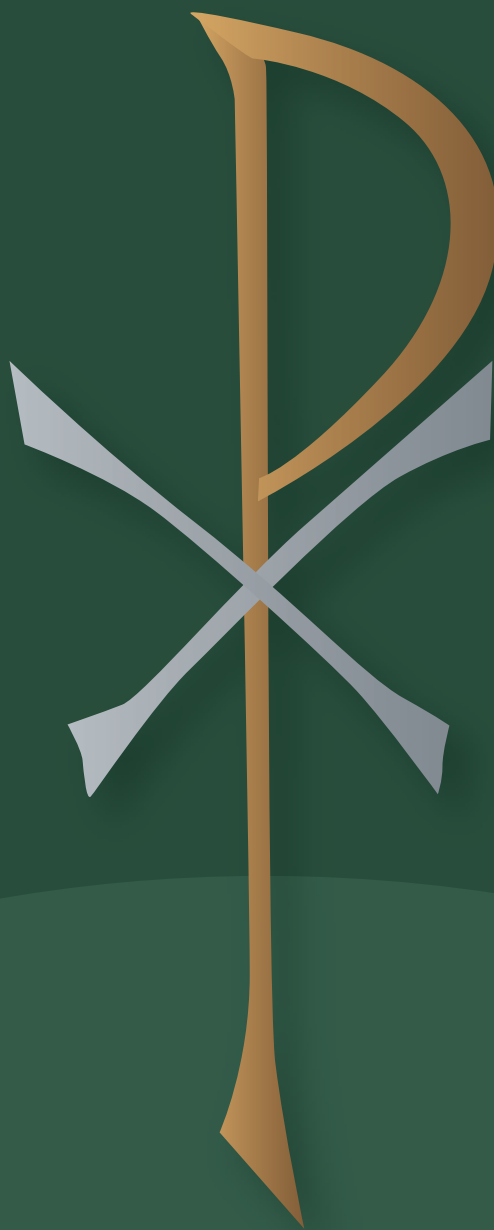


Religious Education in Catholic Schools  
& Colleges in England & Wales: 14-19



**Faith and Science, Church and State,  
Religious Diversity and Dialogue**

Curriculum Guidance

Bishops' Conference Department for Catholic Education and Formation



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# Foreword

I welcome the publication of Curriculum Guidance for Religious Education in Catholic Schools and Colleges in England and Wales for students aged 14- 19. It is published with the agreement of the Bishops' Conference Department for Catholic Education and Formation.

This is a document of crucial importance because it will assist our schools and colleges in a vital task of fashioning the religious education of students in their care at a time of considerable change. As the document explains, greater flexibility in response to the individual needs of students is being sought in every aspect of education for this age group. That is a proper aim. It creates new challenges for our schools and colleges. In facing these challenges this Curriculum Guidance will be of great assistance.

This Guidance will help not only schools and colleges but also all who seek to fashion or choose courses suitable for use in Catholic establishments. The Guidance builds on our established tradition of religious education and pays great attention to the revealed nature of truth. But it also seeks to make clear how Catholic religious education relates to the aspirations put forward in the non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education and to the expectations of accrediting bodies. The Guidance will be an important tool in the shared work and dialogue which we undertake with these public bodies.

In the course of this document various terms, in common use, are used in particular ways. In the

more strict discourse of Catholic thought, the word 'faith' is used to imply the response of the human person to the revelation of God. The word 'religion' is used to describe the patterns of thought and life by which a person seeks higher truth and the answers to the deeper questions of life. These more precise meanings lie behind the choice of words used in this Guidance, although the more common use of these terms has been employed at times. Nevertheless, a correct understanding of the Christian faith requires the acknowledgement that it is based on the revelation of God, given fully in the person of Jesus Christ, to which we human beings respond.

It is for this reason that Catholic education is always centred on the person of Christ, in whom the truth about God and about us is revealed. For this reason, too, Catholic education always holds that religious education, in which that revelation is studied and explored, is the 'core' of the curriculum. It is the source from which the true perspectives on life emerge.

I thank all who have worked so hard to produce this Curriculum Guidance. I commend it to all who are committed to the work of Catholic schools and colleges, professionally and by personal commitment.



+Vincent Nichols  
Chair: Bishops' Conference Department for  
Catholic Education and Formation

## About this booklet

In this booklet you will find curriculum guidance for religious education for students aged 14-19+ in Catholic schools and colleges. It is the outcome of continuing work and reflection by bishops, teachers and advisers on the nature and purpose of religious education in changing circumstances. Not least of these changes is the re-organisation of educational provision for the 14-19+ age group. In addition a new non-statutory National Framework for religious education has been developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) which has much to commend it and we acknowledge the fact that the Catholic community has benefited from it.

