



R.E. Ideas

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Pris £1.00

Delightful Days!

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Suggestions for activities associated with religious celebrations and devotions in primary schools

'How can we make Religious Education interesting?'

'It's difficult to think of something different to do. We can only record plain facts.'

'The children have only questions and answers in their books to record what they have been doing'

'We haven't enough evidence to show what we have been doing.'

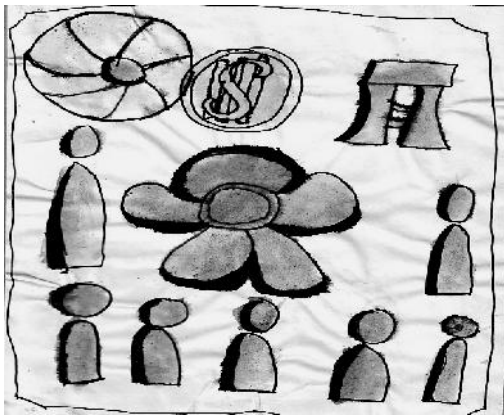
'We had such good discussions, but how do we keep a record of them?'

These are some of the comments teachers frequently make. They often think that they need to liven up the teaching and learning in Religious Education. It can sometimes be difficult to think of new ideas, remembering all that has to be fulfilled in the classroom. There are many interesting, fun filled and exciting activities, though, which can take place to ensure that standards in Religious Education are high.

Here some examples of possible activities. Most of them have been tried already, but maybe there are some new ideas as well!

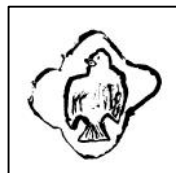
Visits and Visitors

- There is nothing like first hand experience of going on a visit or welcoming visitors to school. Seeing and hearing things for themselves makes everything more relevant to the pupils. Taking their shoes off or wearing a head dress to visit the mosque or gurdwara, for example, creates enthusiasm, makes them inquisitive and eager to learn more. With careful planning beforehand, interesting and useful activities during the visit plus a purposeful follow up; worthwhile experiences can be gained.
- When arranging a visit to a place of worship to learn about any ceremony or celebration, try to get an opportunity to explain to the leaders or members what the purpose of the visit is, and how exactly they can help.
- Before going, it is important to prepare the pupils carefully, including referring to their behaviour at a place of worship.
- When visiting the synagogue to learn about devotions associated with Bar Mitzvah, for example, having activity sheets to work on helps them to concentrate on the relevant parts of the ceremony.
- They should to be taught about the individual roles of the people involved with preparing for, and taking part in special ceremonies and celebration.
- Various celebrations take place at different times of the year, and for Christian churchgoers, it means the churches and chapels are decorated in special colours and patterns. Visits at Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter are usual for schools, more often than not to take part in services, but much more can be gained by giving the children the chance to learn about the origin and meaning of the traditions associated with the celebrations.
- The same is true of the traditions of festivals and celebrations from other religions, e.g. Divali (Hindu), Succot (Jewish) and Baisaki (Sikhism)
- Following the visits, there will be ample topics for lively discussions and effective recording.
- Inviting visitors to the classroom is another way of enriching the knowledge and understanding of the children. By using questionnaires that have been prepared for the occasion, it is possible to gather a store of facts and to learn about the viewpoints of different people.
- Some visitors may bring artefacts with them, to make things easier to explain e.g. when discussing the Shabbat meal or Hindu dress and patterns. Again, it is very important to teach the pupils to respect them.



Using Photographs.

- Using photographs is one way of inspiring discussions, and of introducing new vocabulary and terms
- Looking at photographs can help children to learn about the architecture and external features of places of worship.
- When working on the theme of baptism, it is possible to give the children some photographs to study, to prepare them for their visit to the local church or chapel to take part in a mock christening.
- During the visit to a place of worship it might be possible for some of the pupils to use a camera themselves.
- With a digital camera, it is possible to edit the photographs back at school and then using them in their work.
- Another way of using photographs is to include them in colourful pamphlets or classroom displays.
- A scanner can be used to include photographs and documents that give additional information, such as timetables and certificates (remember to ask permission first!)



Christening



Cross Curricular Activities

- The opportunities to develop literacy skills are abundant. Orally, the children can ask and answer questions, and make presentations to different audiences. Young pupils always enjoy role playing. It lets them develop their ideas and express their feelings. Books to suit the age and ability of the pupils are available. By now schools have colourful Big Books giving information about the different religions. They appeal to all ages in the primary school. They are useful for group or class discussions. Small versions are ideal for group reading. There is no end to the writing genre they can use. How about writing an article or letter, or composing a dialogue or drama? Children always get pleasure out of writing prayers and poems.
- Art is another form of expressing feelings and emotions. For showing the many aspects of various colourful and striking celebrations, nothing gives children more pleasure than to paint or draw a picture. Three dimensional works are also a way of interpreting some ideas
- Within Technology, it is possible to work with textiles, and to sew religious patterns and symbols. Food plays an important role in religious ceremonies and celebrations. It can be fun researching various ingredients for meals, and preparing some meals themselves. Of course, health and safety rules have to be adhered to, and there must be awareness of food allergies!
- Music also plays an important role. Naturally, listening to pieces of religious music is a way of concentrating the mind. How about composing impromptu pieces, to portray a Biblical story or to describe a special celebration?
- Local historians can contribute a great deal in tracing the relevant history of places of worship. It will be possible to learn about the buildings, or investigate the lives and work of leaders, hymn writers and benefactors.
- By making plans, or drawing maps of the way to the place of worship, children will have fulfilled some aspects of Geography, and developed their geographical vocabulary.
- Mathematical work springs from creating tables and graphs, and using them to interpret the data collected.

