the occupation by the Roman Empire, means of travel, the importance of family, differences in (or lack of) medical care
- explore what childhood and growing up in Palestine might have been like for Jesus, in contrast to their own childhood
- explore Jesus' parables of the sower (Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23); the two sons (Matthew 21:28-22); and the purpose of the parables (Matthew 13:10-17)

Suggested basis for activities at P7

- recap on the stories around the birth of Jesus as needed, and explore the concepts of promise and prophecy relating to the birth of Jesus, for example in Micah 5: 2-5 and Isaiah 7:14
- explore some of the aspects of Jesus' Jewish upbringing. For example, what religious writing he would have read from, what happened at the temple, or the local synagogue or on the Sabbath
- explore Jesus' parables of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-35); the tenants (Matthew 21:33-44); and the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8)

Suggested basis for activities at P5	Suggested basis for activities at P6	Suggested basis for activities at P7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explore how Jesus treated people around him (especially socially disadvantaged groups) with consideration of this teaching in relation to other people and to God, for example, who is my neighbour? (Luke 10:29); the great commandments (Matthew 22:38-39) and the golden rule (Matthew 7:12) - recap on the Easter story as needed, with the inclusion of resurrection stories such as Mary and Mary Magdalene at the tomb (Matthew 28) - give consideration to the Christian understanding of Jesus' whole life being planned and how he gives his life for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explore the stories of Jesus healing of the ten people with leprosy (Luke 17:11-19); and raising Lazarus back to life (John 11:1-46) - explore some of the issues Jesus raised through the Sermon on the Mount, for example anger (Matthew 5:21-26); revenge and love for enemies (Matthew 5:38-48) - recap on the Easter story as needed, with the inclusion of resurrection stories such as Thomas (John 20) with consideration of why people believed Jesus and responded to him 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explore the stories of Jesus healing the Roman centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13); and the healing of the man born blind (John 9:1-38) - explore some of the issues Jesus raised through the Sermon on the Mount, for example teaching on how to live (the Beatitudes - Matthew 5:1-11); being salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16); and values in life (Matthew 6:19-24) - recap on the Easter story as needed, with the inclusion of resurrection stories such as his appearance on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24) - explore the Christian belief that Jesus is the Son of God, and what this means for Christians, for example seeing him as their saviour, or expressing gratitude to him. (This might link to aspects of the Places of Worship theme)

*Although not included in the RE Core Syllabus, teachers at Key Stage 2 might also consider exploring some of the key stories at the start of the book of Acts. Written by the same writer as the Gospel of Luke, the 'Acts of the Apostles' outlines the beginnings of the early Christian Church. Areas for study might include Jesus Ascension (Acts 1:1-10); Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13); Peter healing a lame man (Acts 3:1-10); how the early followers of Jesus lived (Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-37); and persecution (Acts 5:17-42).

Key Stage 2: Theme 3 - Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- Become familiar with well-known stories in the Bible, exploring the main themes
- Understand how these stories are important to people of different faiths and beliefs (particularly Christianity, Islam and Judaism)
- Understand that people of all faiths and beliefs read these stories differently, some people believe them to be events that happened as recorded, others see them as stories with a meaning (like myths, fables or parables)
- Consider what the themes of these stories might say to people generally, of all faiths and beliefs

Suggested basis for activities at P5

- continue exploring ancient stories from the Bible with the stories of Joseph
- the story of Joseph is part of popular culture (not least through the musical – though this is unlikely to be in the experience of contemporary Years 5s!) and deals with themes of parental preference, jealousy, hopes and dreams and forgiveness and restoration
- chapter markers in the Bible have been included but a simpler text from a children's Bible would be preferable (so as pupils don't read the stories of Onan and Tamar in Genesis 38; the advances of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39; and also to summarise the lengthy story of Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers)

Suggested basis for activities at P6

- continue exploring ancient stories from the Bible with the stories of Moses and the Exodus
- the story of Moses is part of popular culture (not least through Dreamwork's 1998 Prince of Egypt animated film) and deals with themes of enslavement, oppression and freedom, hopes, dreams, and promises
- chapter markers in the Bible have been included but a simpler text from a children's Bible might be easier as some of the original text is lengthy and detailed for Year 6
- explore the story of the oppression of the Israelites and the birth of Moses (Exodus 1, 2:1-9). Pupils might consider historical enslavement of one people group over another, as well as modern day examples of enslavement