This booklet provides guidance for all those with responsibilities for the provision and quality of religious education in Catholic schools and colleges. It will be of use to governors, and to leaders and managers of Catholic schools and colleges, who will be helped in their understanding of the aims, scope and intended outcomes of classroom religious education.

It will guide dioceses, schools and colleges as they make decisions about the courses to be followed and the schemes to be used. It will provide a benchmark to safeguard standards, and help to ensure continuity and coherence in any schemes to be approved, locally and nationally, for use in Catholic schools and colleges. It will also be of help to all who develop and provide specifications, examinations, schemes and resources.

It is hoped that the whole Catholic community of England and Wales will also benefit from this clear exposition of the work of the Catholic schools and colleges in the field of religious education.

## Structure

We first of all set out the purposes of the guidance and then present some thoughts on the place and importance of religious education in Catholic schools and colleges. In particular we explain its place in the life of the Church before explaining the legal position of religious education in Catholic schools and colleges. This is followed by a consideration of the changing context in which our schools and colleges work. Finally, in this section, we look at the ways in which religious education relates to the rest of the curriculum.

The curriculum framework sets out an entitlement for all students aged 14-19+ to study religious education and to have their learning recognised and assured by the Catholic community, through the National Accrediting Board of Studies (NABS) as well as being accredited by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) or its successor. It sets out the aims, values and attitudes to be pursued in religious education courses. It also identifies the knowledge, understanding and skills to be taught across the age range. It includes suggestions about the breadth and depth of study which should be attempted. Guidance is also given about the principles to be followed by Catholic schools and colleges when selecting accredited courses in religious education.

Religious Education for the 14-19+ student is an exciting, engaging and challenging study of matters which lie at the heart of being human ...

# Religion and Belief

Exploring  
Discussing  
Investigating  
Thinking  
Reflecting

Faith and Science  
Church and State  
Religious Diversity  
and Dialogue

Science and Religion  
Ethics and relationships  
Ecumenism  
Justice and Peace  
Sexuality  
Right and wrong  
Medical ethics

...it is **dialogical**

## The Purposes of this Guidance

The guidance builds on the work of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools*<sup>1</sup> and of the *General Directory for Catechesis*.<sup>2</sup> Its aim is to develop an appropriate application of their principles to the 14-19+ age range.

It provides guidance to leaders in Catholic schools and colleges about the aims, scope and intended outcomes of classroom religious education for students aged 14-19+. It endorses the importance of providing students with a religious education appropriate to their stage of development in terms of faith development, religious, social and spiritual background irrespective of culture, race, gender or differences in ability and disabilities, and which is in accordance with the nature of the school or college.

It will help dioceses, schools and colleges to select and develop appropriate courses for the full range of students in their care. These decisions will be enlightened by the standards established in the guidance which are themselves informed by the principles of continuity and coherence. In pursuing this path, schools and colleges will be confident that their students will be following appropriate courses that will both affirm and challenge them and teach them how to interpret their world religiously.

The curriculum described in the guidance contributes to the provision of an ongoing

systematic and comprehensive exploration of the Christian mystery, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. In Christ, God reveals the truth about Himself and humanity, and the response to this revelation in faith is itself a challenging and exciting lifelong journey.<sup>3</sup> The guidance will also serve as a benchmark for the development of schemes of work and resources by a range of providers.

More particularly the guidance will inform discussions with the QCA and the examination boards to assist in the development of specifications, at all levels (pre-Entry to A2, including sixth form general religious education funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) [in England] and the Welsh Assembly [in Wales]), which meet the needs of students in Catholic schools and colleges.

Finally, it is hoped that the guidance will help the whole Catholic community of England and Wales, many of whom already give generously of their time as parents, governors and supporters, to gain a greater understanding of and confidence in the work of the Catholic schools and colleges in the field of religious education.

The guidance has important implications for the prior learning and breadth of study to be accomplished by the end of Key Stage 3.

<sup>1</sup> Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools*, 1996

<sup>2</sup> Congregation for the Clergy, *Catholic Truth Society, General Directory of Catechesis*, 1997

<sup>3</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, para 22.

