Materials used to Teach about World Religions in Schools in England

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Contents

Executive summary

Introduction

This study was commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and carried out during the academic year 2008-9 by the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit to investigate the materials used in schools to teach about world religions as part of Religious Education (RE). The religions specified by the DCSF for this study are those identified in Religious Education: The Non-Statutory National Framework (QCA 2004), which offers guidance to Agreed Syllabus Conferences, namely Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. The Non-Statutory National Framework (reflecting many local Agreed Syllabuses for RE) includes the attainment targets 'learning about' and 'learning from' religions.[1]

The study includes an evaluation of the published materials readily available, consideration of the contextual and pedagogical factors that influence their selection and use in schools and classrooms, and the materials' contribution to learning. A particular focus has been on their contribution to education for community cohesion both in terms of their ability to enhance young people's understanding of the principal religions in British society, and in terms of the messages these materials may convey about inter communal, particularly inter religious, harmony and co-operation.

Investigation of the nature and contexts of their use have widened the study to encompass a broader understanding of the character of RE in a wide range of English schools (including maintained and independent, primary and secondary) and the schools' varied responses to the community cohesion agenda. The study takes into account diversity within the education system that means different schools take different approaches to RE and community cohesion while respecting the principles of tolerance and respect for religious difference required by both.

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[1] The research questions were:

1. What materials (books, ICT resources and other materials) are available to maintained and independent schools for teaching about and learning from world religions?

2. What materials are schools using in practice to develop an understanding of world religions?

3. What is the content/nature of these materials used by schools and how does this relate to current school regulations (in particular the duty on maintained schools to promote community cohesion and the independent school standard to assist their pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures?

4. How are these materials used by teachers in the classroom to enhance learning and to promote community cohesion? How could their use be improved?

5. What are the key factors for schools to consider when determining which materials should be used to teach world religions?

Methodology

The study was divided into 3 inter-related strands.

Strand 1: A three phase review of materials

- Phase 1 consisted of an audit of available books (produced since 2000) and ICT materials used to teach RE in schools (published separately, Hayward and Hopkins 2010). In addition, a review of a sample of available materials was conducted by experts drawn from academia (one for each religion), professional RE specialists (one for primary, one for KS3 and one for KS4 and post-16) and faith group consultants (one for each religion).

- Phase 2 comprised a review of additional materials by the experts and consultants, including materials identified in the qualitative case studies and the quantitative survey.

- Phase 3 consisted of an analytical review of the Phase 1 and 2 reports from the experts and consultants in order to identify issues and recommendations. This was conducted by group co-ordinators and an ICT expert.

During Phase 1 and Phase 2 the total resources reviewed were:

Primary (KS1/2) - 43 Books, 30 Websites

Lower secondary (KS3) - 37 Books, 32 Websites

Upper secondary (KS4) - 21 Books, 30 Websites

Strand 2: Qualitative Case Studies

These included interviews with teachers and groups of pupils, pupil focus groups, lesson observations and a review of school policy documents. They were conducted in 10 primary schools and 10 secondary schools. These were selected from a variety of school types (including maintained and independent schools and schools with or without a religious character), across the government regions, and including urban and rural settings. The ten primary schools included two independent schools. The secondary schools included one independent school and one Academy. The rest were maintained of one type or another. Half the case study institutions were schools with a religious character. Of these schools with a religious character, 4 were voluntary aided primary (2 Church of England, 1 Roman Catholic, 1 Jewish), 1 independent Muslim primary, 4 voluntary aided secondary (1 Church of England, 1 Roman Catholic, 1 Muslim, 1 Jewish) and 1 Christian Academy.

Strand 3: A Quantitative Survey

This consisted of a postal and online survey involving a nationwide random sample of 2,723 schools of all types. From the primary and secondary schools, responses were received from all types of schools (including Community, Voluntary Controlled and Voluntary Aided schools to independent non-denominational schools and independent schools with a religious character - e.g. Muslim schools and an independent Jewish school). In view of the low response rate (23%) we are not able to report on each category of primary school and secondary school as had been the original intention. Although we recognise that this sample is not nationally representative of schools the discussion of the survey findings presents an overview of the findings from the

primary sector and the secondary sector followed by a discussion in the narrative following certain tables whenever significant differences emerged between three routinely conducted comparisons. The routinely conducted comparisons are 1) maintained schools and independent schools; 2) all schools with a religious character and all schools without a religious character; and 3) maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character (as specified by the DCSF).

Key Findings

- There is a wide range of religious education materials to support teaching about the six principal religions, particularly for Key Stages (KS) 1, 2 and 3.

- Books were used as teacher resources in all Key Stages and as sources of pictures and text.

- The survey and the case studies show that teachers draw heavily on web resources and dvds from the UK and elsewhere. Teachers make creative use of ICT in their lessons using a large amount of material not specifically produced for religious education purposes.

- The promotion of community cohesion is rarely addressed explicitly in RE materials but is dependent on teachers drawing out community cohesion messages from the content of the RE lesson.

- Case studies showed that school responses to the community cohesion agenda are various including learning about differences, transforming life chances, community partnerships and social action. In different schools links are made between RE and all of these areas.

- Much of the material used in RE lessons is generated by the teachers themselves using a mixture of electronic, print and other resources many of which were not specifically produced for RE purposes.

- The development of personal and social values, of positive attitudes towards those of other religions, and of critical thinking, was given higher priority in religious education than knowledge about religions by the majority of teachers in the case study schools.

- Religious learning in schools has various forms and expressions other than formal RE. There are opportunities (at some schools more than others) to learn about religions through cross-curricular themes, use of visits and visitors, local partnerships (e.g. with parish churches or other schools) and collective worship.

- Reviewers of materials pointed out that the value of RE materials for increasing understanding of the six principal religions is often compromised by inaccuracy, imbalance and lack of depth in their portrayal.

- Reviewers suggested a number of criteria for teachers to assess the representation of religions to ensure that their integrity is respected and that student understanding is enhanced. These included ensuring: accuracy in the portrayal of the religion; recognition of each religion's complexity and internal diversity; acknowledgement of the spiritual / numinous; a sense of the religion as living and contemporary.

- Reviewers suggested that books should establish points of contact with their intended readers in the following ways: use contemporary issues and reliable sources to engage pupils; offer a variety of source materials with which pupils of different abilities might engage, e.g. invite interaction with the text and pictures; provide sufficient contextual information for stories and pictures; enhance accessibility through clear design; provide a balance between learning about and learning from religions.

- The availability of many free web-based resources means that teachers and students need to be able to become critical evaluators of materials and assess them for authenticity, content, ease of navigation and provenance.

Findings from each Strand

Strand One - review of RE materials

In order to engage with the research questions, school books and websites were sampled by the review co-ordinators and reviewed by the academic and professional experts and faith consultants in two phases. In a third phase, review co-ordinators and the project's IT specialist analysed the reviews and wrote findings which were incorporated into the final project report. The following is a selection of findings based on reports, firstly from professional RE experts and secondly from academic experts and faith consultants.

Print materials: RE professional perspectives

Information books at KS1 and KS2 provide content for 'learning *about* religion' (having an accurate knowledge and understanding). 'Learning *from* religion' (gaining insight through reflection and discussion) objectives are dependent on the teachers' interpretation of the sources for their pupils. Story books address ethical issues which are less prominent in the information books.

Books for KS3 variously demonstrate awareness of recent initiatives in RE. Most of them successfully balance 'learning *about*' and 'learning *from*', achieving this in a number of ways, and most convincingly when these twin aspects of RE are well integrated in the learning process.

At KS4, books related primarily to examination requirements. The reviewer found that some offered opportunities for 'learning *from* religion' if the teacher identified and developed these, but the books themselves did not do this.

The reviews of books at each Key Stage point to the importance of the RE teacher's insight in making fullest use of available books. The differences among books for the different Key Stages, however, suggest that teachers at Key Stages 1 and 2 especially (where many teachers are non-specialists), require a professional understanding of RE to guide both their selection of books and their use of them, since this is not usually built into the books themselves;

While KS1 and 2 books were often designed for independent learning, KS3 books reflect the 'traditional' shift to a 'textbook' in secondary schools. The trend towards packaged learning may account for the relatively low scoring of KS3 books in relation to independent learning.
At KS4 books were focused on conveying information, asking questions, the development of concepts and setting tasks; the prominence of these four concerns is indicative of most of the books' status as examination texts.

Text emerged as an area of concern across the Key Stages. Problems included for example: font size; density of text; long paragraphs; quantity and complexity of text; design and layout which makes text hard to follow; level of literacy demanded by texts.

Visuals were commonly used as illustration of the text. Where problems emerged they tended to relate to matters of gender, colour (failure for example to show Christianity as a global faith), stereotype, or a poor or insensitive choice of visual and/or caption. Across the Key Stages it was clear that visuals are rarely employed to promote pupils' learning; books often fail to *use* them at all.

At KS1 and KS2 positive contributions to community cohesion were seen in the capacity of stories to explore shared values and provide insight into matters of concern to communities and in the value of books which allow pupils to engage with their contemporaries 'on the page'.

At KS3 and KS4 issues identified as controversial within and among religions tend to be those commonly addressed in GCSE courses relating to ethical and moral issues (e.g. euthanasia); additionally attention was given in some to divisions within individual religions, whilst a further area related to selected social and political issues. At present it would seem more common for textbooks to consider issues which may be examined from the perspective of different faiths, rather than those issues where the roots of controversy lie between or among religions themselves (e.g. the use of images in worship).

Websites

The audit shows that there are two types of resources that are useful for RE: those that could be used by the teacher for leading learning in the classroom, and those that could be used by the pupils for independent learning.

Currently, many websites are still, in effect, books in an electronic form. More engaging and attractive sites use video and audio materials, offer interactivity and engagement with the current traditions and lives of practitioners.

Some sites produced by some religious groups had a proselytising agenda that teachers and students need to be aware of.

Though a few sites are being developed which aim to foster independent learning, not many are useful to students without guidance from the teacher.

Of the websites reviewed, over half had no activities on their sites. Many of the creators of the websites appeared not to be educators. Activities for pupils were most likely to appear on websites produced by schools or by the educational branch of religious organisations. The picture is better for those sites aimed at younger children where a wider range of materials was shown and there was a greater understanding of learning styles.

Some resources offer reflective teaching and learning ideas which might contribute to pupils' spiritual development, but in more 'confessional' sites these experiential activities (including elements of worship and meditation) may be inappropriate for use in RE in community schools or with children from a variety of religion and belief backgrounds.

Academic and Faith consultant perspectives

In many cases RE books and series give an immediately positive message about the religions being presented. The books generally show an interest in broadening young people's knowledge of religions and promoting positive attitudes of respect towards those religions.

Nevertheless the number of errors and points at which criticisms can be made in the coverage of religions (of some more than of others) is concerning. The lack of attention to detail and accuracy was felt by the reviewers to also be problematic because it did not present a positive model of scholarship to young people. They felt that it indicates a carelessness about other people's beliefs and practices which would not be helpful to community cohesion.

Many of the resources fell short in conveying a real sense of the deeper significance and power of religion in the lives of the believer, without which it is difficult for the young people to get a full sense of the influence and motivating force of faith in the lives of people of religion in the society in which they live.

Inaccuracies suggest a need for authors and publishers to consult with experts, academics and knowledgeable practitioners.

External influences (for example, syllabus and examination requirements and the influence of other religious and non-religious perspectives) rather than the internal logic of the religions often structure their presentation in RE materials, supplying different emphases than would have come from the religions themselves, and underplaying important elements.

Particular issues of concern emerged which were specific to each religion examined:

- The content and quality of the presentation of *Islam* was seen to be helpful in conveying a rich and attractive picture of Islam as a living religion that has a place in British society as well as in the wider world. However, accounts of the religion were sometimes rather simplistic.

- There were a large number of inaccuracies in the portrayal of *Hinduism*. Though the portrayal of the religion was often described by the reviewers as attractive, carelessness over details and confusion about Hindu beliefs and teaching were real issues, for example an attempt to explain Hindu thought with the terms '*henotheism*' and '*pantheism*' was considered to be misleading.

- *Sikhism* received a rather superficial, descriptive treatment focusing on the externals of the religion more than on the religion's power for transformation in the lives of the individual or its contribution to wider society.

- The relative weight given in the materials to minority white British and to majority migrant communities was an issue in the portrayal of *Buddhism*. The position of Buddhism as a non-theist tradition meant it could be drawn into the current theist v atheist debate in a way that could lead to misinterpretation.

- The inadequate coverage of *Judaism* in thematic texts and series was noted. A particular issue was the failure of many of the resources to engage with the long tradition of Jewish thought over the last 2000 years. Instead the religion all too often comes across as the Old Testament religion that preceded Christianity.

- In several resources *Christianity* came across as the default religion, a fact that gave Christianity both too much assumed presence and too little actual attention. There were implicit assumptions in some of the resources, that they were addressing students with a Christian background. Non-Christian religions were often presented through a Christian lens. At the same time reviewers noted a reluctance to engage with the real core of the Christian faith such as Christian belief in Jesus as God incarnate.

From the reviewers' comments, it is possible to identify a number of qualities that they value in religious education materials. These included representations of religion that are accurate, coherent, comprehensive, authentic; they present religions as internally diverse, numinous and transformative, living and contemporary with contributions to make to present society; they are intellectually challenging, show respect for different religions, treat them fairly and emphasise the relationship between them.

Case Study Findings

The case studies covered 20 schools (primary and secondary), 10 of them with a religious character. The common characterisation of schools as either 'faith' or 'non-faith' was found not to be a straightforward indicator of the place of religion within those institutions. The situation is complicated by a number of factors, such as history, community and demography.

A variety of RE approaches and pedagogies were seen to be used (often in combination) including those focusing directly on world religions, scriptural approaches (concentrating on religious text and story), experiential approaches (focusing on visits and the use of artefacts, for example), and philosophical and ethical approaches (especially at GCSE level). Teachers and schools mix different approaches, within lessons or across the school.

The selection of materials was influenced by the particular RE pedagogies being used: for example experiential approaches in the primary school might require a greater use of religious artefacts; scriptural approaches require a choice of key texts and stories; world religions approaches require more information-based material, while philosophical and ethical approaches draw on current materials from the media (television and newspapers).

In RE the faith of pupils is often a major influence on the selection of themes and content for the lessons, though there was some evidence of minority religious positions in the school being overlooked.

The teachers in the case study schools were not only concerned with specific issues to do with RE; they also had more general educational concerns when choosing and using resources. These had important implications because teachers then tended to generate their own materials - to 'mix and match'. If teaching materials are teacher-generated, there are significant implications in terms of teacher knowledge, expertise, and training. Six broad themes emerged: methods of learning; literacy; information and communications technology (ICT); examination requirements; and expertise of staff. They were considered in turn.

With regard to *methods of learning*, across the case studies, several teachers and departments had adopted a general pedagogical approach and applied it to RE. This could be an interdisciplinary strategy such as the promotion of thinking skills as required by the National Curriculum. Examples of the influence of thinking skills in teachers' compilation of 'mix and match' RE materials are the use of de Bono's 'thinking hats', and the use of a range of mind maps downloaded from a thinking skills website. An alternative approach was for schools to

produce their own materials in order to match a theory of learning or particular learning strategies. During the course of a lesson on Buddhism at one secondary school, a number of different learning strategies (mind-mapping, card sort, analysing text, group discussion, creative writing) were used employing visual, aural and kinaesthetic learning styles. Most of the materials used had been prepared by the teachers, the only exception being an end of topic quiz from an interactive whiteboard programme.

Several of the schools showed a concern to introduce *creativity* into their religious education teaching. Some teachers emphasised the importance of creativity as a criterion for the selection of materials, and also drew on materials and/or techniques from art, craft, music and drama.

With regard to *literacy*, a critical issue in the selection and use of resources was the appropriateness of the language used for the pupils. This was vital when English was not the pupils' first language. One co-ordinator had difficulty in finding resources that were appropriate for pupils whose reading levels were below their chronological age. Simple texts might be available but they often could not be used comfortably with older children, because the style was too immature. There was also an issue over differentiation. At one secondary school, the head of department relied on a particular series, written to meet the needs of less able 11 to 14 year-olds, but this was regarded as a stop-gap until home-produced differentiated material could be written. For some teachers the question was not so much how to find material that was readily accessible for their students in terms of their existing levels of literacy, but how to find material that would support pupils' language development.

One important element in teachers' selection and use of materials is ICT. The internet and software packages were a source of information for teachers. The internet was also important as a vehicle for delivering lessons, through access to websites and software, and particularly through teachers' own power point presentations. The presence of ICT facilities in the classroom opened up many possibilities for resourcing RE and made much varied material (e.g. video clips) readily available, enhancing teachers' independence in selecting materials. In addition, teachers wanted to encourage the development of ICT skills in RE lessons. This could simply be through the use of laptops for presentations, but could be more complex. At one primary school, the Year 6 teacher used the interactive whiteboard to share Sikh and Muslim stories, sourced from different websites.

Examination requirements in secondary schools, was an important factor influencing selection and use of materials for RE. On the one hand, teachers had freedom to choose from a range of syllabuses, so they could select the most suitable, whether a scriptural approach, world religions approach or a philosophy and ethics approach (few syllabuses were chosen drawing on any more than two religions). On the other hand, this choice could be constraining. Teachers had an eye to results, vital in an often marginalised subject, and crucial to building up sixth form numbers. Some schools felt constrained to purchase sets of the 'official book' written by the chief examiner: '*He's the chief examiner. He writes the syllabus and writes the questions, and edits the textbooks. It is therefore sensible to buy it and use it...However, it doesn't allow for creativity - it's functional but not inspiring…"*

With regard to expertise of staff, many non-specialists were found to be teaching religious education[2]. Of these, most interviewed or observed were highly committed to the subject, and had clear views on resources and pedagogy. Nevertheless, many heads of department and co-ordinators recognised that they had to meet the needs of non-specialists, often teaching their main subject as well, and only teaching religious education temporarily; this had an impact on the choice of materials. In order to help non-specialists in one secondary school, a published scheme for Key Stage 3 was purchased plus the exam board's approved textbook for GCSE.

Even for experienced teachers, there were still issues of expertise: in gaining the skills in judging and using materials and in finding time to familiarise themselves with all the resources available. Local RE specialist advisers provided valuable guidance for teachers in the classroom and helped to address the issues of lack of specialism.

In conclusion, there is evidence from the case study schools that general educational developments and cross-curricular strategies have contributed to the quality of learning. The employment of tools for thinking can lead to a more detailed engagement with religious education materials and issues; creative approaches reflect the fact that response to religion in people's lives is often practical, active and artistic; developments in ICT enable students to explore interchanges between religion and popular, contemporary culture. Learning is enabled and enhanced when the content is accessible and engaging and attention to pupils' learning needs is found to be important here, as with the focus on literacy levels and concrete learning for younger children. Even the pressures of examinations can act as powerful motivators for teachers and students. Thus teachers see some of these other issues as supportive of teaching and learning on world religions, by being innovatively harmonised with religious education. They wanted to combine these strategies creatively, to deliver broader, richer lessons that connected with other aspect of learning. However, there are also indications that some of these influences can impede effective teaching on world religions, most obviously the need to cater for non-specialist teachers and a restricting anxiety to guide pupils towards the 'right' answers in examinations. Both of these concerns influence the selection of lesson materials. Even the repertoire of teaching methods observed has potential to impede as well as to enhance learning if an interest in the development of thinking skills or ICT skills, for example, diverts the lesson away from its focus on the specific skills and content of religious education.

Comments on RE and its purposes from pupils often reflected the approaches adopted by their teachers and the criteria used in the selection and use of resources; thus there was an emphasis on the development of attitudes of tolerance and respect for others, on the free expression of one's own opinions and beliefs and a consciousness of the current pedagogical interest in learning styles. There were variations between the Key Stages with a greater interest in story among the primary age students, in examination requirements among older students, and references to the religious motivations and meanings from the children in 'faith' schools.

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[2] An issue reiterated in OFSTED Report: Making Sense of Religion 2007 and confirmed in findings of the survey strand of this study

For older secondary students examination success was a prime consideration in their judgement of the value of different religious education resources. For some, the criterion against which they evaluated materials was not so much ability to enhance learning as ability to enhance potential to succeed at this level. Among GCSE candidates there was often a preference for resources that organise the material for revision purposes and help them to remember, and to structure examination answers. Often it was the teachers who had done this for the students in the selection and adaptation of material and production of revision aids and guides. This trend towards reliance on teachers may have implications for the students' development as independent learners and their eventual ability to study at university level.

Many of the younger pupils expressed enthusiasm for books and in particular for stories from the religious traditions. There was negativity expressed by some secondary students towards book-learning and the interpretation of religious education as a non-academic subject.

A clear message was given that the young people particularly appreciated direct contact with difference in their learning, rating highly opportunities to learn from others about their views and lives. Electronic resources were also appreciated by pupils as giving them more direct access to 'real life'.

Though some of the materials were evaluated positively by students for their representations of their religions, there some criticisms. Some voices were found to be poorly represented or missing. The representation of the lives of Christians was particularly criticised by the young people with evangelical Christians in particular finding that their perspectives were not included in resources or lessons. There was also a tension between a student-centred concept of learning whereby the young people felt that the resources should represent their own experiences and interpretations of their faith and one that seeks to present a wider tradition and its core teachings. A question for educators and producers of resources is what the balance between these should be.

Community Cohesion

Although Community Cohesion principles are often not explicitly stated in materials, policies and RE lessons, teachers and school leaders recognised social and citizenship imperatives for learning about different faiths. At some of the 'faith schools' the argument for doing so was strengthened by religious imperatives.

Responses to the community cohesion agenda were varied including learning about differences, developing the idea of community within the school, striving to transform the life chances of disadvantaged pupils and engaging in partnerships and social action in the community. For the Case Study schools, in all of these areas RE and other forms of religious learning played a part, for example, through visits to schools by members of religious communities and through collective worship.

Survey Findings

The survey enabled the research project to take a broad overview of what is happening across a wide range of primary schools and secondary schools within both the state-maintained and independent sectors. However, the intention of the research group to report separately on each of the major categories of schools was not viable. This was due to the poor response rate. Nonetheless, this approach was particularly helpful in addressing three of the key research questions posed by the project. A total of 362 primary schools and 301 secondary schools participated in the survey.

The first question concerned identifying what materials are available for schools to use in religious education. The survey findings emphasise the importance of non-print forms of materials in two senses. First, teachers drew attention to the key importance of individuals within the local faith communities who visit schools and contribute to RE lessons. For example, 77% of primary schools report that the Christian faith community contributed to RE and 23% report that the Muslim community contributed to RE, while 70% of secondary schools report that the Christian faith community contributed to RE and 30% report that the Muslim community contributed to RE. Within the primary sector the Hindu community participated more in schools with a religious character when compared with schools with no religious character. Within the secondary sector Christian and Islamic communities contributed more in schools with a religious character when compared with schools with no religious character. Looking only at maintained schools, a similar pattern was found in the contribution of Christian and Islamic communities. Second, teachers are drawing heavily on the web to generate resources for their classroom teaching. Particularly in the primary sector, teachers are not distinguishing between websites originating in the UK and elsewhere in the world when searching for resources to support their classroom teaching. Thus, 21% of teachers in the primary sector agree that UK websites and non-UK websites are very useful. One main difference emerged between maintained schools and independent schools in the primary sector. Independent schools are significantly more likely to report finding UK websites as very useful (29%) compared with maintained schools (18%).

The second question concerned identifying the ways in which the materials were used to fulfil the different aims specified within religious education and the specific aim concerned with community cohesion. The survey strand demonstrated that teachers conceptualise the aims of RE in a variety of ways and that promotion of community cohesion is not conceptualised generally as top priority among these aims. Although the survey strand does not itself tell us how this situation could be improved, it underscores the view that there is room for improvement.

The third question concerns identifying the key factors that determine which resources teachers decide to use. The survey strand demonstrates that there are two main factors influencing teachers' choice of materials at primary level. The first factor is the individual teacher's own personal and professional judgement. The second factor is the price of the materials. This latter factor is crucial in an environment in which budgets are often clearly limited for this area of the curriculum. The survey strand demonstrates that there are two main factors at secondary level. First, it is the individual teacher's own personal and professional judgement and second it is the recommendation by the exam board. Taken together, the answers offered by the survey strand show the crucial role of the RE subject leaders within individual schools in evaluating and employing resources creatively and in informed ways.

At the same time, the survey strand draws attention to some weaknesses in the way in which RE subject leaders have been prepared for this responsibility. On the one hand, there are many RE subject leaders who have been professionally trained (71% in the primary sector and 89% in the secondary sector) for this specialist area of the curriculum and who have maintained their involvement in appropriate continuing professional development (65% in the primary sector and 45% in the secondary sector). On the other hand, there are a number of RE subject leaders who have not had the benefit of professional training and qualifications in the fields of religious studies or religious education (29% in the primary sector and 11% in the secondary sector) and who have not taken opportunities for recent continuing professional development within this subject area (36% in the primary sector and 55% in the secondary sector have undertaken no CPD in RE during the last 12 months). This may prove to be a crucial observation in helping to identify an area for further concern and investment.

General Conclusions

The research project was predicated on the understanding that community cohesion objectives are served by increase in knowledge of the beliefs, practices, motivations and values of people of the six principal religious traditions in British society. The fact that schools of all types, independent, maintained, with or without a designated 'religious character', include a variety of religions in their curriculum is very positive, as is the existence of a wide range of materials available to support them.

However, the findings from the project suggest a need for active measures to ensure that 'learning *about*' religion and religions retains a prominent place in the school RE curriculum and that the information pupils receive about religions is accurate, balanced and comprehensive in order to meet the attainment targets expressed in local agreed syllabuses and the National Framework for Religious Education.

At the same time the findings show a number of different approaches to community cohesion taken by schools and means by which they too can support greater understanding of the way religion influences people's lives and society.

Recommendations

- Schools should recognise in their policy, practice and self assessment that an increase in knowledge about different religions is an important part of education for community cohesion.

- RE policy makers need to investigate the move away from studying religions to issues-based approaches and explore ways in which learning about religions might be renewed in upper secondary education.

- Given the current emphasis on practice, histories and moral teachings, RE teachers and producers of RE resources should ensure that pupils also learn about the spirituality and / or theology of religions.

- RE teachers should be aware of the presence of minority, and sometimes hidden, religious positions within their classes

- Meetings between teachers, RE advisers, university academics and scholars from the religious traditions should be facilitated to identify ways of working together to support the development of teacher subject knowledge.

- Initial teacher education and continuing professional development opportunities should be provided to enhance subject knowledge of specialist and non-specialist teachers.

- Training opportunities should be extended for faith community members who visit schools or host visits from pupils.

- Advisers of community and faith sectors should consult together at a local level with teachers of both sectors so they can support each other in developing RE.

- Publishers, authors and designers of websites should work with academics and faith consultants to ensure the accuracy, balance and appropriateness of the representation of religious traditions in their materials.

- Publishers, authors and designers of websites should promote community cohesion by supplying examples from religions of communal living, positive social involvement and collaborative action between different faith communities.

- School leaders and RE teachers should develop community partnerships between the school and local faith communities, particularly those with an orientation towards social action, so that pupils can learn about the role of religions in society. SACREs and RE advisers should offer guidance on this.

1.   Introduction

1.1   Aims and organisation of the study

The aim of the research project, commissioned and funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), was:

> *…to examine the materials available to schools for teaching and learning about and from world religions* (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism were specified as principal religions in the UK) *to support community cohesion and promote religious understanding amongst pupils. In particular, it will explore which materials are commonly used by schools and how, what key factors schools should consider when selecting materials, and identify any improvements that can be made to materials to better support cohesion.*[3]

The research was organized into three inter-related strands.

- Strand 1 was an audit of books and ICT sources plus a review of a selection of available materials from publishers and websites and of materials actually being used in schools. (Later the decision was made to publish the audit as a separate technical report (Hayward and Hopkins 2010) The results of the review appear in this final report).

- Strand 2 was a set of 20 case studies to investigate the use of materials in primary and secondary schools in England.

- Strand 3 was a quantitative survey of RE teachers to examine the use and selection of materials in different categories of schools.

1.2   Background to the Project

In order to understand the issues surrounding teaching and learning about world religions, it is important to trace some of the changes in religious education in England over time, and to understand the different types of school to be found both within and outside the state maintained system.