Suggested basis for activities at P7

- explore key messages from the prophets - who preach against the ill treatment of people and warn about the coming punishment for doing so
- themes from prophets such as justice, sit easily with contemporary discussion of enslavement, fair and just economic practices and treatment of people who are less well off - as well as the role of people to respond to these issues
- chapter markers in the Bible have been included and alternate texts can be sourced from www.biblegateway.com
- discuss the idea of prophecy - in general terms the prediction of something. Pupils might consider more broadly people who have had a special message at a particular time. In the Hebrew Scriptures a prophet is someone who has a special message from God - for example, Moses

Suggested basis for activities at P5

- explore the story of Joseph's preferential treatment by his father, his dreams, and how his brothers sold him into slavery (Genesis 37). Pupils might consider the consequences of the actions of each of the main characters
- explore the story of Joseph's imprisonment in Egypt (Genesis 39). Pupils might begin to consider concepts of fairness which occur throughout the Joseph narrative
- explore the story of Joseph's interpretation of the cupbearer and the baker's dreams when he was in prison (Genesis 40). This might create discussion around the meaning of dreams, but also the fairness of the punishments
- explore the story of Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams and his release from prison (Genesis 41). Pupils might consider the religious theme of how Joseph says God is speaking through him, as well as the broader themes of how Joseph's life changes and how he prepares for the famine
- explore the story of Joseph's family going to Egypt and their eventual reconciliation (Genesis 42-45). This might allow for discussion around forgiveness and restoration, and whether Joseph was right to 'test' the brothers in the way that he did

Suggested basis for activities at P6

- explore the story of Moses fleeing Egypt and how God calls him back (Exodus 2:11-25, 3 & 4). This might lead to discussion about the injustice of enslavement, the role of the prophet, and the role of Faith and Belief in how people address injustice
- explore the story of God's message to Pharaoh (Exodus 5, 6:1-12). This might prompt discussion around saying the right thing, but in the face of risk and cost
- explore the story of the plagues (Exodus 7-10). Pupils might consider the morality of the plagues and whether they are just or unjust. Consideration might also be given to a less literal reading of the text and the connection between the plagues and the Egyptian gods
- explore the story of the death of the first born and the Passover (Exodus 11 & 12). Pupils might consider the connection between this first Passover, the modern-day Jewish practice and perhaps also the connection to the Christian practice of Communion or the Eucharist, stemming from Jesus' celebration of the Passover
- explore the story of the Israelites crossing the sea (Exodus 13 & 14). This might lead to further discussion of the morality of the story, as well as what the Israelites might have been hoping after their escape from captivity

Suggested basis for activities at P7

- to understand the historical context, pupils might explore the time of the prophets (400-600 B.C.E.), what life was like, a map of the region at this time and understand the major empires around Israel
- explore the prophetic words of Micah, who in a time when people become rich through dishonesty and violence (Micah 6:9-12), told people that what God really wants is justice, love and humility (Micah 6:6-8) - three themes, pupils might explore
- explore the prophetic words of Amos, who, in a time of selling people into slavery and poor people not being looked after (Amos 1 & 2) told people that what God wanted was justice and righteousness (Amos 5:21-24)
- explore the prophetic words of Isaiah who in a time of oppression and hunger (Isaiah 58:6-7) offered people hope that life might change (Isaiah 61:1-9), and they might be treated better
- issues of modern-day justice might be further explored through responses to injustice such as International Justice Mission (www.ijm.org), Fair Trade (www.fairtrade.org.uk), or better treatment for clothing workers (www.cleanclothes.org)
- also, a short book, which might be worth exploring is Jonah. Remembered for being swallowed by a whale, he was running away because he didn't see any worth in the people God was sending him to (Jonah:1-4). This might open up conversation around sectarianism and hatred of others

Key Stage 2: Theme 4 - Places of Worship

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- learn about places of worship, especially in their locality, considering their purpose, and developing an understanding of some of the religious practices that take place there, such as baptism or communion, prayer, and reading from religious texts
- develop an understanding that places of worship can also be meeting points for various groups of people, not just those of the faith community, for example, young people's programmes, sporting / social events, charity work etc
- understand the difference between a building used (sometimes called a church) and a faith community (which Christians also refer to as church) and how worship can happen in a variety of ways and places and does not always need a building
- further develop an understanding of worship as an internal attitude, more than just the external action
- learn about the history of places of worship in the locality

Suggested basis for activities at P5, P6 & P7

- ideally, each year group would have the opportunity for a visit to a place of worship, either in-person or virtual
- encourage each year group to prepare and ask questions about the place of worship they are going to visit
- explore how places of worship often have specific practices, such as prayer, reading, baptism, communion etc
- consider how not every faith practice requires a building (for example, the Baha'i community don't have places of worship)
- talk about how worship can happen in a variety of ways and places and is an internal attitude. Pupils might consider how the external action (lighting a candle, reciting or singing something, standing / sitting / kneeling) is an outward sign of something that's happening internally
- explore how places of worship are often centres where people meet; this may include a wider community than just people of faith, for example young people's programmes, sporting / social events, charity work etc
- explore the local history of the place of worship (more relevant if this is a local, not virtual visit) considering when the buildings were built / opened and any connections to local history or development
- pupils might use artwork to respond to a visit to a place of worship, for example, the design of a stained-glass window, or a plan of a new place of worship or a drawing of the building (if it was interesting enough!)