Information Technology and Communication

This is an exciting field, which is developing quickly. By now, most teachers and pupils can use a computer confidently. There are a large number of suitable sites on the internet for Religious Education.

- These are some of the main sites:

<http://www.culham.ac.uk>

<http://re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk>

www.stapleford-centre.org

- The <http://theresite.org.uk> is a safe search engine, which leads to several other suitable sites. By giving the age of the pupils, then the subject or religion required, you will have plenty of choice. Children are able to explore, and select materials on celebrations and ceremonies from the various religions. Many schools already have their own web pages, and these are very useful for gaining information about the religions of the children themselves, e.g.

www.frenchwood.co.uk

- If you want information and pictures of religious artefacts, Strathclyde University have a very useful site.

http://www.allre.org.uk/shells/strath/_cafacts.html

By changing the letter 'c' before 'afacts' to 'j', 'h', 's' or 'i'; you get artefacts from the different religions in turn.

- If it is not possible to reach some of the sites directly then use the search engine on 'The R.E. Site' (<http://theresite.org.uk>)
- E-mail has opened many doors, and it is possible to create links between schools across the country and further afield. By sending questionnaires to other schools it is possible to use the information gained in many different activities.
- The possibilities can be never ending. Computers can be used to create newspaper articles, letters and other forms of writing, to record what has been learnt. All this will contribute to the general requirements of Literacy and Information Technology as well. It is possible to download pictures to be included in posters and leaflets.
- By now, the Interactive White Board has reached most schools. Here is an excellent opportunity to combine the many aspects of I.C.T. to create interesting and purposeful presentations for pupils.
- The latest development is the curriculum on line, and again it will be possible in the future to have attractive materials for Religious Education lessons.
- Television plays a large part in the lives of children today, and there are suitable programmes and videos to watch, without relying too much on them of course. One popular series for very young pupils is Dottie and Buzz by Channel 4, and there is a website to go with it

www.dottieandbuzz.co.uk

Popular programmes and videos include the *Testament* series and the film *Miraclemaker*
www.miraclemaker.co.uk

- Another way of recording activities is using an audio tape. When questioning the vicar or minister about their role in any religious ceremony, it is possible to store the information for future use. Tapes of music, which is an integral part of religious celebrations, may also be made and listened to. It might be possible to record the voice of the Imam calling Muslims to prayer. What about asking believers to give their views on aspects of the different religions that are relevant to our everyday lives?

Personal and Social Education

Some aspects of the P.S.E. framework are very relevant to Religious Education. Mainly, the emphasis is on the **emotional**, **spiritual** and **moral** aspects, but there many connections with other aspects as well. There will be opportunities to develop the attitudes, values and skills which prepare the pupils to be active and tolerant citizens, who can appreciate world-wide viewpoints and traditions. It is important to set challenging activities which will help to develop thinking skills. They will come to realize that there may not be one simple answer to some questions, and that they have to make choices and accept responsibilities. Looking at the way followers of different religions worship and live together helps to understand and respect their customs.

One example of good practice in the class room is Circle Time. A piece of music or a picture can be used to focus the pupils' thoughts, and spur discussions.

After the children have made Diva lamps, it is possible for the teacher to light them, and the children sitting in a circle round them. Then everyone concentrates on the flames for a while. Deliberations about the story of Rama and Sita; light conquering darkness, good overcoming evil, can then take place.

Following a visit to a place of worship.

1. Sit still, and close your eyes
2. Imagine that you are in the place of worship.
3. What can you see?
4. What can you hear?
5. What smells are there?
6. Pretend that you are touching different things there
7. It is time to leave the building, and open your eyes.

After the children have opened their eyes, give them the opportunity to meditate and reflect. A set of particular questions will help to put their thoughts in order, and to speak about them.

- How did you feel?
- What did you like best?
- Was there anything that you did not like?

That's enough to think about. We must be careful, however, not to lose sight of the Programmes of Study in our local Agreed Syllabus. Our main aim is the spiritual development of the pupils, rather than just giving them bare facts. It is possible to do this in a cross curricular way, without forgetting the true meaning and purpose or the learning.

Hopefully, some of the ideas may appeal. Therefore, have a go! Religious Education can be fun!

RESOURCES from CEMW (*Christian Education Movement Wales*)

Detailed information and further ideas to be found in CEMW Resource Packs

ALL CLASSROOM MATERIAL IS PHOTOCOPIABLE FOR USE WITHIN YOUR SCHOOL

Discounts available to schools in contributing Authorities and all students

Resources Catalogues and Packs plus further copies of R.E. Ideas available from:

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