

The values and outcomes of religious education

[Education](#)



The outcome of religious education is religiously literate young people ... who are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. ' In what ways does classroom RE achieve this? The quote in this essay title not only states that children who experience religious education become religiously literate young people; but that they also begin to know the importance of religious commitment in everyday life. This however is an easy proposition to state, but to achieve this in classroom Religious Education can be a demanding and challenging realisation.

For a child to become religiously literate they need to be able to understand and have knowledge about Religion, but to become aware of the demands they not only need to learn about Religious Education, they need to learn from it. Religious Education in catholic schools is not only learning from classroom RE but from the wider community: from parents and the parish. It is important when learning catholic religion in a catholic school the teacher links the learning in the classroom to the wider community so the children can become aware and possibly adapt the demands of the catholic everyday life.

As the Catholic Education Service says ' If in Catholic schools, we are able to play our part in the moral development of the young people in our charge, we need to agree among ourselves, with parents, what are shared values are and how we plan to put them into practice. A school contributes or fails to contribute, to the moral development of its pupils, by the broad values that are upheld by the school generally. ' (1995, 20) Catholic Education inspires children to be able to make their own decisions, as Catholics believe we were all made in the image and likeness of god.

Religious Education should be portrayed to children as a journey, where children can use their free will to choose their own religious path. They should be able to understand that everything we do our talents, gifts and experiences help us to lead a life in the image of God; this is a huge commitment Catholics make in their everyday lives. Children in Classroom religion should be able to reflect on this and become aware of the demands of religious responsibility. As it states in the Bishops conference, ' The catholic vision of education promotes the dignity and freedom of every person as created in the image and likeness of God.

This vision inspires and encourages the beliefs and values which are lived out in the daily life of the catholic school. ' (1996, 10) When teaching Religious Education in a catholic school the teachers aim should be to develop the children's knowledge about religion and help them understand it. It should be able to allow children to investigate and have opinion on some of the biggest question asked. However even when teaching in a catholic school not all children may have been exposed to religion and this may be their first look into it.

Some children will have come from very catholic backgrounds and when they look into Catholicism deeper it may heighten their faith. However to some children it may make them realise that they don't want to commit to the religious way of life. Whatever the children's beliefs it is important in a catholic school children are able to understand the religion and what it is about, as Grace and O'Keefe suggest ' For some, classroom religious education will deepen and enhance their personal faith; for many it may well be the first presentation of the Christian beliefs.... he freedom of conscience

must be respected. ' (2007, 262) Although Religious Education is not subject to nationally prescribed attainment targets there are two attainment targets for Religious Education they are: Learning about Religions and Learning from religion. Learning about Religions covers skills necessary for pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of a variety of religions. Even in a Catholic school it is important children learn about other religions to give them a broader knowledge of the world around us.

Learning from religion encourages reflection and allows learning from each other and listening to what the children bring to the class, by them sharing their own thoughts and ideas. Learning from religion allows children to ask questions about life's meaning and purpose and explore and share human experiences. Religious Education encompasses many things and can be linked to many cross curricular subjects. It is important that religion helps develop children morally and spiritually.

Religion can be linked to many subjects such as English, History, PSHE, I. C. T, Art, Drama and Mathematics. Linking Religious Education to these subjects helps children grasp topics more easily and makes the lessons more varied. For example when I was on placement in a Catholic school I taught an RE lesson, the learning objective was to learn about the different stories the bible tells us about the birth of Jesus. We looked at the Annunciation and The Visitation, when we looked at the Visitation we looked at Luke 2: 8-20 and Matthew 2: 1-12.

The children then drew on their tables using a whiteboard pen a Venn diagram to show the differences and similarities between the two versions of the story. This brought maths into the lesson and the children stayed

<https://assignbuster.com/the-values-and-outcomes-of-religious-education/>

engaged all the way through as they were doing something different. Afterward we then did some freeze frames of the stories, if the children were tapped on the shoulder they would become the character and say how they were feeling at the time.

This encompassed drama into the lesson, and the children were able to get up and involved in the lesson, it really helped them understand the story and become part of it for a few moments. Another way to keep the children engaged and bring variety to Religion is by going to visit a place of worship, for example if we were studying Islam the children could be taken to Mosques this will allow reflection and add reality to the learning experience. McCreery, Bowen and Bermingham suggest ' The presence of such places will reflect the religious and cultural make-up of the local community.

A place of worship is the source of a first-hand learning experience in which children can begin to recognise that their community is made up of diverse groups of people. ' (2007, 93) One subject to which Religious Education particularity links to is PSHE and they complement each other well; together they can help moralistic development. Children can learn from faith about many contemporary issues, for example forgiveness in the playground, helping others, living life in the image and likeness of Jesus.

Much can be learnt from parables in the bible; one parable that in particular gives a clear message across to the children is the parable of the good Samaritan. This shows children that no matter what we are doing or who is in need of help, it is important that we always lend a helping hand to the people around us; just like the Samaritan did. The Samaritan helped the man

on the side of the road even though he was a Jew; people would think he would have done the opposite as Samaritans disliked the Jews.

Whereas the priest and the Levites just walked past, it is important children understand this is the wrong thing to do and they would follow in the Samaritans footsteps. They can think as if they were walking past the old man what would they do? This is not just teaching the children about the parables but linking it to real life situations, making them aware of the commitment to Catholicism in everyday life. For children to completely understand 'the demands of religious commitment in everyday life' it is important that they can link religion to everyday and the world around us.

A good way to do this would be to talk about media, for example earlier this year Stephen Lawrence was murdered and his mother after losing her son was willing to forgive the murderers however she said in an article "I don't forgive the boys who killed Stephen. They don't think they have done anything wrong. They took away Stephen's life and there is nothing in their behavior or anything to show they regret what their actions have done and the pain it has caused us as a family. It is important especially in a KS2 RE classroom to talk about the way the mum would be feeling? The fact she's forgive the murderers if they showed any remorse, is this a Christian way to behave? This allows children to develop their knowledge and understanding of, and their ability to respond to, Christianity in Britain. Although achieving a standard in an RE classroom where children can become 'religiously literate young people' can be challenging; I believe with the right attitude and variety it is very possible.

Using other subjects to keep the children engaged and links to the world around us, children will become aware of the demands of a religious life. However whatever is taught in the classroom must be seen through the life of the catholic school, through charity work, kindness and forgiveness. Religious Education is not part of the national curriculum, however if working in a catholic school I think teaching Religious Education is vital and will develop children morally and spiritually, as they learn from and about religion.

Catholic Education Service (1995) *Spiritual and Moral development across the curriculum*. Matthew James Publishing Hoodless, P, McCreery, E, Bowen, B and Bermingham (2007) *Teaching humanities in primary schools*. S Learning matters Ltd The Bishop's Conference of England and Wales (1996), *Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools*, London, Catholic Education Service. Grace, R and O'Keefe, SJ (2007) *International Handbook of catholic Education*. Springer