Key Stage 2: Theme 5 - Festivals and Special Times

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- become familiar with the main Christian festivals and special times and understand why they are important to Christians, as well as people who are not Christians
- become familiar with the main festivals and special times of the main world religions (and faiths and beliefs represented in school), and understand why they are important to people of different Faith and Belief
- consider their own 'special times' in the year, and why they are important
- reflect on how they can participate in and contribute to other pupils' / people's special times, even if they do not share the same faith or belief

Suggested basis for activities at P5

- revise the key elements of the Christmas story (see Jesus theme), with continued emphasis on Christmas traditions in other parts of the world (approaches vary widely)
- revise the key elements of the Easter story (see Jesus theme), perhaps with focus on how Easter is celebrated in different Christian denominations (dawn service, eucharist / communion, stations of the cross), or perhaps in other parts of the world
- there is also much religious art (freely available online) concerning Christmas and Easter. Taking one artist, or one short series of paintings each year might also provide an alternative approach, as each artist very often has something different to say³⁹

Suggested basis for activities at P6

- revise the key elements of the Christmas story (see Jesus theme), perhaps with focus on the commercialism of Christmas, and considering themes of appreciating others, gratitude and (for Christians) the gift of Jesus
- revise the key elements of the Easter story (see Jesus theme), perhaps with focus on the unique perspectives of some of the people in the story (for example, Peter, Thomas, Mary)
- there is also much religious art (freely available online) concerning Christmas and Easter. Taking one artist, or one short series of paintings each year might also provide an alternative approach, as each artist very often has something different to say

Suggested basis for activities at P7

- revise the key elements of the Christmas story (see Jesus theme), perhaps with focus on the Christian belief in incarnation
 - God becoming human while still being God. This explains the use of the name 'Immanuel' meaning 'God with us'
- revise the key elements of the Easter story (see Jesus theme), perhaps with focus on Jesus' life after the resurrection and Christian belief about new life
- there is also much religious art (freely available online) concerning Christmas and Easter. Taking one artist, or one short series of paintings each year, might also provide an alternative approach, as each artist very often has something different to say

³⁹ Nativity in art: <https://www.artmajeur.com/en/magazine/5-art-history/the-nativity-in-the-history-of-art/330895>

Suggested basis for activities at P5

- extend knowledge of other Christian festivals. This might include St Patrick's Day or Pentecost
- explore Islamic festivals (or festivals relating to whichever world religion is studied in Year 5), such as Eid-ul-Adha, Eid-ul-Fitr and Mawlid-al-Nabi (see World Religions theme)
- activities relating to festivals and special times for other faiths and beliefs at Year 5 could be based on other faiths represented in class, faiths evident in the local community and what is current (using a multi-cultural calendar)

Suggested basis for activities at P6

- extend knowledge of other Christian festivals. This might include Harvest or Epiphany
- explore Jewish festivals (or festivals relating to whichever world religion is studied in Year 6), such as Rosh Hashannah, Yom Kippur, Passover and Hanukkah (see World Religions theme)
- activities relating to festivals and special times for other faiths and beliefs at Year 6 could be based on other faiths represented in class, faiths evident in the local community and what is current (using a multi-cultural calendar)

Suggested basis for activities at P7

- extend knowledge of other Christian festivals. This might include Saint's days
- activities relating to festivals and special times for other faiths and beliefs at Year 7 could be based on other faiths represented in class, faiths evident in the local community and what is current (using a multi-cultural calendar)



Key Stage 2: Theme 6 - World Religions and Worldviews

An overview of four world religions has been included for Years 3-6. The content included below (adapted from the RE section of the CCEA web site) is at a higher level than needed, allowing teachers / schools to cover different religions in other year groups if they wish. The content below on Hinduism, for example, is adequate for Year 6, but will need simplification at Year 3. It is assumed teachers are already using published schemes for world religions, as there are plenty available, both free (BBC material, for example) and through subscription. Year 7 is suggested as a time to look across the religions that have been studied in previous years, perhaps with a focus on 'rites of passage' as they look to move from primary school.

