

Religious Education



Video case study 2: Planning to lead or contribute to cross-curricular opportunities: religious education, citizenship and history

What can we learn from a study of the diverse groups living in Britain today?

The citizenship, history and religious education (RE) departments of Kingsmead Community School, Wiveliscombe, Somerset, make use of the new secondary curriculum orders and guidance to support the planning of a cross-curricular project on the themes of diversity and identity. As part of the project, pupils will draw on their learning in citizenship, history and RE, as well as ICT skills, to produce short documentary films about people in their local area. A compilation film will then be produced which they will exchange with their partner school in a contrasting area.

School profile

Total number of learners	772 (but only Year 9 involved in the project – 160)
Age range	11–16
Specialist status	MFL and Humanities
Level 5 and above in Key Stage 3 tests 2007	81% English 72% Maths 73% Science
Five A*-C at GCSE 2007	69%
Special educational needs	162 (21%)

Kingsmead is a small rural comprehensive community school in West Somerset. We recently achieved our best examination results ever with 69% of candidates achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE. The school has a predominately white ethnic intake with the vast majority of students originating from Somerset and the South West of England.

What were our learners like at the start?

Kingsmead's students enjoy history and religious education. The majority tackle tasks with enthusiasm and produce good quality work. Examination results at KS4 in history and religious studies are very good. Students' attitudes to citizenship lessons have improved over the last two years but are still poor when compared with more established subjects.

In Years 7 and 8 we teach geography, history and RE through a humanities course. In Year 9, students study discrete subjects for one hour a week as part of our two-week timetable. Citizenship is taught fortnightly within our citizenship and PSHE education programme although we are considering including discrete citizenship lessons on the timetable. We also teach citizenship through 'collapsed days' during our International Week in the summer term. Students enjoy this opportunity to work outside the normal timetabled hourly lessons. We integrate ICT into all our subject-based work: as a result, our students are adept at using technology and by Year 9 our students can plan, script, film and edit video.

Our Year 9 students display a wide range of ability. They are used to working on cross-curricular projects which combine different subject areas and can see the relevance of this to life outside school. They enjoy planning work in groups, listen carefully to each others' ideas and produce work of which they are proud. Our curriculum has, however, provided them with few opportunities to investigate an issue in depth and to present their work to audiences outside the school community.

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As a specialist languages college, Kingsmead emphasizes the international dimension in all aspects of its curriculum. We have also developed a link with Shirelands School in Smethwick in the West Midlands, which has a very multicultural intake, in order to provide students with an experience of the cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of Britain. Despite this, students have less experience of encounters with people from different religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds or to evaluate their own attitudes to the diverse nature of British society.

What do we want to achieve?

We wanted to devise a project for the summer term that would enable us to enhance our students' experience of cross-curricular work by drawing on different disciplines. By emphasising key concepts, process and new ideas for content we would be able to identify genuine links between citizenship, history and RE. We mapped the links using the headings in the new programmes of study. The results can be seen below.

Links between citizenship, history and RE

Subject	Concepts	Processes	Content
Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identities and diversity: living together in the UK. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> critical thinking and enquiry; advocacy and representation; taking informed and responsible action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the changing nature of UK society, including the diversity of ideas, beliefs, cultures, identities and traditions, perspectives and values that are shared; migration to, from and within the UK and the reasons for this.
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cultural, ethnic and religious diversity; change and continuity; cause and consequence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> historical enquiry; using evidence; communicating about the past. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the impact through time of the movement and settlement of diverse peoples to, from and within the British Isles; the way in which the lives, beliefs, ideas and attitudes of people in Britain have changed over time.

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Subject	Concepts	Processes	Content
RE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identity, diversity and belonging; • practices and ways of life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expressing insights into the significance and value of religion and other world views for human relationships; • expressing own beliefs and ideas; • investigating reasons for commitment and causes of diversity; • explaining religious practices including their transmission by tradition. 	study of religious and other beliefs of migrant communities, eg, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christianity of East European migrants, Islam, Hinduism, etc., through theme of interfaith dialogue: relationships, conflicts and collaboration within and between religions and beliefs.

As a consequence of our scrutiny of the new curriculum, we felt that the synergy between these three subjects would enable us to design a worthwhile cross-curricular project. However, our work also identified some of the differences between subjects and we decided to ensure that we respected these in our planning, as follows:

Citizenship – students taking action and being involved in the community

History – using and evaluating sources to investigate, identify and explain changes over time

RE – investigating and explaining the importance of religions and beliefs in many people’s lives.

We agreed we wanted to use an enquiry-based approach and spent some time devising a key question that would work across all three subjects. After much discussion, we opted for ‘What can we learn from a study of the diverse groups living in Britain today?’ We considered that this question would enable our students to investigate the history of the movement and settlement of diverse people to Britain and also to consider the beliefs of different faith groups and the challenges of living in a plural society. It would also enable them to discuss concepts such as rights and responsibilities and explore the ideas of belonging and identity.

Finally, we wanted students to work towards producing a real outcome and agreed that the project would culminate in the production of their own documentary films: a task which would enable us to enhance students’ ICT skills. Excerpts from the films would then be edited into a final compilation DVD. To celebrate the success of the project, students, parents and carers, local business, religious and political leaders and a ‘delegation’ from our partner school would then be invited to an evening to watch the DVD and hear about the students’ discoveries.



What differences did we want to see in our learners?

<p>In terms of knowledge and understanding, we wanted our students to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know that identities are complex, can change over time and are informed by a range of factors • know the reasons why Britain is a diverse society • understand the effects of the range of factors that can bring about community cohesion • understand the background to, and perspectives of, the different faith communities in Britain.
<p>In terms of skills, we wanted our students to be able to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect on the significance and value of religion and other world views for human relationships • empathise and work with people from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds • work individually and as part of a team to research, plan, and undertake enquiries into issues using a range of sources • express their own ideas and opinions confidently • use technology to present their work • plan and manage their own learning, and reflect on their own performance • understand the criteria by which their work is judged • join up learning in different subjects.
<p>In terms of final outcomes, we wanted our students to become:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active citizens interested in their own communities and the wider world • confident about their own identities and respectful of other people's identities.

How did we organise learning to achieve our aims?

How did we set about making a change?

This project was an ideal opportunity to develop further the collaborative work and team-teaching that RE and History had already done together. Students have responded well to working outside of the normal hour provided in timetabled lessons. Having a coordinated approach to the build-up lessons in RE and history – constantly cross-referring to each other's lessons – would be a very powerful tool in motivating students to do well.

The initial outline of the project:

1. Share ideas for the project with our partner school in the West Midlands.
2. Inform students about the broad aims of the project in a Year 9 assembly. Explain that during the project they will plan, shoot, narrate and edit a short film to send to our partner school. Once the project has been established it is planned that in future years students will be able to watch a similar film from our partner school.
3. In lessons, students will be asked to discuss the enquiry question: 'What can we learn from a study of the diverse groups living in Britain today?' and consider how they could best show their learning

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in each subject. They will develop assessment criteria in relation to each subject and will use these throughout the project to assess their progress by writing comments in project booklets.

4. As an introductory activity, students will be asked to construct a questionnaire about identity and use it to survey their friends, family and other students, recording their answers in writing or by using a camcorder or dictaphone.
5. Students will then be asked to investigate cultural, ethnic and religious changes in Britain using news clips and reports from Pathé and BBC etc. We will plan the activities so that students can make links between all three subjects; although at times there will be scope to focus on individual subject areas explicitly, for example, in RE, an investigation of the positive benefits of living in a multi-faith society as well the challenges and controversies raised by it. We estimate that this work will require 8 lessons (3 x RE, 3 x history and 2 x citizenship and PSHE education).
6. Once students have gained an overview of the issues, they will work in mixed-ability groups of four to eight to choose an area for their section of the final video and research it in more detail. Some of these sections will relate specifically to RE, others to citizenship and history. We plan to set differentiated targets for the students and ask the SENCO and the gifted and talented coordinators to help write the instructions for the research work. This will ensure that all students can access the material and that it is appropriately challenging. We also plan to use a range of resources at different levels of difficulty so that students can choose those that are most appropriate to their needs.
7. Students will be given two days off timetable during International Week in the summer term to make their own DVD documentary. These will include a commentary on ethnic, religious and cultural developments and changes in Britain as well as a focus on a controversial issue concerning life in a plural society and on the positive and negative experiences of settlers in the UK. The presentations will also contain ideas for improving public understanding of different ethnic, religious and cultural groups.
8. Staff and selected students will then spend around a week editing the various sections into one documentary with the aim of including at least some of everyone's work.
9. Assessment will be related to each subject's specific criteria. In RE the focus will be mainly on the concept strand of '*identity, diversity and belonging*' with some attention paid to the strand of '*practices and ways of life*'. This will provide a balance between the attainment targets in the agreed syllabus and link with an existing unit within our scheme of work. Students will be asked to self-assess their contribution and the final product. In terms of RE, statements ranging from level 4 to 7 will be included in the assessment criteria.
10. Students, parents and carers, local business, religious and political leaders and a 'delegation' from our partner school in the West Midlands will be invited to an evening to celebrate the success of the project and to watch the documentary.

Once we had an outline of the project, we realised that we needed to enlist the help of the senior management team to help us bring our ideas to fruition and enable us to integrate the teaching of the different subjects involved. We wanted to students to develop their knowledge and skills in lesson time and then to produce the final videos during two of the collapsed days in our International Week. This, we believed, would be an ideal time for in-depth work because the entire school is off timetable and more staff would be available to help. (Year 10 students are on work experience and Year 11 students will have already left.)

We arranged a consultation with the Deputy Headteacher in charge of the timetable to ensure that our plans could be put into action. We explained that on the collapsed days it would be important to team-teach certain aspects of the project because we could make references to concepts and skills in the different subject areas. Students would also benefit from the interaction between subject specialists. As well as citizenship, history and RE teachers we want to involve geography teachers, the ICT department, members of the English department and some of our teaching assistants over the two days. In all, nine or ten members of staff will work with Year 9 students, giving us two teachers for each class.



How well have we achieved our aims?

We plan to teach this project for the first time in the summer term of 2008. The planning process has helped us for a number of reasons:

1. We now understand the requirements of the new curriculum.
2. Individual members of staff see the benefits of cross-curricular learning and are now more prepared to work alongside other subjects.
3. We identified that we need to review the benefits of cross-curricular learning and whether we have allocated the project enough curriculum and staff time for pupils to investigate the issues in sufficient depth. To do this, we plan to develop a questionnaire to enable us to gauge our pupils' attitudes to their work before the project begins. When the project is finished, we shall ask them to complete a similar questionnaire to ascertain their views about cross-curricular work.

We believe that we already have high standards in our subject areas but the opportunity to work together in an intensive way using joint lesson time will enable students to extend their knowledge, understanding and skills. They will also have engaged in a memorable and significant project which will be of value to the local community.



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National
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Working in partnership to support
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Part of the 14–19 education and skills programme