



# Ten beginnings in RE for children in the Reception Class

Here are 10 flexible sets of learning ideas for children in the 4–5 age group. What could your school make more use of from this list? Which ones are you already doing well? And what would be numbers 11–15 if you wrote them? How does each idea connect to Early Learning Goals and to other curriculum areas of learning?

<p><b>1. Play</b> Through their play, children make sense of the world and have fun together. The main learning area for RE, but often neglected.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use children’s natural love of play to set them up for ‘playing’ ritual: family life, weddings or baby-welcoming ceremonies.</li><li>• Use Small World, Playmobil or Lego people to encourage children to play out a faith story they have heard.</li><li>• Teach children the meaning of some values words through play activity: helping, caring, co-operating, forgiving, being kind, sharing, taking turns.</li><li>• Play guessing games about children’s baby pictures: Who grew up from these 4 babies to these 4 grown ups?</li><li>• Communication, language and literacy are at the heart of this kind of RE</li></ul>
<p><b>2. Games</b> The fun of games is an underused resource for introducing ideas and questions to 4 year olds</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These ways of working help any child to learn team skills</li><li>• Use team games to develop understanding of simple RE concepts:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ follow the leader, for work on religious leaders</li><li>○ Kim’s Game (remembering 10 objects on a tray) to review and develop learning about religious artefacts, or objects seen on the church visit, or ‘what shows that people care for us?’ or many more</li><li>○ ‘mime an action to your partner’ games for learning about gestures of greeting, celebration or prayer</li><li>○ hiding and seeking games to find some key words on flashcards or to find Easter eggs, or diva lamps, or pieces of an RE jigsaw.</li><li>○ turn taking games – where there are 12 disciples in a story for example.</li></ul></li></ul>

### 3. Music

Religious communities and FS classrooms are both places to enjoy music together



- Play music from a religious tradition to pupils to show them how faith uses music in worship, or to tell a story from the faith.
- Make music with children to express simple ideas: a piece of music that is excited, that is thankful, that is easy to sing, tied to a faith story of thrills or thanks or praise.
- Use drums, sticks and rhythms to accompany storytelling or key word work: “hit your sticks loudly whenever Goliath is mentioned, and clap your hands softly for David.”
- Use rhythms and chants created by the children as a class to focus learning and make it memorable: chant the six words that say how Noah felt through the flood story. Thigh slapping RE is always good!
- This work adds to a child’s understanding of the world, and contributes to creative development through expressive arts.

### 4. Artefacts

Make objects from inside a faith into a keyhole or window into the religion. Let the artefact tell a story for you.



- Use one artefacts at a time and introduce it in multi-sensory ways – touch before sight using a feely bag, for example, or ‘what sound does it make?’
- Or make a paper box into a ‘through the keyhole’ looking box, and put artefacts inside. Get a child to look and describe what they see to the rest.
- Get children to speculate about the artefact you choose: what, how, where, when, why?
- Then introduce a second, related artefact, and do the same simple enquiry process.
- Use a candle to set an atmosphere for RE that is calm and reflective.
- Knowledge and understanding of different cultures can start here.

## 5. Questioning

Asking big questions and playing about with them is often fun and opens minds.



- Always ask children to come up with the questions they would like to ask: if you could ask the character, the object, the visitor, the person in the story two questions, what would you ask?
- Try this with an artefact, a complex picture or artwork, a story, or even 'what would you like to ask the person who knows everything?'
- Distinguish big questions from little ones, and accept that the bigger the question, the harder to answer. Share this mystery!
- Use 'Who, how, where, when, what, why' to get children to make up arrange of questions.
- All good learning uses questions, but especially in RE, 'asking for myself' is a key.

## 6. Talking:

the foundation of good RE learning



- Use 'think pair share' or 'thinking time, talking time' or numerous circle time routines to enable children to talk about their RE and their own ideas and feelings.
- Talk about names, for example: who was I named by, after? What do names tell us? Whose name is also in a holy book? Lots of learning about diversity can follow.
- Talk matters much more than paper in early RE: celebrate and use this.
- Get children to talk about stories, sayings from the sacred texts, photos of worship, values and everything else by asking them for favourites: favourite word, story, character, day, time, celebrations are all good, but there are many others too.
- This is all about RE's intersection with language and literacy.

## 7. Storytelling

The essence-of-learning method in religion



- The foundation of 4 year olds' RE is in good storytelling. Use all your gifts and talents to make it memorable and exciting. Find the J K Rowling within yourself, and release that storyteller!
- Search for stories from the different faiths to tell in the class.
- Make it interactive, with children responding and joining in on cue.
- Communication and literacy methods are very well suited to RE with stories.

## 8. Making and creativity

Through giving time to these activities, thinking can open up



- Children make 'leaves for the tree of peace'.
- Children make links in the chain of 'what helps us to live together'.
- Children decorate a candle template with signs for kindness, happiness, love and friendship.
- In festivals work, get children to choose designs and colours for cards, mobiles, displays and wall hangings, or to decorate letters to make up words for a display: Happy Easter, Eid Mubarak.
- There are 101 ways RE can contribute to creative development. Hardly any RE lesson can avoid it!

## 9. Imagination

Good learning for 3–5s takes their own wide world of imagination seriously!



- Set up imaginative activity for children, e.g. using lights, large floaty pieces of cloth, items collected from the school grounds, den-making kit, learning outside the classroom, or whatever!
- Use five senses to stimulate the sixth and seventh senses of thinking and feeling. What can we see, touch, taste, smell, hear? And what can we think and feel?
- Give children space and scope to be imaginative about – for example – heaven, a world of peace, what it would be like to go back in time to the stories of Jesus or Guru Nanak.
- Use a wide range of hats, or dressing-up activities, or making 'dens', to mark out space for imagination, and use faith stories to kick off the playing instinct for groups of children dressed up!
- Creative development ELGs matter in RE

## 10. Symbol

A key to learning from religion: symbol carries meaning without words. Very useful for 3–5s.



- Introduce simple symbols of two religions to children.
- Can the children match the dress, food, place of worship, to the symbol?
- Can they talk about the different symbols?
- Think together about the symbols of festivals – which ones really matter? Can children choose 'one out of five' Divali, Christmas or Eid symbols that they like best, or think is most important, to talk about?
- Can children choose symbols for themselves from a range offered, and talk about why they work? What colour, plant, place, food is a good symbol for me?