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- understand how there are many religions across the world, and understand some of the basic similarities and differences between them
- become familiar with the basic beliefs, practices and festivals of some of the main religions in the world
- understand, at a basic level, how Faith and Belief can shape how people live
- learn to reflect on the Faith and Beliefs of others, and consider their own faith and / or beliefs in response
- understand how there are many different types of Faith and Belief present in Northern Ireland and across the British Isles

Suggested content for activities at P5

- Introduction: Islam is one of the world's largest religions, with approximately 1.25 billion followers. It grew from the Arabian peninsula in the early 7th century CE and quickly spread into Africa, Asia and Europe

Suggested content for activities at P6

- Introduction: Judaism is one of the oldest religions and has about 15-18 million Jews worldwide (about one third live in Israel). Jews today are the spiritual descendants of the Israelites - the Hebrews. They trace their faith back to Abraham, who is thought to have lived around 2000 BCE.

Suggested content for activities at P7

- Year 7 might include the study of Humanism, as a non-religious set of beliefs. An educational resource is available from Humanists UK⁴⁰ which covers basic beliefs, understanding the world, the place of human beings and ethics

⁴⁰ <https://humanists.uk/education/teachers/>

Suggested content for activities at P5

- Beliefs: Muslim faith centres on the belief that there is one God and that Muhammad is his Prophet (or Messenger) - the last of all the prophets. Islam means submission to God; a Muslim is one who submits. Muslims believe the prophet Muhammad was given words to recite by the Angel Gabriel. These recitations eventually became written down as the Qur'an. There are five pillars of belief in Islam: Shahada (reciting the statement of faith); Salat (prayer five times a day);

Zakat (giving money for the needs of the poor);

Sawm (fasting during the day in the month of Ramadan); and Hajj (pilgrimage to Makka at least once). Class activities might focus on these five key aspects

- Worship: The mosque is the place of assembly for salat (prayer). The Qur'an states that mosques are 'houses which God has allowed to be built, that his name may be spoken in them'. Muslims normally go to the mosque for Friday Prayers, where the worshippers face together in the direction of Makka and the prayers include recitations from the Qur'an. An Imam, which means 'example', is leader of the prayers in the mosque. Mosques are also community places and places of study. Children often go to classes there to learn Arabic and the Qur'an. A visit to a local mosque would be very helpful, but if no local mosque is available there are places online for virtual visits

Suggested content for activities at P6

As the descendants of Abraham's grandson, Jacob, who was renamed Israel, Jews are also known as 'the Children of Israel', who escaped slavery in Egypt and were led to their homeland by Moses, who received the God's Law on Mount Sinai. There is a diverse range of Jewish groups with varying styles and practices, from Orthodox to Liberal & Progressive. Pupils should be able to make links to these Bible stories, even if modern day Judaism is different

- Beliefs: Jews believe there is one God who has made a special promise (the Covenant) to them and given guidance for life in the Law (the Torah), which includes the Ten Commandments. Orthodox Jews look to a coming leader, the Messiah, who will reign in Jerusalem. Within Reform Judaism however the idea of the Messiah has been spiritualised to symbolise God's kingdom on earth of love, peace and righteousness. Observant Jews do not work on the Sabbath Day (Friday dusk to Saturday nightfall) and eat only certain (kosher) foods. The most important document for all Jews is the Bible (TeNaKh), which is in three sections - the Law (Torah - considered most important), the Prophets (Nevi'im) and the Writings (Ketuvim). Pupils should be familiar with the different writing in the Bible

Suggested content for activities at P7

- The year is also suggested as time for recapping and reflection on the religions studied. One possible way of doing this is through consideration of various 'rites of passage'. These might connect to discussion about growing up (physically, emotionally and spiritually), assuming responsibility, changes in life and preparing to move on from primary school. Examples include:

Hinduism: The Sacred Thread Ceremony (*Upanayana*) is a ceremony for boys in some Hindu communities to confirm they are of an age to take on religious responsibility. Girls are sometimes honoured in the same way, but it is rare for them to receive and wear the thread.

