

## Assessing Pupils' Progress in Religious Education

Over the two years to September 2010, a team of RE teachers, advisers and pupils worked in Key Stage Three to create standards files that exemplify the level of work that a pupil is achieving. These standards files were published on a website by the Government Agency QCDA in Summer 2010. To describe achievement, the project devised, again in consultation with many advisers and teachers, assessment focuses for RE based upon the QCDA's Framework 8 level scale for RE. These assessment focuses express how RE achievement at each of the levels can be described. As QCDA's project consultants for APP and standards files in RE, Lat Blaylock and Deborah Weston are pleased to be able to disseminate this work to interested readers, via the RE Today and NATRE websites. Please note the introductory comments below, which give a specific context for this work and suggest its value – and its limitations.

### What are the APP assessment focuses useful for in RE?

- The AFs take the dense language of the RE 8 level scale and break it down simply into items for which a pupils work' might give clear evidence.
- Like the 8 level scale, these AFs make the mapping, planning and monitoring of pupils' progress clear.
- A SACRE might like to include these as part of its assessment guidance in a new syllabus
- The Standards Files for RE make most sense when read in the light of the AFs.
- The work done to create the AFs may save teachers time and effort.
- The second AF in particular focuses on pupils' skills of enquiry and investigation.

### What do these pages not offer?

- These AFs have no authority from the DfE or from government. They may nonetheless be useful professional tools.
- All general statements of progression, including the 8 level scale and the AFs below, need to have a professional teacher to implement them, adding content, making learning activities that show how to use them, and achieve them.
- The AFs do not need to be applied to every pupil. One of the best uses of them is for analysing the progress of a small sample of pupils across a population. Assess less in RE, but do it better.
- QCDA and best practice never endorsed or recommended the use of 'sub levels' in foundation subjects. The AFs should not be used to add to the already unfeasible marking load of classroom teachers.

### How might these AFs be used?

An Agreed Syllabus Conference might consider these AFs in writing requirements and guidance for school in a local authority area.

They could be used to generate pupil friendly classroom close 'I can...' statements that include content and skills.

They could be useful in relation to how teachers interpret the 8 level scale, particularly in uniting the attainment targets for learning about and learning from religion so that pupil experience in RE is coherent.

Teachers might use the AFs to clarify their work in using levels to assess pupils progress, for example:

- make a periodic judgement about the qualities they have noted in a pupil's work using the criteria for each level;
- identify gaps in learning and teaching and adjust planning accordingly;
- support diagnostic marking by writing precise feedback for pupils.

RE Assessing Pupils' Progress Assessment Guidelines. Using three assessment focuses to explore and explain achievement in RE

Level	AF1: Thinking about religion and belief Pupils:	AF2: Enquiring, investigating and interpreting Pupils:	AF3: Reflecting, evaluating and communicating Pupils:
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recall features of religious, spiritual and moral stories and other forms of religious expression</li> <li>• recognise and name features of religions and beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify what they find interesting and puzzling in life</li> <li>• recognise symbols and other forms of religious expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• express their own experiences and feelings</li> <li>• identify what is important to themselves and may be important to others</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• retell religious, spiritual and moral stories</li> <li>• identify how religion and belief is expressed in different ways</li> <li>• identify similarities and differences in features of religions and beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise that some questions about life are difficult to answer</li> <li>• ask questions about their own and others' feelings and experiences</li> <li>• identify possible meanings for symbols and other forms of religious expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• respond sensitively and imaginatively to questions about their own and others' experiences and feelings</li> <li>• give a reason why something may be valued by themselves and others</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make links between beliefs, stories and practices</li> <li>• identify the impacts of beliefs and practices on people's lives</li> <li>• identify similarities and differences between religions and beliefs"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• investigate and connect features of religions and beliefs</li> <li>• ask significant questions about religions and beliefs</li> <li>• describe and suggest meanings for symbols and other forms of religious expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify what influences and inspires them, and why</li> <li>• compare their own ideas and feelings about what pupils think is important</li> <li>• make links between what they and other people think is important in life, giving reasons for beliefs, attitudes and actions</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comment on connections between questions, beliefs, values and practices</li> <li>• describe the impact of beliefs and practices on individuals, groups and communities</li> <li>• describe similarities and differences within and between religions and beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gather, select, and organise ideas about religion and belief</li> <li>• suggest answers to some questions raised by the study of religions and beliefs</li> <li>• suggest meanings for a range of forms of religious expression, using appropriate vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe how sources of inspiration and influence make a difference to themselves and others</li> <li>• apply ideas and reflections to issues raised by religion and belief in the context of their own and others' lives</li> <li>• suggest what might happen as a result of their own and others' attitudes and actions</li> </ul>