Since the mid 1970s it has been common for syllabuses in religious education (RE) in England to include the study of various religions in addition to Christianity. The 1988 Education Reform Act broadened the law to require such studies in fully state-funded schools. Whereas the educational systems in some countries specify the materials to be used in lessons about the major religions - or 'world religions' as they are often called - in England, schools are free to select the materials or resources[4] they wish to use. Up to the present study, there has been no systematic enquiry into the materials being used with different age ranges and in different kinds of schools in England, and no consideration of the contribution such materials make to community cohesion. This report is the first large-scale study to focus specifically on materials used to teach about world religions as part of religious education in English schools, how they are used and the messages they convey.

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[3] Specified in the DCSF tender EOR/SBU/2008/008**.**
[4] In this study both the terms 'materials' and 'resources' are used as appropriate.

In order to understand the various contexts in which these materials are used currently, and to understand how studies of different religions were incorporated into religious education, it is necessary to give a brief outline of the history of the subject in England, and to distinguish between different kinds of schools within the maintained sector, as well as between independent and maintained schools, in order to clarify the requirements for religious education in these various establishments.

1.2.1 The evolution of religious education in England

Essentially, modern religious education has evolved in its legal requirements and organisational arrangements since the introduction of state education in 1870. In England, religious groups have been involved since the nineteenth century in partnership with the state in the provision of schools and the curriculum subject of religious education (known then as religious instruction). Institutionally, the Church of England holds a privileged place as the established church and a prime provider of mass education prior to 1870. Changes in society have led to more equality within education between religious traditions, initially for the Roman Catholic and Jewish communities and more recently for other religious traditions, including Muslim, Sikh and Hindu communities. Social changes in the United Kingdom have included increasing secularisation, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, and increasing religious plurality, mainly through migration. These changes, together with a growing global awareness, are reflected in the way RE has developed in English schools.

The educational structures and arrangements that produce syllabuses for religious education in the fully state-funded schools in England and Wales (known as Agreed Syllabuses) have evolved from those of earlier times. In these schools in England and Wales, religious education aims to foster knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other main religions represented in British society, and also to help pupils to form their own views and opinions on religious matters. In mainly state-funded faith based schools (e.g. voluntary aided schools), however, religious education continues to include religious nurture.

Syllabuses for RE in community schools in England are drafted at local level by an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) which includes four committees: representatives of teachers; the Church of England; other denominations and religions; and local politicians.[5] Agreed Syllabus Conferences can co-opt further members (for example humanists and members of minority religious groups represented in the locality). Thus the interests of professional educators, religious bodies and politicians come together at a local level in determining syllabus content. There is also a trend towards a national pattern for the subject (see below on the Non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education).

(a) The Legal Framework

The 1944 Act made mandatory the use, by fully state-funded schools, of Agreed Syllabuses for Religious Instruction. Each English Local Education Authority (LEA) had to convene a Syllabus Conference consisting of four committees. Two of the four committees represented religious constituencies: the Church of England and 'other denominations'. In practice 'other denominations' meant 'other Protestant Christian denominations'. It was not until the 1970s that some LEAs liberally interpreted the Act as allowing representatives of non-Christian religions on to the 'other denominations' panel.

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[5] Fully state funded schools that do not have a religious character, since 1998, have been called community schools (formerly, county schools). Voluntary schools are schools, funded wholly or partially by the state, that retain a connection with their founding religious group.

Changes to religious education brought about by the 1988 Education Reform Act have to be seen against the background of the introduction of a national curriculum, with compulsory core and foundation subjects. Mainly because of the local arrangements for religious education that already existed, RE was not included in the national curriculum.

The 1988 Education Reform Act retained many features of the 1944 Act, but introduced changes which strengthened RE's place in the curriculum and acknowledged some recent developments in the subject. A significant change was the use of 'religious education' to replace the term 'religious instruction' with the latter's suggestion of deliberate transmission of religious beliefs. The subject now had to justify its aims and processes on general educational grounds. For the first time in law, representatives of faiths other than Christianity were 'officially' given a place on Agreed Syllabus Conferences, on what used to be the 'other denominations' committee.

The Education Reform Act requires that any new Agreed Syllabus 'shall reflect the fact that religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (UK Parliament, 1988, Section 8.3). This says nothing about instruction in Christianity, and the Act specifically prohibits indoctrinatory teaching. New Agreed Syllabuses needed both to give proper attention to the study of Christianity and, regardless of their location in the country, had also to give attention to the other major religions represented in Britain. The Education Reform Act also sets religious education in the context of the whole curriculum of maintained schools which 'must be balanced and broadly based' and must promote 'the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society...' (UK Parliament, 1988, 1 (2) para 2). Religious education then, as well as being broad, balanced and open, should not simply be a study of religions but, like the rest of the curriculum, should relate to the experience of pupils in such a way that it contributes to their personal development.

(b) National Initiatives: The Model Syllabuses and the National Framework for Religious Education

In 1994, two model syllabuses were published by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA), including material on six religions in Britain (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism) and produced in consultation with members of faith communities.[6] The two models (SCAA, 1994a, b) were non-statutory; they were for the use of Agreed Syllabus Conferences, who could choose to ignore them or could edit or borrow from them. The model syllabuses used the terms 'learning about religion' and 'learning from religion' (AT1 & AT2) as the two attainment targets for religious education. This terminology has achieved wide circulation since the publication of the Model Syllabuses and is affirmed in the non statutory National Framework (see below).

Further work took place at national level in 2003-4. The Department for Education and Skills commissioned the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to produce a new national framework for religious education in consultation with faith communities and professional RE associations, for use by Agreed Syllabus Conferences and others. The document (published in 2004), referred to hereafter as the National Framework, received the approval of all the professional associations and faith communities (Gates, 2005a). It aims to clarify standards in religious education, promote high quality teaching and learning, and recognize the important contribution

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[6] Humanism was not included on the grounds that there had been an earlier court ruling (not in the context of RE) that it was not a religion. Many SACREs and AS conferences have co-opted humanist members or have ensured a humanist presence on the committee including representatives of teachers.

of the subject to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by supporting local SACREs and local Agreed Syllabus Conferences (QCA, 2004). The National Framework is intended to ensure that local syllabuses meet the needs of pupils, and to facilitate the development of more national support materials for RE. It is also intended to increase public understanding of religious education by providing clear guidance on what is covered in the subject. Like the Model Syllabuses, the National Framework lists Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism as the principal religions that should be studied in addition to Christianity. The National Framework notes that 'It is important that ASCs and schools ensure that by the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have encountered all of these five principal religions in sufficient depth' (p. 12). Christianity should be studied across the Key Stages. The National Framework also states that 'To ensure that all pupils' voices are heard and the religious education curriculum is broad and balanced, it is recommended that there are opportunities for all pupils to study other religious traditions such as the Bahá'í faith, Jainism and Zoroastrianism' and 'secular philosophies such as humanism' (p. 12).

The National Framework also explains how religious education can contribute to intercultural understanding and citizenship education. The structure of the National Framework closely follows that of national curriculum requirements.

Since the publication of the National Framework, the Religious Education Council of England and Wales, representing professional organisations and faith communities, lobbied for the development of a national strategy for the subject based on the National Framework. The strategy includes improving the quality of the religious education taught in maintained community schools and schools with a religious character (commonly known as faith schools), encouraging those responsible for RE in faith-based voluntary aided schools, academies and independent schools to consult and use the National Framework in planning their RE syllabuses, and encouraging schools generally to strengthen an inclusive approach to the subject, by developing links with faith communities in their local areas. Government funding has been provided for extending and improving in-service training of teachers through the development of continuing professional development materials, and research commissioned by the Department of Children, Schools and Families on materials used to teach about world religions, described in this report.

(c) State-funded religious schools

The existence of state-funded religious schools acknowledges institutionally an element of plurality in English education. At the time of writing (December 2009), there are 21,727 maintained schools in England of which 6832 are faith based schools of one type or another.

The close collaboration between Church and state in education in England goes back to the 1870 Education Act. The 1902 Education Act established the 'Dual system' of partnership between the state and the churches in providing a national system of education and the 1944 Education Act clarified this system, by distinguishing different types of maintained (i.e. state funded) schools. County schools were entirely publicly funded and had no Church appointed governors. Voluntary schools, originally funded by religious bodies, went into voluntary partnership with the state.

Voluntary schools were of three types: Aided, Controlled and Special Agreement.[7] In Voluntary Controlled schools, the RE syllabus was provided by the LEA. In Voluntary Aided schools, (Church of England, Roman Catholic, some other Christian schools and, significantly, a few Jewish schools[8]) had a majority of governors appointed by the sponsoring religious body. Since 1988, Voluntary Aided schools, like all other maintained schools, have had to follow the national curriculum. However, they have continued to teach religious education and to have collective worship according to the religious tradition represented in the school using, in the case of the Church of England, for example, diocesan syllabuses. However, all the major religious traditions have acknowledged the importance of the National Framework for Religious Education in influencing their approach to religious education and the survey and case studies from the present research indicate that it is not uncommon for 'faith schools' to include some teaching about 'world religions' in their RE.

Law and policy since 1997

Major changes have been brought about since 1997. In addition to the Government's stated aim of achieving fairness and good community relations, evidence (from Ofsted statistics) of higher attainment and a stronger sense of community in some religious schools have contributed to a more pluralistic view of the state school system.

In 1998 the School Standards and Framework Act introduced the concept of 'religious character' and modified the range of types of school receiving state funding (UK Parliament, 1998). There are now four categories of school within the state system: Community (formerly County schools); Foundation; Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled. All Community schools must use the local agreed syllabus as a basis for religious education and may not have a religious character. Schools within the other categories may have a 'religious character'. Most, but not all, Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled schools and some Foundation schools have a religious character. All schools with a religious character can have collective worship that is distinctive of the religious body concerned. Only Voluntary Aided schools can have 'denominational' religious education. Voluntary Controlled and Foundation schools with a religious character have to use the local agreed syllabus, except in the case of children whose parents have specifically requested 'denominational' religious education. In effect, a wider range of religious schools has been incorporated into the state system, partly for reasons of fairness and partly because such schools are recognised as potentially having certain qualities that might be more difficult to develop in some Community schools (DCSF, 2007a). As an example of its confidence in the ability of religious bodies to make schools work in difficult social settings, the Government, in March 2000, announced its intention to develop Inner City Academies (now called Academies) catering for children of all abilities. Some of which are sponsored by Church related bodies.

(d) Independent schools

Independent schools, which receive no state funding, may or may not have a religious character. There is great diversity within the independent school sector - from schools with ancient foundations, often religious foundations, although not necessarily now formally designated as having a 'religious character' - to small, financially struggling schools offering distinctive education.

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[7] Special Agreement Schools had curriculum arrangements close to those of Aided schools.
[8] There were some Jewish schools with public grants even before1870 (Gates 2005b).

The Department for Education and Skills contacted all independent schools in 2003 offering them the opportunity to apply to be designated as a school with religious character under the *Designation of Schools Having a Religious Character (Independent Schools) (England) Order 2003*. This Order extended the procedure undertaken with maintained schools following the publication of the 1998 *School Standards and Framework Act*. By April 2004, 427 independent schools had been granted the designation of having a religious character.

Independent schools can make their own arrangements for teaching religious education. However, all independent schools are required to meet *The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003*, regarding the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. In order to meet this standard, the schools must promote principles which 'assist pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions'.

(e) Community cohesion

The 'duty to promote community cohesion' formed part of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 [21 (5)]. Since September 2007, there has been a requirement for schools to promote community cohesion, partly through curriculum subjects such as religious education and citizenship, and this requirement is now influencing the development of some materials for use in religious education in schools. The non-statutory guidance on community cohesion requires that 'Every school - whatever its intake and wherever it is located - is responsible for educating children and young people who will live and work in a country which is diverse in terms of cultures, religions or beliefs, ethnicities and social backgrounds' (Department for Children, Schools and Families [DCSF], 2007b) *Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion*, July 2007). The draft non-statutory guidance for religious education states that effective RE will promote community cohesion at each of four levels:

- 'the school community - RE provides a positive context within which the diversity of cultures, beliefs and values within the school community can be celebrated and explored;

- the community within which the school is located - RE provides opportunities to investigate the patterns of diversity of religion and belief within the local area and it is an important context within which links can be forged with different religious and non-religious belief groups in the local community;

- the UK community - a major focus of RE is the study of the diversity of religion and belief which exists with the UK and how this diversity influences national life; and

- the global community - RE involves the study of matters of global significance recognising the diversity of religion and belief and its impact on world issues.' (QCA, 2009, p.15)

Although the community cohesion advice is not directed towards independent schools, they are required to meet the standard of assisting their pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions.

(f) Conclusion

The development of religious education in community schools, and also the provision of state funded schools with a religious character, has been evolutionary. Although there has been some expansion of schools with a religious character, the great majority of state-funded schools continue to be community schools. Although voluntary aided schools within the maintained sector may teach forms of religious education which promote a particular faith, there has been agreement that the National Framework is an important tool in facilitating forms of religious education that are outward looking and inclusive of learning about the main different religions represented in Britain. Although independent schools can make their own arrangements for religious education, they are required to promote principles which 'assist pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions'. Religious education in all types of English schools is thus potentially an arena for learning about the different religions represented in the country and for dialogue between pupils from different religious and secular backgrounds. Finally, it should be noted that although teaching about world religions is a central part of RE, other topics are also covered in schools in England, including Biblical studies, life issues and philosophy and ethics.

1.3   The Investigation

1.3.1 Terminology: 'Religions' and 'World Religions'

The study reported below is concerned with investigating the materials used to teach about world religions in English schools. Legal and policy documents do not use the term 'world religions', but refer to 'principal religions represented in Great Britain', following the 1988 Education Reform Act, or to 'religions and beliefs', following international human rights codes. However, the terms 'religions' and 'world religions' are used widely, but often uncritically, in educational literature and discussion.

Some historians of religion and culture argue that the idea that the major 'religions' or 'world religions', are completely homogeneous systems of belief is relatively modern. Some argue that the idea of religions as distinct belief systems emerged fully in the 17th and 18th centuries (e.g. Smith, 1978).

Some cultural critics argue that the western concept of 'a religion' was used to classify what was considered to be material equivalent to the structures of the Christian religion in non-Christian cultures encountered by the west (Said, 1978). It is in the seventeenth and especially the eighteenth centuries that we find, in Western writing, many early references to religions such as 'the Hindoo religion' (Jackson, 1996). It was not, however, until the nineteenth century that some (but not all) of the familiar modern terms, such as 'Hinduism', 'Buddhism' and 'Sikhism' were coined in English.

The term 'world religions' emerged in the twentieth century, and was in fairly regular use by the time of the rise of Religious Studies in British universities in the mid 1960s. The expression was used as a synonym for 'religions of the world' or 'world's religions'. In religious education, an early use of term is in a pamphlet entitled Teaching Children about World Religions (Hilliard, 1961).

Many scholars view the terms 'religions' and 'world religions' critically, but find them to be useful categories to encompass sets of beliefs, practices, experiences and values dealing with fundamental existential questions, such as those relating to birth, identity and death. Some scholars look for looser ways to describe world religions - as broad religious traditions, for example - rather than as completely homogeneous systems of belief (Jackson, 1997). Such alternative views give attention to the diversity within religions, to the permeability of boundaries between religions, as well as to differences between traditions, key concepts and central sources of authority. This view does not deny the 'reality' of the religions nor does it take a fixed view on their relationship (regarding them as equally true or equally false, for example). It does, however, acknowledge that there are 'insiders' and 'outsiders' who use the language of 'religions' and 'world religions' and that this language is meaningful, even if it needs qualification. This moderate view is reflected in documents such as the National Framework (QCA, 2004), although this document does not use the term 'world religions'. The research reported below took account of the debate about 'religions' and 'world religions', and was concerned to examine how different materials regarded or represented those world religions indicated in the DCSF specification and identified as 'principal religions' in the National Framework (QCA, 2004).

1.3.2 Previous research

Although there has been some international research on religious education textbooks, on the representation of Islam in European textbooks, for example (Falaturi, 1988; Falaturi & Tworuschka, 1992), no research has surveyed the use of books and materials on world religions across England or the UK. However, some UK projects have linked theory, textbooks, and occasionally empirical research. These include the Chichester Project, on Christianity (e.g. Brown, 2000; Hayward, 1987), the Westhill Project (e.g. Rudge, 2000), the Religion in the Service of the Child Project (e.g. Hull 2000) the Warwick RE Project (e.g. Jackson, 2000, 2006) and the Stapleford Project (e.g. Cooling, 2000).

1.3.3 Key research questions

The DCSF identified 5 key research questions on which they wished the project to focus. These are:

- What materials (books, ICT resources and other materials) *are available to* maintained and independent schools for teaching about and learning from world religions?

- What materials *are schools using in practice* to develop an understanding of world religions?

- What is the *content/nature* of these materials used by schools and how does this relate to current school regulations (in particular the duty on maintained schools to promote community cohesion and the independent school standard to assist their pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions)?

- How are these materials *used by teachers in the classroom* to enhance learning and to promote community cohesion? How could their use be improved?

- What are *the key factors for schools to consider* when determining which materials should be used to teach world religions?

The DCSF made it clear that it did not wish the research to 'kite mark' materials used in schools. Rather it sought to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the books and materials available to and being used by schools in the classroom to teach world religions across the different types of schools. The DCSF also required, for the process of reviewing materials, involvement of academic specialists, professionals involved in the teaching of RE and members of the faith communities to be considered.

2. Methodology

2.1 Overview of Methodology

2.1.1 Methods

The project, which focused specifically on schools in England, used a 'mixed methods' approach employing both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the research questions. As indicated above, the study was divided into 3 inter-related strands

1. *A three phase review of materials*

- Phase 1 consisted of an audit of available materials (Hayward and Hopkins, 2010, and review of a sample of available materials by experts and consultants drawn from faith groups, academia and professional RE specialists.

- Phase 2 comprised a review of additional materials by the experts and consultants, including materials identified in the qualitative case studies and quantitative survey.

- Phase 3 consisted of an analytical review, by the group co-ordinators and ICT expert of the reports from the panel of experts and consultants at Phases 1 and 2, in order to identify issues and recommendations.

2. *Qualitative case studies* (selected from most school types, across the English regions, including urban and rural) conducted in 10 primary schools and 10 secondary schools.

3. *A quantitative survey* which consisted of a nationwide random sample of all school types.

2.1.2 Outcomes

The qualitative case studies and quantitative survey provided a considerable amount of information about the materials used in schools, and, in addition, provided further information, for example on: pupils' views of materials used; teachers' views of materials used; processes of teaching and learning in which the materials are used; factors influencing the selection of materials; how issues of community cohesion, inter faith relations and controversial issues are dealt with through the use of RE materials; and how far a secular world view is considered in the use of RE materials.

2.1.3 Involvement of faith communities, academics and RE professionals

Members of the 6 faiths covered in the materials to be examined (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism) had a full role in the review of materials. In consultation, wherever possible, with members of the Executive of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales, one person from each of the six world religions was appointed as a faith consultant with a brief to review materials from their own faith perspective. In addition to their faith membership and participation, these consultants were chosen because of their knowledge and understanding of religious education and/or because of their academic knowledge of their own tradition.

Six academic experts, one specialising in each of the religions covered in the study, were appointed with a brief to review materials from an academic perspective. Although the criteria for selecting members of the group were academic, several members happened to be also practitioners of the faith in which they specialise as academics.

Religious education professional specialists had a full role in the review of materials. In consultation with the then Chair of the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education, three professional religious education experts (with expertise respectively at Key Stages 1 and 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and post 16) were appointed. Teachers of religious education were also represented on the Steering Group by the then Chair of the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education and there was also representation from the Religious Education Council (REC). (Members of the project team are listed in Appendix A1.1).

2.2   Strand 1: The Audit and Review

The Audit aimed to determine what materials (books, internet sites and other resources) are currently available across schools (primary and secondary, maintained and independent) for RE teaching and learning regarding Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism (reported in a separate technical report: Hayward and Hopkins, 2010).

The Review aimed to analyse and evaluate the content and nature of materials that are in current use in schools, with reference to teaching about the faiths, and contributing to community cohesion and inter faith issues.

Phases of the Review

This was a three phase review of a wide range of resources available to schools including texts, visual material, ICT (websites, CD-Roms, DVDs, audio, animations, games, simulations), and test / examination materials covering six religions from Key Stages 1 to 4 and post 16.

2.2.1 Phase 1*: Audit and pilot study*

(a) Audit

The review group conducted an audit of available materials in print (from 2000). A cut off date of 2000 was chosen, since most materials in current catalogues were published after this date. These materials were classified by phase (primary, secondary (KS 3, KS 4 and post 16) and by type e.g. print, audio-visual and ICT.

Materials for all phases were identified through consultation with, representatives of religious education professional associations as well as from: online catalogues of key publishers for information books, CD ROMs, DVDs, videos, textbooks and schemes which may also have a teacher's book; educational programme details from television companies; back copies of *RE Today* and other professional publications; examination boards' recommended booklists for Key Stage 4 and post-16; appropriate websites; and information from the ICT expert (see below).

(b) Written briefing

The review group prepared a detailed written briefing including a schedule, details of tasks to be completed and an explanation of how to review using templates based on the criteria developed for evaluating a resource (see the Appendices to Section 2 for a sample set of the templates and notes of guidance for reviewers).

(c) Analysis and evaluation of materials

Members of the review group identified materials available since 2000. This process led to the identification of a sample of materials, including the most recent. Where possible for phase 1 the selection made drew at each Key Stage on series of books, which in most cases offered a book on *each* religion.

The panel of experts (faith, academic, RE professional) analysed, evaluated and reported on these materials using templates based on draft criteria prepared by the co-ordinators and at the same time evaluated the effectiveness of the templates in preparation for phase 2.

The faith consultants and academic experts received the materials specific to their particular religion (including ICT materials). The primary RE professional expert received all primary materials across the religions (including ICT materials) and the secondary RE professional experts received secondary materials across the religions (including ICT materials) respectively for KS3 and KS4/5.

The ICT expert analysed and evaluated all ICT materials (cross phase) and produced a report.

The panel of experts and faith consultants and the ICT expert submitted their reports and their comments on the usefulness of the templates to the review co-ordinators who drew up the phase 1 review (consisting of cataloguing materials and recording evaluations) and modified the templates in the light of the pilot exercise.

2.2.2 Phase 2: Analysis of materials by experts (academic and professional) and faith consultants

(a) Liaison with survey and case study groups

The purpose of this phase was to analyse materials (including websites) actually used by schools. From the data gathered by the survey and case study groups, and following the DCSF specification, the co-ordinators selected the materials that were most widely used and which dealt most substantially with community cohesion issues and inter-faith relations.

(b) Analysis of materials by panel of experts

Materials identified in the survey and the case studies were distributed to the academic expert for the faith concerned, the faith consultant concerned, an RE expert for the phase concerned and (in the case of ICT and audio-visual materials) the ICT expert.

The faith consultants and academic experts received selected generic texts that included material from the specified religion plus further materials (including ICT materials) specific to their particular religion, The primary RE professional expert received the primary materials (including ICT materials) across the religions and the secondary RE professional experts at KS3 and KS4/5 received selected secondary materials (including ICT materials) across the religions. The ICT expert analysed and evaluated the ICT materials (cross phase) and submitted a report. Experts and consultants wrote a concise report on each of the materials sent to them, using the revised templates from phase 1 of the review. The co-ordinators collated these reports in preparation for Phase 3.

2.2.3 Phase 3: Final analysis by co-ordinators of the Review Group

In phase 3 the co-ordinators of the review group used the analysis and distinctive perspectives of the faith consultants, academic and professional experts, to identify and discuss issues that emerged from the review of the materials and to make recommendations. They produced an overall analysis which discusses issues raised by the reports (phases 1 and 2) from the panel of experts and consultants. They also made recommendations, on the basis of the data gathered, on factors to be considered by schools when determining which materials should be used to teach world religions.

2.2.4 The templates: use and data analysis

On the basis of the criteria, templates were designed for use by reviewers. The review co-ordinators designed one template for the professional RE experts and a second for the academic experts and faith consultants. The ICT specialist adapted each of these for use specifically with web-based materials. Notes of guidance relating to each template were written for reviewers. In the light of feedback from the experts and consultants after phase 1, minor amendments were made to the templates for phase 2, and the notes of guidance were also revised.

(a) The Professional RE Experts

The review template used by the professional RE experts was underpinned by five interrelated research questions. The cross referencing to the template provided below highlights the key section to which the question relates, and also indicates other sections which are of relevance. The research questions are as follows:

i) In what ways do resources meet or reflect current requirements and / or current initiatives and recommendations in this subject area? Are resources 'shaped' or influenced by these factors [Template reference: Q **2.1/2.2**/2.3].

ii) Do resources balance understanding and appreciation of religion(s) with a concern for pupils' personal development? In what ways do they do this? [Template reference: Q 2.2/**2.3**/6] Is this done in relation to *each* religion presented, or in relation to some only?

iii) What are the approaches to learning the resources adopt and/or support? [Template reference: Q **3**/4/6]

iv) Are resources inclusive of pupils of all faiths and none and are they accessible to their target users? [Template reference: Q **4**/5 in part/6]

v) In what ways do the resources contribute to community cohesion? Are any aspects of the resources unhelpful in this respect? [Template reference: Q 2.3/4/**5**]

The template consists of closed questions and focused questions which ask for evidence in support of responses to selected closed questions, a feature which particularly distinguishes the handling of the main question on community cohesion from its counterpart in the review template for faith and academic consultants. Reviewers were also given the opportunity to write openly, and usually advantage was taken of this opportunity.

Analysis of completed templates

The analysis of completed templates was approached from two perspectives. The first was a consideration of responses to the closed questions and the second, a grounded analysis of the associated focused questions.

Closed questions

The template's closed questions directed reviewers' thinking towards the concerns of the above research questions. It was not intended that the closed questions should generate statistical data and this was not attempted. However, tabulation of the responses to *each* closed question, in relation to *each* resource, and to *each* religion proved a useful method in gaining, for example, an overview of a series of books; identifying whether or not religions are given parity in the contributions they make to RE, or in a particular series of books. Particular issues may also be quickly identified, for example, whether controversy is linked only with some traditions and rarely others; the dominance of particular approaches to learning; or the attention paid to developing pupils' global awareness. A meaningful statistical examination of such matters would arguably demand a far larger sample of resources than has been possible in this project; here the tabulation undertaken provided a cameo of the present resources, broadly indicating their dominant features and those which are less prominent or absent. Relevant information gained from the tabulation of responses to closed questions was fed into the reports for each Key Stage.

Focused questions

Focused questions allowed reviewers to comment on their responses to key closed questions, whilst the last two items of the template [Q 6/7] allowed for more open comments. For *each* Key Stage the analysis of reviewer's responses adhered to the following process.

i) All responses were gathered into one composite document and organised by *question*, and then by series and *religion* under each question. As with the tabulation of responses to closed questions, this initial collation of the data facilitated, for example, reading of responses to any one question *across* all resources under review at a particular Key Stage; comparison of resources e.g. in relation to their potential contribution to RE (as understood in the template); the treatment of any one religion across all the selected resources at any Key Stage (and also across Key Stages, if required); comparison of the handling of each religion within a particular series; and tracking of any theme/category (see below) back to the actual resource and the reviewers' comments.

ii) From the gathered responses to each question, the dominant themes/categories emerging from the reviewers' comments were identified. Working question by question and resource by resource also maintained awareness of the particularity of each book.

iii) Where common themes emerged from responses to more than one question, this also became apparent through this process of analysis.

(b) Faith Consultants and Academic Experts

The review templates used by the faith consultants and academic experts addressed the aspects of the review for which the knowledge and experience of these two groups of reviewers were particularly valuable. The main purpose of the review was to identify those elements in commonly-used religious education materials that, in the perspectives of the reviewers, help or hinder the development of pupils' understanding of and positive attitudes towards the six religions being considered. A number of interrelated research questions (below) guided the design of the templates. The cross referencing to the template highlights the key section in the template to which the question relates and indicates other sections that are relevant. Each reviewer answered the questions for their own religion or the religion that is the subject of their expertise.

i) How accurate are the materials regarding historical information, statistics and central / doctrinal teachings? Are there significant omissions? [template Q 3]

ii) To what extent do the materials represent the inner diversity, and the coherence, of the religion? [template Q 3]

iii) What sources of knowledge about the religion are used in the materials and is there clarity about the status of these? [template Q 4]

iv) How appropriate and helpful are the illustrations and activities for studying the religion? [template Q 4, 5]

v) What messages, positive or negative, do the materials convey about the religion and people of that religion? [template Q 6]

vi) In what ways do the materials contribute to community cohesion? Are any aspects of the materials unhelpful in this respect [template Q 7]

Analysis of completed templates

The templates included both closed and open questions. Answers to the closed questions on the templates gave some indication of the reviewers' responses to the materials, though the primary purpose was to direct their thinking towards some key concerns of the research questions. The open questions provided opportunities for reviewers to explain and expand on their answers, and to make other comments relevant to an evaluation of the value of the materials for the promotion of understanding and positive attitudes. The reviewers' responses to these open questions provided the primary data for analysis.