In some Hindu communities, the male participant's head is shaved for the ceremony, symbolising a cleansing. New clothes are put on after bathing. Gifts and blessings from family and friends are often received. Some young Hindus accept a guru at this point and start their study of scripture. It is increasingly common for young Hindus in the UK and in urban India to have the ceremony at different ages. (BBC Bitesize)

Suggested content for activities at P5

- Festivals: Eid-ul-Adha (feast of sacrifice) is the major Muslim festival, which marks Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son, and God's faith and mercy in providing an alternative. Children usually accompany their parents to special Eid prayers in the morning, and there are new clothes and gifts from relatives and friends. Eid-ul-Fitr follows the feast of Ramadan and thanks Allah for help during the fast. For children Eid-ul-Fitr is particularly exciting, involving feasting, family visits and exchange of cards and gifts. Mawlid-al-Nabi (the Birthday of the Prophet) is a smaller festival, one of a number which relate to events in the life of the Prophet. Class activities might consider these festivals through the perspective of Muslim children

- Symbols: A familiar Muslim symbol is the Crescent Moon, this can be seen on the national flags of some mainly Muslim countries.

- There are between 3,000 and 4,000 in Northern Ireland. The largest community is based in Belfast, but smaller groups are based throughout Northern Ireland. A Belfast Mosque and Islamic Community Centre was established in the early 1980s. The Muslim population of the UK as a whole is about 1.5 million.

Suggested content for activities at P6

- Worship: Jews worship in the synagogue, where the reading of the Torah is central. The Torah scrolls are kept in a special cupboard - the Holy Ark - at the front of the synagogue and are taken out for reading. Worship in the synagogue (often referred to as Shul) is normally led by a rabbi (teacher) and in larger synagogues there may also be a cantor (chazzan) who sings some of the prayers. Jews also pray and worship together in the home, especially as part of the special meal on Friday evening at the start of Sabbath. Pupils might be able to visit the synagogue in Belfast, but there are plenty of synagogues that can be visited online

- Festivals: The most important Jewish festivals are Rosh Hashannah (New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), times of reflection which take place about September. The most popular festival is Passover (Pesach) which marks the deliverance of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. Hanukkah (dedication) is an eight-day festival of lights which takes place in November / December which celebrates the recapture and rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in 165 BCE by Judas the Macabee

- Symbols: The most familiar symbols are the menorah (seven-branched candlestick) and the Star of David (Magen David), which also appears on the flag of Israel

Suggested content for activities at P7

Judaism: Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah
When a Jewish boy reaches 'adulthood' on his 13th birthday he becomes bar mitzvah (son of the commandment). After his birthday there is a special ceremony at which he is called forward to read in Hebrew from the Torah and the Prophets - a public announcement of his coming of age. In Reform/Progressive Judaism (and sometimes Orthodox) communities, girls may mark their achievement of adulthood at age 12 in a Bat Mitzvah (daughter of the commandment) ceremony to encourage girls to have a more active role. It takes a similar form to the Bar Mitzvah (CCEA RE guidance)

Christianity: Believers' Baptism Some Christian denominations practise baptism for adults (or at least teenagers) who have made their own choice to be baptised. Baptism is often by full immersion in a tank of water, or sometimes at a beach or lake. Believers' Baptism is considered a sign of following Jesus - who was also baptised as an adult. It also signifies taking a more active role in a faith community, as the act of baptism is making a declaration of faith

	<p>Suggested content for activities at P6</p> <p>- Jewish communities have been present in Ireland from the 17th century, and in 1871-2 the first purpose-built synagogue was established in Belfast. One of the co-founders of the Harland and Wolff Shipyard, G.W. Wolff, came from the Belfast Jewish community at this time. Around the turn of the century Sir Otto Jaffe, a prominent Jewish businessman, was twice Lord Mayor of Belfast. The present synagogue in North Belfast was opened in 1964, however numbers of Jewish people in Northern Ireland have declined to just a few hundred.</p>	<p>Suggested content for activities at P7</p> <p>Christianity: Confirmation This is a sacrament or practised by some Christian denominations. The word means strengthening or deepening one's relationship with God. In the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox Churches, it enables a person to confirm the promises made on their behalf at baptism. It is also a sign of full membership of the faith community (BBC Religions)</p> <p>Sikhism: Amrit Ceremony This is the initiation ceremony for joining the Khalsa (Sikh community). The candidate may be an adolescent but is more frequently an adult. The ceremony is conducted by five initiated Sikhs ('loved ones'). The Sikh principles which the candidates for initiation must then observe are explained. The amrit (holy sugar and water) is stirred while passages of scripture are recited. Each candidate receives amrit in his or her cupped hands to drink and then amrit is sprinkled on each candidate's hair and eyes. Everyone then sips amrit from one iron bowl (BBC Bitesize)</p>
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Key Stage 2: Sub-theme 1 - Moral and Spiritual Values