## Religious Education in Catholic schools and colleges

### **The place of Catholic schools and colleges in the educative mission of the Church**

“The Catholic vision of education promotes the dignity and freedom of every person as created in the image and likeness of God.”<sup>4</sup> The education of young people has always been an integral part of the mission of the Church. For the Church, “the aim of education is, literally, to draw out of young people their God-given potential, to enable them to fulfil their unique role in creation within the human community.”<sup>5</sup> For its part the Catholic school and college “participates in the evangelising mission of the Church.”<sup>6</sup> The school’s and college’s vision and mission are most convincingly fulfilled when its close relationship with the People of God is recognised, embraced and celebrated, most especially in the complexity of the modern world.

In this way Catholic schools and colleges are truly places of “formation, of inculturation, of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people.”<sup>7</sup> Students who leave our schools and colleges will have been enriched personally and intellectually. They will have been inspired and challenged by the person and teaching of Jesus Christ and drawn into the community of faith with its conversations and reflections reaching from the origins of all life to eternity. They will be encouraged to recognise the presence of God in themselves and in creation; to reflect seriously on their personal

faith and to respect the faith and religious traditions of others; to think imaginatively; to question critically; to grow in maturity and wisdom; to discern their identity and vocation and to acquire the knowledge and skills for future work. They will become increasingly aware of education at the service of human flourishing, as an “inclusive, distinctive and holy endeavour”<sup>8</sup> not simply as a utilitarian means to employment.

### **Religious education in the curriculum: the legal position**

Religious education is part of the basic curriculum which consist of both religious education and the national curriculum. It is to be taught to all registered pupils in maintained schools, including those in the sixth form, in England and Wales, excepting those withdrawn by their parents.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, and in view of the importance given to religious education by the bishops of England Wales, they have said that “it requires the unequivocal support of the management of every Catholic school. It also requires 10% of the length of the taught week for each key stage of education [up to the end of compulsory schooling]. This is what we reaffirm and expect.”<sup>10</sup> The requirement for General Religious Education in Year 12 and Year 13 is 5%.

4 Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, *Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools*, 1996, p. 10

5 CES, *The Common Good in Education*, 1997, pp.6, 7

6 Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, 1998, n. 11

7 *ibid.* n. 11

8 Secondary Religious Education Advisers of England and Wales, *Context for Religious Education Catholic Schools and Colleges: 14-19+*, October 2004 (see Catholic Education Service website)

9 The legal requirements for teaching religious education are set out in the Education Act 1996 and School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of religious education lessons.

10 Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, *Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 2000, n.10

## Religious education in a changing context

There are many facets to the context in which Catholic schools and colleges now operate, each including points of agreement, development and dispute.

The first facet is the Church itself. The Holy Father in his address to the Curia on 22nd December 2005 clearly stated that we are at a seminal moment in the life of the Church, forty years after the Second Vatican Council. The task of appropriating the Council's teaching has proved extremely difficult and he expressed a determination that this remains a crucial task in the coming time. This phase, he suggests, will rightly be characterised by debate and dialogue, by innovation and continuity, by ongoing discernment about the meaning, interpretation and application of the Council's teaching. "This dialogue must now be developed by great open mindedness but also with a clear discernment that the world rightly expects of us in this very moment."<sup>11</sup>

The second facet is the place of Catholic education in relation to the shifting identity and sense of purpose to be found in our society and its institutions as rehearsed in the first chapter of *On the Way to Life*.<sup>12</sup> This report was commissioned by the Department for Catholic Education and Formation and describes a society characterised by diversity, fragmentation, fluidity, competing perspectives and a continuing search for meaning - a society struggling to construct an identity.

The third facet is the field of education itself. In its

document *The Common Good in Education*<sup>13</sup> the Catholic Education Service (CES) identifies an "increasing confusion in our society about the nature and purpose of education (which) stems from the tendency to judge the success of both individuals and of society as a whole by economic criteria."<sup>14</sup> This field of education is itself a critical partner in society's struggle to find meaning and purpose.

In recent decades evolving government policy has emphasised "the training and skills required by employers"<sup>15</sup> - the so-called 'skills agenda'. In practice this has meant a focus on raising achievement, encouraging more young people to continue in education beyond the age of 16, and on the provision of an increasing diversity of courses and qualifications from a greater variety of 'learning providers'. One critical consequence of this is that students are likely to follow courses more according to their stage of development rather than according to their age, e.g., some students will embark on AS courses during Key Stage 4 whilst others may follow Entry Level courses in Year 12. It will also mean that some students may well follow courses at different institutions, including the workplace. Their resulting portfolio of qualifications is likely to be more varied than at present.

Our Catholic schools and colleges are not exempt from these changes and developments. The students in them will demonstrate great variety in their levels of practice and understanding of the faith. Our student bodies as a whole will continue to reflect a

<sup>11</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia, 22nd December 2005*.

