

Artefacts and visual images

7.1

What did the Warwick Report say?

The report included significant references to the use of religious artefacts and visual images, stating that, for example:

- most primary schools have collections of artefacts (p.141)
- even experienced teachers can feel the need for more guidance on artefacts (p.153)
- artefacts can enable pupils to gain a deeper understanding of a particular religion if they are not themselves part of that tradition
- RE resources can have different meaning for children of faith depending on whether or not they are from their own tradition (pp.166–7)
- religious artefacts are used, in primary schools in particular, as tools for concrete and kinaesthetic learning, to encourage empathy with the people for whom these artefacts hold religious significance, and to generate responses of awe and wonder
- in their classroom use and in children’s responses, the boundaries are sometimes blurred between ‘hands-on’ learning, respect for other people’s sacred objects and religious devotion (pp.149, 205, 212)
- a Year 2 lesson on *Shabbat* demonstrated the use of artefacts in experiential approaches to RE, in that it involved:
 - it is helpful to use known authorities to check on the use and meaning of artefacts (p.137)
 - many teachers justify the use of artefacts in terms of finding ways of engaging the attention of pupils, e.g. through looking at and touching (pp.149, 164)
 - in some schools, particularly where children come from linguistically deprived backgrounds and/or have English as an additional language, artefacts and large pictures are used as stimuli for discussion in order to support pupils’ language development (p.150)
 - pupils can recognise the value of pictures in books, e.g. ‘They don’t just show you what the writing says, they teach you something of their own also’ (Y5 student, p.163)
 - online resources – including the collections of major museums, art galleries and libraries – are giving unprecedented access to information and materials (p.204)
 - captions to illustrations used in books can be unhelpful or misleading (e.g. when a technical word is included in a caption to a photograph containing several possible points of reference) (p.40).

direct sensory engagement as the *challah* bread was ceremoniously uncovered as the class sat around in a circle and watched. The *havdalah* spicebox and the *challah* bread were passed round in a calm atmosphere of reverence and the children smelt and tasted them, engaging as closely as they could with the *Shabbat* experience of the Jewish family they were learning about through a storybook (Warwick Report, p.141).