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- understand the commonly shared value that everyone is valued and special
- understand that Faith and Beliefs guide people to act in ways that treat other people well
- develop their understanding of themselves and other people through self-awareness, emotional literacy and an enhanced vocabulary to describe: themselves, others, situations and consequences
- explore, in detail, how what they say and do is important and how they treat other people matters
- explore how behaviour affects them and other individuals, as well communities and people they have never met
- understand how moral choices extend to choices people make about the environment

Suggested basis for activities at P5, P6 & P7

- use aspects of the Bible, especially the teaching of Jesus, as well as stories and extracts from other religious writing, to consider how religious faith can inform moral choices
- activities should deepen the ways pupils talk about moral choices, for example, Matthew 5:43-48 (in the Jesus theme) might help pupils explore a story that considers forgiveness - what this means and how it can restore a broken relationship
- continue to explore the belief that individuals are unique and valuable, from faith and / or belief perspectives, and how this affects how pupils treat each other
- continue to use PDMU resources and activities such as Circle Time to explore situations that have choices and consequences
- from the perspective that emotions are part of who we are, and for many people of faith God made people this way, pupils might explore their feelings in various contexts. There are plenty of PDMU resources to provide activities around positive ways of dealing with feelings, and expand emotional literacy
- reflect on what is needed in their classroom / school / home for it to be a healthy, caring environment, where they and others are well
- explore a story that considers the importance of telling the truth in the context of how this is valued by people of all faiths and beliefs
- explore stories that have moral meanings or life lessons. www.aesopfables.com has a long list of fables, with simple texts, which could be used for (non-religious) discussion about the consequences of actions. Better texts might be located elsewhere, but this web site is a useful overview. At Key Stage 2 stories might include The Ass and his Master (probably better retitled...); The Bald Man and the Fly; The Miser; and The Old Woman and the Wine Jar

Suggested basis for activities at P5, P6 & P7

- more contemporary (and much lengthier) stories would include novels such as Jerry Spinelli's *Loser*, *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio and *The Windsinger* by William Nicholson
- find out about people, who have made moral choices that have affected the lives of others, these might include well established figures like Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, Jane Goodall or Gandhi, but might also include more contemporary figures such as Greta Thunberg or Malala Yousafzai
- this topic might also link to exploration of topics of fair trade and climate justice as examples of making moral choices about other people, not just ourselves

Key Stage 2: Sub-theme 2 - The Natural World

Learning intentions

Pupils should:

- understand how different faiths and beliefs often link the idea of the world being created, to appreciation of the natural world, and in particular ideas of creation and of creativity
- understand that no matter what faith or beliefs people have, human beings are creative
- understand how people of a wide range of faiths and beliefs believe that caring for the natural world is important, and that human beings have responsibilities for the environment

Suggested basis for activities at P5, P6 & P7

- use the natural world as an impetus for pupils to respond creatively to it, whether this is through 'real life' experience, a useful video or artefacts brought into class. Responses might be in the form of poetry, prose, music or artwork
- understand how Christians, and other people of faith, believe that God created the world and cares for it (though not necessarily through a literal six-day creation) and that people should care for it too. Pupils might consider what their role is, in looking after the environment.
- pupils might consider some of the concerns they have about the wider environment, beyond school, and what they can do / could be done to improve that, for example encouraging recycling, reducing people's carbon footprint, or choosing recyclable / reusable objects over disposable ones
- pupils might be encouraged to explore and respond to aspects of the natural world such as simple ecosystems (including food chains), weather systems, use might also be made of resources like BBC's natural history programmes which show less accessible aspects of nature, such as migratory patterns
- there are multiple links to aspects of the World Around Us commonly studied at Key Stage 2, such as migration, parts of a flower, tree leaves, habitats etc, all of which could have an element for appreciation of these aspects of the natural world, as well as learning information about them

6.2 Sample policy for RE

[Insert name of school] policy for Religious Education

Context

The original intention for Integrated schools was to bring together a divided community, in which religious denomination played a significant part. The aim was for children and young people who, in many cases might not otherwise meet, to be educated together. In the context of the influence of Christian churches in society and in education particularly, Integrated Education offered the possibility for a pupil to be as Catholic or as Protestant in an Integrated school, as they would be in any other school, while also recognising there were lots of pupils from other faiths, or from no religious belief. This aim of recognising diversity, and not neutrality, remains at the core of Integrated Education.