<sup>12</sup> Rev James Hanvey SJ and Anthony Carroll SJ, *The Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life, On the Way to Life: Contemporary Cultural and Theological Development as a Framework for Catholic Education, Catechesis and Formation, 2005*

<sup>13</sup> CES, *The Common Good in Education, 1997*

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.* pp.6, 7

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* pp.6, 7

wide range of abilities. Finally the cultural, ethnic, social and religious diversity evident in society will continue to be reflected in our schools and colleges.

In the light of these changes and developments we recognise that our schools and colleges are facing significant challenges. They are not alone for the authors of *On the Way to Life* speak of a wider 'crisis of transmission.'<sup>16</sup> This crisis challenges the Church to find new ways of articulating its mission, its vision: for the person, the good of society and why its "ultimate values are an enrichment and liberation not a surrender of autonomy and rationality."<sup>17</sup>

In response to these changes the Church re-affirms its commitment to a vision of education which addresses not only the main areas of *Every Child Matters*<sup>18</sup> but also the whole person. We recognise that in all these situations our schools and colleges have the "grave duty (to) offer religious [education] suited to the ... widely varying religious situations of the pupils"<sup>19</sup> and which is faithful to the call "for greater sensitivity in respecting conscience."<sup>20</sup> In these circumstances Catholic schools and colleges must provide a religious education appropriate to the needs of the diverse range of students they admit. A more diverse, richer range of courses must be developed. We now have an opportunity to contribute to the promotion and development of such courses.

### **Religious education and the aims of the curriculum**

Classroom religious education forms a significant part of the whole curriculum. It makes explicit the vision

and purpose which underpins the 'Catholic curriculum' as a whole epitomising an "educational philosophy in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony."<sup>21</sup> The religious dimension of the whole educational enterprise will be characterised by attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility<sup>22</sup> and will promote the accomplishment of a life "lived to the full"<sup>23</sup> in contemporary society.

In itself, good quality classroom religious education is stimulating, interesting and enjoyable. It will promote independent and interdependent learning, an enquiring approach to matters of belief and truth and will develop the students' capacity to think coherently and consistently. It has a significant role in students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and impacts on learning in other subjects such as science, history, geography and English. Faithful to the teaching of the Church the religious education curriculum finds its focus in the human person enquiring into matters of truth, justice, respect, freedom, self-worth, self-transcendence and self-sacrifice.

When Catholic schools and colleges pursue these aims and objectives they will also, naturally and inevitably, be supporting the aims of the wider curriculum. These require schools and colleges to (1) provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and achieve; and (2) promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.<sup>24</sup> The 'Catholic curriculum' consciously promotes human good, both of the person and of society.

<sup>16</sup> *On The Way To Life*, op.cit., p.7

<sup>17</sup> *On the Way to Life*, op.cit., p.7

<sup>18</sup> DfES, *Every Child Matters*, September 2003

<sup>19</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Catechesis in Our Time*, n.69

<sup>20</sup> Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in School – Witnesses to Faith*, 1982, n.28 and Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *Catholic Schools and Other Faiths*, 1997, p.17

<sup>21</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, 1988, n. 34

<sup>22</sup> Lonergan, *Method and Theology*, Chapter 2: Section 2 entitled Feelings and Section 7 entitled Progress and Decline, DLT, 1972

<sup>23</sup> John 10:10

<sup>24</sup> Education Act, 2002, section 78 (i)

# The Curriculum Framework

## Aims of classroom religious education

The intended outcome of all classroom religious education is “religiously literate young people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills – appropriate to their age and capacity – to think spiritually, ethically and theologically, and who are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.”<sup>25</sup>

The programmes of study available to Catholic schools and colleges will address the substance of faith, namely the “mystery of God, his saving will ... the central place of Jesus Christ ... our Saviour ... [who] having died and risen ... is always present in his Church ... the source of our faith [and] model of Christian conduct.”<sup>26</sup> Students will explore the life and teaching of the Catholic Church; the ultimate questions of life; the Church's response through doctrine; the relationship between religious belief, personal faith and lived experience; awareness of and respect for other religions and world views; the dignity of human life and work and the idea of service of others for the common good.<sup>27</sup> Students will be encouraged to become familiar with and understand their own religious cultural heritage both nationally and globally.

In the 14-19+ phase of their education students in Catholic schools and colleges will be encouraged to investigate openly, to question critically, to reflect thoughtfully and to imagine creatively. They will be helped to interpret the wealth of information presented to them and to develop the ability to critique the culture and to express their own beliefs. They will be encouraged to become independent and autonomous learners, accepting increasing responsibility for their own learning.

