

Foundation Stage

*Pupils should not just learn
about religion
but also about themselves
from religion.*

The Foundation Stage describes the phase of a child's education from the age of 3 to the end of Reception at the age of 5.

Religious Education is statutory for all pupils registered on the school roll, including those in Reception, but the statutory requirement for Religious Education does not extend to nursery classes in maintained schools so RE is not a legal requirement for them. It may, however, form a valuable part of the educational experience of children throughout the Foundation Stage.

*Adequate curriculum time must be provided for Religious Education.
This will not usually be less than 5%.*

What is the contribution of Religious Education to the Early Learning Goals?

The Early Learning Goals set out what most children should achieve by the end of the foundation Stage. The six areas of learning identified in these goals are:

- personal, social and emotional development
- mathematical development
- physical development
- communication, language and literacy
- knowledge and understanding of the world
- creative development.

Religious Education can make an active contribution to all these areas but has a particularly important contribution to make to:

- personal, social and emotional development
- knowledge and understanding of the world
- communication, language and literacy
- creative development.

For each of these four areas, this syllabus offers examples of Religious Education related experiences and opportunities and an activity. Each activity is indicative only and is included to exemplify particular ways in which activities related to Religious Education can contribute to the Early Learning Goals.

During the Foundation Stage, children may begin to explore the world of religion in terms of:

- Special people, special books, special times, special places and special objects.
- They visit places of worship.
- They listen to and talk about stories.
- They are introduced to religious words.
- They use their senses in exploring religions and beliefs, practices and forms of expression.
- They reflect on their own feelings and experiences.
- They use their imagination and curiosity to develop their appreciation and wonder of the world in which they live.

Personal, social and emotional development

Examples of Religious Education related experiences and opportunities

- Children use some stories from religious traditions as a stimulus to reflect on their own feelings and experiences and explore them in various ways.
- Using a story as a stimulus, children reflect on the words and actions of characters and decide what they would have done in a similar situation. They learn about the story and its meanings through activity and play.
- Using role-play as a stimulus, children talk about some of the ways that people show love and concern for others and why this is important.
- Children think about issues of right and wrong and how humans help one another.

Example of an activity:

In the context of a learning theme to do with 'Growing' or 'The Natural World' children encounter the parable of the mustard seed.

- They look at and talk about some tiny seeds and the teacher tells the parable, putting it into context as a story that Jesus told. The teacher emphasises how, in the story, the tree that grew from the little seed became a safe home for birds.
- Children talk about what helps them to feel safe.
- They take a walk to look at trees and touch trees. They think about how they should look after trees. They talk about what it would be like to fly up into the branches.
- They plant seeds and role-play the growth of the seed in dance.
- They produce shared or independent writing on what they would like to grow into.
- Through these experiences children become more aware of themselves, for example of the concepts 'I am growing' 'I need to feel safe'.
- They respond to the significant experiences of exploring a story and wonder at the growth of seeds.
- They learn to understand their responsibility to the natural world and begin to consider beliefs about Jesus.

Communication, language and literacy

Examples of Religious Education related experiences and opportunities

- Children have opportunities to respond creatively, imaginatively and meaningfully to memorable experiences.
- Using a religious celebration as a stimulus, children talk about the special events associated with it.
- Through artefacts, stories and music, children learn about important religious celebrations.

Example of an activity:

In the context of a learning theme to do with 'Books' or 'Favourite Stories', children look at a child's Haggadah and are encouraged to ask questions about it.

- The children are told that the book belongs to a Jewish child who is celebrating Passover. The story of Passover is briefly told.
- Children are invited to think about their favourite books.
- The teacher talks about the child learning Hebrew and having an important job to do at the celebration meal.
- Children think about where and how they learn and how it feels to do something really well.
- They learn the words 'Jewish' and 'Hebrew'.
- They use language in role-playing a family meal.
- They look at and talk about a variety of dual-language books, share other old stories from both oral and written traditions and make a class book based on a favourite story or a celebration they have shared.
- A Questions Board is set up for children to record any questions that come into their heads.
- Through these experiences, they learn about the importance of story and sacred texts in religion, develop respect for the beliefs and values of others and extend their vocabulary.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Examples of Religious Education related experiences and opportunities

- Children ask and answer questions about religion and culture, as they occur naturally within their everyday experiences.
- Children visit places of worship.
- They listen to and respond to a range of religious and ethnic groups.
- They handle artefacts with curiosity and respect.
- Having visited a local place of worship, children learn new words associated with the place, showing respect.

Example of an activity:

In the context of a learning theme to do with 'Buildings' or 'Special Places', children are shown a selection of pictures.

- They then learn about three different places children go with their families to worship God: a church, the Golden Temple and a mosque.
- Children are invited to talk about the pictures of places of worship, looking for common and distinctive features. Children talk about somewhere they have been that they will remember.
- They go out and photograph significant places (and people) in the local area and display their pictures in school. They visit a place of worship and record what they see.
- They talk about building materials and how they are used. They look at patterns.
- They sort collections of photographs of buildings and they compare buildings in their local environment and far away, talking particularly about the local church, the Golden Temple and the mosque.
- Through these experiences, children learn about the importance of places of worship, relating this to their own special places. They begin to be aware of their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people.

Creative development

Examples of Religious Education related experiences and opportunities

- Using religious artefacts as a stimulus, children think about and express meanings associated with the artefact.
- Children share their own experiences and feelings and those of others, and are supported in reflecting on them.

Example of an activity:

In the context of a learning theme to do with 'Water', 'Journeys' or 'The Natural World', children look at a sealed pot that has water from the Ganges river inside it.

- Once they know that the pot contains water, they are encouraged to imagine a wide, flowing river.
- They look at photographs or videos of rivers and waterfalls and talk about how water moves.
- They hear the story of the birth of the river Ganges (regarded by Hindus as sacred). The teacher emphasises that it is a story that helps some people imagine what God might be like.
- They look at photographs of Hindus bathing in the Ganges and talk about why the river is important to them.
- They are invited to think about their ideas about heaven.
- In response to the story, they explore water through play. They create a great river collage, using a variety of media.
- They make a river dance, using lengths of coloured fabric and accompany it with percussion music.
- Through these experiences, children develop their imagination through a variety of creative and expressive arts.
- They begin to think about the importance of water as a symbol in religion and why some people regard particular places as sacred.