Northern Ireland has, however, experienced much societal change since the end of the Troubles. Northern Irish society has become more 'mixed', it is arguable that, for many people, their sense of identity has changed, sometimes with a desire not to be labelled. The role of Christianity in society has also changed, and while, for some people, they are attracted to the 'religious' elements of Integrated Education, for others, it may seem dated, or out of place. The aim of this policy is to clarify how and why [insert name of school] delivers RE.

The legal requirements for RE

The current legal requirements for RE are based on the Education Act (NI) 1947, which was added to by the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, and further developed by the Education (NI) Order 2006. This order legislated for an updated RE Core Syllabus, after a review had been carried out between 2003 and 2006, by the four main denominations in Northern Ireland.⁴¹ The current RE Core Syllabus⁴² was approved and implemented from 2007 and remains the current requirement for teaching RE.

Outcomes for pupils

- RE is taught in [insert name of school] because it is a legal requirement in the curriculum, but also because it is a topic that helps pupils better understand: [amend as appropriate]
- the broad range of beliefs and practices in their school and their local community, as well as globally
- the importance of religious practices in people's lives
- how religious festivals or customs are often used to mark key times such as weddings, funerals and rites of passage
- the place of religious writing, artefacts and buildings in their local environment

⁴¹ Church of Ireland, Methodist Church of Ireland, Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic Church

⁴² <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/religious-education-core-syllabus-english-version.pdf>

- their own beliefs, attitudes and values
- how ethical and moral choices are made
- religious references in popular culture, as many stories, songs, films, paintings and plays include references to religious stories, practices and ideas

Through their learning in RE, pupils will have the opportunity to develop their understanding of themselves and others, through:

- recognising their own needs and the needs of others through a recognition of their own worth
- celebrating life, becoming increasingly aware of personal events, festivals and celebrations and exploring the common elements of Faith and Belief
- communicating their awareness and understanding of Faith and Belief in a variety of ways, for example, through talking, writing and the arts
- reflecting on their own life and others' lives with aspects such as opportunities for stillness, awareness of belonging, and awareness of others' needs
- being helped to manage emotions and behaviour
- encouraging active engagement in learning

The study of RE can also be another aspect of the curriculum through which pupils can more widely develop:

- an inclusive, caring ethos within a school
- respect for difference and celebration of diversity
- empathy
- thinking skills (including inquiry, evaluation, analysis and reflection)
- the ability to express ideas and opinions
- self-confidence and self-esteem
- responsibilities and the consequences of actions
- wonder and curiosity about the world
- understanding of what makes life better for other people

Approach

[amend as appropriate]

Religious Education is simply learning about religions. It is not about trying to convert pupils or help them develop a particular faith (unless this has been specifically requested, for example, in classes where pupils are prepared for the sacraments of the Catholic church). Teachers deliver content in an objective way, stating, for example, 'Christians believe...' or 'Buddhists believe' and not in a confessional way ('We believe...').

[Insert name of school] takes an inclusive approach to RE, teaching aspects of Christianity (in keeping with the RE Core Syllabus) in each primary school year, as well as the study of the other major world faiths and beliefs [add these religions and the year groups they are studied, if appropriate].

Where possible, we aim to develop simple connection points between faiths and beliefs. This is not to deny difference, but to allow for similarities to be acknowledged. This might include practices / ceremonies about growing up, festivals and celebrations, and approaches to prayer. Pupils can then become aware of how practice of Faith and Belief might be different, but understand how there are often shared themes. While many pupils may not practice any religion, the study of faiths and beliefs prompts questions about human experience generally, which, in an age-appropriate way, we aim to explore in class.

Arrangements for teaching RE

Include arrangements for RE across each year group.

Overview of the content

If an overview of a scheme of work has been created, it might be helpful to add this here.

Provision for pupils who are opted out of RE

See guidance in Section 4.5

6.3 Sample policy for assembly and religious practice in school

[Insert name of school] policy for Assembly and Religious Practice in School

Context

The original intention for Integrated schools was to bring together a divided community, in which religious denomination played a significant part. The aim was for children and young people who in many cases might not otherwise meet, to be educated together. In the context of the influence of Christian churches in society and in education particularly, Integrated Education offered the possibility for a pupil to be as Catholic or as Protestant in an Integrated school, as they would be in any other school, while also recognising there were lots of pupils from other faiths, or from no religious belief. This aim of recognising diversity, and not neutrality, remains at the core of Integrated Education.

Northern Ireland has, however, experienced much societal change since the end of the Troubles. Northern Irish society has become more 'mixed', it is arguable that, for many people, their sense of identity has changed, sometimes with a desire not to be labelled.

The role of Christianity in society has also changed, and while, for some people, they are attracted to the 'religious' elements of Integrated Education, for others, it may seem dated, or out of place. The aim of this policy is to clarify how and why [insert name of school] approaches collective worship.