This will be accomplished through studies of increasing depth and challenge, in words suited “to the maturity and understanding of [the] hearers, as [teachers] hand on the teaching of the mysteries of faith and the rules of moral conduct”<sup>28</sup> and “in new ways which are open to the sensibilities and problems of this age group.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus in classroom religious education students will engage with a programme of study which will inspire and challenge them personally, intellectually and catechetically. They will be encouraged “to seek the truth which is of God, in the whole of creation, in themselves and in others”<sup>30</sup> and enabled to make “free, informed and full responses to God's call in everyday life.”<sup>31</sup>

25 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 2000, n.5

26 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, op cit., *Apostolic Constitution*, n. 2

27 'The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching', a document produced by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in 1996, available from the CES, highlights the social teaching of the Church.

28 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Geoffrey Chapman, 1994, Prologue n.24

29 *Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis*, CTS, 1997, n. 185

30 Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools*, op.cit., p.8

31 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, op. cit., n.5

## Values and attitudes to be promoted

Catholic education necessarily incorporates a commitment to certain values and attitudes which spring from an encounter with the person and teaching of Jesus Christ. In Catholic schools and colleges religious education will have a pre-eminent role in the promotion of the values of truth, justice, freedom, integrity, and respect for all peoples and the created world.

These fundamental values have been addressed, amplified, developed and dissected in many ways by a variety of groups. There is, perhaps not surprisingly, a large measure of agreement about the basic values although expression sometimes varies. The following have been identified as important attitudes to be developed in and through a study of religious education:

- an open-mindedness or spirit of enquiry
- attentiveness, appreciation, awe and wonder
- justice and compassion
- respect for and a sense of reverence for all peoples and the earth they inhabit
- self esteem, self-awareness and self-sacrifice
- wisdom, understanding and discernment..

Our Christian tradition recognises and affirms here the presence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The non-statutory National Framework emphasises the fact that the attitudes are essential for good learning in religious education.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Amplification of these attitudes can be found in 'Religious education The non-statutory national framework', QCA, 2004, pp.8, 13; 'Model syllabuses for religious education, SCAA, 1994, p.7; Broad Areas of Attainment in Religious Education, NBRIA, Rejoice Publications, 1994, p. 20

## Knowledge, understanding and skills

The knowledge, understanding and skills to be developed by students in the 14-19+ phase may be identified as 'Learning about Religion' (Attainment Target 1) and 'Learning from Religion' (Attainment Target 2). Both attainment targets involve a range of skills and this Framework offers a way of organising them in the curriculum.

**Learning about religion:** this attainment target is about knowledge and understanding of (i) beliefs, teachings and sources; (ii) celebration and ritual; and (iii) social and moral practices and way of life. It includes the skills of enquiry, investigation, analysis, interpretation and evaluation of Catholic Christianity including how the Church relates to other Christian denominations, other religions and world views, moral education, as well as the study of the philosophical nature and characteristics of religion. It demands an increasing ability to think rigorously and present coherent, informed and detailed arguments using specialist vocabulary.

**Learning from religion:** this attainment target, called Reflection on Meaning, is concerned with developing students' reflection on and response to their own and others' experiences in the light of their learning about religion. It contains two strands (i) engagement with their own and others' beliefs and values; and (ii) engagement with questions of meaning and purpose. In addition, a third element has been identified, namely 'reflection and contemplation', which is aspirational rather than evaluative and judgemental.

'Learning from religion' develops students' skills of application, interpretation, evaluation and expression of what they learn about religion. Students learn to develop and communicate their own ideas, values and attitudes, particularly in relation to questions of belief, meaning, purpose and truth, and commitments. They learn to relate their learning to the wider world.

Both attainment targets involve the development of a range of skills. As indicated above, the pre-eminent skill to be developed is of thinking spiritually, ethically and theologically. This will promote the development of religious understanding, and the ability to see and interpret the world from a religious perspective. Individual skills which will build these overarching skills include: investigation, interpretation, reflection, empathy, evaluation, analysis, synthesis, application and expression.<sup>33</sup>

**The Framework** of religious education for the 14-19+ phase is made up of a central core, Religion and Belief and some overarching themes, which will be translated into examination specifications. The central core of "Religion and Belief" comprises:

- Catholic Christianity in all its richness;
- two other principal religions, one Abrahamic and one other;
- moral education including differences in the human and moral framework;
- a secular worldview, where appropriate;
- the philosophy of religion, where appropriate.