A grounded approach to data analysis was adopted to ensure that it would do justice to the reviewers' own informed and expert perspectives on the portrayal of the six religions in the materials and the issues that emerged. The templates of each faith consultant and academic expert were read independently and key categories were identified for each reviewer. The twelve sets of categories were then compared to find headings and sub-headings for an overall analysis that combined the perspectives of all reviewers. Note was taken of issues that were specific to only one of the focus religions or that were of more concern to one group of reviewers than to the others, and references to these included in the report.

2.3 Strand 2: The Case Studies

The 20 case studies aimed:

- to investigate what materials are being used in practice to develop an understanding of world religions. *(Research question 2)*

- to investigate how the materials are being used by teachers in the classroom to enhance learning and promote community cohesion *(Research question 4)*

- to ascertain what messages pupils receive from these materials about religion and the value of community cohesion. *(Research question 4)*

- to identify the key factors that the teachers consider when selecting and using materials to teach world religions *(Research question 5)*

2.3.1 The importance of case studies to the project

(a) Case studies provide detail on the use and reception of materials in the classroom.

The case studies were considered vital because every school has an individual ethos in relation to religion and community relations. This may be stated explicitly in school documents and policies, or it may be implicit in both the messages about religion conveyed to members of the school through recognition given to the religious positions of school members and the wider community, and through the handling of religious themes within the curriculum.

(b) Case studies exemplify the use of materials to convey messages about religion and about the value of community cohesion in the delivery of the RE curriculum.

Particular attention was given to the handling of questions of religious diversity and inter-religious understanding, and to how pupils' attitudes and values can be influenced by learning throughout their schooling, from Year 1 to Year 13. Choices made about the collection and analysis of data were informed by awareness of the complex relationships between policy and practice within any institution, school or classroom. To analyse these relationships, data from interviews with head teachers, heads of departments and RE co-ordinators and scrutiny of school policy statements were related to observations of RE in practice and the views of pupils and teachers in relation to materials used.

(c) Case studies reveal the complex interplay between curriculum materials, teachers' interpretation of these materials and the messages that pupils receive from them.

Analysis of materials, observation of lessons and interviews with teachers and pupils were used to explore this relationship. As teacher interpretation is dependent on teacher confidence with the material used and pupils' learning is influenced by their background experience and understanding of religion, these factors were also considered in the research. The case studies provide illustrations of how these factors work out in practice, and suggest explanations for the features emerging through the project's other research approaches. As a result, it was possible to suggest how teachers' uses of the materials could be improved, in line with the fourth research question.

Secondary school case studies took into account the syllabus requirements of any public examinations.

2.3.2 Methodological approach

The case studies investigated the perspectives of subject leaders, teachers and pupils on both the RE materials themselves, and the messages about religious diversity and community cohesion that were delivered through classroom use of these materials. They considered what resources teachers chose and why they chose them (e.g. cost); they investigated how teachers used materials in practice, for instance as authoritative fact or as a point of view for investigation. It investigated how pupils received the resources, and made sense of them both in their lessons and in their lives outside school.

(a) Selection of schools

The following criteria determined the selection of schools in order to ensure diversity: age of pupils: all Key Stages of schooling, both primary and secondary, from Year 1 to Year 13; school type (maintained schools, including schools with a religious character; independent schools, including independent schools with a religious character); regional balance (South, South West, Midlands, East Anglia, North West, North East, London); socio-economic balance; ethnicity and migration background; religious profile; schools with areas of study that encompass a religious community with a significant local presence.

(b) Agreed instruments

The case study group agreed in advance protocols, proforma for observations and interview schedules in order to maximise consistency across the case studies. They also agreed common coding guidelines with reference to the categories employed by the quantitative survey to ensure greater reliability. However researchers also used a 'grounded' approach and were open to emerging themes. The semi-structured interviews and variety of qualitative research methods enabled a 'thick description' of the use of RE materials, their impact and the influencing factors in each school.

(c) Research methods

A variety of methods were used to investigate the complex relationships between policy and practice, teachers' intentions and pupils' learning.

Specific instances of curriculum delivery were analysed for a detailed understanding of how these relationships play out in day-to-day classroom practice. These specific instances were contextualised through the collection of data relating to the messages about religion received in the school environment and the experiences and viewpoints of the pupils. Particular attention was given to the use of and responses to materials utilised in religious education teaching and learning.[9]

(i) Document analysis

Documents included the school ethos/vision/mission statement; school policies relating to religious diversity, community cohesion, links with local community, curriculum visits and visitors to the school; the school's overall results in public examinations and, at secondary level, RE GCSE and A level results, for the previous four years; the RE syllabus used by the school (e.g. Local Agreed Syllabus, Diocesan Syllabus); the RE policy and schemes of work, including GCSE and A level specification details at secondary level; RE lesson plans; an audit of RE materials (including websites where appropriate); an audit of class library books relating to RE in primary schools and resources available for use by pupils in RE departments in secondary schools; and a review of the school library catalogue under 'religion'.

The analysis of documentation enabled researchers to find out about: the materials used by teachers and pupils to advance their knowledge of religions and religious diversity; school guidelines and plans on the selection and use of RE materials; and the school's ethos in relation to religion and to religious diversity as contextualisation for a study of the use of RE materials.

(ii) Lesson observations

RE lessons were observed at each Key Stage, from year 1 to year 13. A few other relevant lessons were also observed at the invitation of schools, for example, Islamic and Jewish Studies as well as RE in schools that had both, a PSHE lesson as an example of religion through the curriculum, an Ivrit lesson, and some examples of collective worship. Lesson observations enabled researchers to: see how RE materials were used within lessons; compare actual use of materials with plans and guidelines for their use; see how teachers interpret the materials for the pupils throughout their education; and see how pupils respond to and interpret the materials within the lesson throughout their education.

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[9] An initial idea to incorporate visual ethnography as part of the methodology was rejected after discussion, on the grounds of confidentiality.

(iii) Semi-structured interviews

These were conducted with:

- the head teacher or a member of school senior management team designated by head teacher (in primary schools and secondary schools where appropriate) about school ethos in relation to religion and community cohesion. In two schools, interviews were also conducted with school chaplains.

- the RE co-ordinator or head of department about the selection and use of RE materials

- teachers after lesson observations

- groups of 4-5 pupils after lesson observation, selected, in consultation with the teacher, for a range of factors, including gender, attainment, socio-economic, religious and ethnic background.

Semi-structured interviews enabled researchers to: acquire an understanding of the school's ethos in relation to religion, religious diversity and community cohesion as contextualisation for a study of the use of RE materials; understand the criteria by which RE materials were selected; gain knowledge of the parameters within which RE is resourced, for example issues of departmental budgets; ascertain the learning that takes place and the messages that pupils receive about religion, religious diversity and community cohesion through use of RE materials in observed lessons; compare the purposes of the teacher in the use of these materials with the learning; gauge the confidence of the teachers in the use of these materials; and compare the teachers' and the pupils' interpretations of the materials during the observed lessons.

(iv) Focus groups

Interviews were conducted with 4-5 Year 5 and Year 11 pupils around a few RE resources. Pupils were selected, in consultation with the teacher for a range of factors, including gender, attainment, socio-economic, religious and ethnic background

Focus group interviews enabled researchers to: ascertain the messages that pupils received from RE materials commonly used in schools about religion and religions; ascertain the messages pupils received from RE materials commonly used in schools about the value of community cohesion; and, where appropriate, ascertain views of pupils about the representation of their own faith tradition in the RE materials'

(v) Data analysis

(i) Process

The qualitative research group co-ordinator oversaw an agreed schedule of tasks and procedures in relation to the conduct and preliminary analysis of research findings. All the qualitative group researchers made preliminary analyses of the data from each school where they had personally undertaken fieldwork. Audio-taped interviews were summarised and key extracts transcribed. The researchers each produced a report summarising the findings for each school.

(ii) Monitoring data

All the school-level analyses and a selection of the data (e.g. a taped interview, selection of lesson plans, photographs) were peer-checked in order to ensure that there was inter-rater reliability across the schools. A copy of each report was sent back to the school to give the RE co-ordinators and heads of department opportunities for comment. They were given opportunities to discuss the findings further with the researcher should they so wish.

(iii) Comparative analysis

The field notes, interview précis, analyses and reports from all the case studies were brought together by the lead researchers for comparative analysis, the identification of patterns and contrasts across the data, and of factors that could be related to the findings of the quantitative survey and fed into the detailed analysis of RE texts being carried out by the review group.

2.4   The Survey

2.4.1 Introduction

The survey strand was shaped by three main influences: the invitation to tender issued by the DCSF; the response to the invitation to tender submitted by the research team; and the subsequent modifications introduced by the DCSF.

2.4.2 Invitation to tender

The invitation to tender specified that the survey strand should be: conducted with RE teachers, preferably subject leaders; include primary and secondary schools in England and cover maintained schools as well as independent schools.

The information gathered by the survey should focus on: which materials schools are using in practice; how they are used in their teaching of different faiths; what factors determine which materials are used and purchased; and which materials were perceived to be more useful than others.

In inviting teachers to assess the usefulness of materials, the purpose of such materials was identified as 'providing a good understanding of different faiths and the underlying values and how they relate to one another'. The invitation to tender recognised that 'ensuring a high response rate from all school types may be challenging.'

2.4.3 Listening to the invitation to tender

Placing the survey strand within the wider context of the invitation to tender resulted in the following detailed discussion concerning the aims of the survey, the content of the survey, the outcomes of the survey, the sampling strategy, and the anticipated response rate.

(a) Aims of the survey

The aims were:

- to examine the materials used in schools for teaching and learning about and from religions, to support community cohesion and promote religious understanding among pupils.

- to do this by means of a self-completion questionnaire addressed to subject leaders in religious education from a representative sample of primary and secondary schools in England, covering maintained schools and independent schools (including faith based schools).

(b) Content of the survey

The survey addressed to subject leaders would be concerned with identifying three broad categories of materials: those which are used by teachers in the preparation of lessons, including those for personal instruction; those used by teachers and by students during lessons and those used by students during their own independent learning.

Since the intention of the project was to examine the materials available to schools, the emphasis would be on materials widely available to support religious education, including: books; journals; magazines; videos / DVDs; web-based resources; audio resources. Given the way in which RE is locally determined by the Agreed Syllabus within each local authority, attention also would need to be given both to the local syllabus and to the locally generated resources designed to support the local syllabus within those schools to which this provision applies.

The survey among subject leaders would distinguish between: the six world religions identified in the DCSF tender (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism); the four Key Stages plus post 16; and the types of schools.

(c) Outcomes of the survey

The survey would be concerned to identify: which resources are used; factors determining which resources are used; how resources are evaluated; how resources promote religious understanding; how resources relate to community cohesion, citizenship, coping with difference and respecting other people's beliefs and values; what makes effective religious education resources; what improvements can be made to materials; and what are the key factors for schools to consider when determining which materials should be used to teach world religions.

(d) Sampling strategy

The research specification required coverage from all maintained and independent schools in England with sufficient representation to enable at least broad generalisations about schools of each type and religious character. To meet this requirement the survey group proposed a sampling strategy stratified by schools type. The group's analysis of types of school proposed the following categories within both primary and secondary sectors.

State-maintained: Community; Roman Catholic (Voluntary Aided); Church of England (Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled); Each other faith group (Voluntary Aided); Foundation; Academies.

Traditional independent: no religious affiliation; Roman Catholic**;** Church of England**;** each other faith group (including non-denominational Christian).

New independent faith schools: Christian; Muslim**;** each other faith group.

(e) Anticipated response rate

The survey group took the view that to ensure secure generalisations about each category about 100 responses were required from each type, recognising that for many of the minority faith groups (including the new independent Christian secondary schools) the total number of schools is below this level. The group's strategy was to draw up a complete list of schools within each category and to select a random sample of schools within each category in order to ensure a representative spread across different locations.

Anticipating a response rate of 40% the group decided to sample 250 schools within each category (whenever the size of the category permitted) resulting in a total of 2,723 schools in the sample.

2.4.4 Issues in designing the survey

The tender response reflected previous research experience by the research group and drew in particular on an earlier study (Francis, Astley, Wilcox and Burton, 1999). This study demonstrated the willingness of teachers concerned with religious education to provide quantitative data regarding their understanding of RE and their approach to the subject. The invitation to tender was, however, breaking entirely new ground in the intention to use this research methodology to generate information about the precise curriculum resources used in schools.

Recognising the problematic nature of motivating teachers to provide detailed information about resources, the tender response discussed the time scale that would allow the ground to be adequately prepared for the survey. One of the major obstacles identified by the research group to achieving a satisfactory response rate concerned the fact that no public listing was available regarding the names of the individuals designated by schools as subject leaders in religious education. For this reason the research group proposed a long lead-time between July and December 2008 to establish the sampling frame, to make 'preliminary contact with all identified schools in order to identify and create relationship with RE subject leaders'.

There were some changes to the plans outlined in the tender response brought about by conversation with the DCSF. It was agreed that the sampling strategy should be thoroughly debated and initial contacts with schools postponed until full consultation and agreement could be reached on the sampling strategy. As a consequence the survey could not meet the originally proposed schedule and so it was agreed that the project should proceed without taking time to identify the named subject leaders with the schools in order to meet the original timescale of the project.

2.4.5 Data collection and analysis

(a) The questionnaire

There was a pilot study (using hard copies of questionnaires) and a main study (using hard copies of questionnaires and an option to use online questionnaires).

Two forms of the questionnaire were printed, one for distribution among primary schools and one for distribution among secondary schools. Both forms of the questionnaire are presented in Appendices A.5.1 and A.5.2.

(b) Response rate

A total of 2723 questionnaires were dispatched and during the subsequent weeks phone calls were made to all of the secondary schools and to many of the primary schools. All primary schools also received a reminder letter.

The response rate was, nonetheless, very disappointing. Although all the questionnaires had been posted to schools before the end of March 2009, by 20 May 2009, when DCSF reviewed progress, of the total 2,723 questionnaires mailed, 97 had been returned. At this point the DCSF agreed that a shorter questionnaire should be mailed to all schools that had so far not replied. By this stage many of the subject leaders had been identified by name through the telephone calls. A total of 627 responses were received before the end of the school term, representing a 23% response rate.

(c) Analyses

The data were analysed using appropriate techniques available within SPSS. Basic reporting took account of category of school (primary, secondary, faith group, and so on).
The analyses provided an account of which types of resources are used, including: factors determining which resources are used; how resources are evaluated; how resources promote religious understanding; how resources relate to community cohesion, citizenship, coping with difference and respecting peoples' beliefs and values, controversial issues; what makes effective religious education resources; how approaches differ across different categories of schools.

2.5   Interrelationship Between The Three Strands

Each strand co-ordinator was in regular contact with the Project Leader, and made periodic reports on activities, issues and emerging findings to other members of the project team, feeding their comments back into their own research group. Issues were discussed in project meetings, and by email communication with the project manager at the DCSF, and appropriate action was taken, often in consultation with members of the Steering Group.

Findings from each strand were shared across the project team and these informed the writing of the final report and the recommendations.

2.6   Appendices

The appendices to this report are published as a separate document (Jackson et al. 2010). The appendices are presented in five sections:

Section 1 presents appendices to the introduction. These include details of the project team researchers and reviewers, and the criteria that were developed for evaluating materials.

Section 2 lists appendices to the chapter on methodology. These include a selection of notes and templates produced for reviewers of books and websites.

Section 3 includes appendices to the Review, and lists all the books and websites reviewed.

Section 4 gives anonymised details of the 20 case study schools.

Section 5 includes the questionnaires sent to teachers in primary and secondary schools.

3.   The Review

3.1. RE Professional Perspectives: Books

This section of the report provides a summary of the reviews of books undertaken by members of the review panel professionally engaged in RE; it draws also on their expertise in teaching particular age ranges. Each reviewer had responsibility for the Key Stage(s) corresponding to their expertise.

The section is organised by Key Stage: primary (KS1/ 2), lower secondary (KS3) and upper secondary (KS4 and post 16); this organisation recognises the distinctive nature of books for the different stages of education and also the varying focus and interests of publishers and teachers. At primary (KS1/2) 43 books were reviewed, at lower secondary (KS3) 37 books were reviewed and at upper secondary (KS4 and post 16) 21 books (18 for Key Stage 4, 3 for post-16 students) were reviewed.

In consultation with the DCSF it was decided that individual materials would not be identified in the report in order to avoid the appearance of kite marking resources – which was not the intention of this research. Rather, the report would concentrate on identifying key issues that would be of particular assistance to stakeholders, such as publishers, authors and teachers.

3.1.1 Primary (KS1 & KS2: 5-11)

The books reviewed for primary stages fell mainly into the category of 'information' books; in publishers catalogues they were variously classified as 'Multifaith' (Evans), 'Religion' (Wayland), and 'Religious Education' (Franklin Watts; Heinemann). These books are pupil texts of the kind which may be found in school libraries or resource collections; they may also provide a basic source of information for teachers. Prompted by findings of the case studies and survey, phase 2 reviewing focused on two popular story collections and sampled two thematic books, each drawing on six religions, and a cross phase book (KS2/KS3) published by a faith organisation. The reporting follows the 5 research questions (see 2.2.4b) which underpinned the reviewing.

(a) Requirements and initiatives in RE

None of the 5 series of information books carried any reference e.g. on a cover or in a preface to agreed syllabuses or recent initiatives in RE, although sometimes publishers' catalogues make such links. By contrast, one book reviewed in phase 2 closely mirrored the structure and interests of the National Framework; but this was an exception. The task of relating books to such requirements appears to lie principally with teachers. The importance of teachers' understanding of RE and consequent perceptions about the resources they choose and their potential use emerges as a fundamental issue of this report on primary school RE resources. Consistent with the notion of 'information', books in this category tended to contribute mainly to 'learning about' religions, sometimes with a very specific focus, as in one series where the history of each religion was dominant.

Learning about and learning from religion[10]

In their focus on 'learning about' religion information books exemplified publishers' practice of adopting a largely common framework across a series within which each religion is then accommodated. For example, the reviewer noted of each book in a series covering six religions:

> *In the main the focus is 'learning about religion'; the resource is purely for information. In 52 pages the author gives facts about [named religion] through four main sections entitled worship, history, festivals and people and includes one map and a timeline ...*

However, in another each religion was approached through its '*principal teachings, scriptures, leaders, events, festivals, places of worship, community life, belief and practice across the world'.*

A series which achieved a balance between 'learning about' and 'learning from' did so through an interactive approach focusing on the life of a child and through this invited pupils' personal engagement: '*key…beliefs and practices are explored through simple text and colourful photographs. The question/answer format enables pupils to begin to learn from Islam as well as learn from Tayeba and her family about their Islamic values and commitments'. Where the content of other books touched on 'learning from' it was similarly through the introduction of a personal element; '… 'learning from' is touched on through six text panels in which named Buddhists across the UK comment about their own beliefs';* the reviewer drew attention to the importance for pupil engagement of those whose 'voices' are used being 'named'. A book using conversation among young people of different faiths engaged with everyday concerns successfully promoted 'learning from', conveyed information, and offered the possibility of developing activities from the 'script'. One of the few books to suggest activities did so under the headings of 'learning about' and 'learning from'. The reviewer also commented that where a text offers little inviting a reader *'to reflect, respond, or discuss'* there is often something included - a hymn, for example - which may lead a teacher or pupil *'to question or ponder'.*

(b) Learning across the curriculum: RE's contribution

Like other school subjects, RE contributes to aspects of the curriculum which cut across subject boundaries and foster the rounded development of the pupil. The reviewer considered the contribution the books made/might make in five areas: pupils' personal and moral development; community cohesion; social and cultural awareness; global understanding; spiritual development. It is clear from the reviews that where books on religions serve these interests, this tends to be implicitly. The corollary of this is that recognition of the books' potential contribution rests with the teacher, as does the insight and skill to use them for these ends; for example:

> *Some of these five strands are loosely (maybe unconsciously) woven through the book e.g. The Noble Eightfold Path - personal and moral development; Festivals - social and cultural; the history of Buddhism - global understanding; Worship - spiritual development. It would be up to the teacher to identify and focus upon the strands to enable pupil development in these areas.*

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[10] This terminology describing the two commonly used Attainment Targets (AT1 & AT2) for RE has achieved wide circulation since it was employed by the RE Model Syllabuses (SCAA, 1994a, b) and affirmed in the non statutory National Framework for RE (QCA, 2004).

Elsewhere the reviewer spoke of such insights depending *'upon the teacher's ability to make the link'* - a pertinent observation, since many of the books' concern with 'learning about' religion, sets their tone.

(c) Approaches to learning

The series on religion reviewed in phase 1 were primarily concerned with conveying information and with one exception were considered to contribute to pupils' understanding of concepts. These approaches, as Table 1 indicates, were balanced by the books' promotion of empathy and appreciation for the religions covered. Yet, despite a focus on information *about* the religions, only two of the series adopted an approach which posed questions about religion(s), sought to develop interpretive skills or promote individual learning. None adopted approaches which considered the ultimate questions raised by human experience and religious traditions, and only two were found to raise questions of value and meaning. In noting these matters, it is important to recall that whilst information books of the kind reviewed comprise the bedrock of those available for teaching about world religions in the primary school, they are not necessarily designed for religious *education* per se; in this respect they are unlike those published for subsequent Key Stages. Other books reviewed were seen to offer more scope for approaches which offered exploration of 'questions of meaning and value' or 'ultimate questions'. Stories in particular offered opportunities for reflecting on the former.

Table 1 - Approaches to learning in Key Stage 1/2 books

Approaches to learning:	**KS1/2**
Conveying information	100 %
Asking questions	26%
Asking ultimate questions	6%
Raising questions of value and meaning	45%
Developing an understanding of concepts	72%
Developing skills to interpret religion(s)	29%
Promoting empathy and appreciation of the focus religion(s)	81%
Setting tasks	6%
Promoting independent learning	61%

43 books reviewed

(d) Accessibility

Consideration of the accessibility of the information books to primary school children raised the question for the reviewer of who might appropriately use them. Two series were identified as primarily a teacher resource; of one it was noted that 'some upper KS2 and lower KS3 pupils could refer to it if carrying out independent research' and the other was appropriate for upper KS3 and KS4 pupils. Only two of the series were confidently placed within the primary

age phase.[11] From the reviews of these books it quickly becomes clear why some may be judged difficult for many children in the primary years; most of the issues focus on the nature of the text.

(i) Textual issues

Comments from reviewers about text pointed to issues which made access difficult for at least some children.

- ***Fonts*** may be purposefully used to focus different elements and endorse particular kinds of material within a book. However, choice of font may both confuse and deter the reader. In the case of some books for KS2 pupils modelled on an earlier KS3 series, the reviewer observed *'Able pupils might be put off because at first glance the large font could imply that the book is for younger or less able children...'*. But note that, *'Less text and larger font does not mean that the series is automatically accessible to younger children'*. And whilst this series had less text than its predecessor, its *quantity* remained potentially difficult for *'children who find reading a challenge'*.

- ***Quantity and complexity of text:*** the reviewer drew attention in one series to the organisation of the text, its handling of information and the cross referencing skills required by the reader:

  I found the format somewhat confusing and a pupil would need to understand cross-referencing in order to glean some information. E.g. the question 'What do Christians believe about Jesus?' is raised in the first section (Introducing Christianity, page 8). However there is no mention here of the Christian belief that Jesus was the Son of God. It is not until the 'Festivals' section (Christmas) on page 40 that the belief is raised and even then is somewhat ambiguous. Similarly 'The birth of Jesus' (Section 'Beliefs', page 26) does not refer to God at all.

Cross-referencing of this kind also demanded a *'reading of the whole text'* - this was not a series to be *'dipped-into'* - and even then, in the reviewer's opinion, other resources needed to be read alongside the series.

- ***Glossaries:*** many of the books reviewed included glossaries and one series was commended for making this accessible for primary school children. Others were less useful, e.g. where key words listed in the glossary were not highlighted in the main text of the books. The pronunciation of many terms appearing in glossaries is not immediately apparent and it was felt that guidance on this would be helpful for teachers. [12]

(ii) Visuals

Where text may not prove accessible, pictures, illustrations, diagrams and maps may provide a focus for inquiry; this was found to be the case in information books. For example, one series offered *'stunning photographs….from communities around the world'* and had the capacity to heighten pupil's awareness of each religion's global presence. Story books were commended for their sensitive illustrations, often effectively conveying the mood of a story or the feelings of its characters. Illustrators were alert also to the sensitivities of particular religions, as well as to those of the young child. Photographs too were in the main

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[11] Some of the series reviewed were listed by publishers in their catalogues for secondary schools as well as in those for primary schools.
[12] A number of websites now offer such help for teachers. See for example:
http://www.shapworkingparty.org.uk/glossary.html

considered acceptable to the respective faiths. Where problems arose they related to gender balance - a book on Christianity, for example which had no pictures of a woman priest; or to the choice of picture - a baptism in a 'church' - thought to be Lutheran by the reviewer - but not easily identifiable and potentially mistaken as 'one out of the seventeenth century'. Poor captions and insufficient information may also lessen the usefulness of pictures:

> *The photographs would be useful as starting points for discussion. However, the captions are somewhat pedestrian and in some examples prior knowledge would be needed for understanding. E.g. 'A takht' could be misinterpreted as being the man in the photograph rather than the throne for the Guru Granth Sahib.*

This kind of observation was more frequently made of visuals in books for other age groups - arguably a lost opportunity in developing young people's understanding of religions.

(iii) Support materials

Books may offer 'inbuilt' support and /or direct readers - pupils, teachers and sometimes parents - to other resources: 'The notes for parents and teachers are excellent and the glossary and index accessible to most KS1 and KS2 children - some with support.' Series varied in the kind of information which gave support or extended their learning potential. A simple statement may have value, *'On the contents page is a text box relating to the world's six main religions explaining how sacred texts play an important part and why they are treated with such care. Such a simple paragraph but vital teaching.'* By contrast some books provided a collection of additional information

> *… Great Lives' - approx 150 words each about ten Buddhist leaders from Siddhartha Gautama to Tenzin Gyatso; arbitrary Facts and Figures, including festivals, holy days and population; Timeline, Glossary, 'Further information' - books and websites (clearly for the older pupil); Index.*

Others focused more on their possible use as well as background knowledge:

> *At the end of the book there are seven very helpful pages: 'What next?' subtitled 'possibilities and projects' followed by four pages of 'information about the religions', including a glossary and index. Finally there are two full pages - slightly overwhelming in its layout - called 'Using this book'.*

Story collections were found to have helpful notes for teachers which contextualised the stories within a tradition, relating them, for example, to their sources, to particular historical events, or to festivals and celebrations marked by the communities for whom the stories mattered.

Increasingly readers are directed to websites. For example, one series explained how to find out more about religions on the web; another directed readers to relevant websites for each religion via a gateway site and included in each book a page giving 'clear and helpful guidelines regarding the web links and web safety'. Links were dispersed throughout each book, functioning as 'activities'. The reviewer found the sites were targeted at adults and that, *'whilst there was nothing inappropriate for KS2 and KS3 pupils, much of it would be challenging and beyond what most pupils would be looking for'* (the reference here is to Buddhist links) and thus necessitating teacher selection. The reviewer found a useful site of Buddhist stories and, with reference to Judaism, a link to *'a live web cam video at the Western Wall which is excellent'*. At the same time recommendation of websites inevitably meant some 'leads' which proved inaccessible or led only to a general search facility.

(e) Community cohesion

Attention has already been drawn to the importance of teachers' recognising books' potential contribution to cross curricular concerns; only one of the books reviewed was identified by a publisher as relevant to community cohesion. The reviewer substantiated this claim recognising that its conversational style *'couldn't fail to engage the pupils'* many of whom would be able to relate what they read *'to their own experiences and open up their own 'real' conversations about their beliefs and practices'*.

The specific questions the review templates asked about community cohesion sought to sharpen the focus on this curriculum concern. When used in relation to the information series, the reviewer found that where significant matters were raised it was usually briefly - a 'mention' rather than a 'tackling' of particular issues. It should be noted however that most of the books reviewed pre-date the community cohesion legislation and non-statutory guidance; consequently any contribution they are seen to make to this is probably incidental rather than planned. Three of the series of information books on specific religions had something to say on issues which may bear on community cohesion.

