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| Title: | **Moving assessment forward in Religious Education** | | | |
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| This report relates to the previous discussions of SACRE about the Agreed Syllabus, its planning and the assessment of RE. | | | | |
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| Wards Affected: | **All** | | | |
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| To: | **SACRE** | | On: | **Date 15th November, 2016** |
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**1. Key points and Summary**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to bring to SACRE’s attention the issues relating assessment in religious education in light of the Agreed Syllabus. It looks at how assessment in RE is being developed in the Learn Teach Lead RE (LTLRE) project, based on a revised form of Blooms Taxonomy and the difficulty that this poses for classroom teachers. Finally the report proposes a way forward for Torbay schools.

**2. Introduction**

2.1 Currently assessment is mentioned twice in the Agreed Syllabus 2015:

It is recognized that schools are having to review assessment, recording and reporting procedures and for this reason the use of levels in association with this syllabus will be kept under review. As schools develop new approaches to assessing progress, further advice and guidance will be made available. (Page 3)

Enquiries in RE contribute to the wider opportunities for learners to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and provide links to other curriculum areas. The enquiries lead pupils to experience personal, emotional, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through engaging and meaningful activity. Enquiries enable pupils to examine rigorously religions and worldviews and assessment must reflect the depth of their learning and attainment. (Page 26)

It is worth noting that the syllabus puts the onus on schools to develop assessment but at the same time promises ‘further advice and guidance will be made available’. This advice and guidance has not been produced in the eighteen months since the syllabus was adopted by the Authority. It is worth noting, though, that this situation was caused by the previous government as a result of the policy change indicated in the government White Paper: *The Importance of Teaching* (2010) which disambiguated curriculum and assessment, dis-applied levels of attainment for the National Curriculum and when the current *The National Curriculum in England Framework Document* (2013) was published simply stated: ‘Teachers should use appropriate assessment to set targets which are deliberately ambitious.’ (Page 9) This culture change in education, where every school is responsible for its own assessment had led to a variety of practice throughout England, in some cases levels have remained, in others new types or forms of levels have emerged and in yet others indication that learning has occurred has focused around knowledge and understanding acquired and, sometimes, skills – depending on the subject area being taught.

In 2013 a solution to this for RE was proposed by the RE Council for England and Wales in its *Curriculum Framework for RE in England*, which had a series of end of key stage statements that were seen to be progressive over time under three broad headings:

* Knowledge and understanding
* Express and communicate
* Gain and deploy skills

Which applied to three broad areas of study (these are summarized from the document):

* Key concepts and questions of belonging, meaning, purpose and truth
* Questions and teachings about identity, diversity, meaning and value
* The nature, significance and impact of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning

The difficulty, though, is that these are generally focused around skillsets, as there is no core knowledge in the Framework around which to build the other elements of the assessment model. This lack of a stable and agreed body of knowledge in RE is having a significant impact on planning in RE and, consequently, assessment.

2.2 **Learn Teach Lead RE Assessment project**

LTLRE has been developing assessment without levels for some time, see: <http://ltlre.org/projects/assessment-without-levels-in-re/>

Appendix 1 give an example of the approach being taken by LTLRE which tries to deal with two different issues:

1. What constitutes knowledge in RE and in what way has knowledge been acquired?
2. What constitutes progress in knowing and understanding in RE?

Appendix 1 is a useful example of this in that it clearly identifies the issues, not only with assessing but also with the way that Blooms Taxonomy (see Table 1 below) has been used.

Table 1:

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| **Bloom’s Taxonomy 1956** |
| 1. Knowledge: Remembering or retrieving previously learned material. |
| 2. Comprehension: The ability to grasp or construct meaning from material. |
| 3. Application: The ability to use learned material, or to implement material in new and concrete situations. |
| 4. Analysis: The ability to break down or distinguish the parts of material into its components so that its organizational structure may be better understood. |
| 5. Synthesis: The ability to put parts together to form a coherent or unique new whole. |
| 6. Evaluation: The ability to judge, check, and even critique the value of material for a given purpose. |

Firstly, it is important to recognise that Bloom is working in the field of psychology and this is, in many ways, a psychometric approach to learning. Therefore, it focuses on cognitive processes. Secondly, the way it was applied was relative to age, a Piagetian approach to learning – but more defined in some ways. Hence, knowledge was for infants and evaluation for Year 11 pupils. What is clear, though, is that infants are capable of evaluation and Year 11 pupils still need to know things.