<sup>33</sup> See 'Model syllabuses for religious education', SCAA, 1994, p.6 and also 'Broad Areas of Attainment in Religious Education', NBRIA, Rejoice Publications, 1994, p. 14. (see Appendix 1.)

This core is the authentic source of the teaching and learning to be explored through the themes and topics. It is the guarantee of authenticity, breadth and depth. It is the well from which themes and topics are drawn. Overleaf is an artistic impression of the well of Catholic Christianity in all its richness.

The core elements of study will be explored through overarching themes such as the relationship between 'Faith and Science', the relationship between the 'Church and the modern State' and 'Religious diversity and dialogue'. The themes are drawn from the well of 'Religion and Belief: Catholic Christianity.' They draw on the work of the Second Vatican Council and have recently been identified by Pope Benedict XVI as critical challenges facing the Church today.<sup>34</sup>

During the 14-19+ phase, students will be following different **Pathways**. These pathways or routes will include traditional GCSE and A Level work, specialised and general Diplomas, and functional skills as well as workplace-based learning and apprenticeships. It will be possible for students to follow an exclusive pathway or to mix and match courses from different routes.

Throughout their 14-19+ career students will be following courses and pathways more according to their stage of development, taking account of prior learning, than their age. Religious education courses, appropriate to the maturity and capacity of the

students, will need to be provided for this variety of pathways.

Catholic schools and colleges will elect to provide courses, or specifications, for their students chosen from those available on the NQF or approved by the NABS. These choices will be informed by this guidance and that of individual dioceses, governing bodies and headteachers. The particular courses chosen should reflect several elements: the maturity and capacity of the students; the need to provide appropriate challenge and depth of study, the methodologies available in the course and the method of assessment.



*Catholic Christianity*

- two other principal religions, one Abrahamic and one other
- moral education including differences in human and religious frameworks
- a secular world view
- the philosophy of religion

## Religion and Belief: the Well of Authenticity & Tradition

This is the source of the teaching and learning to be explored; it is the guarantee of authenticity, breadth and depth. It comprises:

1. Catholic Christianity;
2. two other principal religions, one Abrahamic and one other;
3. moral education including differences in the human and moral framework;
4. a secular worldview where appropriate;
5. the philosophy of religion where appropriate.

**The overarching themes:** drawn from the well of Catholic Christianity are 'Faith and Science', 'Church and State' and 'Religious diversity and dialogue'.

### Pathways

These are the routes to be followed by students according to their ability and aptitude. The particular route followed may be exclusive, e.g., a strictly academic one, or a general one drawing from a variety of options. The final qualification may be a general or a specialist diploma made up of passes in a variety of subjects.

Level	Qualification	Diplomas	
		General	Specialised
Pre-Entry	Unit Award Scheme		
Entry	Certificate of Educational Achievement	A general diploma is a performance measure at level 2 only. It comprises 5 GCSEs at A* - C, which must include English and maths.	A specialised diploma is made up of courses at a single level, which may be level 1, 2 or 3. The principal learning element (50%) will be in a specific area of applied vocational learning. In addition, elements of generic learning, functional skills, work-related learning, an extended project and additional learning related to the principal content will also be included. The overall diploma can include A levels and GCSEs.
1 – Foundation	GCSE D – G GNVQ 1		
2 – Intermediate	NVQ 1 GCSE A* - C GNVQ 2		
3 – Advanced	NVQ 2 AS A2 GNVQ 3 NVQ 3		

## Specifications

These specifications, formerly known as syllabuses, are developed and owned by the Examinations Boards drawing on skills available both within and broader than the organisation itself. The specifications set out the content and the objectives and methods of assessment. Courses in religious education can be developed at all levels of achievement.

All the specifications will draw on the core elements and themes arranged in topics and modules to form a coherent study of an aspect of Religion and Belief. The range of such topics is extensive and the number and size of the topics may be combined in different ways to suit particular levels, approaches and methods of assessment. What follows is an exemplar of how these topics may be related to current qualifications.

Qualification	Title of course	Exemplar topics
Unit Award Scheme	Awareness and Appreciation of Colours in God's Creation	Listening to stories from the Old and New Testament relating to the colour of focus e.g.: the creation of sun, moon and stars, Joseph and his coat of many colours
Certificate of Educational Achievement	Religious Education	Relationships Our World Looking for Meaning Identity and Belonging Is It Fair?
GCSE	Thinking about God and Morality	
Bishops' Conference Certificate / NABS	General Sixth Form Religious Education	Theology and Art Religion and Science
Level 3	Religion and Contemporary Society	Belief in God Medical ethics Prison as a place of redemption Religious & cultural expression Suffering Human rights Poverty
GCE AS	Religious Studies	An Introduction to the New Testament An Introduction to Religion and Ethics An Introduction to Religion and Science
GCE A2	Religious Studies	Studies in the Philosophy of Religion Studies in Religion and Human Experience

## Assessment and Accreditation

Assessment of students' work is a necessary part of the learning process. It involves the making of judgements about progress and attainment which in turn will inform the next step in learning. This assessment for learning is the prime purpose of all assessment. However, the judgements will also form the basis of recording and reporting student progress.