(i) Controversial matters

The weight of the reviewer's comments focused on controversial issues *within* religions and those *among/between* religions which are touched on in the books. The controversial issues which emerged in relation to particular religions covered by the 3 series referred to above are shown in Tables 2 and 3

Table 2 - Controversial issues within each religion

Series:	Series '1'	Series '2'	Series '3'
Buddhism		Chapter on 'current issues and world role' raises some issues	Historical conflict and challenges of moving into the 21st century
Christianity	Divorce - differing beliefs / attitudes.	Abortion; celibacy; divorce; liberalism; women priests.	Fundamentalists; women priests and the ecumenical movement.
Hinduism	The caste system	Caste system; role of women; tension between ancient / modern	Historical conflict between Hindus; caste system; role of women.
Islam	Divorce; Sunni / Shi'a Muslims; Jihad	Al-Qaeda; fundamentalism; marriage & divorce.	Historical conflict within Islam; origins of Jihad; Islamic radicals (in brief)
Judaism	Arab-Israeli conflict	Divorce and interpreting laws of Torah	Historical division, post war Judaism
Sikhism	Arranged marriages		Historical conflicts, Jats and Non-Jats (briefly)

Table 3 - Controversial issues between/among religions

Series:	Series '1'	Series '2'	Series '3'
Buddhism			Briefly historical conflict
Christianity			
Hinduism			Hinduism and Indian politics; Hinduism in the modern world
Islam	Briefly…when….discussing the history of Islam and the importance of Jerusalem to Muslims, Jews & Christians	Conflict / terrorism are referred to and briefly commented upon	Arab-Israeli conflict, extremism in India, terrorism are tackled in brief.
Judaism	Persecution; the Arab-Israeli conflict	Anti-Semitism and racism, the holocaust & the Arab-Israeli conflict are touched on briefly	Historical conflict and persecution; Arab-Israeli conflict.
Sikhism			Historical conflict esp. between Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims; anti-Sikh riots.

Setting out the data in this way usefully illustrates a number of points:

- The series' weighting of religions in relation to controversial issues;

- A bias, broadly speaking, towards 'political concerns' in Table 3, and in both 2 & 3 a tendency to focus mainly on Judaism and Islam.

- The dominance of the Arab-Israeli situation (Tables 2 & 3)

- An apparent 'detachment' of Christianity from controversy, except for some of its own 'domestic' concerns (as in Table 2)

- In the area of personal and social ethics, concern mainly with the areas of marriage, divorce - and perhaps the role of women. (Table 2)

There are issues about the representation of religions here too, and also about the value of inevitably brief references to the kinds of issue identified. The question of whether references of this kind in school books have an impact on 'community cohesion' for good or ill would demand further research.

(ii) Relationship between religions

Whilst the reviewer found nothing in the information books which would cause offence, there was little which affirmed relationships among people of different faiths. Pointers to a 'shared humanity' were discerned by the reviewer in a few instances - for example, *'a clear thread indicating the importance of friendship and co-operation'* running through a book on Buddhism, or another's recognition *'that the Sikh community welcomes visitors of any faith or none'.*

Story collections appeared to provide a surer way of discovering shared values, as well as identifying with the experience of others and gaining insight into what is important to particular faiths. Stories offered themes of forgiveness, good triumphing over evil, being kind and thankful, of God being present in everyone and of *'all being equal in God's eyes'*; there were *'stories in which communities were challenged and in which parts of a community challenge authority'.* Contextualised stories pointed to communities coming together to celebrate, and illustrated how shared memories shape a community's life; sometimes the ambivalence of belief and experience came to the surface. Finally stories overall conveyed positive images of the religions.

(iii) Representation of young people

Books - and even stories - are no substitute for personal encounter. However, story apart, those which emerged strongly from this review of books for the primary years sought to engage young people with their contemporaries 'on the page'. The reviewer's comment on a book from a series for younger children may point to an ethos for future resources seeking to promote community cohesion:

> *One of the best things about this book…is that it is about a real child who wants to talk about his faith and life - just like our 'real' pupils do.*

and

> *…the attraction is 'real people' following a 'real faith' which enables a wide range of pupils to explore, question and enjoy.*

3.1.2 Lower secondary (KS3: 11-14)

Books used for RE in the lower secondary school tend to be textbooks, books specifically designed to meet the curriculum concerns of RE. The project audit (Hayward and Hopkins, 2010) demonstrates that, in the main, textbooks at KS3 fall into series which offer discrete coverage of each of six religions or into series which are thematic in their approach, drawing in varying degrees on religions, or sometimes focusing primarily on Christianity. Four series falling into the former category were reviewed; each series was well established and had passed through more than one edition. There had thus been an opportunity to keep abreast with developments in RE and to serve its more recent interests and concerns. Reviews of several series drawing on more than one religion, and offering a potential programme for the three years of KS3, were also undertaken. Additionally, two freestanding books aimed at 9-13 year olds were reviewed.

Each of the series identified for review is supported by the publisher through the provision of a range of additional resources for teacher and / or pupil - for example, teacher handbooks; copymasters; CD-rom; online resources. The reviews which are reported here are based *solely on student textbooks.* As in section 3.1.1, reporting follows the 5 research questions (see 2.2.4b) which underpinned the reviewing.

The Case Studies

(a) Requirements and initiatives in RE

Nine key series of text books for KS3 were reviewed in total; of these five made reference to one or more of the following: agreed syllabuses, QCA schemes of work (first series) and the related 8 level scale of assessment, the National Framework, the Government's KS3 strategy and the revised KS3 curriculum. The National Framework had clearly influenced three of the series reviewed; one - here represented by a book on Christianity - appeared to be shaped by it:

The headings of each section match the National Framework. Assessment using levels is embedded into the text. There is a conceptual framework on which the book is built, with chapters exploring beliefs and issues from a Christian perspective. The ethos of the framework is at the heart of this text.

The conceptual basis of this book, as well as its integrated assessment and use of levels do not appear to have been central to other books reviewed in phase 1, although the adoption of conceptual and thematic approaches in many of the phase 2 books were found to support the National Framework. One way in which they did this was in mirroring it. For example, a book for year 8 students offered units on 'questions of truth, science and religion, authority and, responsibility and morality' clearly reflecting the areas of study of the National Framework; attention was also paid to secular as well as religious viewpoints - another feature of the Framework. A series based on the earlier QCA schemes of work, offered units for year 9 on 'God, life after death, science and religion, good and evil, medical ethics and interfaith dialogue' which the reviewer indicated would 'sit well' with agreed syllabuses based on the National Framework - but this was not always the case when older curriculum models had shaped books. The structuring of material - in one series each unit began with 'What' and 'How' sections expressing intention - was another way in which the Framework shaped a series, in this case 'What' and 'How' corresponding closely to the words in which the Framework speaks of 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion.

(i) Learning about and learning from religion

Most of the books reviewed achieved a sound balance between 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion. These two interrelated aspects of RE were handled in different ways. Probably the most sophisticated approach was developed in a series on religions, an approach in which learning about and learning from were interwoven into an integrated learning process (set out here in relation to Buddhism):

The approach is almost cyclical starting with 'learning from' (pupils' own ideas etc, general beliefs about human nature etc), moving on to learning about Buddhist views, then applying this to their own lives through structured activities. The activities do not move from AT1 [Learning about] to AT2 [Learning from], rather they are 'mixed up' so there is continual application of what the students have learnt through the text.

By contrast, in other series, 'learning about' and 'learning from' are used to distinguish different kinds of activities for students to do, or questions may be listed under these two headings; another approach is to pose a dilemma or question which is then approached through 'learning about (a) religion' and then a conclusion drawn often through an extended piece of work linking more to 'learning from'. For example, students may be asked how a mosque should call its members to prayer; they next learn about the importance of prayer and the mosque in Islam; they then look at a situation in an imaginary town, and apply and evaluate their knowledge in answering the question. Other series too adopted this kind of approach allowing *for 'the application of learning to real life situations and experiences'.* A book which set questions under 'learning about' and 'learning from' tended to *'move easily between the two, drawing on religious teachings and experience from one faith and*

comparing to other faiths / secular world views and enabling young people to reflect on and analyse this from their own point of view'. Other ways of ensuring attention to ' learning about' and 'learning from' included building them into the structure of a book; for example stating objectives related to these at the beginning of a unit , or ensuring assessment tasks allowed for progress in both areas. Providing a key question in relation to a chapter was considered helpful for the teacher by the reviewer, as well allowing students 'to reflect on relevant issues'. For example a chapter on prayer had the subtitle 'How do you get in touch' and one on prejudice and discrimination, asked 'Everyone's equal - or are they?' A series which the reviewer found less successful in achieving a balance between learning about and learning from was found to focus mainly on the former, and the text was concerned with giving information; whilst activities took some account of 'learning from' they focused mainly on students' views and opinions. Achieving a balance between and integration of the two attainment targets was however effectively demonstrated in many of the books reviewed.

(ii) Balancing the coverage of religions

Balance is also important in the weighting given to the principal religions in RE. Past deliberations frequently focused on the particular weighting to be given to Christianity - a legacy of Clause 8.3 of the Education Reform Act (UK Parliament, 1988). A series of textbooks may similarly pose questions about balance in the representation and treatment of the religions they cover. The series reviewed in phase 1 each offered books on the six religions, usually adopting a common format across a series. In one instance, however, the reviewer drew attention to the book on Christianity *'which had about 50 pages more than each of the other religions'* and took an approach different to that taken to other religions in the series:

> *In the other texts there are no references to other religions or secular worldviews at all. In this one there are a number of references and illustrations relating to other faiths. Students are asked to consider the whole importance of religion, not just relating this to the Christian faith.*

The same textbook also gave a whole chapter to Chief Seattle and Greenpeace - an pproach not typical of the others. The reviewer felt that *'in this series it could seem that Christianity - but not other faiths - is in communication with and interested in other views'*, whereas the other religions in the series could be seen in 'isolation'.

(b) Learning across the curriculum: RE's contribution

The books reviewed were all developed or edited against an educational backcloth interested in the contribution that RE might make to students' own lives and to their lives beyond school in the wider society. This fundamental concern lies behind the areas addressed in the template (at 2.3).[13] 27 of the 41 books reviewed contributed to 4 or 5 of the areas, whilst 38 had something to contribute to 2 or more areas.

(i) Personal and moral development

The reviewer found that all except three of the books reviewed clearly contributed to students' personal and moral development. There are a number of ways in which they did this. Increasingly, ethical and moral issues feature in RE at KS3 and many emerged from the series reviewed here: e.g. environment, wealth, poverty, justice, racism, prejudice and discrimination, war and peace, conflict, medical ethics, animal rights, human rights and capital punishment. A contribution is made to students' own development where they are

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[13] The areas are students' personal and moral development; community cohesion; social and cultural understanding; global understanding; students' spiritual development.

challenged to think about their own attitudes to these issues, to discuss them, to work out practical approaches to them and to apply insights from religions to them. Taking a more philosophical line, some books encouraged reflection on the nature of right and wrong, or on 'What does it mean to be good?' One book encouraged an *'in depth approach'* to forgiveness*, 'looking at the effects of not forgiving, as well as examples of people who have forgiven murderers'*. Others set ideals before students, exploring a life of service, for example, focused on the process of ethical decision making, or considered rules and authority and the moral framework for living that religions can offer. 'Truth', suffering and good and evil were explored and some books encouraged students to think about what it is to be human. Opportunities for pupils to reflect - on their own lives, to apply knowledge, to make a personal response to issues, to form their own views and values, and to use and apply religious ideas in their work - were all identified as positive ways in which texts contributed to students' personal and moral development:

> *Three issues are looked at from a Buddhist perspective - the environment, wealth and poverty, and racism. Pupils are challenged to think about their own attitudes and what they might do to stop racism and poverty.*

> *...there are ample opportunities for students to reflect on their own morality and personal beliefs. Many of the A2 activities pose challenging questions and activities, also a chapter on Rahit Maryada which enables the students to reflect on Sikh conduct and discipline from their own perspective*

From these observations it is clear that the way in which content (here 'issues') is related to learning processes in textbooks is important if the books are to contribute to students' personal and moral development.

(ii) Social and cultural understanding

The contribution the reviewer saw the books making to this dimension of the curriculum appears to lie more in the area of content than in their approaches to learning. Features from different books which were identified as contributing to social and cultural understanding included:

- Opportunities to understand traditions, customs and rituals practised by faiths

- Encounter with the myths, stories and symbols which help students to understand the religious and cultural traditions in the world

- Aspects of the lifestyle of different religions, and the influence of faith on practical living

- Leaders and figures in authority and their impact on the life of believers; rules and teachings influencing the daily life of believers

- Discovering reasons why religions may take particular stances e.g. on medical issues

- The impact of religion and the questions it raises in relation to the modern world in terms of science.

- The impact of faiths on culture

- The involvement of faiths in the (UK) community

- The chance (in a historical chapter) to discover why Britain is called 'a Christian country'

- Representation of diversity within faiths - religious and cultural; opportunities to see difference within and between communities

- Opportunities to discover 'what it means to be a faith member today'

- Offering positive images of women and addressing issues relating to the role of women

- Visuals which focused mainly on young people within a faith

- Using visuals which related to the UK, but also those which represented the global presence of a religion

Series and individual books had these features in varying measure; the following comments illustrate some of the points above exemplifying some books' contributions to social and cultural understanding:

> *There are lots of photos of young people in Islam which helps students to see that even if there are no Muslim young people in their school, there are many young Muslims in the country and the wider world…*

> *The chapter on women gives some very positive images of Muslim women which may dispel assumptions among some students…*

> *The first part of the book shows how people in the UK may have their cultural heritage rooted in a range of different places around the world. The images have been carefully chosen…and show a range of ages and cultures both in the UK and beyond.*

Finally, in a book on Buddhism which had *'a good spread of images of Buddhism from around the world', 'the importance of being in community and not living in isolation'* was also *'a key theme through the book'.*

(iii) Community cohesion

Closely related to the promotion of social and cultural understanding are present concerns for community cohesion. Among the series reviewed in phase 1 only one was found to contribute to this in *each* of its books, and thus in relation to each of the six religions; across all four series the textbooks on Sikhism each had aspects which might contribute to community cohesion, whilst those on Islam appeared to contribute least. In one series, the reviewer noted Islam was 'perhaps not approached in the most helpful way', but rather negatively in the following words: *'Coming to live in a country where Islam is a minority religion has caused them [Muslims] many problems…There are four areas where there has been conflict in the past…'*, although the intention was to help students understand *'issues that Muslims might face in their community'.*

Overall just over half of all the KS3 books reviewed mentioned or explored some topics relevant to community cohesion; it is the case, however, that most of the examples below are drawn from 4 of the series reviewed:

- the 'messages' of a religion's teachings about society

- the use of case studies illustrative of faith communities working together in Britain and elsewhere e.g. an '….*excellent example of 'respect for all' …about a project in Bradford*' (Christianity); '*Jewish - Muslim links in Manchester* '; a student SACRE conference; '*good examples of Jews working with non-Jews and discussion around the Council of Christians and Jews*'; Neve Shalom-Wahat al- Salam (Oasis of Peace)

- people and movements promoting peace or working across social, cultural and religious boundaries: e.g. Vinoba Bhave; the work of Sewa International; the Corrymeela Community; the Children of Abraham; the Peace People

- the contribution faith communities make to society: '….*The role of the 'Sikh Citizen' is considered and there are numerous references to the ways in which Sikhs have got involved in community life.*'

- how groups bring about good in their society

- RE as a way of coming to understand faiths; SACREs[14]

Sensitive issues were also tackled by some texts as in one book on Christianity which also prompted students to reflect on attitudes and action:

> *...There is a section on Islamophobia (this is not covered in the Muslim book). There are some useful questions that students might ask themselves to reflect on their own attitudes. There are also sections on peace and reconciliation, exploring how people might work together towards harmony.*

Another book explored the history of Jerusalem *'sensitively and objectively'* and posed the following question for students *'How can a multi faith school work in Jerusalem?'*
It is probable that very few of the books reviewed had community cohesion specifically on their agenda, although those influenced by the National Framework may be the exception here.

(iv) Global understanding

The previous two areas have drawn attention to textbooks' recognition of the presence of the principal religions in the UK and have also pointed in some instances to their global presence and varied cultural roots. Reviewers were asked to assess the contribution books made to global understanding (reflecting the concerns of the National Framework that at KS3 young people should consider global issues). Where a global dimension was present the reviewer found this delivered in different ways. These included using photographs - portrayals of Jesus from around the world are popular in books on Christianity; maps; diagrams - 'reference to Jews across the world is quite explicit, including a pie chart illustrating this'; and showing religious practice around the world - '*There are examples of Buddhist practice in a variety of countries including Thailand, Sri Lanka, Japan, UK, Nepal and India'*. In one case a religion's global representation was linked to exploration of a key concept for that particular faith:

> *…there are examples of Islam from around the world e.g. UK, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. In addition there is a chapter considering what makes a community. This reinforces the idea that Islam is a global community.*

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[14] In England each Local Authority (LA) must convene a Standing Advisory Committee for RE (SACRE) comprising four committees representative of the LA; the Church of England; other Christian churches and religions; teachers. SACRE's task is to monitor local provision for RE and to convene the Conference legally required to draw up (or adopt) an Agreed Syllabus for RE.

Sometimes attention is given to a particular place or political concern for members of a religion, or to a point of conflict which points to the global dimension of a religion:

> *…good examples of Sikhism particularly in India. Two chapters are devoted to pilgrimage which shows the importance of particularly the Harimandir Sahib. Also the importance for [some] Sikhs of striving for their own homeland.*

Finally a few books gave attention to faith perspectives on *issues* of worldwide concern: '*Islam is seen as a worldwide faith which has important messages for the global community on a range of issues*'; '*Sikh perspectives on three global issues are explored*'. Occasionally the negative impact of religion – in relation to e.g. war, discrimination and poverty - in different parts of the world was explored. From the books reviewed it appears that whilst global awareness is evident in the ways indicated above, there may still be a need for a change of perspective in some books. One observation made by the reviewer highlights how books may fail in sensitivity:

> *The cultural diversity of Christianity is definitely NOT explored at all. There is not a single picture of an Asian or Black Christian in the entire book. The only images of those from ethnic minorities are those relating to AIDS in Africa and very negative indeed.*

Among the series providing discrete presentations of religions, Christianity was represented in terms of its global presence / interests in only two of the four series; Buddhism alone was presented in this way in *each* series. There is perhaps a need for a more even handling of faiths in relation to some of the cross curricular matters, and for further thinking about *how* RE resources may promote learning in relation to them.

(v) Spiritual development

Most of the KS3 books were found to have some contribution to make to students' spiritual development, although not necessarily in equal measure; nor did each religion covered in a series contribute to the same degree. Where books contributed to students' spiritual development this appeared to depend on their attention to students' personal engagement rather than content; a book on Islam offered

> *… a very good chapter on the nature of God called 'Awesome'. This is an excellent way into this topic focusing on spirituality and 'what takes our breath away'. Other 'learning from' tasks allow students to reflect on their own spirituality e.g. in relation to life after death and suffering.*

Tasks relating to 'learning from' religion were often relevant to spiritual development: '*The AT2 questions do foster spiritual development e.g. considering the most beautiful place they have ever visited, what does it mean to feel 'peace' or 'contentment'?*' It is clear from these examples that the *kinds of questions* students are encouraged to think about are important. Books which raise questions of meaning and purpose, address ultimate questions, and encourage students to think about their own beliefs and values had a contribution to make to spiritual development. For example one book asked 'What would you like to be remembered for? And another, asking 'What makes us strong?' encouraged students to identify the inner strengths and qualities of people 'who inspire us'.

Space for *reflection* also emerged as important. A review of a book on Buddhism noted '*…there are many opportunities for students to reflect on what life means to them e.g. what is needed for happiness*'. The encouragement of students' own quest for meaning and purpose was highlighted as a feature of many of the books' contribution to spiritual development; opportunities for reflection on values, on concepts like loyalty and conscience, on 'the sanctity of life', on 'the nature of the soul', on suffering, or on hope highlight something of the scope of textbooks.

(c) Approaches to learning

The reviewer found that, overall, books reviewed supported a wide variety of approaches to learning; there was only one book where only one approach - conveying information – was identified. And this was consistent with the nature of the book - an information book rather than a structured 'textbook'.

Table 4 indicates the percentage of the 41 books reviewed which supported each approach to learning. Setting the KS2 figures alongside those for KS3 serves to indicate some key differences between books for the primary stage and those for the lower secondary school. The figures serve to highlight the different nature of information books and textbooks and draw attention to some significant differences in the kind of learning which each may facilitate. Although the KS3 books are characterised by their adoption / support of a wide range of approaches, the reviewer indicated that the quality of activities set for students was often at a low level or lacking in imagination - a point returned to below.

Table 4 - Approaches to learning in Key Stage 3 books

Approaches to learning:	KS1/2	KS3
Conveying information	100%	90%
Asking questions	26%	90%
Asking ultimate questions	6%	71%
Raising questions of value and meaning	45%	90%
Developing an understanding of concepts	72%	85%
Developing skills to interpret religion(s)	29%	78%
Promoting empathy and appreciation of the focus religion(s)	81%	90%
Setting tasks	6%	83%
Promoting independent learning	61%	34%
Number of books reviewed	43	37

(d) Accessibility

In order to assess the accessibility of the books to users a series of closed questions were used. Table 5 indicates 'Yes' responses and where the reviewer made a qualified response (Yes / No).

Table 5 - Accessibility in Key Stage 3 books

Questions about accessibility:	YES	YES/NO
Is the text accessible for the target age group?	88%	12%
Are key vocabularies / terms linked to explanatory references?	78%	17%
Are photographs appropriate for the focus religion/s?	85%	15%
Are artists' impressions appropriate for the focus religion/s?	80%	5%
Are visuals used to *engage* pupils in learning?	59%	7%
Are the activities (where suggested) appropriate to the focus religion/s?	98%	0
Are activities appropriate for pupils of different abilities?	83%	10%
Is the resource accessible for pupils of different abilities?	54%	37%

37 books reviewed.

The text of most books was considered appropriate for the target age group (11-14), as were the suggested activities; yet books' accessibility to students of different abilities was sometimes problematic[15]. Terminology was generally clearly explained where it was used and whilst visuals were found to be mainly appropriate for the different religions and thus unlikely to cause offence, some critical observations were made. Where reservations were expressed about books' accessibility, density of text and matters of layout and design were important.

(i) Text

A key obstacle to 'access for all' in relation to textbooks proved to be *'dense text'* which might prove '...*heavy and daunting'*; by contrast a foundation text for use by those who are 'less able' would have less text and a simpler format. Texts employing the following kinds of features helped to ensure access for all students: chapters broken down into smaller units; dense text broken down into smaller units; use of subheadings; use of bullet points; highlighting of key vocabulary in the text; making sure that key words in the text *all* appear in the glossary[16] (where provided); use of colour and visuals to break down text; 'check it out' diagrams; diagrams to support learning; and use of prompt questions.

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[15] It should be noted that where publishers offered a series in a 'core' edition and in a simpler 'foundation' edition, it is the core edition which was reviewed; this may in part account for the percentages here.

[16] Note that careful attention is needed to ensure key words are included in glossaries: a book on Judaism failed to include 'Torah', Talmud' and 'Messiah' in its glossary, whilst one on Christianity failed to include 'Trinity'**.**

(ii) Visuals

The issues which emerged here relate to the quality of visuals, to the representation of religions through the visual and to books' failure to *use* the photographs and artists' impressions which they include. Those books which fail on quality are unlikely to command interest or respect; in one series art work was described as *'out of focus', 'very strange', 'very odd' and 'very bad indeed': 'The images of people seem blurred. I can imagine students asking why the people look strange….!'*. Visual 'encounters' through resources matter in textbooks; for some students they may be their first meeting with a particular faith.

(ii.a) Representation

Comments relating to representation were relatively few and drew attention mainly to the cultural representation of traditions and the contrary messages which may be given by visuals.

Photographs: These in nearly all cases show Buddhism in the 'East'. There are few which show images for example from the Western Buddhist Order ….) or lay Buddhists. If a pupil was to look through this might think that most Buddhists look like Buddhist monks.'

Photographs: they are nearly all 'White UK' images of Christians, and mainly traditional images of Jesus e.g. white man, long robe…There are some younger Christians shown, but the majority of the images show white middle aged men and women

Using a picture rooted in one tradition to illustrate another was also questioned by the reviewer: *'…painting of hell by Bosch = could be misleading as this is not an Islamic interpretation of hell.'* A photograph and its caption in a book on Judaism further indicated the potential of pictures - and captions - to mislead readers: *'…the photo of a wedding couple …is confusing - is this a Jewish couple? Why does it say next to it 'happy ever after …?' What is this implying?'*

A particular choice of visual - here an illustration in a book on Buddhism - may also be of questionable value in terms of students' learning:

Visuals: The validity of some could be questioned e.g. the Three Baskets.......a flow diagram of the passing down of traditions might have been more helpful or images of the actual texts…

Failure to 'locate' pictures was also found to limit their interest and usefulness:

Visuals: They are not used to engage pupils in learning. In most cases, one does not know where the picture was taken e.g. which country or place…some are referenced on the last page, but this is not particularly helpful…

(ii.b) The purpose(s) of visuals

The primary message from the reviews was that photographs and artists' impressions serve the purpose of illustrating the text; this is sometimes very well done – but sometimes has no obvious function: *'The point of some of the illustrations has to be questioned e.g. a 2/3 page spread showing Charles Darwin, a ½ page spread showing a couple in an embrace – looks like they were trying to 'fill up space'.*

Use of the visual to engage students - both that which is generated by religions themselves, and photographs relating to significant aspects of them - does not appear to be well recognised in textbooks. As Table 5 shows, many of the books reviewed did not try to engage students in learning through the pictures and illustrations they offered. The reviewer's comment on visuals in one book is applicable to many:

Visuals: these are generally well chosen and support the text, but are rarely used to engage learning. A skilled teacher might use the visuals to stimulate thinking and ideas, but there are no suggestions in the text itself.

Learning to interpret the visual and respond to this in a sensitive way is a skill which is neglected in many RE textbooks - but one which could be regarded as having a part to play in engaging student interest and in fostering community cohesion.

(iii) Activities

The books reviewed offered examples of very basic, unchallenging and unimaginative activities, as well as activities which were imaginative, demanding and interesting for students. Most series had something positive to offer, but sometimes varied in the balance achieved *across* a series or within individual books. There was also variation in the weight given to AT1 and AT2 based activities and the particular kinds of activities each attainment target generates may be an area worth further investigation. Books in which chapters or units had a clear structure and a statement of purpose appeared to best integrate content and learning and engage students in worthwhile tasks.

Strengths and weaknesses

Comments relating to books from different series clearly illustrate the strengths and weaknesses which set tasks and activities may have:

The activities in this book are among the best I have seen. There is huge variety and most are challenging and interesting. They range from creating adverts, to writing soap opera scripts, research using the internet, imagining they are charity workers managing a disaster and writing protest letters. The majority of the tasks focus on understanding and application of Buddhist beliefs. They are encouraged to use the skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis. Students are required to put themselves in a Buddhist's shoes, so encouraging empathy. The only slight reservation is that the assessed tasks only go from levels 3-6, I would expect some students to be working at level 7,8 or exceptional performance in year 9. This is the same in all the books in this series however.

A book from another series was not so engaging:

The activities are on the whole not interesting at all. They are mainly questions or comprehension exercises. They develop the skills of explaining and reasoning, but do not particularly encourage creative or imaginative work. Whilst the students would gain a good understanding of the Sikh faith, they might be 'switched off' as the tasks are uninteresting and in some cases not very challenging either. Good for 'cover' lessons though!

