

Religious Education Monitoring: observation sheet

The expected features of general lessons should be present:

- Did the teacher make clear how this lesson related to the previous one and the next one?
- Was the lesson material presented in a way that stimulated and engaged pupils?
- Were the expectations challenging?
- Was the lesson well structured and paced?
- Were the resources of good quality, accurate and authentic?
- Was there a good balance between direct teaching and pupil tasks?
- Were strategies used successfully to match work to pupils' needs?
- Was pupils' achievement noticeable in the lesson?
- Did the lesson conclusion recap learning (including input from the pupils)?
- Were any supporting adults deployed effectively to facilitate learning?

Features specific to religious education lessons:

Were the expectations appropriately focused on Religious Education objectives?	
Did learning tasks address both ATs, Learning about religion, and Learning from religion (or in case of Birmingham AS learning from faith and learning about religious traditions)?	
In what ways did teaching provide opportunities for spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of pupils?	
What religious concepts and vocabulary were taught/reinforced?	
How did questioning develop pupils' religious understanding? How did pupils respond, especially to open questioning?	
Did pupils have effective opportunities to respond for themselves, reflect on ideas and questions, relate religion to their own experience, learn from religion?	
Was there any opportunity for pupils to be nurtured in their faith?	

Guidance and examples	
Religious Education objectives – rather from literacy, art	<p>In a Y6 lesson pupils were involved in exploring the symbolism of the cross and were able to create their own symbolism on a Salvadoran cross. The objectives for the lesson were based on the ideas used rather than artistic merit.</p> <p>Following an account of the nativity story, Y5 pupils wrote with empathy about how the journey would have been for Mary or Joseph. The objective was for the children to draw on their understanding of the Biblical narratives, rather than use particular conventions of literacy – eg connectives etc.</p>
Learning about religion, and Learning from religion (or in case of Birmingham AS learning from faith and learning about religious traditions)	In KS2 RE lesson, pupils were helped to understand how and why members of the Jewish faith celebrate Hanukkah and what they as pupils can learn from this festival. Children eagerly wrote on a menorah “flame” actions for which they would like to be remembered.
Opportunities for spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of pupils. The spiritual is explored through considering the spiritualities of others, and the choices and commitments that help to shape people’s lives	<p>In a lesson about gifts before Christmas, Y2 pupils learned how to give a helping hand in terms of money and time, such as in preparing boxes for Operation Christmas Child. They talked of ‘sending some things in boxes to other people who don’t have as many things as we have’.</p> <p>In a Y6 lesson pupils were exploring the difficulties of people with opposing views reaching unity and harmony. Pupils were actively involved in role play, some of them holding deeply entrenched views about Christianity, others having different opinions or being mediators, all of which enabled pupils to manage their feelings, explain their point of view and decide how to best to arrive at a consensus. Relevant Bible readings helped pupils to use these messages to resolve future disputes.</p> <p>Year 2 pupils reflect on sacred or holy writings, applying the story of Ruth to welcoming a new member to the class, enabling them to feel welcomed and settled.</p>
Religious concepts and vocabulary	These might be religious concepts like Trinity or Sacrifice, or particular vocabulary such as ‘Shabbat’ or Sabbath. ‘Dharma’ or duty can be explored through the story of Rama and Sita.
Questioning to develop pupils’ religious understanding – particularly open questions	Bible stories and prompts such as ‘ <i>what qualities might Jesus want in a friend?</i> ’ and ‘ <i>what is the kingdom of God like?</i> ’ helped pupils to think through what is important for Christians
Opportunities for pupils to respond for themselves, reflect on ideas and questions, relate religion to their own experience, learn from religion	<p>In a Y6 lesson, following teaching on Sikh Belief, pupils of faith (and no current inclination) reflected upon their beliefs</p> <p>Year 2 pupils were able to reflect on the need to forgive others, making coloured beaded bracelets to symbolise God’s forgiveness and love. As one pupil put it, ‘<i>it makes me feel I don’t want to hurt anyone again.</i>’ They are able to make connections in their own lives.</p>
Opportunities for pupils to be nurtured in their faith	<p>In a lesson on prayer, all children wrote prayers. Muslim children wrote prayers addressed to Allah.</p> <p>Following an imaginative lesson using the Bible, a pupil became more interested in reading it at home with her family</p>

Is spirituality just to be contrasted with physicality and the material?.

Christian faith affirms the original goodness of creation, and the importance of bodies. It celebrates the incarnation of God as human flesh and blood, born in humble, earthy circumstances and dying a very real death on a Roman cross. Bread and wine, basic staples of daily life, are central Christian symbols. People are called to be followers with their whole bodies, not just their minds, or spirits.

Spirituality is about the way our lives are shaped by what we love and give ourselves to. It includes a focus on the practical here and now. Spirituality in the classroom is therefore not just about the invisible and inexpressible, or about moments for eyes closed and special sensations; it includes **considering all the ways in which our lives and experiences are patterned by our commitments and our relationship to or estrangement from God.**

Since spirituality helps give shape to our lives, Christians maintain that there is no getting away from choosing what spiritual direction to pursue. Different beliefs and commitments will shape differing spiritualities and different life patterns. The choices we make matter. As time goes on, we begin to become like that which we place at the heart of our lives. Helping students to engage with spiritual growth will include making clear that choices and commitments are involved.

Christian spirituality includes a call to seek God and work at living a faithful life. Spiritual growth is about trusting and receiving before it is about striving and perfecting. It involves learning to look beyond our own efforts.

This also means that spirituality is not just about making us feel more peaceful. Spiritual growth will not just involve positive experiences such as awe and wonder; it will include facing our own fears and failures and experiencing confession, forgiveness, and then thankfulness for good things not deserved.