As a result if this Blooms work has been further developed by scholars such as Anderson and Krathwohl. It is this work that Dr Barbara Wintersgill uses in relation to the developing approach in LTLRE’s assessment project.

Appendix 2 gives an example of what planning for assessment would look like at Key Stage 1 over one year, six half terms. There is something to note: firstly not all examples have all of the boxes completed. Take Term 1, first half term:

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| **ANDERSON AND KRATHWOHL’S TAXONOMY (BRT) 2001** | **What is a Christian? (i) A follower of Jesus.**  ***How did Jesus teach his followers to behave?***  Examples of Jesus' teaching that Christians try to copy e.g.   * The foundations of Christian morality -The two greatest commandments * The parable of the Good Samaritan (children's version) 'Love your neighbour' * The parable of the two sons (children's version) 'Carry out your promise' * The story of Martha and Mary. 'Get your priorities straight' * The parable of the prodigal son. 'Forgive; however much someone has hurt you'. |
| **COGNITIVE PROCESSES** |  |
| 1. Remembering: | Pupils can define the words Christianity and Christian.  Pupils know that:  Christians are people who follow Jesus  Pupils can recall the two great commandments  . |
| 2. Understanding: | * Pupils can explain what 'love' means in this context * Pupils can distinguish between examples of 'loving God' and of 'loving your neighbour'. * pupils can summarise parables in their own words * pupils can explain the point of each parable i.e what is its message/meaning |
| 3. Applying: | * pupils can explain how Christians might try to apply the message of each parable to their own lives. |
| 4. Analysing: |  |
| 5. Evaluating: | * Pupils decide how difficult it would be to live by these principles |
| 6. Creating: | * Pupils can create their own parable for today on the theme of one of Jesus' parables. |

Note that Analysing is empty. This is because the subject matter does not fit itself easily into this cognitive process. Further, though, the six processes are not progressive or dependent on each other – otherwise evaluating and creating would not be possible as the ‘step’ of analysing is missing. This would be to use Blooms in a non-Piagetian way.

It is not necessary to do a full analysis of the materials available but it is of note that the concept of pupils having a core entitlement to knowledge is key to the approach, see Appendix 1: 1. 1.1: ***Identify the 'essential curriculum core'***, which goes on to state: ‘It is desirable that essential ideas, core knowledge and key abilities will be identified for each year group…’

What is being recognised, though, that whilst this approach is educationally based and is good for planning, in terms of what a teacher might want to develop in their pupils, it is nevertheless difficult to use – being over complex.

**2.3 Building on current planning guidance for Torbay**

In the summer of 2016 SACRE was presented with a model of primary curriculum planning that focused around knowledge. SACRE recommended this approach to primary schools using the Agreed Syllabus 2015 as one way to implement the syllabus. The planning grids clearly set out what pupils should learn and indicators of what learning would involve. For instance:

Year 3: Autumn 2:

**Jesus**

What we learn about Jesus in the four Gospels and why there are four Gospels

1. Pupils will know that Jesus is God the Son, that he speaks of the His Father and the Holy Spirit – Jesus is the second person of the Trinity

2. That Jesus was born as an outcast, that he preached the coming of the Kingdom of God and the need for repentance, that the suffered, died, was buried and rose again. That He is with the Father and will come again.

3. There are four Gospels because these were the four earliest accounts of the life of Jesus. Pupils should be able to name the four Gospels.

Whist these can form a basis for assessment how you actually assess is not specified. Hence, there is a clear need to develop assessment models that have the following features:

1. It builds on the current Torbay advice
2. It gives practical examples of assessment using the framework of outcomes
3. It is not overly complex
4. It enables teachers to see progression over time.

In order to do the latter in relation to Christianity should not be overly difficult as there are four consistent themes that frame the teaching of this religious tradition:

Jesus, The Bible, The Church and The Christian Way of Life (based on the 1994 *Faith Group Working Party Reports for the National Model Syllabuses 1 and 2 for RE*) with God being dealt with in each theme.

**3.0 Recommendation**

* 1. That SACRE ask the Torbay LTLRE Hub to work on models of assessment that teachers can use as exemplars for further assessment planning.
  2. That SACRE ask the Torbay LTLRE primary lead to report back on progress made at the spring meeting of SACRE.

**Andrew Strachan**

**Chair of SACRE**

**Appendices**

**Documents available in members’ rooms**

Background Papers: