

Resourcing RE in your school

2.4

Suggestions to discuss to support schools in addressing the question, 'Does the way in which we store, handle and display resources convey positive messages about their value and importance?'

It is notoriously difficult to compile a list of ideas about handling RE resources for a number of reasons:

- There are no hard and fast rules because what is appropriate in one context might be inappropriate in another.
- Teachers usually learn through experience, particularly through being sensitive to the reactions of others and being willing to learn by mistakes.
- There is diversity and variation both within and between different traditions.
- Some traditions and cultures appear more intuitively sensitive to physical handling and use than others.
- There is sometimes disagreement about what should be done (e.g. whether, *in an educational context*, the hands should be washed before handling the Muslim *Qur'an* or Jewish *tefillin* placed on a pupil to show how they are worn).

Under the headings 'Religious artefacts and visual images', 'Displays' and 'Books' on the following page are listed some of the ways in which teachers handle RE resources, in the light of their knowledge and experience.

Group exercise

- 1 Read through the lists
- 2 Discuss each of the suggestions in turn, in the light of people's own knowledge and experience
- 3 Add further examples and suggestions.

Resourcing RE in your school

2.4 (Continued)

Religious artefacts and visual images

Some teachers would suggest the following:

- that good quality storage demonstrates awareness of the value of the contents for believers
- that storing artefacts in separate containers according to their tradition (e.g. 'Buddhist box', 'Christian box') avoids causing offence
- that, while some 'substitute' artefacts (e.g. a wig to show *kes*h – uncut hair, one of the Sikh Five Ks) can demonstrate a lack of taste, one must be careful not to dismiss all 'cheap-looking' artefacts (e.g. plastic water bottles in the shape of Our Lady of Lourdes, plastic images of Hindu deities) in that they might have real value for believers/devotees/pilgrims
- that it is more appropriate to pass round particular artefacts (e.g. prayer beads from the various traditions) than it is others (e.g. replica *Torah* scrolls, the Holy *Qur'an*, the Tibetan bell and *dorje* – the former of which some Buddhists say should not be rung for trivial purposes)
- that the display of religious images (e.g. of the *Kabah* in Makkah) near the floor, or the placing of artefacts or images on the floor during circle time, for instance, might cause offence
- that it is not appropriate to point one's feet directly at sacred objects (e.g. the *Guru Granth Sahib* (sacred book) in a Sikh *gurdwara*, the image of the Buddha in a Buddhist meditation room)
- that two-dimensional images of the Sikh Gurus should be used rather than three-dimensional (which many/most Sikhs find offensive)
- *other examples and suggestions ...*

Displays

Some teachers would suggest the following:

- that religious artefacts can be displayed to good effect (e.g. in a glass-fronted display cabinet)
- that a 'mystery item' can form part of a display (i.e. an unlabelled artefact that pupils have to guess the origin and use of, e.g. the clay tablet used by some *Shi'a* Muslims during prayer)
- that questions can be used to encourage interaction (e.g. 'Is this a Christian artefact?' next to an image of Father Christmas)
- that displays of religious artefacts and images can be used to illustrate certain themes (e.g. 'festivals', 'prayer', 'directions', 'patterns', 'special places')
- that a single artefact can be used as a starting point for investigation into the lives of those with a particular religion or belief (an approach pioneered in the 'Gift to Child' curriculum material)
- *other examples and suggestions ...*

Books

Some teachers would suggest the following:

- that copies of the Arabic *Qur'an* are placed on a high shelf in deference to what Muslims do (i.e. it shows sensitivity to Muslim belief, custom and practice)
- that all sacred texts (including the Christian Bible) should be handled with respect and care
- *other examples and suggestions ...*