(iii.a) Limited activities

Criteria for judging activities are implicit in the above evaluations. Limited activities are likely to be un-demanding, *'not interesting'*, lack imagination and fail to engage students' imaginatively; they *'don't stretch students and lack challenge'*, e.g. copying, drawing, *'very basic cloze exercises'*. Some tasks of this kind were still to be found, despite some criticism of RE on just such grounds.[17] A book on Hinduism suggested that students should copy the textbook pictures of Ganesh and Krishna and write five pieces of information about each. As the reviewer commented, this was inappropriate on a number of accounts: the pictures were too detailed for copying; the task was very low level for KS3 and lacked point; and one might ask, *'Would a Muslim pupil feel happy doing this task?'* Another book asked students to

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[17] See for example Wintersgill (2000)

design a card for the Jewish festival of Shavuot - a task perhaps more appropriate for KS1 and one which failed to address pertinent concepts - such as *'divine presence' or 'authority'* - appropriate to learning at KS3. Low level tasks such as *'matching up bits of sentences'* and *'drawing pictures of a marriage ceremony'* were found in a book for year 9 students, where, in the main, the questions asked focused mainly on comprehension, an approach to RE which *'does not meet the new requirements for personal learning and thinking skills'*. Overall such very basic activities did not dominate the KS3 textbooks, and whilst some activities might be found to operate only at the level of description and explanation, or to *'focus on knowledge of religions, rather than about an understanding of concepts/ideas'*; there was also evidence of greater demands being made on students.

(iii.b) Activities and learning

Concern for the quality of learning at KS3 generally has been to the fore in recent years; the new secondary curriculum for RE, following the National Framework, is conceptually based and interested in students' learning. This review consequently considered the quality of the activities suggested in the books reviewed in relation to students' potential learning. The following emerged as positive features:

Structure: where the intentions of each section of a book are clearly set out, enabling a process of learning which moves towards an intended outcome. For example, one series *'always has an "end task" in mind, the activities all link to this final outcome. There are a wide variety of different tasks and the outcomes are always clearly displayed at the start of each unit'…* The reviewer noted that this gave a *'sense of motivation through each unit'*. Two other series adopted similar approaches. In one, *'the start of each "lesson" outlines the skills being developed…The key ideas, and the knowledge and understanding being developed is explained'*. In the other, *'Each section has clearly defined learning outcomes which are useful for the teacher to use'*.

Skills: some books clearly 'scored' highly in offering activities which developed higher order skills - as advocated in the National Framework[18]. A book for Year 7 students which was seen to *'provide an excellent foundation at the start of KS3'* suggested thought provoking and creative activities which allowed students to *'move beyond the recalling or describing of information / knowledge to real application, analysis and evaluation'*. A book designed for year 8 took a *'problem solving approach and encouraged a wide range of skill development, including 'making decisions, evaluating, analysing, explaining, reflecting, reasoning, synthesising…there is emphasis on higher order thinking in many activities encouraging pupils to create hypotheses or conclusions based on evidence'*; furthermore, *'Students are encouraged to be independent learners using the internet where appropriate, and source material within the book itself'*.

Thinking skills: activities in several books adopted thinking skills strategies. Students were encouraged to participate in 'community of enquiry' activities; to use mind maps, to undertake ranking, sorting and classification tasks and to develop concept maps.

Literacy skills: one series identified literacy skills; this was seen as a positive step in encouraging listening and, speaking skills, as well as placing RE work in the context of the wider curriculum.

Concepts: activities in books for year 9 tended to give more attention to concepts than those for earlier years in KS3, possibly reflecting a more philosophical emphasis in their content in some cases. Whilst thinking skills approaches were used to clarify concepts in some, there was also evidence of activities which '*encourage[d] interpretation e.g. creating a symbol or image to represent a concept, idea or proverb*'. Sometimes books may (unwittingly) miss an opportunity to engage students with concepts. In one, activities did not build on the text:

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[18] See, for example, the National Framework (QCA, 2004, p.28)

There is less focus on conceptual development in the activities - more about understanding of beliefs and practices. This is illustrated in the chapter on the nature of Allah. Rather than enabling the students to explore the concept of oneness, the activities focus on names for Allah and the use of prayer beads…In the text, however, there is a good explanation of oneness.

In another - in relation to a chapter on peace and conflict - tasks were set which required students *'to interpret Jesus' teaching, and consider the Just War theory'* but did '*not actually engage students with the nature of conflict itself*'. Given many books' concern with 'issues' this seems an important point to note. Each of these cases, whilst identifying missed opportunities, points to the desirability of a positive relationship between content/text and activities.

Assessment: where books included assessment tasks, they were seen often as useful preparation for KS4 work and /or GCSE; where activities were related to levels of attainment, the reviewer commented positively on a year 9 book which covered levels 4-7 - since few do this.

The above features serve as an indication of the thinking about learning which might underpin worthwhile activities in textbooks. Whilst references to the skills students may develop were frequent in the reviews, those referring to *attitudes* (exemplified in some of the books reviewed by opportunities to develop empathy and appreciation and use of one's imagination - each of which figures in the National Framework's delineation of attitudes) were fewer. The activities themselves (as noted by reviewers) need also to be creative and imaginative and to engage students' interest.

(e) Community cohesion

The series reviewed predate the responsibility now given to schools to promote community cohesion. Among them there is little to suggest that the books either contribute to or work against this particular goal. Individual books may point to a common humanity or explore what it is to be human; point to the importance of a 'sense of belonging' or being part of a home or family; to the golden rule and the mutual respect humans should have one for another; to shared concern for the world and human hope and dreams; to the suffering which all encounter or to human rights. They may occasionally identify collaborative ventures among faiths, or initiatives from a particular faith - Alliance of Religions and Conservation, the Council of Christians and Jews or the Week of Prayer for World Peace, for example. Sometimes local initiatives provide good examples of co-operation, and occasionally a historical excursus - into the common heritage of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, for example or, albeit in a limited way, looking at Gandhi's influence on Martin Luther King, and Christians' influence on Gandhi - may offer positive messages. Individual books may also try to help readers to understand recent events and ongoing concerns, for example:
In a limited way there is reference to co-operation and friendship in the chapter on peace and also on the chapter on Islamophobia. The latter focuses on the importance of understanding the Muslim tradition.

…there is a chapter on what it means to be a British 'Muslim'. There are references to the Newsround survey held in Sept 2001 after 9/11 and the impact on the lives of Muslim children.

Such examples tend to endorse the view that elements which may prosper community cohesion are currently incidental rather than central to the concerns of the books reviewed.

(i) Respect and error

Respect for religions and giving no cause for offence are well established values within RE teaching, and one would expect textbooks to exercise care in these matters. The reviewer found little that was disconcerting in any of the books, but occasionally a text prompted a comment because of its potential to cause offence. Errors of a factual kind sometimes appeared to be due to using categories which don't 'fit', and seeking to make comparisons, as in one book *on Hinduism* when it speaks of Islam having a' founder', or to making generalisations:

> ...there is one phrase…which says 'Sikhism grew up a separate religion from Hinduism because of that faith's teaching about the caste system'. This is not qualified in any way, and could be seen in a negative way.

Such problems may also be compounded by the juxtaposition of text and visuals:

> Not exactly offensive. But…there is a picture of a Hindu Brahmin, and underneath it says 'Guru Nanak Dev Ji taught the caste system was wrong'. This could be taken out of context by a pupil…they might not automatically read the fuller text alongside it.

There were few examples of this kind, but the above serve as a reminder of the care needed in setting religions alongside each other; similarly care is needed when handling diversity within traditions. The reviewer found that the books did this satisfactorily overall; few problems emerged, but one implicit danger might be a nuanced if not biased text:

> I feel the chapter on Orthodox and Reform Jews is slightly in favour of Reform Jews…Orthodox Jews are respected, but the text focuses on changing culture and 'bringing things up to date'.

Care is also needed about the impressions books may leave with students; one book took account of both Sunni and Shi'ah but the reviewer recognised that *'the elements of Shi'ah Islam could easily be interpreted by students in a negative manner.'* Conversely, where books fail to recognise diversity, one may ask whether this is equally a cause for concern.

(ii) Handling the controversial

At each Key Stage, reviewers were asked to identify any controversial matters with which books dealt, including those concerns an individual faith might regard as controversial, as well as those that might figure between and among faiths. The respective issues which were identified by the reviewer, in the four series reviewed in Phase 1, are set out in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6 - 'Controversial issues *within* religions' in a sample of KS3 textbooks

Series:	Series 1	Series 2	Series 3	Series 4
Buddhism	Suffering, prejudice, environment, animal rights, war, science	Environment; wealth and poverty; racism; Buddhism in Tibet.	Invasion of Tibet; Buddhist views on war; poverty; the tsunami disaster.	The use of sexual images e.g. expressing wisdom and compassion.
Christianity	Religion and science; vivisection; organ transplantation; morality; HIV and AIDS; environment; war; suffering; abortion; euthanasia	Animal rights; prejudice; suffering.	Poverty; environment; relationships; morality;	The diverse ways in which Christianity is practised; relationships and poverty.
Hinduism	Sacredness of life; poverty and wealth; charity giving; environment; non-violent-action; war; suffering; prejudice	Animal rights; prejudice and discrimination; life after death; suffering.	Science and religions; nature of truth; ethical decision making; poverty; environment; violence	
Islam	Science; war; environment; poverty	Existence of God; evil and suffering; jihad; human rights	Terrorism and Islam (sensitively approached). The question 'Why did people in the West blame Islam for 9/11?' is approached 'Suicide bombing'. 'Greater' and 'lesser' jihad.	Muslim groupings and Islam today e.g. the Iranian Revolution; Muslim States, conflict between religion and western culture.
Judaism	Anti-Semitism; the Holocaust; wealth and poverty; environment; war and peace; medical ethics; euthanasia.	Suffering; existence of God; drugs; environment.	Religion and science; poverty; environment; Just War.	Looks at the idea of the Promised Land.
Sikhism	Justice; prejudice; environment; wealth and poverty; euthanasia; body matters; medical ethics.	Human rights; striving for a homeland/state; environment.	Wearing of kirpan; use of violence / non-violence; environment projects.	Martyrdom, and fight for a Sikh state.

Table 7 - Controversial issues *between/among* religions in a sample of KS3 textbooks

Series:	Series 1	Series 2	Series 3	Series 4
Buddhism				
Christianity	Religion & environment: mention of ARC and of sacred lands project. Peace: Religions of peace org., Week of Prayer for World Peace. Humanist responses for some issues e.g. science & religion.		*Most of issues identified above looked at from Humanist viewpoint too.*	
Hinduism			Use of the C17th Indian painting on 2005 UK Christmas stamp.	Indian Independence
Islam				The Crusades
Judaism	*'Issues in Middle East carefully avoided'*			Relationship between Christians and Jews. Explores the Holocaust
Sikhism				

As at KS2, the books tended to give greater attention to matters which may be controversial *within* an individual religion. These fell into a number of categories: a range of moral issues, including some which are pressing and topical e.g. environment; those (rather few) which focus on issues calling for a historical and political perspective; and third, those which raise perennial questions about human experience. Overwhelmingly the identified issues appear to anticipate those which are addressed in popular GCSE options - if we leave aside the relatively slight attention to historical/political matters. A positive note to emerge from the books was that, where recent events which have prompted controversy across societies and faiths were considered, the reviewer found a sensitive handling of these matters:

Terrorism and Islam - this is approached in a sensitive way, explaining clearly that Islam is a religion of peace and therefore terrorism is totally unacceptable to Muslims. This is compared to terrorism in Northern Ireland and the fact that Christians were not blamed for the work of the IRA or Loyalist activists. The question is asked why did people in the West blame Muslims for 9/11? The nature of 'suicide bombing' is then explored - again in a sensitive way. This chapter does well to promote community cohesion through very challenging and controversial material.

The phase 2 series, where books drew on a number of religions, tended to work with the same range of issues as those in phase 1, but perhaps with slighter attention to those events with a political dimension noted in Table 6; the reviewer also drew attention to some additional issues which might be considered controversial *among/between* religions - including faith schools, interfaith dialogue, and the nature of truth.

3.1.3 Upper secondary (Key Stage 4 (14-16) & Post 16)

In relation to the earlier Key Stages it was possible to select books relating to each of the six 'principal religions'. The range of books for KS4 students appears to reflect a narrowing of interests as they approach GCSE; books on Christianity are readily available, including those which focus mainly on the Roman Catholic tradition. After Christianity, Islam and Judaism appear to be the most popular traditions for study; there was no book on Sikhism available in a post 2000 edition and little on Buddhism and Hinduism.[19] All of the books selected for review at phase 1 were designed for use for GCSE; of those relating to specific examination boards and identified specifications, some had an 'endorsed' (by the relevant exam board) status. The selection and review of these books and those selected at phase 2 took place at a point of change with regard to GCSE criteria and specifications to be taught from September 2009. New books and (further) revisions of popular texts were scheduled for publication during 2009 in readiness for these changes.[20] At phase 2 further GCSE texts were reviewed, but this time representative of books drawing on more than one religion, or having a philosophical or ethical focus; an ethical or philosophical focus; an additional 'single religion' text helped to balance the coverage of religions at KS4. Three examples of materials for AS students were also reviewed in phase 2. Whilst the revision of AS/A courses which took effect in 2007/2008 maintained a place for 'world religions', this did not appear to be matched by the publication of many books for the related options - although AS/A level texts are well established for the popular choices of philosophy and ethics. [21] A feature of many books for GCSE is the part taken by examiners in writing them; this is also true of some AS/A level texts, whilst the very notion of an 'AS/A level textbook' has been the subject of recent criticism (Clark 2008).

This section is shaped by the same questions as those used in reporting on the earlier Key Stages; the books for KS4 are central to its concerns; whilst these share some features with those for KS3, a distinguishing feature is their weighting in terms of content and, with a few exceptions, the priority of this over attention to students' learning and engagement with the information they provide.

(a) Requirements and initiatives in RE

Most of the 21 books reviewed served examinations and were shaped by them. Their focus tends to be knowledge and understanding of religions, and with the exception of only one series their focus was 'learning about' religion. For example, a sound book on one religion provided an 'interesting and clear account', was considered '*a very good back up textbook to make sure everything is covered*'; but it was '*not designed to be an engaging, task driven, conceptual approach which challenges the students to reflect on their own beliefs or learn from*' the religion with which it was concerned. Consequently good teachers would be able to '*use it as a resource'* but would need to '*create their own engaging activities to make it enjoyable, exciting and engaging.*' Observations of this kind were made about many of the KS4 books reviewed. Although examination revisions for GCSE allow for more attention to be given to 'learning from' religion, even some recently revised material did not to go beyond asking students to 'give reasons for your opinion'. Where ethical issues were addressed and students' personal engagement and responses might be anticipated, there was little found to encourage this in many books.

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[19] A book on Sikhism is available from one RE publisher but is designed for the WJEC (Welsh Joint Education Committee) specifications; Sikhism also included in one older series, but not available in a post 2000 edition.

[20] Tables providing an overview of the old and new syllabuses are available in the audit of books prepared for this project (Hayward and Hopkins, 2010); these demonstrate continuity between old and new syllabuses which justified consideration of existing books.

[21] For example AS and A material on world religions may be made available to schools/colleges online via examination board/publisher.

(b) Learning across the curriculum: RE's contribution

The potential of the books to contribute to the cross-curricular areas identified in the review template varied greatly; some had a contribution to make in each area but, in many, development was *'implicit'* or *'incidental rather than intentional'*, or a book might *'not do any of these explicitly'* but might *'make a contribution to all'*; again the teacher is the key to 'unlocking' these broader dimensions of learning:

> *A good teacher could manage all of these [i.e. the five areas listed] with this resource as a support, but the text does not encourage it. Engagement with the material, such as the Beatitudes, could help pupils' spiritual development, but the text does not do this.*

Taking all the GCSE and AS textbooks together, fewer than half were identified as able to make some contribution to students' personal and moral development, spiritual development or community cohesion, whilst the great majority and about two thirds had a contribution to make to social and cultural understanding and global understanding respectively.

(i) Personal, moral & spiritual development

As at KS3 the contribution books might make to students' personal and moral development lay in the opportunities they provided to meet a range of ethical and moral issues – and in a few cases allowed for *'active engagement'* through case studies and *'space'* for students to respond to issues. Opportunities for reflection and response similarly marked out those books which the reviewer saw as contributing to students' spiritual development:

> *'…encourages reflection on ultimate questions, such as ideas of God and life after death; allows for students to explore their own beliefs.'* Sometimes relevant issues were raised but not pursued:

> *Despite dealing with matters of spiritual significance, the text rarely expects students to offer personal reflections and responses. The occasional exception is really geared to training students to answer evaluative sections of exam questions [rather] than expressing spiritual development. One task does say "consider the possible spiritual, moral, social, cultural and physical effects of regular prayer"… but this is an isolated case.*

The reviewer's comment above points to a need for authors of textbooks to reflect on the nature of the content they present, as well as ways of securing student engagement; it perhaps also draws attention to the tensions involved in writing textbooks for GCSE.

(ii) Global understanding & social and cultural development

Where books were contributing to global understanding, this was generally achieved through visuals and / or indicating a particular religion's presence beyond the UK - Judaism in Israel; Christianity in Ethiopia; Hinduism in India.

Possible contributions to students' social and cultural development was evident in the way in which some books pointed to the *impact* of faith on culture and society, considered how beliefs affect behaviour or drew out the relation and impact of beliefs and actions - for example, offering a *'...good exploration of [the] impact of Islam on lives of believers and consideration of this impact in non-Muslim countries.'* The way in which some books approached 'difference' also contributed to an understanding of culture and society. Opportunities for students to encounter the diversity of viewpoints in society on topical issues or, as in one book, to *'meet … with a range of voices from [the] Jewish community - local, national and worldwide - authentic contemporary voices throughout'* were both seen to contribute here. A further comment related to how the '*tone'* of a book was able to overcome the 'strangeness' students might find in meeting another's faith:

> *'….a warm account of Hinduism does make it sound like a living faith, and helps to explain the real differences there are from a Western belief system without making Hinduism look bizarre…'*

(iii) Community cohesion

Contributions in this area were identified in a number of books. One recently revised text included a full chapter on community cohesion, although its emphasis was on the provision of information rather than engaging students in discussion. The book just referred to above makes a distinctive contribution by its approach to pluralism; the insights it offers with respect to *'diversity and sophistication of Hindu thought and practice'* might also *'encourage valuing of Hindu beliefs and practice'*. The contribution of one series lay in the content it selected for discussion: racism, anti - Semitism; Islamophobia, and the UK as a multi-faith and multi-ethnic society, for example. The choice of content was also significant in two other books: one had an *'…impressive section on social harmony'*, a section on the *'benefits of a multi-faith society'* and a *'clear account of Christian and Muslim attitudes to other religions'* which was *'sensitively expressed'*. Writing of the other book - on Islam, the reviewer comments:

> *...it will help dispel some ignorance, and there are clear explanations of different Muslim groups, sensitive handling of the suggestion that Muslims are often seen as " fundamentalists" …and mention of the impact of Islamophobia…These have the potential to contribute to community cohesion etc. although this would need to be drawn out by good teaching and learning activities. The text is simply informative about these issues rather than engaging students in exploring them.*

Again the important role of the teacher in the use and interpretation of textbooks is clear as is the need for authors and publishers to consider how books may present information *and* promote students' learning; put another way, how may they encourage a 'conversation' between the content and the student?

(c) Approaches to learning

Table 8 sets the judgements made about approaches to learning in KS4 (*not post 16*) books alongside those made for KS3 to draw out the different emphases at the respective stages.

The most common approaches to learning adopted by the KS4 books reflect their relation to examination demands; approaches which might be seen as more important in relation to RE's potential contribution to community cohesion - developing skills to interpret and understand religion(s) and promoting empathy and appreciation of religion(s) enjoy much less prominence in the KS4 books. In contrast to KS3 books, but consistent with the lack of attention to 'learning from' in the KS4 books few asked ultimate questions or raised questions of value and meaning; in each stage few encouraged independent learning. The place given to the provision of information in KS4 raises the further question of their accessibility to students.

Table 8 - Approaches to learning in KS4 books

Approaches to learning:	KS3	KS4
Conveying information	90%	100%
Asking questions	90%	78%
Asking ultimate questions	71%	28%
Raising questions of value and meaning	90%	44%
Developing an understanding of concepts	85%	78%
Developing skills to interpret religion(s)	78%	56%
Promoting empathy and appreciation of the focus religion(s)	90%	44%
Setting tasks	83%	67%
Promoting independent learning	34%	22%
Number of books reviewed	37	18

(d) Accessibility

The reviewer's 'Yes' responses to the questions asked about the accessibility to students of *books for KS4* are set out in Table 9. Many of the comments made on these books relate to the first and last questions in the table, and are concerned with the design and structure of the books and with the texts, some of which prompted the comment 'higher ability GCSE students will cope'.

Table 9 - Accessibility of Key Stage 4 books

Questions about accessibility:	YES
Is the text accessible for the target age group?	72%
Are key vocabularies/terms linked to explanatory references?	83%
Are photographs appropriate for the focus religion/s?	89%
Are artists' impressions appropriate for the focus religion/s?	100% *
Are visuals used to *engage* pupils in learning?	39%
Are the activities (where suggested) appropriate to the focus religion/s?	100%**
Are activities appropriate for pupils of different abilities?	65% **
Is the resource accessible for pupils of different abilities?	28%

18 books reviewed, except where indicated by asterisks
* 15 books reviewed
** 17 books reviewed.

The lower numbers here, reflect the fact that the questions were not applicable in all cases.

(i) Structure, design and text

The kind of difficulty identified by reviewers includes: lack of differentiation of text so lower ability students are likely to struggle; too many words to the page/long, dense text; font too small; use of too complex words; no attempts to highlight key words with short definitions; lack of engagement with pupils.

Those books which succeed in offering wider access appear to be characterised by their incorporation of varied materials for example:

> *Exemplary text book in terms of interest and accessibility. Some sections will be less accessible than others, but the variety of voices, sources and case studies means that there is material for a range of abilities. More technical information is put in small font as "Checkpoint" …'*

and in one case writing in a manner which might 'reach' the reader:

> *The tone of the book sets it apart from the other titles in the series - and most of the other text books I've reviewed for this project - as it is written with enthusiasm and warmth…and is directed at students rather than no specific audience. Whilst this is only a very slight issue it is noticeable and will help to make this resource more enjoyable than other titles…*

Whilst the personal enthusiasm of the author and personal direction of this text invited interest, this was not supported by other aspects e.g. the book's design and activities.

(ii) Visuals

The primary use of visuals in KS4 books, as with those reviewed for KS3, is for illustrative purposes; only 39% of the KS4 books reviewed attempted to make any use of visuals as part of students' learning. Where the function of pictures is illustrative, it may also be limited and stereotypical - especially when one considers the global presence of the Christianity:

> *…reasonably up to date photos but the overwhelming majority are of white European[s]. Apart from a group of Asian nuns…there are no pictures of black or other Asian people until*

> *…a black family is used to illustrate poverty. Thereafter, racial/ethnic diversity or disability is used to illustrate particular issues. Given the worldwide nature of the Roman Catholic Church, this text is remarkably lacking in evidence of diversity.*

The reviewer also drew attention to some pictures which may be considered insensitive (and indeed unnecessary) where, for example, they show Muslims praying and are taken from behind, or in a book on Judaism include a painting of 'God leads Adam', *'despite the reference to the prohibition of images[22]'* in the same book. The choice of visuals may also be obscure, unexplained and oddly juxtaposed; a book on Judaism included a *'picture of Michael Moore grinning alongside a box about the tragedy of the Columbine shootings, but with no real explanatory link'* and *'a drawing of 2 Jews in the entertainment industry, with no name'*. Book covers can sometimes be puzzling too. In a series where titles on different faiths had religion-specific covers, Christianity was represented by the *'image of a circular staircase viewed from above'*; as the reviewer observed, *'it's actually in the Vatican, but there is no way of knowing that, and it has no other link with Christianity'*.

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[22] Jewish tradition permits no representation of God.

It is clear here, as with KS3, that the rich visual resources which each of the religions offer are under-played, and that inappropriate images sometimes find their way into textbooks.

(iii) Using websites: a cautionary note

Few of the KS4 books adopted an approach to learning that promoted personal research, although a few encouraged the use of websites; this can lead to rather pointless open ended tasks - 'use Encarta to find about another shrine' - to links that no longer function. More seriously, links are sometimes given to unfortunate web-sites. An example followed through by the reviewer is provided below .

A reference to Khadijah led to a particular named website, which led to "Sexy Russian Wives" within two clicks. There was no obvious sign of information about Khadijah, although I could find Beautiful Muslim Women or get Car Insurance or download a ring tone if I wished. Whilst schools can filter the sites which students access, home use of textbook links will not necessarily do this; as the reviewer put it *'This is a worrying side-effect of tying in web support with the book'.*

(iv) Activities and learning

Only 8 of the KS4 books were thought to include activities appropriate for their target group. The dominant concern of activities was that of comprehension. Testing one's knowledge and understanding of the information provided in the text, occasionally presenting arguments for and against a particular case, or discussing an issue, all contributed to meeting examination expectations. The development of attitudes and skills did not appear to be important in most of the books; whilst a few did allow for a limited application of the knowledge and understanding students had acquired, activities tended to lack challenge, and might also be of poor quality - *'How would you dress bishops today?'* It is also surprising at KS4 to find activities which still ask for drawing and copying: *'Sketch your own picture of the Last Supper'*, *'Draw the symbol and copy the explanation'*.

(v) Examination preparation

Books for GCSE also offered a range of tasks which tended to be concerned with the processing of information, *'being able to explain and express ideas carefully'*, although one book was noteworthy for the way in which exam preparation had been integrated into the learning process:

Addresses key areas of GCSE syllabuses e.g. issues of life and death, wealth and poverty. The approach focuses on getting students to engage with material so as to understand it rather than simply describing beliefs. Advice is given throughout, such as … "How to use the Bible in your exam", which notes the difference between how the exam requires students to refer to the Bible and how Christians use the Bible in their everyday lives; also "how to structure an essay".

One book for AS level included exam questions and *'advised on the selection and presentation of material to address [the] question'* and focused on *'developing clarity and structure for essay writing'*. Another offered *'basic tasks to increase understanding of concepts and ability to express ideas coherently within [the] format required by the exam - i.e. logical expression, structure of essay, flow of argument'*. This particular AS book was so comprehensive and so linked to the exam specification - *'All the key ideas, key issues, key weaknesses, possible conclusions, exemplar essays with examiner comments on - are all laid out'* - that it prompted the reviewer to ask why teachers would plan active learning or offer their students the chance *'to get into some scholars, explore their ideas, wrestle with them and come to their own conclusions?'*

(**vi) Content and learning**

Books designed for examination preparation invest heavily in content. Although no specific question was asked about this, the reviewer drew attention to the ways in which information conveyed bears on learning.

First, content is more likely to engage students when there is a variety of material. For example a book on Christianity used interesting examples and case studies, together with responses from individual Christians; another used cartoon, and extracts from Christians, including a Christian soldier.

Second, books frequently wish to convey something of the diversity of views held within a religion on controversial issues; contrary to intent, this may lead to oversimplification and a simplistic use of source materials. For example, one GCSE book, taking each of the five religions covered, indicated that e.g. Christians had two viewpoints, Muslims had two view points - and so on, on each issue. A book addressing ethical issues offered a good range of Biblical quotations to back up comments - but as the reviewer noted *'...almost all the good work is undone by calling these quotations "Biblical Bitz"'*. The quotations were then *'presented without any context, which means that there is not sufficient discussion of interpretation',* and students' learning is not advanced by the textbook.

Finally where a text lapses into an *'almost confessional manner'* or apologetics, its accessibility to all students and use in an RE open to all may be questioned. Content handled in the ways described provides a poor example to students who are *learning* to investigate, interpret, and evaluate religious material.

To conclude this section on activities and learning, a quotation relating to a series acclaimed by the reviewer highlights the strengths of its activities (here exemplified by its book on Islam), as well as pointing to the interrelationship of relevant content and learning:

> *A variety of tasks and activities promoting a range of skills is provided, drawing on a diverse range of sources, requiring interpretive, analytical and evaluative skills throughout: e.g. 'interpret source and explain how it affects Muslims' actions'; … 'apply learning on Muslim beliefs to a range of dilemmas'; '…the case study on abortion requires students to engage in the full process of ethical decision-making'; '…challenges attitudes and deals with a real life case study to do with kerb crawling in Balsall Heath and the Muslim response to the issue'.*

> *This active engagement with diverse and authentic sources continues throughout the book.*

As well as serving the end purpose of the examination there is clearly much that books *can* do to prosper the student's development as student and as person through their selection of material and challenging activities.

(e) Community cohesion

There proved to be little that stood out in the books reviewed for KS4 and post-16 which affirmed those things religions may share and value; only five texts were identified as '*attempting to draw out or affirm a 'shared humanity'*. This was seen in one in its exploration of *'... a range of values that are commonly held as important'*, and in another implicitly in a section on community cohesion which pointed to *'the value of different faiths'*; a third brought together a range of voices from an inter faith group. A book on Hinduism accorded humans *'supreme dignity'* and pointed to the value of diverse paths; another, on Christianity, was described as a whole as being *'about shared humanity',* but specifically its *'section on the nature of human life and Christian views of the soul'*.