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<p><b>5</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain connections between questions, beliefs, values and practices in different belief systems</li> <li>• recognise and explain the impact of beliefs and ultimate questions on individuals and communities</li> <li>• explain how and why differences in belief are expressed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• suggest lines of enquiry to address questions raised by the study of religions and beliefs</li> <li>• suggest answers to questions raised by the study of religions and beliefs, using relevant sources and evidence</li> <li>• recognise and explain diversity within religious expression, using appropriate concepts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• express clear views about how sources of inspiration and influence make a difference to their own and others' beliefs</li> <li>• recognise and explain how issues related to religion and belief are relevant in their own lives</li> <li>• contribute to discussions and develop arguments about religious viewpoints and beliefs, and the challenges of commitment</li> </ul>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use religious and philosophical terminology and concepts to explain religions, beliefs and value systems</li> <li>• explain some of the challenges offered by the variety of religions and beliefs in the contemporary world</li> <li>• explain the reasons for, and effects of, diversity within and between religions, beliefs and cultures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify the influences on, and distinguish between, different viewpoints within religions and beliefs</li> <li>• interpret religions and beliefs from different perspectives</li> <li>• interpret the significance and impact of different forms of religious and spiritual expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• argue persuasively their views on questions of religion and belief, taking account of others' viewpoints</li> <li>• express insights of their own into the challenges of committing to a religion or belief in the contemporary world</li> <li>• explain the challenges posed by religious, spiritual and philosophical questions</li> </ul>
<p><b>7</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use abstract concepts to analyse issues of religions and beliefs</li> <li>• explain coherently some consequences and influences of religions and beliefs on individuals and communities</li> <li>• explain some of the varying influences of history and culture on aspects of religious life and practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• initiate independent critical enquiry into aspects of religions and beliefs</li> <li>• use a wide range of relevant evidence, examples and sources to explore religious ideas and practices</li> <li>• use some of the principal methods by which religion is studied to enquire into forms of spiritual and moral expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• critically evaluate the significance of religious and non-religious viewpoints, personally and across societies</li> <li>• articulate insightful personal and critical responses to questions of belief and ethical issues</li> <li>• analyse contrasting viewpoints, including their own, through critical argument and use of evidence and experience.</li> </ul>
<p><b>8</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use a wide range of terminology, concepts and methods to analyse and synthesise a broad understanding of religions and beliefs</li> <li>• interpret religions and beliefs in their historical, social and cultural contexts</li> <li>• analyse different interpretations of religious, spiritual and moral sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• independently research and conclude from critical enquiries into a range of arguments about religions and beliefs</li> <li>• analyse the interrelationship between religions and beliefs and other disciplines or areas of human understanding, e.g. scientific enquiry</li> <li>• interpret varied forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression using their understanding of religions or beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• synthesise a range of evidence, arguments and reflections to challenge others' ideas and justify their own</li> <li>• express creative interpretations and evaluations of different forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression</li> <li>• draw balanced conclusions about aspects of religion and belief and present them persuasively to others</li> </ul>

## A ladder of key skills for assessing RE

This simple ladder uses skill terms extracted from the 8 level scale, intended to clarify and make explicit the progression of skills which the Agreed Syllabus uses to enable all pupils to achieve in RE. It is to be read in conjunction with the full version of the scale above.



Good teaching will share the appropriate skills with pupils and make explicit opportunities, through well designed learning opportunities for pupils to acquire, practise and develop these central skills in RE.

This version of the skills of the RE scale from the national framework (2004) and the new secondary curriculum (2009) uses the skill words of the scale to picture progression clearly.

The two attainment targets are, of course, usually intertwined in teaching and in pupils experience of RE, but it's useful to see them separately here and in planning work.

Thanks to Nottingham City and County's Agreed Syllabus (2009) for the graphic version of this work.