The national *Levels of Attainment in Religious Education*<sup>35</sup> developed by NBRIA provide both targets and levels in the twin areas of 'learning about' and 'learning from religion'. The attainment targets and levels give substance to the desire for excellence in religious education which, the bishops have suggested, will be "characterised by a clarity of succinct religious learning objectives and ... accurate methods of assessment".<sup>36</sup>

Attainment target one is all about knowledge and understanding of (i) beliefs, teachings and sources; (ii) celebration and ritual; and (iii) social and moral practices and way of life. It is summarised as 'learning about religion'.

Attainment target two requires students to reflect on and respond to their learning about religion, engaging with (i) their own and others' beliefs and

values; and (ii) questions of meaning and purpose. This target is summarised as 'learning from religion'. The third element identified, reflection and contemplation, is more aspirational than evaluative and judgemental.

The levels of attainment are designed "to support [students'] learning by offering an account of educational progression. Each attainment target consists of eight level descriptors of increasing difficulty, plus a descriptor for exceptional performance.<sup>37</sup> The levels will help teachers to make accurate judgements on [students'] achievement, to sum up what [students] have learnt so far and to identify how [they] can make the next step in learning."<sup>38</sup> The levels of attainment will provide a measure of the challenge, in terms of content, breadth and depth, of approved and accredited courses and qualifications.

In the 14-19+ phase Catholic schools and colleges will be making their own judgements about the most appropriate courses in religious education to be followed, taken mostly from the NQF. The levels will be useful in gauging the appropriateness of courses for particular groups of students, whether they are following specialist, general or applied courses.

35 National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers, *Levels of Attainment in Religious Education*, Rejoice Publications, 2000. See also Appendix 2; these are the revised level descriptors due to be published in September 2006.

36 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, op. cit., n.7

37 For information: the Foundation Stage has its own levels and there are P levels for those working towards level 1.

38 National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers, *Levels of Attainment in Religious Education*, op. cit., p.7

It is hoped that appropriate courses and specifications, from pre-entry level to A2 including general sixth form religious education will be made available to Catholic schools and colleges through the NQF or NABS. It may well be that a NABS route should be developed for students who are working at pre-entry level in both sixth forms and Key Stage 4.

A principle to be followed here is that courses must be chosen according to their ability to provide the depth required truly to challenge students to ‘think spiritually, ethically and theologically.’<sup>39</sup>

Range of levels within which the majority of pupils are expected to work	
Pre-entry	Differentiated Performance Criteria (P-scales)
Key stage 1	1-3
Key stage 2	2-5
Key stage 3	3-7
Key stage 4	3-8
16-19	5-EP <sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, *Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools*, op.cit., p. 10

<sup>40</sup> Exceptional Performance.

# Appendix 1

## Skills and Processes in Religious Education

Progress in religious education is dependent upon the application of general educational skills and processes which in turn will themselves be strengthened through this application. The following skills, identified in *Model syllabuses for religious education*, SCAA, 1994, are central to religious education, and should be reflected in attainment targets and in learning opportunities:

### a) Investigation - this includes:

- asking relevant questions;
- knowing how to use different types of sources as a way of gathering information;
- knowing what may constitute evidence for understanding religion(s).

### b) Interpretation - this includes:

- the ability to draw meaning from artefacts, works of art, poetry and symbolism;
- the ability to interpret religious language;
- the ability to suggest meanings of religious texts.

### c) Reflection - this includes:

- the ability to reflect on feelings, relationships, experiences, ultimate questions, beliefs and practices.

### d) Empathy - this includes:

- the ability to consider the thoughts, feelings, experiences, attitudes, beliefs and values of others;
- developing the power of imagination to identify feelings such as love, wonder, forgiveness and sorrow;

the ability to see the world through the eyes of others, and to see issues from their point of view.

### e) Evaluation - this includes:

the ability to debate issues of religious significance with reference to evidence and argument;

weighing the respective claims of self-interest, consideration for others, religious teaching and individual conscience.

### f) Analysis - this includes:

distinguishing between opinion, belief and fact;  
distinguishing between the features of religions.