Where books refer to a number of religions or to divisions within religions they were nearly all respectful - *'fully and exhaustively respectful',* in one case. One book in its persistent defence of the tradition it represented did, however, appear to have - as the reviewer put it - *'some high handed dismissals of other beliefs'* and criticisms of *'other… approaches to reality'*; it is not that one looks for agreement on all matters among faiths, but the language used in speaking e.g. of another's teachings or beliefs requires care: '*words like "fixation" and "'futile mental gymnastics" do not sound respectful'*. The use of language also seemed misplaced in another book, where the descriptions *'savage'* and *'primitive'* sat uneasily in an otherwise academic text.

(i) Controversial issues within religions

The reviewer found that all except one of the 21 books reviewed for KS4/post16 gave some attention to matters which were likely to be controversial within the respective religions. The issues which emerged fell within a number of broad headings:

(i.a) Internal divisions within religions

Examples cited here included differences between Buddhist Schools; theological differences between Christian denominations; differences in (Christian) interpretation of the Bible: fundamentalist, conservative, liberal; differences between Sunni and Shi'ah Muslims, and divisions within Shi'ah groups; differences and divisions between Progressive, Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jews

(i.b) Issues and questions

Many of these were *'standard ethical issues for GCSE'* and include e.g. abortion; euthanasia; sanctity of life; homosexuality; sex outside marriage; contraception; women; racism; attitudes to war and peace; jihad; Islamophobia; the environment; poverty. Other books focused on questions of good and evil; on life after death; and on the relationship between religion ad science.

*(*i.c) Socio-political matters

A few examples fell under this heading, drawn from just three of the books reviewed; a book on Islam included the attack on the procession at Kerbala in 2004 and also the attack on the twin towers. By contrast, the reviewer noted that two other books appeared to avoid handling terrorism or extremism, although one included Islamophobia. One book on Judaism included material about the State of Israel; one book on Hinduism picked up Hindu nationalism, whilst others turned to caste - one including a critical look at hereditary caste, and the other at the treatment of Dalits.

Although controversial issues appeared in the books, there was a tendency in some just to describe them and to offer basic information rather than engage with them. As the reviewer put it, *'there is no sense of controversy'* – a book on Hinduism might briefly mention the treatment of Dalits and Gandhi's naming them 'Harijan', *'but the real difficulties faced by Dalit people in India are not addressed as a significant problem'*. Textbooks and examination syllabuses require students to examine a wide range of controversial matters. In the light these observations, how books present these issues, and the ways in which students are encouraged to engage with them, deserve continuing attention.

(i.d) Controversial issues between/ among religions

A distinction needs to be drawn here between issues which may be examined from the viewpoints of different religions - such as those identified above - and those where the roots of controversy lie between / among the religions themselves. Few books raised matters which fell clearly into the latter group. Among these, the relation of religions and inter faith dialogue featured in a small number of books, sometimes explaining exclusivist stances rather than engaging with the question of truth; in one book - as the reviewer observed - *'the conflicting truth claims of religion are seen as disappearing if Hindu pluralism is accepted'*. Another had a *'tendency to place religions alongside each other as if this is unproblematic'* and *'without considering that conflicting truth claims are a real issue'*. One book offered a *'brief discussion of differing views on Jesus between Muslims and Christians'*, but this kind of discussion does not appear to be the norm. In one book a 'shared' problem was found in looking at the term 'fundamentalism' and comparing the ways in which this is applied to Muslims and Christians - reaching the conclusion that it is often misused of both. And finally one example had the potential to bring into focus historical, societal and theological interests in considering *'racism and anti-Semitism - including Christianity's part in this'*.

It remains to be noted, as in other sections of this report, that the KS4 / Post 16 books selected were written prior to the community cohesion requirements and guidance being given to schools; it may be that this focus will contribute to the future shaping of RE syllabuses and resources - perhaps resulting in more attention to the relationships between faiths and the promotion of a better understanding of the 'cutting edge' issues which divide them.

More generally, the books reviewed for KS4 serve a very specific purpose: they are designed to serve current examination requirements. The reviewer was able to affirm most in terms of the information they provide about the religions they cover: *'an impressively clear account'; 'full and detailed'; 'more than enough factual detail'; 'an impressive amount of information'*, and other such phrases, indicate the value of these particular books. For the reviewer some of the key qualities of a good textbook are embedded in this review of a book on Islam:

It takes learning seriously but recognises that teachers and students need to have clear, authentic stimulus material and tasks that require them to engage with this. It seems to pack in as much about Islam as any of the other more standard text books whilst also making Islam seem living and relevant, and getting students to think for themselves

3.1.4 Conclusion

This section has reported on the project's RE professional experts' evaluation of the books selected for review. The books reviewed were pupil/student texts. Related support materials for teachers, whether print or web based, were not part of the review of books. The comments which follow should be read in awareness of this.

After some general observations, this concluding summary follows the fivefold pattern which has been used throughout this section (3.1) in reporting on reviews at each Key Stage.

The review notes some points of contrast and similarity in books across the Key Stages which are important in relation to issues of continuity and development in RE throughout the Key Stages and beyond. In particular attention may be drawn to the following:

- Information books, the dominant genre at KS1 and KS2, share with KS4 books a focus on 'learning about religion', a focus on content and the communication of information;

- by way of contrast, books for KS3 have in the main have developed ways of approaching the now common requirement that pupils should also 'learn from religion'; one effect of this may be the tendency of some of the recent KS3 series to be more pupil focused than, for example, their KS4 counterparts;

- In distinction from most KS1/2 books, those for KS3 and KS4 are in varying degree shaped by factors relating to RE as currently understood for their respective Key Stage. Recent KS3 books, for example, offered programmes in relation to both content and learning influenced by the National Framework; books for KS4 and post-16 students related closely to the demands of examination specifications - frequently a sharp focus on information, as noted above;

- Consequently, it is at KS3 that books seem most likely to reflect or deliver religious education as currently understood, that is as offering students the opportunity to 'learn about' and 'learn from' religion(s); they may also contribute more to pupils' development in RE than those for other Key Stages.

- the reviews of books at each Key Stage point to the importance of the RE teacher's insight in making fullest use of available books; the qualitative differences among books for the different Key Stages, however, suggest that teachers at Key Stages1 and 2 especially require a professional understanding of RE to guide both their selection of books and their use of them, since this is not usually built into the books themselves.

These qualitative differences among books for the Key Stages and the consequent importance of teachers in the selection and use of books provide a backdrop to the summaries below.

(a) Requirements and initiatives

(i) In the main, books about religions for KS1/2 did not refer to current initiatives in RE; the reviewer's comments drew attention to the importance of teachers being able to relate them to the purposes of the subject. Since most focused primarily on learning about religion, teachers would in particular need to consider how they might be used to foster pupils' 'learning from religion'.

(ii) Books for KS3 variously demonstrated awareness of recent initiatives in RE. Most of them successfully balanced 'learning about' and 'learning from', achieving this in a number of ways, and most convincingly when these twin aspects of RE were well integrated in the learning process.

(iii) At KS4 books related primarily to examination requirements; the reviewer found that some offered opportunities for 'learning from religion' if the teacher identified and developed these, but books had yet to take advantage of the extended opportunities for this permitted by examination specifications.

(b) Learning across the curriculum: the contribution of RE

(i) At KS1 and 2 the books did not overall make specific contributions to the five named areas (personal and moral development; social and cultural understanding; community cohesion; global understanding; spiritual development); the books were essentially about religions and would depend on teachers' ability to draw out any wider implications.

(ii) KS3 books were found to make a significant contribution to pupils' personal and moral development: in their examination, for example, of a wide range of ethical and moral issues; through philosophical approaches to such issues; in the ideals they set before pupils and through their presentation of the moral framework religions offer.

In the area of social and cultural understanding the content selected for inclusion in books was cited, including for example the presentation of faiths in Britain, the relation of faith and life-style, and the contribution of faiths to community life; topics selected for study in just over half of the 37 KS3 books reviewed were considered relevant to community cohesion; books on specific religions seemed less likely to make significant contributions in this area. In addressing a global dimension, a distinction must be made between showing awareness of religions' global presence and engaging with global issues; books tended to demonstrate the former, although a few turned to issues.

Most of the KS3 books were found to have some contribution to make to students' spiritual development although not in equal measure. Their contribution here did not usually lie in content, but rather for example in their attention to students' personal engagement; to activities emerging from 'learning from'; to the questions students' were asked to consider; spacing for reflection on themes human and sometimes personal too.

(iii) At KS4 the books' contribution in these areas was often found to be implicit and their potential subject to teachers' drawing out of relevant material and offering students opportunities to engage with the content provided. Personal and moral development, spiritual development and community cohesion emerged as areas attended to by fewer than half of the books reviewed for KS4 and post16.

(c) Approaches to learning

(i) Books on specific religions were found to support strongly approaches to learning focused on the conveying and acquisition of information, as well as developing conceptual understanding. On the basis perhaps that knowledge prospers understanding, they were also judged to promote empathy and appreciation of religions, as well as enabling independent learning. Story books, reviewed in relation to a different template (Appendix A.2.5) may be seen e.g. as addressing matters of value and meaning which were less prominent in the information books.

(ii) Most series reviewed at KS3 were found to support all the approaches to learning in RE listed in the review template (Appendix A2.2); KS3 books reflect the 'traditional' shift to a 'textbook' in secondary schools - packaged learning which may account for the relatively low 'scoring of these books in relation to independent learning.

(iii) At KS4 books were focused on conveying information, asking questions and the development of concepts and setting tasks; the prominence of these four concerns is indicative of most of the books' status as examination texts.

(d) Accessibility

Evaluation of books' accessibility pointed both to weaknesses and to positive features. **Across the Key Stages** the reviews focused on three main areas; at this point attention is drawn to some of the 'weaknesses' in each of these areas, reserving the positive features for 'recommendations' below.

(i) **Text:** emerged as an area of concern across the Key Stages. Problems included for example: font size; density of text; long paragraphs; quantity and complexity of text; design and layout which makes text hard to follow; level of literacy demanded by texts.

(ii) **Visuals:** were commonly used as illustration of the text; where problems emerged they tended to relate to matters of gender, colour (failure for example to show Christianity as a global faith), stereotype, or a poor or insensitive choice of visual and /or caption. Across the Key Stages it was clear was that visuals are rarely employed to promote pupils' learning – books fail to *use* them.

(iii) **Activities:** were not common in the primary school books reviewed, but do of course assume importance in secondary school textbooks. It was clear that the development of RE in recent years has left some books behind in relation to the activities and tasks they suggest. Limited and unchallenging tasks - copying, drawing, matching sentences, for example - whilst still occurring in some KS3 books were not widespread; in contrast , there was also evidence of the identification of tasks and activities as part of a thought out learning process underpinning a KS3 series. This shift in perspective did not seem to apply to many of the KS4 books reviewed, where a dominant concern of activities continued to be comprehension, and limited opportunities for the application of knowledge and understanding.

(e) Community cohesion

(I) At KS1 and 2 positive contributions to community cohesion were seen in the capacity of stories to explore shared values and provide insight into things which 'matter' to communities and in the value of books which allow children to engage with their contemporaries 'on the page'. Awareness of controversial issues within / among religions may be prompted by some information books at KS2, but such issues are not examined in any detail.

(ii) At KS3 and KS4 issues identified as controversial within and among religions tend to be those commonly addressed in GCSE courses relating to ethical and moral issues; additionally attention was given in some to divisions within individual religions, whilst a further area related selected social and political issues. At present it would seem more common for textbooks to consider issues which may be examined from the perspective of different faiths, rather than those issues where the roots of controversy lie between/among religions themselves.

3.2   RE Professionals' Perspectives: Web-Based Materials

3.2.1 Introduction

The following analysis of the template provided for the Professional RE experts focuses on their observations made in the check boxes and in the open-ended comments on the web resources that they reviewed (see Appendix A2.3 for the template). The open-ended comments were often made by way of explanation or illustration of their answers to the closed questions. It is important to realise that the reviewers were given a cross section of the kind of web resources that are being used in classrooms. These, by the very nature of on-line resources, are not comprehensive or exhaustive. Each reviewer was examined resources that were particular to a Key Stage.

The analysis of the reviewers' comments involved reading through the completed templates submitted on the web resources, plotting this on a comparison spreadsheet and doing some numerical analysis on the answers and drawing conclusions from these comments.

3.2.2 The websites selected for review

Due to the overwhelming numbers of websites available for use by schools, and the unrestricted nature of the internet, criteria were needed for selecting websites for review. These were formulated and applied in two stages:

(a) Stage 1

For the first round of reviews, selection was made by the ICT expert according to a number of criteria:

- Websites that were known to be used in school, this was determined by:

- The experience of the web reviewer in this area

- An analysis of links from known school websites and previous work in this area (as reported in Hopkins 2008 and described in Hopkins 2009)

- The frequency or 'hit rate' of sites from the most common of the RE specific search engine (www.reonline.org.uk) and from Google analysis

- Relevance to the core aims of the project of examination of the six world religions specified in the tender (and the National Framework) and relevance to community cohesion.

- Coverage of each Key Stage (from ages 5 to 19), of the respective religions.

(b) Stage 2

As data came in from the qualitative case studies and quantitative survey, any websites not reviewed were given to reviewers as part of the stage 2 materials. There were few of these.

3.2.3. Materials outside of the remit of this research

A decision was made to exclude subscription sites as the costs of accessing these would have been very high. There were also issues with Local Authority intranets that often were restricted to schools in the particular Local Authority. Finally, specific areas of some sites were targeted, as the whole sites were often very extensive.

3.2.4 Analysis

The analysis was conducted in relation to each of the questions given to the reviewers on the templates provided (see Appendices to Section 2).

(a) Attention to official documents

Reviewers were asked:

Does the website draw attention to its relevance to the agreed syllabuses for RE, The Non-Statutory National Framework, the New Secondary Curriculum, QCA schemes of work, examination syllabuses?

Responses indicated that it was very rare that a website drew attention to any of these documents. Of the 30 websites reviewed by the Primary expert, only 2 mentioned the QCA schemes of work, and there were no references to any other of the documents. In the secondary review (62 sites), only 8 made reference to the QCA schemes of work. However, all of these references were to the old QCA schemes (which were revised and replaced in 2008). There was also one site which, whilst it used the language of the New Secondary Curriculum, did not explicitly refer to it.

It is possible that this lack of reference to official documents is because of the wide number of locally agreed syllabuses and faith based syllabuses. This does not explain the lack of reference to the National Framework. Perhaps this is due to its non-statutory status. The reviewers were not asked to comment on how useful linkage of sites to syllabuses and curriculum documents would be. It should be noted that some of the sites that *are* tied specifically to a syllabus (via an examination board or a text book) are subscription sites. These were outside the remit of this report.

(b) The focus of the website

The reviewers were asked how best to describe the focus of the website. In particular, they were asked about whether its contributions were mainly to pupils' 'learning about' religion or ''learning from'' religion, and whether it offered a balanced opportunity both to learn about and learn from religion.

The primary reviewer found a balance of contribution, with a third offering a bias towards 'learning about', and two thirds offering a more balanced approach to 'learning about' and 'learning from'. The secondary reviewers found a more pronounced bias with about two thirds being biased towards 'learning about' at Key Stages 3 and 4; The reviewers found less than a fifth (KS3) and only a few (KS4) to have a balance of 'learning about' and 'learning from' and about a tenth (KS3) and and a quarter (KS4) suggesting that the site contributed to neither 'learning about' nor 'learning from'. From the associated comments a number of themes arise:

(i) A focus on description

Sites that were determined to be focused on 'learning about' often had a large amount of descriptive text, sometimes with supporting audio visual materials, without exposition or challenging the students to interact with or react to the materials. The primary reviewer made this point on a number of occasions. For example: *'This part of the website is entitled "Christianity for Children" and sets out to describe the life and teaching of Jesus, including some of his better known stories* and '*It describes the main beliefs of Christians and is written for primary aged children'.* There is often a large amount of text with occasional supporting images, but, as one reviewer put it, these sites are rather dull 'textbooks on the screen'.

The secondary reviewers made similar comments *'This is all factual material about Christianity'* and *'Very detailed information on symbolism within Buddhism.'* There are some sites which offer some audio-visual materials: *'The site provides a range of AV material showing how Muslims perform the Hajj and why, but also how it transforms the lives of Muslims'.* Some sites gave information about sacred texts, for example *'Information about several Jewish texts is provided, e.g. 13th C Babylonian Talmud - background information and images'.*

(ii) The confessional or educational nature of the materials

All the professional reviewers commented on the difference between materials that had been written with broad educational aims in mind and materials that had been written either for use within a faith community or in order to evangelise or proselytise.

The primary reviewer commented: *'This site does offer a balance, although it is not really aimed at the UK school pupil',* and *'it is not clear until you look at the teachers' handbook that this is for teaching Buddhism to children of Buddhist parents! i.e. for confessional purposes'.'*

The reviewers do not dismiss sites that are aimed at practitioners, acknowledging that they can be very useful in the classroom if moderated by the teacher and used carefully. For example,

> *Much of the material could be used to help students understand the nature of Buddhism in terms of 'learning about'.*

> *The site is primarily about conveying information about Judaism. This is done in a reasonably objective way. The author is Jewish and she gives good inside knowledge about the traditions and practices of Jews'.*

However, reviewers were concerned that there is not always a clear distinction between whether the author is aiming to address members of the faith community, to deliver a message to potential members of the community or to offer an informed and balanced view about the faith community.

(iii) Sites providing balance

Sites reviewed which were considered as having a balance of 'learning about' and 'learning from' were those that gave students an opportunity both to read 'information' and to hear or interact with the opinions of practitioners of the faith.

> *There is a good balance of 'learning about' and 'learning from' Christianity throughout the seven sections of this resource. Each section enables the pupil and teacher to learn facts as well as to find out what Christians say or think, watch related video clips, ask questions, follow activities, or listen to interview and music.*

This balance allows students to distinguish between the information they are learning about the faith tradition and make critical decisions about the information that they have received and how this impacts on their own beliefs, understanding and spiritual development. This is exemplified well by the following comment from the primary reviewer:

> *It explains in detail about the place of worship, its importance within the community, how and why Sikhs worship, meet, educate, eat and play there…*

and from the secondary reviewer:

> *The examples of biblical stories unpacked allow for reflection and response.*

It is worth nothing that, whilst the reviewers classified a large proportion of the resources as having a 'learning about' focus, there was an acknowledgement that these could be used in a more reflective way: *'Lots of opportunity to reflect on the impact of Hajj and compare with their own lives.'*

(c) Contribution of the resource to understanding, community cohesion and personal development

The reviewers were asked:

In your view does the resource contribute towards: pupils' personal and moral development, community cohesion, social and cultural understanding, global understanding and pupils' spiritual development.

The primary and KS3 reviewers found that the sites offered some contribution to many of these areas, whilst the KS4 reviewer was less positive:

Table 10 - Coverage of moral, social and global issues including community cohesion

	Primary	KS3	KS4
Personal and Moral Development	47%	58%	10%
Community Cohesion	49%	35%	7%
Social and Cultural Understanding	54%	87%	31%
Global Understanding	60%	84%	5%
Spiritual Development	89.5%	36%	14%

Number of websites = 30 (primary), 32 (KS3) and 30 (KS4)

(i) Personal and moral development

Often, reflective tasks - usually involving some engagement with the materials - are seen by authors as contributing to pupils' personal and moral development. Sometimes there are examples on the sites of people who have behaved or acted in a way that would inspire or influence the students.

This was so…*particularly on the pages referring to Jesus' life and teaching, Christian beliefs and worship.'*

> *Gives examples of real people and situations; asks questions and encourages learners to ponder.*

The reviewers all spoke positively of sites which offered the opportunity for students to reflect on how the lives of historical or mythological figures from within the traditions might be relevant to the development of their own worldviews.

(ii) Community cohesion

The reviewers linked the idea of 'helping people' and 'thinking about people in their own communities' to the development of community cohesion, alongside 'understanding another's perspective'. While the primary reviewer identified about half the sites and the secondary reviewer about a third (KS3) (see data above) as contributing to community cohesion, they both felt that this was something that would need exemplifying and developing by the teacher.

The KS3 reviewer also thought that the materials and their production would offer an interesting starting point for discussion on community cohesion:

> *…shows how Muslims from across the world, from different walks of life, descend on Mecca.*

> *The fact that Channel 4 was allowed to film in such a way is an excellent discussion point in terms of promoting community cohesion.*

Websites sometimes emphasised the dangers of generalisation:

> *There is good explanation in a downloadable PowerPoint explaining that there are no such people as Islamic Terrorists; rather, some Muslims are terrorists. This seems a helpful distinction. It also points out that other faiths also experience the presence of extremists. The aim is to try to dispel myths about Islam.*

There were also comments on the openness of religions, and religions crossing boundaries,

> *… the Golden Temple is open to all.*

> *…there is an image of Jesus as a guru which the text claims aims to cross the barriers that exist between religions.'*

This last quotation also shows that websites do not necessarily make a clear distinction between the expression of a religion's teaching using possibly unfamiliar cultural symbols (Jesus the teacher portrayed symbolically as Jesus as a guru) and an assumption about the theological relationship between faiths.

In some cases the primary reviewer felt that sites included all of the above 5 areas (personal and moral development, community cohesion, social and cultural understanding, global understanding and spiritual development) within the site's contents and that the teacher would be able to draw these out when working with the pupils. She also considered that the websites contained topics that were pertinent to community issues. (See also the later section on Community Cohesion.)

(iii) Social and cultural understanding

Social and Cultural Understanding was linked by the reviewers to understanding a range of practices from the religions and exploring them across history, geography and cultures.

Reviewers were positive about the ways in which sites situated religion within its wider socio-cultural arena but were also cautious about teachers of RE losing the focus of the academic study of religion and making sure that they did not drift too far into covering sociological points rather than clear and accurate information about religions.

The KS4 reviewer commented on the importance of understanding the viewpoint of the believer as part of the development of social and cultural understanding:

> *…the use of authentic Christian voices responding to the ethical issues can be used to demand responses from students.*

> *Good insight into Jewish beliefs from a Jewish believer.'*

Again there were some concerns expressed that these ideas would need to be facilitated by the teacher: '*This will depend upon how the material is used by the teacher'*.

(iv) Global understanding

The reviewers commented on websites encouraging care for the Environment, a link commonly made in RE, *'the Creation Story is told and explored including issues about caring for the world'* and *'issues such as caring for the world … are explained and explored;'*

However, the issues receiving most comment from reviewers were the presentation of faiths as '*worldwide*' or on the '*worldwide perceptions of these faiths*'

> *…awareness of the global nature of Buddhism is shown through the stories.*

> *The site addresses Diwali in History, Traditions and Customs,* (bringing out its) *meaning and significance,* (as part of) *celebrations across the world, and also its regional significance*

> *Examples of Buddhism from around the world are presented.*

This awareness of religions as having both a global and a local character, and how these are linked, was seen as an important contribution to understanding religious traditions and how faith and beliefs are affected by their geographical locations and their interactions with the existent cultures in the societies in which they are set.

(v) Spiritual development

Although reviewers were more positive about resources that offered reflective teaching and learning ideas which might contribute to pupils' spiritual development, as well as information or facts about the religions, they also pointed to the inappropriateness of some experiential activities (from more 'confessional' sites) for use in religious education in community schools or in any schools which had classes with children from a variety of religion and belief backgrounds. These included the suggestion that children might participate in worship or meditation in the classroom.

(d) Approaches to learning

Table 11: Responses to the question 'Which of the following characterises the resource's approach to learning?'

Yes responses

	KS1/2	KS3	KS4
Conveying information about the focus religion(s)	100%	97%	73%
Asking questions about the focus religion(s)	15%	34%	22%
Asking ultimate questions	16%	13%	6%
Raising questions of values and meaning	49%	49%	9%
Developing an understanding of concepts	68%	51%	41%
Developing skills to interpret and understand religion(s)	21%	10%	6%
Promoting empathy and appreciation of the focus religion(s)	71%	51%	37%
Setting tasks for the pupils to undertake on the focus religion(s)	34%	21%	0%
Promotes independent learning	68%	10%	3%

Number of websites = 30 (primary), 32 (KS3) and 30 (KS4)

It can be seen from Table 11 that all the sites reviewed were seen to convey information about the particular religion under consideration. Just less than half the primary sites reviewed tackled questions of value and meaning, but it was more common for them to mention understanding of concepts and promoting empathy. The primary reviewer also felt that there was promotion of independent learning in just over two thirds of the sites.

The picture was similar for the primary and the Key Stage 3 reviewers but very different in the case of the KS4 reviewer. Here the sites were found predominantly to be sources of information about the religions. The KS4 reviewer was concerned that many of the sites reviewed were pedagogically under developed, with little attention to developing skills to interpret and understand religion(s), or relating material studied to the experience of the learner, through raising existential issues or questions of value and meaning. There was very little promotion of independent learning in the sites considered by the KS4 reviewer.

(e) Use of the resource / accessibility

Table 12 - Accessibility and Appropriateness of Electronic Resources
Yes responses

	KS1/2	KS3	KS4
Is the text accessible for its target group?	71%	82%	48%
Are key vocabularies / terms linked to explanatory references?	48%	22%	20%
If the website used the following resources are they used appropriately?			
Photographs	76%	78%	52%
Video Material	29%	19%	8%
Audio materials	29%	26%	36%
Animated materials	33%	11%	4%
Interactive material	24%	19%	20%
Graphic materials (e.g. charts, tables, diagrams)	33%	4%	12%
Are AV materials used to engage pupils in learning?	77%	26%	4%
Are AV materials used appropriately for learning?	58%	44%	4%
Are links to other sites appropriately used to support learning ?	62%	67%	36%
Are links to other sites clearly differentiated?	58%	63%	52%
Are the activities appropriate to the focus religion/s?	53%	44%	32%
Are activities appropriate for the target age group?	43%	15%	8%
Is the resource accessible for pupils of different abilities?	33%	37%	16%

Number of websites = 30 (primary), 32 (KS3) and 30 (KS4)

It can be seen from Table 12 that the majority of the KS3 and KS4 sites that were reviewed (and these are the sites which were deemed to be most in use in schools) are still dominated by a 'book on screen' approach using text and image and not developing the more audio-visual or interactive tools available on-line. The picture is better for those sites aimed at younger children where a wider range of materials and a greater understanding of learning styles are shown. None of the sites reviewed made any use of Web 2.0 technologies,[23] allowing for user participation in the generation of content. A 'top-down' approach to the dissemination of expertise and information predominates.

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[23] Web 2.0 technologies are web based tools in which the user has a more interactive role in developing and inputting content. All the sites reviewed consisted of content selected by the website provider and were not collaborative collections of materials.

(i) Weaknesses of the sites

Reviewers were asked to provide comments if they gave negative answers to any of the questions in Table 12, thus identifying weaknesses in the sites.

The primary reviewer identified several themes. The first concerned language levels and access. Many of the sites which claim to be for 'primary' or for 'younger children' are not suitable for this age group.

> *The home page refers to it being written for 'little children - primary school age'. However, I would only use this with KS2 children as much of the vocabulary is beyond that of younger pupils.*

> *The text is accessible with adult support although fluent Y2 readers should manage to read most of the text unaided.*

The second theme was around broken links or missing support materials. The third theme was the absence of appropriate activities.

> *There were no activities, other than clicking on the captions to obtain the next photograph.*

Some similar points were made by the KS3 reviewer. The most common additional point was the 'dullness' of the sites. The reviewer commented many times on the lack of audio-visual materials or on the excessive amounts of text to be read.

> *There are no AV materials to comment on…The site is textually very heavy…There is a huge amount of reading involved…the text is very detailed and would have limited use with KS3 pupils.*

The reviewers were looking only at free sites, and it may be the case that commercially available material is of much better quality. However, as many RE teachers have very limited budgets, some of them (as in some of the case study and survey schools) are likely to turn to free materials.

Comments were also requested about the activities included on the sites and several responses referred to the lack of activities and their poor quality.

The low and inappropriate level of tasks for KS4 pupils was also a concern, with some considered to be more appropriate for KS3 rather than KS4. There were some negative comments about sites which were not set up specifically for educational purposes.

> *This is not an educational site. It is not set up for classroom use. It is an information site for Buddhists, primarily.*

Where there were positive comments about the sites, they focused on resources that the reviewers found stimulating and exciting. These were often, but not always, AV resources.

