NATRE
National Association for Teachers
of **Religious Education**

Visits and visitors

8.3

Matters to consider when addressing the question, 'Do we sufficiently use the pupils themselves as a resource?'

Although the idea of involving pupils directly as a resource, whether informally during the course of a lesson or more formally in the case of 'faith ambassadors' – visiting a school of a different character – might be appealing, it is very important to do this only in the context of a number of principles and considerations.

On principle, for example, it is important to:

- respect the right of particular pupils not to be involved in activities that might cause distress or embarrassment
- respect the right of those coming from non-mainstream or non-religious backgrounds to be represented and involved in RE activities
- allow pupils to talk and reflect from their own experience of a particular religious or belief tradition/s, i.e. the burden of representing the whole of that tradition/s would be both unrealistic and unfair for the pupils concerned.

It is also important to understand that, for example:

- society is becoming more plural and diverse
- a significant number of children have been brought up in mixed-faith families
- religious and belief traditions are complex, diverse and changing
- the experience of a particular young person may not match the account of a particular religious or belief tradition set out in a textbook or storybook
- terms found in particular religious and belief traditions might be used, pronounced or spelled in a wide variety of ways
- younger children, in particular, might have a very sketchy impression of the religious traditions in which they are being brought up
- in learning from the experiences of young people, teachers – as well as their pupils – need to adopt the attitude of an interested learner, ready to be confronted with the unknown, the surprising or the unusual
- the dividing line between 'religion' (or belief system) and 'culture', as well as between 'belief' and 'superstition', is not always easy to disentangle.