The legal requirements for collective worship

The legal requirements for 'collective worship' in schools were first set down in the Education Act (NI) 1947. Collective worship was:

- to occur each school day
- to be for all pupils together (unless this was impracticable)
- not to 'be distinctive of any particular religious denomination'

The Act also states:

- parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship, and do not need to give a reason for this
- 'the school shall be open to pupils of all religious denominations for instruction other than religious instruction' and that 'no pupil shall be excluded, directly or indirectly, from the other advantages which the school affords'

'Collective worship' was undefined, however practice at the time (and for some schools still) is for a Christian

act of worship, usually based around a Christian song or hymn, a Bible reading, perhaps a short talk and a prayer. In most schools, the legal requirement for collective worship is expressed through 'assembly'.

[amend as appropriate]

Our assemblies are sometimes religious in nature / often not religious / have both religious and non-religious elements. Sometimes religious practice, such as prayers or religious songs are included in assemblies, and sometimes these happen on other occasions such as at a church service.

A rationale for assembly

Assemblies offer opportunities for pupils to experience:

[amend as appropriate]

- being together and developing a sense of the school as a community
- inclusion and participation (through, for example, celebration of festivals and special times of the year, class-led assemblies, or the inclusion of visitors)
- recognising and respecting different beliefs and practices
- presentation of and reflection on the values of the school (for example, Integrated values, or values stemming from programmes such as PATHS® or Rights Respecting Schools)
- communication of key messages (for example, firework, internet, or traffic safety)

- fun and enjoyment of being together (this might include games, quizzes, singing together etc)
- connection with the wider local community, and other people and issues in society (most commonly when visitors are invited)

More widely, pupils might develop a sense of:

[amend as appropriate]

- belonging, not just in a class, but in school
- diversity, from all the varied backgrounds and beliefs that make up the school (and local) community
- values that are important to the school (and local) community
- respect for others
- awareness of their own safety
- awareness of the needs and welfare of others in society

Assemblies in

[insert name of school]

Our assemblies:

[amend as appropriate]

- occur [add frequency]
- with visitors from....
- whole school / Key Stages
- who leads assembly (principal, teacher, visitor, pupils)

The content of our assemblies includes:
[amend as appropriate]

- a range of topics, and not just religious assemblies

- Bible stories, religious festivals, values, class topic work, and key times of the year
- prayer / opportunity for reflection
- Christian-based songs

Approaches taken in assembly

[amend as appropriate - text is adapted from Section 4.3]

Stories: Amongst other non-religious stories, we use stories from Faith and Belief perspectives, but we also consider what a story says to everyone, not just to people of faith. This way, everyone has a shared experience, listening to, and reflecting on a story together.

Prayer: We recognise that prayer is a religious practice and there is a very broad range of views about prayer within our school community. Our approach to prayer is ... [explain approach. Language in Section 4.3 might help.]

Religious songs: Like prayer, we recognise there is a broad range of views on religious songs being sung in school. Our approach to religious songs is... [explain approach. Language in Section 4.3 might help.]

Religious visitors: Local clergy, church workers (often youth workers) and people from different faiths and beliefs (other than Christian) [amend as appropriate] have been regular visitors to [insert name of school] because:

[amend as appropriate]

pupils hear about a range of Faith and Belief perspectives, directly from people of faith

- a visitor to assembly can provide a fresh voice, and add something for the whole school community to reflect on together
- religious visitors are part of a local community connection (the place of worship might be nearby; some of the pupils might attend this place; some of the pupils might attend youth clubs / youth organisations run by this faith community)

Visitors from various faiths and beliefs understand [insert name of school] is an Integrated school, and take the same objective approach to Faith and Belief as teachers take when teaching RE. We ask them to speak from their perspective about their belief or practice, not assuming everyone believes the same. Visitors are also asked to take the same approach to prayer as teachers or pupils take. Brief, but direct guidance is given to visitors from different faiths or beliefs before their first visit.

Religious services: We hold a religious service at [insert times of the year]. We recognise how these are different occasions to assemblies in school and are optional for our pupils to attend. Nevertheless, the whole school is invited to these events, and we want everyone to feel welcome. We aim to make these events as inclusive as possible.

Christian basis: Our mission statement says: [insert mission statement]. When we say we have a Christian basis, we mean that...

Provision for pupils who are opted out of religious practice in assembly

See guidance in Section 4.5

Faith and Belief in School

Guidance for RE, assembly and religious practice in Integrated primary schools

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