> *The 'magazine' section has some good photo documentaries which may be more accessible and could be used as a stimulus for creative writing. This section also has comic strip stories - some explaining quite difficult concepts in fairly straightforward language.*

> *This site has a huge range of different types of material - videos of the people who were involved in the project, videos of Hajj, slide shows, audio material (including prayers), interviews, 'ask an imam'…if pupils found the text hard then there are plenty of other sources to use. There is a glossary of Islamic terms*

These comments illustrate that, when sites make use of resources which cannot be replicated in text-books, they can be creative learning tools.

The reviewers were also positive when they considered that some thought had been given to the types of resource that were used.

> *There is much in the content which would support learners in developing their knowledge about Judaism.*

> *There were lots of video clips of different practices in Christianity, e.g. the communion service.*

Positive comments, where the site was seen as a rich resource for the teacher, included:

> *There is plenty of material for teachers to use to develop their own knowledge and understanding and for upper secondary pupils.*

> *The site seems geared to teachers and students of RE who wish to increase their own knowledge and understanding of Hinduism.*

(ii) Comments on activities

The reviewers were asked to comment on the activities suggested (if there were any) and to indicate how they support learning. In particular, they were asked to distinguish between activities aimed at individual student learning, mediated student learning or teacher led learning.

Activities were deemed to be positive when they offered a variety of learning styles and opportunities, and offered both 'learning about' and 'learning from' perspectives.

There was a note of caution that some of the activities needed prior knowledge before the children could usefully engage with them:

> *The games also require understanding about Buddhist practice, belief and teaching. Games, puzzles and quizzes would require a reasonable knowledge of the particular story or belief for pupils to access them.*

The KS3 reviewer had concerns over the level of the activities and that these were too basic for Key Stage 3 students, lacked challenge and often only covered 'learning about' religions. Activities often simply demanded factual recall or reorganisation and repetition. Higher cognitive skills, such as synthesis or evaluation, were rarely required. Many of the activities suggested on the sites would only be suitable for use if directed by the teacher.

(f) Practicalities

Table 13 - Website Navigation

Yes responses

_____

	KS1/2	KS3	KS4
Is there a site map / structure of the resources on the site?	95%	52%	68%
Is it easy to navigate around the site?	95%	85%	6%
Is it clear where you are within the site?	86%	81%	64%
Does the site have a search engine?	24%	63%	60%

_____

Number of websites = 30 (primary), 32 (KS3) and 30 (KS4)

These data reflect the change in the expectations of the users of the sites from the primary to the upper secondary range. There is an expectation that older users of sites will be more competent in the use of search technologies; the sites become more complex for older users. Clearly, designers of resources for students need to be aware of the age range of potential users.

(i) Comments on the effectiveness of these tools

The primary reviewer commented on the usefulness of simple site maps:

> _There is a simple site map on the 'home page' and it is easy to navigate._

> _The site map and good navigation enables users to move around without having to keep returning to 'base', unless they choose to do so._

She made several positive comments about the usefulness of a graphical interface for younger pupils

> _Being a virtual tour, the site has a small map for pupils to explore which takes users to a different part of the monastery._

> _The site map consists of a row of books and a separate icon for Sikh weddings._

A site map, or a graphical interface, is important as sites are non-linear in their construction and it can be very easy for a user to 'get lost' in the navigational structure of a site.

Linking to other sites was seen as a positive aspect of websites, as long as these were relevant links and were clear. However, a note of caution was sounded over where some of these links might go:

> _Some of the web links on the 'parent's place' would be accessible to children, although they are not necessarily appropriate._

(ii) Direction to other sites

Reviewers were asked whether sites directed them to other resources, and whether sites required the installation of additional software.

Table 14 - Site direction and requirement to install software

Yes responses

_____

	KS1/2	KS3	KS4
If the site directs you to resources outside its own creation, is this obvious?	67%	67%	64%
Does the site require you to install any additional software?	10%	41%	40%

_____

Number of websites = 30 (primary), 32 (KS3) and 30 (KS4)

It is important for pupils to know when they are looking at a 'primary source' which they have been given by their teacher or have found as part of their own researches, and when they have left this primary resource and moved to another. This linking is one of the primary advantages of e-resources over paper based resources. However, the transition from one site to another must be clear and transparent.

For the secondary reviewers, linking to external sites could be seen positively, although complaints were made about the high number of adverts on websites. Some frustrations were expressed over the need to install software in order to use resources.

(iii) What makes a site 'feel' right?

Comments were made by both primary and secondary reviewers about what made a site 'feel' right. These might be summed up as simplicity and clarity of layout, balance of content, text being directed to the reader, and ease of navigation.

For the primary reviewer the balance of text and AV was important for the site to 'feel' good. For the secondary reviewers the clarity and simplicity of sites were important both in terms of navigation and in the aesthetic effect.

(g) Community cohesion

Reviewers were asked a series of questions related to themes that might contribute to community cohesion. These are set out below in Table 15.

Table15 - Community Cohesion

Yes responses

_____

	KS1/2	KS3	KS4
Is attention given to a shared humanity valued by those of all faiths and none?	39%	44%	4%
Does the resource tackle any controversial issues *within* the focus religion	29%	44%	52%
Does the resource tackle any controversial issues *among* religions?	5%	15%	24%
Does the resource include any material which may be offensive to those of 'other' faiths	5%	19%	0%
Does the resource introduce pupils to friendship and cooperation between people of different religions?	14%	4%	8%
Where reference is made to religions other than the focus religion are they treated with respect?	29%	74%	52%
Where reference is made to those who have no religious beliefs are they treated with respect?	39%	67%	12%
Are differing traditions within the focus religion treated with respect?	39%	86%	68%

_____

Number of websites = 30 (primary), 32 (KS3) and 30 (KS4)

In general, community cohesion was not tackled directly by the websites reviewed (ie, those specifically on world religions). There is a group of sites that have been developed to support community cohesion.[24] The reviewers felt that the sites potentially could contribute to the areas of community cohesion outlined in Table 15 but their potential for this would depend largely on the way in which the sites were used by teachers. It was concerning to note that about a fifth of the sites offered materials that the reviewers felt could cause offence. However, where comments were offered by reviewers, they referred to insensitivity rather than to a deliberate intention to be offensive.

(i) Controversial issues:

The primary reviewer commented on how,

> *Some of the questions, particularly for older children, may lead to discussion of controversial issues.*

---

[24] The most prominent of these is http://www.cohesioninstitute.org.uk the Institute of Community Cohesion (iCoCo) and this site links to a number of other sites.

However, in relation to another site the reviewer reported:

> *Nothing highly controversial - baptism, marriage, death, creation are all explored sensitively.*

Sometimes the reviewer felt that sites *avoided* controversial issues, or did not tackle them directly:

> *Yes, but the site doesn't imply that the issues are controversial, e.g. women's clothing.*

(ii) Promotion of equality, respect and tolerance:

All the reviewers commented on how sites are keen to display the values of equality, respect and tolerance.

> *However from the 'feel' of the site I would imagine that treating others with respect would be high on the list of values…*
>
> *…divorce, celibacy, prejudice and discrimination, equality etc are all tackled in a sensitive manner',*
>
> *Shared humanity stories about sharing, kindness and friendship…*
> *It's made clear that non-Sikhs are always welcome to the Gurdwara. Meals and drinks are always available free of charge to anyone who needs food, regardless of belief.*
>
> *The equality of all is highlighted.*

The general impression is given that many sites have no clear rationale for dealing *both* with controversial issues associated with religions (including issues of conflict), *and* with issues of tolerance and respect.

(h) Enjoyment, Engagement and Excitement

Reviewers were asked a series of questions relating to the potential of websites to foster students' enjoyment, engagement and excitement (see Table 16 below)

Table 16 - Enjoyment, Engagement and Excitement

_____

	KS1/2	KS3	KS4
Will this resource excite the pupils about the religion / belief?	24%	30%	4%
Will this resource be enjoyable?	95%	37%	32%
Will this resource, and the activities be engaging	24%	30%	16%

_____

Number of websites = 30 (primary), 32 (KS3) and 30 (KS4)

It can be seen from Table 16 that the primary reviewer found a substantial majority of the resources likely to be enjoyable while only about a quarter would be likely to excite or engage pupils.

The KS3 reviewer found the resources slightly more engaging than the primary, whilst the KS4 reviewer gave the lowest rankings. The primary reviewer considered that the great majority of the sites would be found to be enjoyable, while the secondary reviewers judged this to be so in only about a third of the sites. This could reflect the effort put into the design of web space for the younger pupils in contrast to sites for older users, or that the more exciting resources for older pupils tend not to be in the world religions field. There has been a move in recent years, especially at GCSE level, away from the study of religions and towards the study of ethical and philosophical issues, and it may be these that GCSE students find more engaging. More attention to exploring issues on sites dealing with religions, rather than simply providing information, would make them more attractive and engaging to older users.

(i) General comments: Primary

The reviewer noted the importance of sites that would engage and excite the students and commented on the resources that would do this for her own pupils and, in her estimation, for pupils in other primary classrooms. These were sites where good quality AV materials, the right language level and interesting, appropriate activities came together. The reviewer commented on two types of resources that would be most useful: those that could be used by the teacher for leading learning in the classroom, and those that could be used by the pupils for independent learning.

The reviewer commented that most resources would need to be mediated in their use by the teacher, but there were a few that could be used independently by older primary students

The reviewer also commented on how resources need to be suitable for the ages of the pupils and, as noted above, there are often questions around text, vocabulary and comprehension, which sometimes relate to previous learning.

(ii) General comments: Secondary

The two secondary reviewers' comments cover similar themes. They commented on the potential of a minority of sites to engage students, in terms of enjoyment and interest. However, it was more likely that sites would neither excite nor engage students.
Some sites were unsuitable because they were not aimed at the appropriate age or ability group:

> *The resource is too high level for KS3. It is…aimed more for the teacher to use as a basis for teaching and learning activities and/or to acquire knowledge about the Hindu tradition.*

> *The teacher might use this to get a basic understanding of Wesak. It is not really aimed at pupils as such.*

Some comments were more positive:

> *I liked this site - a personal view from a practising Buddhist, including lots of appropriate quotations and extracts from Buddhist sources.*

(i) Concerns over impartiality and the purpose of websites

The reviewers were aware that some sites written by some religious groups might have a proselytising agenda, which, it was felt, would more likely to be encountered on-line than in textual materials.

> *The teacher would need to be careful if recommending this site for homework use as it has confessional overtones in places*

3.2.5. General conclusions and Implications for development of e-resources

As mentioned in the introduction, the sites reviewed represent only a tiny sample of what a teacher, or student, can access free of charge on-line (see Hayward and Hopkins 2010) Two main categories of sites have been reviewed: those developed for the religious education classroom and those developed for practitioners of particular religions. As the reviewers have commented, both of these types of site can be engaging and useful for the RE teacher and RE student.

Budgetary constraints precluded analysis of pay resources, which are often linked to text books or to schemes of work. However, as is evident from the case studies and the survey, many teachers are using free sites.

From the review it was found that many sites are still, in effect, 'books in an electronic form'. This format only takes advantage of one web technology, namely hyperlinking. The sites that were found by reviewers to be more engaging and attractive are those that utilise video and audio materials, those which offer interactivity, and those which offer engagement with the current traditions and lives of practitioners. There were no examples, among the sites and resources reviewed, of the use of Web 2.0 tools designed to encourage communication and collaboration, or the creation by users of resources for the community.

Few sites reviewed were seen to be useful to students without guidance from the teacher. A few sites are being developed which aim to foster independent learning, but many of these are pay sites and are outside the remit of this project. Some of these are developing activities drawing on suitable e-materials and also providing students with tools to develop a product. This is the next stage of development which will be a more dynamic and interactive on-line experience than that provided currently by most free sites. There are a few exceptions among free sites. These are exemplified by the following reviews:

> *This is one of the best sites I have seen on Hajj. There are endless possibilities for classroom use. The material shows modern Muslims from a range of backgrounds who all have one thing in common. Hearing the personal accounts allows the students to engage with 'real life' faith perspectives and shows how faith can change lives - very powerful. The resource is completely interactive and students will enjoy following different 'threads', depending on their focus.*

> *The resource gives a clear presentation of Buddhism. The site is colourful and bright and the use of images is good. The video section is perhaps the most useful for KS3 as the students gain different Buddhist perspectives on a range of issues and can compare responses. This allows them to analyse and evaluate beliefs. The site is easy to use so this would help pupils to remain engaged with the material*

3.2.6 Recommendations for the development of future web-based materials

There are a number of recommendations for the development of future e-resources that can be drawn from the comments from reviewers:

The resource should be designed for the age range that is expected to use it. Consideration should be given to language, including size, balance and complexity of the text.

There should be more extensive use of audio-visual materials to stimulate and engage pupils. It is especially important to include video and audio recordings of believers expressing their own ideas.

Resources should include carefully constructed learning activities, targeted at the appropriate age range, which offer the opportunity to engage learners in a variety of pedagogical tasks, allowing class, group and independent learning across a range of learning styles. These tasks should be linked to curriculum activities. Sites need to be simple, with a focus on a topic, and on links between topics. E-resources need to be mediated by a teacher and, while they can include independent learning, they should be part of a collaborative, managed process.

3.2.7 Checklist for teachers

The following is a suggested checklist for teachers, based on the responses of the reviewers, for use when selecting websites for use in teaching about world religions.

(a) Authenticity / Credibility

- Where does the site originate from?

- Who is sponsoring / paying for the site? Is this a religious / secular organisation? Does this have an impact on the content?

- Who is the author (individual or group)? Is this obvious? Does this have an impact on the content?

- What is the bias of the site and is this obvious/stated?

- What is the academic credibility of the site?

  - o   Does it attribute sources?
  - o   Does it cite evidence?
  - o   Does it include a bibliography/list of websites?

- When was the site last updated? Does this matter?

- Is the site acceptable in terms of gender, creed, race, sexuality, age, values?

(b) Content

- How does the content of this site fit into your syllabus (aims, objectives, outcomes)?

- Which age / year group is it suitable for?

  o   What RE might be better taught using this site?
  o   What tasks can you set?
  o   How would they be assessed?

- How is this website better than another resource (DVD, video, textbook, artefact)?

  o   What range of content does the site offer (e.g. text, AV, animations, assessment)?

- Is the readability suitable for the age group that the material is aimed at?

- Is the content of the website accurate (how do you know?)

- Is the content free from bias, or is the site honest about its bias?

- Is the content up-to-date?

(c) Navigation

- Is the structure of the resource, and what it contains, obvious?

- Can you get back where you came from, and to the home page, easily and from within the site?

- Does the site have a search engine - how useful / effective is it?

- Does the site direct you to other sites - is it obvious when this has happened?

- Is there a good balance of text, space and image?

- Multi-media usage?

Does the resource require you to download / install any software / plug-ins? If so is this easy / obvious?

3.3   Faith Consultants' and Academic Experts' Perspectives: Print Materials

3.3.1 Introduction

This section of the report presents findings that are addressed to the third and fifth research questions: investigating the content and nature of the materials used in schools and relating that to the key factors to be considered when determining which materials to use in school. The emphases of these two research questions are combined in a subsidiary question that guides the analysis of the faith consultant and academics' reviews of religious education materials.

Understanding of and positive attitudes towards the six religions

The reviewers undertook a detailed and thorough analysis of a broad range of materials relating to their religion in order to answer consider the issues related to understanding of and positive attitudes towards the religions. Each expert reviewed between 30 and 35 print items. From their answers it is possible to put forward some recommendations from a faith

perspective for the selection of religious education resources. Both print materials and web-based materials were reviewed. As the different nature of the resources raises different issues, the results of the review of print materials and the review of web-based materials are being presented separately (3.4)

The following analysis focuses on observations made by the faith consultants and academic experts in the open-ended comments boxes on the templates for the print materials they reviewed. These comments were often made by way of explanation or illustration of their answers to the closed questions. The responses enable the identification of those elements in commonly-used religious education materials that, in the perspectives of the reviewers, help or hinder the development of pupils' understanding and positive attitudes towards the six religions being considered.

The analysis of the reviewers' comments involved:

- Reading through the templates of each faith consultant and academic expert independently

- Grounded analysis to identify key categories for each reviewer

- Comparison of the categories across the reviewers to find headings for a combined analysis

The resulting report recognises that there are common themes and an overlap of concerns across the reviews of the thirteen reviewers, but is also alert to some variations of representation and interpretation between the faith traditions due in part to their different histories and positions in English society today. The report reflects the multi-voiced nature of the analysis, keeps close to the reviewers' meanings and also captures the tone of the comments which is often indicative of the weight they are giving to the point being made. The final section (3.3.9) provides a summary of the findings from the review for each of the six religions and for the approaches to religious education more generally. In answer to the question, it sets out the main qualities that, in the reviewers' understanding, would help develop pupils' understanding of and positive attitudes towards the religions.

Although the contributions of two constituencies, faith consultants and academic experts, are being presented here, a decision has been made not to separate them but to present a combined analysis. There are several reasons for this. The faith consultants and academic experts were using the same template for review of the materials and so answering the same questions. More importantly, when their completed templates were viewed by the research team it was found that there were so many commonalities in the concerns and perspectives of the two groups that it would be false and unhelpful to separate them. This is perhaps a reflection of the fact that leading figures in religious traditions are likely to be scholars of their own tradition and that professional academics very often have a faith commitment themselves, so the academic/faith consultant distinction is not clear cut. What the combination of the two groups has ensured, however, is that the perspectives of knowledge and learning, and of faith and community are all integrated into the analysis.

The identity of the reviewer in terms of their focus faith and their faith consultant or academic status is indicated with a coding system[25]. The Buddhist faith consultant role was shared between two consultants.

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[25] The focus faiths are represented by initials: B=Buddhism; C=Christianity; H=Hinduism; I=Islam; J=Judaism; S=Sikhism.
A=academic expert; F=faith consultant

3.3.2 Accuracy

Reviewers made several positive comments about the accuracy of some of the materials they reviewed. In a few cases they noted the overall accuracy of the representation, the accuracy of the historical account, or, at a more focused level, accurate portrayals of details of belief and practice: a text on Buddhism was commended as '*detailed and highly accurate*' (BFi), for example, and one on Judaism for being '*an accurate representation of Jewish perspectives on a broad range of moral issues*' (JA). The representations of Islam in particular were often commended for their accuracy (IF).

However, there were also frequent references to inaccuracies found in the materials' representation of the religions. Occasional errors were noted in some texts but others included so many mistakes as to undermine their value as teaching and learning resources. Reviewers, both faith consultants and academics, were very critical of this. As a reviewer wrote of one of the Sikhism texts, there are '*too many errors for this book to be of merit*' (SA). The accuracy of texts on Judaism was found to be particularly problematic: '*in general I found the material poor and far too frequently inaccurate*' (JF). Noting a number of errors across the representations of different religions in a series for Key Stage 3, another reviewer commented that '*they matter unless we expect students to leave their minds behind when they enter an RE class*' (HA)

(a) Factual inaccuracies

Many of the inaccuracies found were at the basic level of incorrect dates and figures, wrong spellings (often repeated and included in glossaries) or translations of terms. Such errors were found across the six religions and reviewers were able to provide long lists of these. Examples include among many others the dating of the origins of the Indus Valley civilization as 5000 rather than 2000 BCE (HA); incorrect population figures for the Sikh community (SA); using the spelling '*Ghandi*' instead of 'Gandhi' (HA); the term vegetarian for vegan (HA); giving the United Synagogue rather than the Board of Deputies as the main body of Jewry in Britain (JF). A picture of Krishna was mistaken for the goddess Lakshmi (HF), and one of Chrysostom for Jesus (JA). The translation of holocaust as '*time of raging fire*' instead of 'burnt offering' loses some of its significance (JA); translating '*brahmin*' as 'priest' is inadequate for conveying the other occupations typical of a Brahmin (HA). Inaccuracies could distort the understanding of the tradition: '*the Vedas are twice said to have been written when they were composed and handed down orally, and only written much later, this is not only inaccurate but obscures the sacredness of speech in Hindu tradition*' (HA). On occasion the errors were in very sensitive areas and could cause offence, as with a map in a Christianity text book that bore the caption: '*the location of Palestine now known as Israel*' (CF). In a Sikhism text the author refers to Jats and Non-Jats as early immigrants from '*the Hindu untouchable caste*', an inaccuracy that the reviewer found to be '*inappropriately derogatory*' (SA), and a book's presentation of caste as though it was an entirely Hindu phenomenon playing no part in Sikh lives was described as '*damagingly inaccurate*' (SA).

(b) Confusion

Reviewers of the books on Islam found examples where the Shia and Sunni distinction (IF), and sectarian differences and Sufism, (IA) were well handled. However, reviews of other texts found some authors unable to navigate their way through the internal divisions and interrelationships of the religious tradition resulting in a confused portrayal. There was confusion in some sources about the different schools and traditions of Buddhism and the relationship between them (BFi). One of the Christianity texts presented a very misleading interpretation of the development of Christian denominations in a tree diagram where dates were incorrect and where Lutheranism was shown as a branch of Anglicanism (CF).

Explanations of the theological and philosophical concepts of the religions sometimes earned approval: '*the chapter on caste and dharma is a model of clarity and completeness*' (HA). In other cases there were some confusions noted by reviewers leading to inaccuracies, for example, an explanation of caste which is '*inadequate and misleading*' (HA). In different portrayals of Buddhism there was a confusing conflation of the Buddhist Wheel of Life with the Noble Eightfold Path (BFii), and a description of consciousness as '*binding everything together*' '*when,* the reviewer observed*, 'it is really one skandha among five and the point of the skandha doctrine is that nothing binds everything together*' (BA). With Christianity '*some issues are presented in a way that could be confusing to some readers, e.g. on approaches to the Bible it is not clear what the difference between the literal and fundamentalist approaches is*' (CA). In another text the concepts of God and Trinity were explored '*in a way that may leave some readers more confused than when they started*' (CA).

Reviewers felt that confused representations of the religions could have a negative effect on young people's attitudes towards them; as one said of the portrayal of Buddhism in an AS level text: '*representing the results of practice confusingly, incoherently or claiming that they are ineffable presents a negative image of what Buddhists practice to pupils*' (BFii)

(c) Omissions

Reviewers occasionally found that key omissions in the presentations of the religions affected the accuracy of the overall picture: '*this is a book that will easily fuel misconceptions by what is omitted*' (SA). A text had good explanations of the 5 Pillars of Islam but its omission of the seven cardinal tenets of belief skewed the representation of the faith (IF). Another text on Judaism failed to include anything about a moral dimension in Jewish life implying that it was all about God and worship (JF). Questions of the overall balance of the presentations will be considered in more detail in the following section. At the level of smaller details, an example where a resource explained that some Jewish men strap straps and boxes to themselves when they pray, but failed to mention that these contained texts of the Torah, showed how such omissions can take away the meaning and significance of what might, without them, seem strange religious practices (JF).

The reviewers suggested several reasons for inaccuracies in the presentation of the religious traditions (d-h below).

(d) Lack of expertise

Where there are inaccuracies it is reasonable to conclude that authors lack the necessary knowledge of the subject. The reviewers on occasions made this link (HA; SA). One book was described as '*an interesting attempt to introduce key concepts across the religious traditions but [it] is not sufficiently well informed to be successful*' (HA). A criticism of a book on Islam spoke of the authors' presumed lack of confidence with the subject: '*the depth is missing, the narratives are very sketchy and most in form of bullet points reflecting the inadequacy of writers to explain things clearly*' (IF). A Jewish reviewer observed: '*the book was marred by a huge number of simple factual errors and other errors of implication which suggest that the writer does not know the Jewish world or its range as well as he should*' (JF). One criticism related to lack of expertise was the failure of some resources to keep up-to-date with scholarship or practice in the field, as, for example, in the following comments: '*the passage on the origins of religion is rooted in outmoded 19th century speculation*' (HA); '*it's not just Reform Jews who have Bat Mitzvah... He's thirty years out of date.*' (JF)

Gaps in knowledge could be addressed by consultation with experts and adherents of the religion in question, and where it was clear that this had taken place it was commended by the reviewers. The accuracy of a text on Islam was attributed to the involvement of an imam in its writing, and another book was deemed to have extra authority and accuracy because it

made use of question and answers with an imam (IF). Another text on Islam was praised because it had been written in consultation with a Muslim scholar (IA). The importance of authoritative voices from the tradition was re-emphasised when a text on Islam was criticised for using Amir Khan as its main Muslim voice (IF). The Sikh reviewer praised one of the texts as a '*good, comprehensive outline of the Sikh tradition, which seems to draw on views of practising/reflective Sikhs rather than those with a more cursory knowledge of their tradition*' (SF). This contrasted with another book where there was '*little evidence of dialogue with Sikhs themselves'* (SF). In one of the texts on Judaism a reviewer noted of the author '*there doesn't appear to be any advisor to help him'* (JF), and the lack of consultation with people from the faith tradition was viewed as a serious problem with a high proportion of the resources he viewed; '*I was frankly appalled by how many had not checked this information with an informed Jew*' (JF).

(e) Viewing the religion through the perspective of another tradition

One trend that affected accuracy was a (generally subconscious) tendency in some texts to present the religion through the lens of another tradition. It was noted on several occasions how the story of Adam and Eve was viewed through the lens of Christian interpretations even when the text was purportedly presenting Islamic and Jewish traditions. Thus the explanation in a book on Islam that evil was created by shaytan, '*a fallen angel'*, is a Christian, not an Islamic understanding (IF). Similarly another book '*claims that Jews also believe in the Fall story, because Jews also believe in the story of Adam and Eve, without realising that the Fall is a Christian take on the story'* (JF). A more general issue is the tendency to view Judaism through the perspective of the Christian history of salvation and the significance of the Old Testament to that. This is behind the inaccurate claim in one book that the Old Testament ends the story of the Jews under the Romans, '*mostly the end of the story in the Old Testament is about 3 to 4 hundred years before. This betrays the desire to link the OT up with the NT and make them a seamless robe'* (JF).

In Sikhism materials, the concept of mukti (release from the cycle of rebirth), whilst shared with other Indic religions, holds a different place in the framework of Sikh teaching; it is not the ultimate goal or purpose of Sikh life, which books tend to suggest. Rather mukti is to be understood as a consequence of living 'attuned to the divine will, remembering the Creator (simran)' and seva (selfless service) - qualities which sum up the 'purpose' of Sikh life (SF). Assumptions are made that the concept of the soul can be translated from other religions to Buddhism (BFi). In one book on Buddhism, the concept of karma was treated as '*synonymous with Hindu usage'* (BFii). These examples are at the level of beliefs. At the level of practice it was noted that '*comparisons with parallel categories from other faith traditions e.g. priests or clergy, are misleading and do not allow for the exploration of key concepts of leadership in the Sikh tradition'* (SF). Viewing a religion through the lens of another tradition affects not only the factual accuracy of the presentation but the nuances and balance. These issues will be revisited in 3.3.3

(f) Simplification

Religions are complex in their histories, their doctrines, in their internal diversity, and because of the different levels on which they operate. Some simplification is needed to suit pupils' learning levels and several of the reviewers' comments recognise the allowances that have to be made for younger children's and teenagers' understandings. They also recognised that simplification does not necessarily lead to inaccuracy, for example a book that presents Judaism to primary age children through the eyes of a Jewish girl is commended by both reviewers: '*a very simple, short but accurate introduction'* (JA); '*within its simplifications it's very accurate'* (JF). A book on Buddhist scriptures was praised for, though Buddhist scriptures are complex and contain difficult ideas, '*the book does well to convey them simply and link them to Buddhist ideas*' (BA). Even where space is limited

accuracy does not have to be compromised, as with the 'bite-size' introductions to different traditions in a book on inter faith dialogue that were applauded for succinctness and accuracy by two of the reviewers (CA; SA).

Nevertheless there are several examples where attempts to simplify have led to inaccurate or misleading representations. Of one book a reviewer writes, '*some simplifications may be read as inaccuracies*' (CA); of another, that it has '*occasional simplifications which may be misleading (e.g. in countries with a Muslim government, the whole of the legal system is based on Shari'ah; no scientist has any convincing evidence to support intelligent design theory ... the interpretation of Biblical teaching on homosexuality*' etc (CA). In books directed at younger children one was found where the Jewish Sabbath is simplistically and misleadingly described as '*a day off*' (CA), and another where readers learn that '*Roman Catholic priests are not allowed to marry so they have more time to spend on their work*' (CA). Attempts to explain difficult theological and philosophical concepts to older pupils can lead to error. This was particularly noted in texts on Hinduism where the Hindu reviewer found an attempt to explain Hindu thought with the terms '*henotheism*' and '*pantheism*' misleading (HF), and where inaccuracies in an explanation of karma were further embedded through the activities suggested by the text, for example in the question '*how do you think someone might use the law of karma to excuse themselves from trying to help the poor and needy?*' (HF) The reviewer felt this '*encourages a simplistic understanding of Hinduism*' (HF).