### g) Synthesis - this includes:

linking significant features of religion together in a coherent pattern;

connecting different aspects of life into a meaningful whole.

### h) Application - this includes:

making the association between religions and individual, community, national and international life;

identifying key religious values and their interplay with secular ones.

### i) Expression - this includes:

the ability to explain concepts, rituals and practices;

the ability to identify and articulate matters of deep conviction and concern, and to respond to religious issues through a variety of media.

AT 1: Learning about Religion: Knowledge and Understanding of:

AT 2: Learning from Religion: Reflection on meaning

Progression in reflection and contemplation

Strand Level	i) beliefs, teachings and sources	ii) celebration and ritual	iii) social and moral practices and way of life	i) engagement with own and others' beliefs and values	ii) engagement with questions of meaning and purpose	Progression in reflection and contemplation
	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils
1	Recognise some religious stories	Recognise some religious signs and symbols and use some religious words and phrases	Recognise that people because of their religion act in a particular way	Talk about their own experiences and feelings	Say what they wonder about	Reflect quietly
2	Retell some special stories about religious events and people	Use religious words and phrases to describe some religious actions and symbols	Describe some ways in which religion is lived out by believers	Ask and respond to questions about their own and others' experiences and feelings	Ask questions about what they and others wonder about and realise that some of these questions are difficult to answer	Participate in periods of reflection in response to a given stimulus
3	Make links between religious stories and beliefs	Use a developing religious vocabulary to give reasons for religious actions and symbols	Give reasons for certain actions by believers	Make links to show how feelings and beliefs affect their behaviour and that of others	Compare their own and other people's ideas about questions that are difficult to answer	Show understanding of the importance of stillness and quiet during times of reflection and prayer
4	Describe and show understanding of religious sources, beliefs, ideas, feelings and experiences; making links between them	Use religious terms to show an understanding of different liturgies	Show understanding of how religious belief shapes life	Show how own and others' decisions are informed by beliefs and values	Engage with and respond to question of life in the light of religious teaching	Demonstrate an appreciation of the elements needed for reflection and contemplation or prayer (places, times, foci, stimuli)
5	Identify sources of religious belief and explain how distinctive religious beliefs arise	Describe and explain the meaning and purpose of a variety of forms of worship	Identify similarities and differences between peoples' responses to social and moral issues because of their beliefs	Explain what beliefs and values inspire and influence them and others	Demonstrate how religious beliefs and teaching give some explanation of the purpose and meaning of human life	Explore how different situations are conducive to reflection and contemplation or prayer
6	Explain how sources and arguments are used in different ways by different traditions to provide answers to questions of religious belief, ultimate questions and ethical issues	Explain the significance for believers of different forms of religious and spiritual celebration	Explain how religious beliefs and teaching influence moral values and behaviour	Express insights into the reasons for their own and others' beliefs and values and the challenges of belonging to a religion	Explain with reference to religious beliefs their own and others' answers to questions of meaning	Discern how different forms of reflection and contemplation or prayer can be important in people's lives
7	Show a coherent understanding of faith, religion and belief using a variety of sources and evidence	Use a wide religious and philosophical vocabulary to show a coherent understanding of religious celebration	Critically evaluate the ways of life of religious groups with reference to their history and culture and show a coherent understanding of differences	Articulate their own critical response(s) to different religious beliefs and world views	Evaluate religious and non-religious views and beliefs on questions of meaning and purpose	Express creatively, linguistically or through other media, how reflection and contemplation can give people insights into their own lives and their relationships with God.
8	Analyse a range of faiths, religions beliefs and teachings, making reference to the texts used and how adherents interpret them	Use a comprehensive religious and philosophical vocabulary to analyse and interpret varied religious and spiritual expression	Show a coherent understanding of the impact of a belief system on the way of life of individuals, communities and societies	Critically analyse and justify own and others' religious beliefs and world views	Synthesise a range of evidence, arguments, reflections and examples to justify their own views and ideas on questions of meaning and purpose.	Reflect and analyse with others different views people hold on the worth of reflection and contemplation or prayer
EP	Provide a coherent and detailed analysis of faith, religion and belief	Evaluate in depth the nature of religious and spiritual expression in contemporary society	Provide a coherent philosophical and evaluative account of the relationship between belief systems and ways of life	Provide independent, well-informed and highly reasoned insights into their own and others' religious beliefs and world views.	Provide an independent, informed and well-argued account of their own and others' views on questions of meaning, purpose and fulfilment with reference to religious and moral traditions and standpoints	Reflect quietly

# Appendix 2

## [Levels of Attainment]

# Notes