(g) Generalisation

Generalisation was another occasional cause of inaccuracy giving a mistaken impression that all members of the religion conform to certain generalised beliefs or practices. This issue will be raised again in the section on diversity. The Hindu reviewer noted some specific views attributed to Hinduism as if they were common to all Hindus including positions on genetic engineering, rationality in religion, religious pluralism (HF). A reviewer of the Sikh texts noted that '*such sweeping statements are made - but on what basis?*' and gave as an example a comment on attitudes to women's equal rights: *'" Most Sikhs with this attitude do not read the scriptures, nor know about the lives and teachings of the Gurus". How does [the author] know?'* (SA). Examples from texts on Buddhism include the statement that '*Buddhist monks and nuns do not take vows for life*' which is untrue for some traditions (BFi). There is also a confusion of ideal for practice when one resource states that '"*all Buddhists follow the 5 precepts which means they live without harming any living creature*" when the reality is '*many aim to follow and try to live etc*' (BFi).

(h) Carelessness

On occasions errors were attributed to carelessness and rushed production. A Jewish reviewer described a text as '*poorly proof read*' because of its factual errors and typos (JF). The kind of errors include giving the wrong captions to pictures so, for example, a Vishnu with four arms is described as Shiva (HF), a picture of an elder giving 'parshad' to little children is wrongly described as amritsankar initiation ceremony (SF), or '*a woeful mislabelling [which] identifies the piles of suitcases at Auschwitz as a pile of wallets!*' (JF) In some cases items of deep religious significance are handled in a very casual manner with a photo presented in reverse so the Ik Oankar symbol is back to front (SF) and a similar reversal of the Roublev icon of the Trinity (CF).

For some of the reviewers the carelessness that leads to inaccuracies constitutes disrespect to the religions being studied. One, writing of a book on Hinduism, declared that its '*inaccuracies and failures to explain may give the impression that the study of Hinduism or religious education itself, is just an excuse for sloppy work*' (HA). One of the Jewish reviewers commented that '*an offensive aspect of the material is the cavalier indifference to accuracy*' and cited as an example the misleading description of the Monument and the

Name - Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial Centre in Jerusalem where it appears that the names recorded are the names of the Death Camps: *'those who have worked tirelessly for more than half a century to record the names of those slaughtered might feel this is not just wrong but absurd to the point of offensive'* (JF).

3.3.3 Integrity and balance

Some books were praised for the integrity and balance of their presentations. The reviewers' comments indicate the aspects of the religion that they expect to see in a balanced portrayal: '*an excellent introduction to Judaism, with an emphasis on religious practice and belief, moral values and identity as well as aspects of Jewish culture*' (JA); '*a fair and balanced but also provocative picture of Christianity as a living faith within the contemporary world*' (CA); '*there is a balance between beliefs and practice as well as faith's interaction with wider society*' (IF); '*very good balance - linking the outward, tangible aspects of the faith and the historical detail with understandings values and how they are practised by Sikhs in contemporary contexts.*' (SF); '*a positive and coherent view of Buddhism is conveyed*' (BA).

Other texts were found to be deficient in this regard, a number of factors skewing the representation. These included the structuring power of the school syllabus and of examination requirements particularly when thematic approaches were adopted. The representations of religious traditions can also be skewed when they are interpreted through the lens of another religion, culture or minority position, or where one strand within a religion is given too much prominence.

(a) Syllabus and examination influences

There were several comments on the way religious education syllabi and examination requirements dictate the emphasis and balance within published materials rather than that emphasis coming from the religions themselves: '*since this material is entirely wedded to the syllabus concerned the selection of the material is dictated by that. As a result the balance and emphasis might not be one I might choose*' (JF). Reviewers recognised the value of such resources in supporting young people in examination preparation: '*a very helpful resource for pupils preparing for exams*' (HF). Nevertheless that the examination rather than the religion itself should be the shaping influence was seen as an issue: '*everything is geared to an examination paper and is shaped by UK agendas rather than the faith itself*' (SA); '*the book is clearly designed to cover a GCSE syllabus. It is therefore selective in what it covers re Christianity. E.g. though it talks about arguments for the existence of God it does not touch upon (to any degree) the distinctive Christian understanding of the nature of God, affected by incarnation and Trinity.*' (CF).

Although the interest in commonalties and similarities was often viewed as positive for encouraging good relations across religions, there was also concern about the distorting effect on the understanding of the religions. It was found that the logic of the syllabus and a focus on teaching about festivals at primary school level, for example, introduced pupils to Vaisakhi early on in their study of Sikhism. The reviewer felt this was '*potentially damaging to the image of Sikhs as details of 'swords' and 'beheadings' could be quite alienating*' (SF); it was therefore important not to reduce the story to this kind of detail, but rather to draw out the messages and values Sikhs find in the story, and which may be relevant and accessible to pupils. A reviewer of the Hinduism materials used the instance of the treatment of a sacred symbol to make a more general comment about the structuring influences of RE syllabi: '*the sacred syllable Om or Aum is presented primarily as a graphic symbol and only secondarily as a sound; actually it is the other way round. This seems to be for the sake of the modern practice of giving every religion a logo in order to fit into the pattern dictated by RE*' (HA). A syllabus-driven interest in religious leaders and places of worship, and finding parallels across the faith traditions using these categories, can lead to a too hierarchical and

institutionalised understanding of religion. Buddhist, Hindu and Christian reviewers found instances where the role of the laity was underplayed as opposed to monks and nuns in Buddhism for example (BFi), where the '*misleading impression is given in pictures and captions that only Brahmin are pure enough to read Vedas' or that aarti is a specifically priestly function* (HF), or where the resource on Christianity comes across as too '*churchy*' (CF).

Where the materials themselves were structured thematically rather than religion by religion these tendencies could be amplified. The comparative method, by making false correlations, can lead to distortion: '*e.g. the way Jesus is compared to Abraham/Moses and Muhammad could be said to distort one or more of the religions because Christians (and Muslims) for example do not belief that Jesus and Muhammad have a comparable function in their respective religions. (ie the parallel to the Christian understanding of Jesus is the Muslim belief about the Qur'an)*' (CF). Reviewers made comments about the selective and sometimes rather random nature of the representation of their focus religion and of the religions more generally. They commented on what was seen as a necessarily '*bitty selection*' (IF) of content and of portrayals of the religions as '*inevitably rather sketchy*' (SF), and incoherent: '*it's very hard to create a coherent picture of any tradition by this thematic treatment*' (JF). The question of the balance between the six religions in materials following this format will be considered in 3.3.8.

The emphasis on the moral and social dimension of religions in several Key Stage 4 courses influences the balance of the presentation. It was suggested that one such textbook gave too little attention to doctrinal/belief issues (e.g. about the person of Jesus) and too much to social issues: the '*lack of balance was so marked that it could even be said to lead to an inaccurate presentation*' (CF). It was deemed '*worthy on a humanistic level but doesn't give the sense of why either Christianity or Islam captured the hearts of millions*' (CF). Reviewers commented on the subservience of religions to other agenda and the way this could give a partial and even false impression of the religious traditions and their teachings : '*the religions are used as information fodder for debate, so are not covered in a balanced information-rich way*' (BF); '*enthusiasm for presenting fashionable/contemporary values - environmental concern, gender equality, human rights etc - appears to be responsible for an uncritical 'skewing' of the representation [of Sikhism]*' (SA). The question was raised whether a community cohesion and citizenship agenda is in fact partly responsible for such 'skewing': texts can be '*very concerned with the contemporary RE/Citizenship agenda, so that social cohesion and the environment receive a disproportionate amount of attention and risk tipping the balance of the coverage*' (SA)

(b) Through the lens of another religion or culture

Some instances have already been noted where the representation of one religion is influenced by another and some of the inaccuracies that resulted from this identified. Even where there are not actual inaccuracies, there are examples where the influences are still present in the particular slant they give. In one of the texts on Islam it was found that, although there were no overt, serious mistakes, the nuances are not truly Islamic: '*it's Christianised Islam being presented*' (IF) The same reviewer commented on the dominance of Christian thinking in another text: '*the book presents four basic themes of religion, mainly arguments from a Christian point of view although other religions are given a voice too*' (IF).

The overriding influence of Christianity on some of the presentations was noted by a reviewer of the Christian texts, prompted by the quote in one text '*religious people believe that they also have a soul*': '*Do they? This needs more careful handling, if the differences between the religious traditions are not papered over and synthesised into a western model and Christianity artificially homogenised.*' (CA).Other examples of Christianised interpretations of religions were found in a Sikhism textbook which '*contains the*

overstatement "All Sikhs have faith and trust in God" and majors on 'beliefs', in the manner of many Christian publications' (SA), and in another book where the Sikh tradition is conveyed*, 'largely through the terminology and understandings of a traditionally Judeo-Christian worldview'* (SA). A Jewish reviewer explained that a statement made in a textbook, *'"Orthodox Jews will try to follow the Halakhah so that they go to heaven not hell" is misleading and written from what seems to be a Christian perspective'* (JA).

As already noted there are particular issues with the representation of Judaism because of Christianity's historical link with this faith; and a tendency in some resources to conflate the religion with a Christian interpretation of the Old Testament (JA). The Jewish consultant remarked on '*the almost total failure to recognise or bring to bear the extremely rich ethical and philosophical material of the rabbinic tradition, thereby suggesting that Jews only really have the 'Old Testament' to rely on'* (JF).

The influence of a secular worldview was also evident. In an account of Christianity, for example, *'the messages taken from the book are very basic and generic, chiefly a sense that Christianity is based on the life and teachings of Jesus, whose message was one of compassion and encouraging care for others, regardless of who they are and where they are from ....the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus is not dwelt upon, apart from a vague comment that present day Christians believe that Jesus died to make the world a better place'* (CA). Religions were sometimes presented as a set of good ideas without the sense of inspiration or personal relationship and discipleship, for example the inspired nature of the Guru's message (SF) or the personal devotion of the Buddha's followers (BFii).There are criticisms of '*an underlying assumption that religions are so many packages among which the consumer can choose'* (HA).

A western approach to gender issues was noted. In an Islam textbook what was missing was '*depth about how Muslims traditionally view women as the mother, daughter, sister and wife'* (IF) and with a text on Sikhism the quote '*men and women sit on opposite sides of the gurdwara in order not to distract each other'* was picked out and the reviewer observed that '*it might be better to explain that for cultural reasons they would feel more comfortable in these groupings - and that they are still in equal view of the Guru Granth Sahib'* (SF).

(c) One strand representing the wider tradition

Occasionally one strand within a tradition was used, without acknowledgement, to represent the whole. This was found to be a particular issue in several books on Buddhism. In one a reviewer noted an unacknowledged leaning towards the theravadan tradition (BFi). In a different text another reviewer found an emphasis throughout on the Buddhism of FWBO (Friends of the Western Buddhist Order) she felt was not justified by their numerical strength (BA). This theme was picked up by the third reviewer in reference to another account of Buddhism where the entire portrait of the Buddhist lifestyle was derived from this denomination, '*this is not a failing in itself, but needs to be balanced against other (perhaps migrant) forms of Buddhism in the UK'* (BFii).

Among the Christianity materials a text was identified where a particular strand of Anglicanism was presented as Christianity. This, the reviewer felt had the potential to annoy other Christians who did not feel represented by this portrayal (CF). A contrasting bias was noted in another of the Christianity textbooks where the reviewer observed the unacknowledged influence of the author's Quaker perspectives on the presentation with little attention given to doctrinal issues and formal religious practices, *'bare mention of holy communion, baptism, confirmation etc'*, (CF). An ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) bias was observed in the text and the style of many of the pictures of one Hinduism resource (HA), and in the portrayal of the Hindu diaspora in another (HF). The presentation of Hinduism generally seemed to have a bias towards Vaishnav and northern

Indian traditions with principal deities of South Indian and Sri Lankan origin Indians missing (HF).

Some examples were noted where the bias had been made explicit in the text so teachers and pupils knew that their learning from this resource was only partial, or that if they wanted a broader view they would need to look elsewhere. This was the case with a book on Buddhism, for example, where the author acknowledged her perspective (BFi). Similarly the Vivekananda perspective in a series of two books on Hinduism is made apparent (HA), and so could be useful '*if used critically by a teacher who understands the issues*' (HA).

3.3.4 Diversity

(a) Religious diversity

The reviewers appreciated those materials that presented the diversity of their tradition both in the variations of its denominations, schools or movements, and in the variations of individual practices and interpretations. There are a number of examples of reviews where the resources' ability to achieve this is commented on positively: '*care is taken to show a variety of Hinduism and variety of views of its history*' (HA); *'[Christianity] is presented as an internally diverse tradition and different Christian parties explicitly contrasted at points in the book*'(CA); '*this book is very well balanced and Buddhism's diversity is both well covered and furthermore pupils are helped to understand it*' (BA); '*some very relevant sections on Sufism and sectarian differences in Islam*' (IA); '*an introduction to Judaism from a modern Orthodox perspective but it allows for religious diversity*' (JA); '*excellent - every effort has been made throughout to take account of evolution and diversity*' (SA). Several reviewers appreciated the use of the qualifier 'some' or 'many' to show inner diversity as in '*some Buddhists, many Buddhists - as opposed to 'Buddhists and all monks*' (WK). Another reviewer would like to see the differences addressed more thoroughly: '*the book hardly deals with diversity except obliquely with comments like 'many Jews ...' or 'most synagogues ...' implying that there are others, but it doesn't actually address the differences much*' (JF)

The reviewers noted that some texts make a point of covering diversity within the religion being presented, but also that they are not always successful. Examples have already been given of confusion over the portrayal of internal differences in Christianity and Buddhism. One book attempted to explain the differences in Christianity using the anodyne and inappropriate metaphor of different washing powders (CF); there is an over simplistic division into 'two styles of Christian worship' and the Protestant Church is used '*as a catch-all in a way that is slightly distorting*' (CF).

There are other examples where diversity is not dealt with. The lack of representation of South Indian, Sri Lankan Hinduism in some texts has already been mentioned (HF). In some cases a standardised description of rituals suppressed the variety of Hindu religious practice '*giving a misleading impression of what Hinduism is*' (HA): Some texts on Sikhism were found to underplay the diversity in the faith in terms of different groupings and organisations (SF), or to overstate and generalise in such a way as to give the impression (in a primary school text, for example) '*that if anyone does not do or wear the things described in the book then that person is not a Sikh*' (SA). Reviewers of the Judaism texts found '*sweeping generalisations*' (JF) and *'insufficient attention given to diversity in Judaism. Hardly any reference to secular Judaism and greater attention should be given to non-Orthodox Judaism'* (JA). A Key Stage 4 book on the Roman Catholic Church was found to offer a fair and non-judgemental account of non Roman Catholic perspectives, but the Roman Catholic view itself was portrayed as '*artificially monolithic*' (CA).

(b) Cultural / ethnic diversity

Reviewers appreciated those books that reflected the cultural diversity and international character of the religion in question commending, for example, a book on Islam that showed Muslims from east Asia, from Africa and the west (IF), or a text that presented Christianity as a world faith rather than simply white and western (CF). On the question of cultural and ethnic diversity the issues raised in the review were slightly different for the different religions. The concern for the Christian consultant was that the pictures in several texts were too UK-centric, there were too few pictures showing African and black Christians and insufficient material on oriental churches (CF). On the other hand one Buddhist consultant found that a key problem with the resources was that the images were too foreign and exotic, that there were virtually no pictures of lay or western Buddhists and the impression was given that '*Buddhists live in far off countries and virtually all are monks and nuns*' (BFi). In some texts she would like to have seen more photographs of white, western, UK-based Buddhists (BFi). By contrast her colleague introduced a different perspective and noted how in some other texts only white British Buddhism was presented: '*Buddhism has been portrayed as practised by the white British community throughout this series*' (BFii). This, he felt, did not reflect the majority and growing migrant Buddhist community (including British born Buddhists from migrant families), nor was it sensitive to community cohesion issues within the Buddhist community, '*especially as integration between white and migrant communities is high on the agenda of community cohesion it would have been thoughtful to explain Buddhism in addition, through the eyes of the sizeable and growing community of migrant Buddhists in Britain*' (BFii).

The Muslim consultant took a middle position welcoming representations of Islam as culturally diverse and global as this demonstrated Islamic unity, yet at the same time concerned that these might convey the impression that Islam is an alien and foreign religion (IF). In one book 90% of the images were pictures of foreign places and people which was deemed to be too many, presenting a '*real danger children might get confused as to how British Islam is*' (IF). He thought '*more local scenes would help children to see Islam as a British religion and not foreign*' and particularly commended the local grounding of one of the texts which was based on the Muslim community in Birmingham (IF). The other Muslim reviewer expressed concern at the overemphasis on Muslims from the Indian subcontinent in some resources and the way such images accorded with stereotypes of what western audiences think Muslims look like (IA). An issue with reviews of the Jewish materials was that the images made Jewish people look too distinctive and even 'odd' and the reviewer would have preferred to get across the message that '*Jewish people do not stand out as looking different on the street*' (JF).

(c) Gender

A gender imbalance in the representation of the religious tradition was noted in several of the textbooks as the following comments show: '*there is no mention of Jewish culture nor the role/contribution of Jewish women*' (JA); '*[photos] focus exclusively on male figures*' (JA); there is '*not enough again on women and the complexity of gender issues*' (CA); there is '*nothing on gender relations*'; '*issues of gender don't get adequate depth of coverage*' (IA); '*Units 2, 3 and 4 show male experience without attempting to balance it with female experience*' (HA); '*I would have liked to have seen some coverage ...of the role of women in Hinduism*'(HF). Where gender issues are addressed (e.g. on matters of female dress and gender segregation) they are dealt with rather too simplistically (IA) and with a lack of cultural awareness as noted above in section 3.3.3 (IF; SF). Attempts by some of the materials to rectify the gender imbalance by using more inclusive translations of religious language were seen as unhelpful misrepresentations of the tradition: '*gender inclusive terms are not helpful when describing a patriarchal system*' (HA).

3.3.5 Depth v Superficiality

The criteria by which the reviewers evaluated the resources included not just the breadth of coverage but also the depth, the degree to which the materials engaged at more than a superficial level. There were two emphases in this category, one on the learners themselves and the extent to which they were challenged by the content of the resources, and the other on the representations of the religions, their higher meaning and significance in the lives of their followers.

(a) Challenges for learners

In several cases books were commended for their ability to challenge young people's thinking with a particular emphasis on the activities and questions. The activities for challenge received some of the most positive comments in the reviews as a whole. Pupils are *'required to use Buddhist ideas as a stimulus to reflect on their own values, and to think way beyond the factual base of the religion. They are also asked to engage critically with Buddhist ideas in a way which is inoffensive and entirely educationally appropriate'* (BA); there are *'regular challenging exercises demanding thought and reflection'* (JA); *'lively and thought-provoking pertinent dilemmas which Jews and non-Jews could usefully explore while giving Jewish approaches and responses to them'* (JF); *'text boxes and activities through the book challenge the reader to reflect on meaning and relevance of topics in relation to their own experiences. These are hugely imaginative and allow a deep probing of some complicated issues in an accessible fashion'* (CA); *'this book - and indeed the series - uses pertinent questions and challenging illustrations and is likely to generate worthwhile thought and discourse'* (SA).

Both Muslim reviewers agreed that more challenge was needed in some of the activities relating to Islam:*' some of the questions for this age group could be more challenging'; 'perhaps simplistic for this age group'* (IA); whilst some of the presentations of the tradition tended to obscure essential matters, there are '*too many diagrams, flowcharts and boxes [there] should be more substantial explanations, quotes from scripture and thought-provoking discussions'* (IF). A Christian reviewer wrote of another resource, '*it did not feel detailed or profound enough in historical and theological areas about Christianity'* (CF) In order to challenge the students further the resources could have tackled some of the subtleties and nuances of religion, for example, one reviewer mentioned the distinction between obligation and practice in relation to Islam: *'distinction should be made between obligation and practice e.g. circumcision falls into one of these complex areas'.*(IA). Another way of presenting greater challenge is to explore the nature and significance of the differences between religions rather than just stating what those differences are: *'There is a certain shallowness in the presentation which means that I think controversial issues (within and between religions) are somehow skated over. Attention is only given to the 'shared humanity' concept only through the setting out of rituals from various religions around birth, death etc. It is not brought out as an idea to be explored across religions.'* (CF).

Though one text on Buddhism was praised for its *'excellent and rigorous use of scriptures and writings to provide substantial resources for debate'* (BA), a recurring theme from several reviewers was that the young people were being given challenging questions to answer without having been given sufficient knowledge of the religious tradition to support them. In one text on Islam it was found that there were '*some good questions for debate though more textual resources are needed'* (IA). In a Sikhism resource *'it is unclear where pupils may find answers to some questions and for learning about there needs to be accurate information, not simply an opportunity to speculate'* (SA); '*Students are being asked to compare 'person versus book' without being offered any clues about the nature of the Sikh 'holy book' e,g, its lyrical, conversational content, differentiation the way it addresses people of different walks and stations of life etc.'* (SF) There were other examples of the same mismatch between

expectation and resource: '*each unit has a panel calling for reflection on moral and experiential questions and Hindu answers to them ...however an informed discussion would need more information than this unit gives*' (HA); '*many of the activities presuppose a knowledge that the student is unlikely to have e.g. "it is often said that, in proportion to its size, Judaism has an enormous influence on the world. Do you agree?" How is a 16 year old supposed to get to grips with that?*'(JF); '*sometimes the activities ask profound questions of the reader that may stretch their capacities, given the resources presented in the relevant section e.g. one activity asks why God doesn't heal all who go to Lourdes - is it fair to ask pupils to engage with this without any corresponding section on Christian perspectives on natural evil, free will etc*' (CA). It was suggested that the 'learning from' targets in religious education would be seriously impeded by this lack of material to work with: '*the potential for 'learning from' is stunted, because of limitations in the resources given to students to work with*' (SF). What these comments from the reviewers, and several others in the same vein, show is that the materials should not just require students to think as part of their learning, but should also feed and challenge that thinking. There is a direct link between these concerns and the question of the depth of the content of the resources.

(b) Deeper significance of religion

In their reviews of the materials reviewers were interested in the depth of understanding of what religions are and what being a follower and member of a religion entails. They praised books that took readers beyond external manifestations to include something of religions' ongoing power for effecting change in people's lives and society. The Sikh reviewer found texts that '*take readers beyond recognition of aspects of Sikh identity to consider how Sikhism's world-view and guiding ethics, which evolved and were expressed in a distinct socio-historical context, influence the thoughts and actions of Sikhs in new contexts today*' (SF). However, it was noted that in many of the resources the focus was limited. With the Buddhism texts, for example, the reviewer noted of one book '*doesn't give the feel of what a special and sacred place might be like - what people may experience as pilgrims - how being of that religion might change someone*' (BFi). The personal and relational were downplayed when, for example, a text described how "*thousands converted to the middle way*" rather than that they became followers of the Buddha as a person. The Buddha came across '*as nothing more than an original thinker - such a portrayal undermines the significance of enlightenment and meditation in the eyes of Buddhists*' (BFii). Similarly the inspirational was missing in an account of the origins of Sikhism: '*it presents the Gurus as preachers or philosophers who had an idea and simply shared it. It would have helped to convey the Sikh belief that they were divinely sent to bring light to human understanding on life's purposes and how to live it*' (SF). Writing of the accounts of Christianity and of the other religions in one thematic series, a Christian reviewer declares: '*I don't think there is adequate emphasis on the numinous aspect of the religions - any of them!*' (CF)

A comment on another Christianity text similarly found that '*the transformational nature of religion [is] not a strong message in this resource*' (CF). It is an approach that can make religions appear rather boring: '*the Seder sounds a bit dour - the problem always of describing ritual, without the probable feeling or emotional investment made by the participant*' (JF); '*It makes Christianity feel worthy but not inspirational or exciting*' (CF). This was seen as a particular issue for Sikhism where there were several comments along the lines that '*connections were not made between outward elements of the faith - turban, kirpan, khanda - and the underlying values and principles associated with them that 'we must 'rule' our own minds and the world around us with dignity, spiritual wisdom and spiritual qualities*' (SF). Even where the texts are encouraging a 'learning from' approach to religious education the reviewer found that pupils were not necessarily encouraged to delve much more deeply into the significance of the religion; '*"learning from ideas" tend to operate at the level of functionality - e.g. how they might show someone / something respect, the role of having a uniform etc.*' They do not explore Sikh ideas about human values and are interested in parallel practices rather than resonating with values in other traditions and pupils' lives (SF).

3.3.6 Selection of images, examples and texts

Variety appears to be what the reviewers most appreciated in the selection of images, examples and texts to support the presentations of the religions in the materials viewed. The positive description given of one of the Christianity texts is indicative of this: the book '*uses a wide variety of sources presented in a highly imaginative way, an approach that successfully communicates the diversity, depth and multi-faceted relevance of the Christian tradition*' (CA). The Sikh reviewer noted of the images in one book '*a good combination of historical paintings, contemporary photographs, artwork which is a generally accurate and sensitive portrayal of Sikhs and Sikhism*' (SF), but noted also that in some books photographs lacked a 'human' or affective quality which might bring practices alive rather than just presenting the '*dry mechanics of the process*'.

(a) Images

There was enthusiastic reception, particularly from the Islam and Hinduism specialists, of many of the high quality pictures and photographs used in the materials. For the detailed information about the religion that they can give, '*photographs speak 1000 words*'*(IF)*; they are '*inviting and graphically illustrate cultural aspects of Islam as well as its diversity*' (IF); '*[the]photo representations are accurate and positive representations of Islam*' (IF), and they have potential for encouraging discussion and further learning: '*colourful photos (artefacts, family worship, festivals, places of worship, food and so forth) should encourage further discussion*' (HF); '*the iconography and photos of practices and everyday life are varied and well chosen*' (HA), and can be a stimulus to the pupils to find out more. A book on Judaism earned the comment: '*the pictures are generally lively and attractive - and sometimes beautifully surprising - like a picture of people saving scrolls of Torah from the New Orleans flood*' (JF).

Some of the messages about the religions conveyed by photographs have already been mentioned, for example, the degree to which they illustrate ethnic diversity or the messages they give about the relationship of the tradition to British society. The reviewers sometimes had difficulties with their messages. In one book on Islam it was noted that '*from some 30 images of Muslims, 10 of them presented images of poverty, natural disasters etc. which may give the image of Muslims as being persecuted*' (IF). Inappropriate choices of pictures include fierce images of Sikhs with long swords (SF), a gargoyle used to represent Christianity (CF), stereotypical images of Jews in reproductions of art work of Christ's life and passion in Christianity resources (CF). In a text on Judaism there is a contentious picture used to illustrate Israel: '*an Israeli soldier arresting a Palestinian demonstrator. It has its place in a collage of pictures but should surely not be the definitive main pictorialising of all that Israel is and has achieved*' (JF). The pictures of Jewish people prove to be particularly problematic in the resources reviewed and the response of the Jewish consultant is worth recording in full to emphasise this: '*Sorry to go on but it's dreadful!!! 3 pictures collectively captioned "Jews live all over the world". The three pictures show the top of a man's head, presumably to show the kipa, about a dozen men dancing at the Western Wall in Jerusalem wearing tallit and tefellin and a Hasid standing in front of the Western Wall*' (JF).

Several times reviewers made comments to the effect, not so much that the images were wrongly chosen, but that full use had not been made of them and their potential to teach more about the religion was not realised. One reviewer regretted the lack of detail in the captions for images of Christian art in a textbook, as knowledge of the artist, dates and contexts of examples of Christian art, might be a spur and aid to further exploration of these sources (CA). The Sikh reviewer noted of the pictures in one text: '*whilst the images are generally appropriate representations of Sikh life, their selection and usage together with the accompanying captions, doesn't work to bring out and enhance understandings conveyed in the main text. More thought over the choice of images could have helped to bring out their*

educational potential' (SF); Sometimes the captions are slightly unfortunate, for example, '*a clearly half empty Baptist church is captioned "There are millions of Baptists in the world today", and a heavily 'Christianised' picture of the infant Jesus (with what appears to be a church in the background!) is captioned "As far as we know Jesus had a perfectly normal Jewish upbringing."'* (CF)

It is not just the content of the pictures, but also the quality of the images that have an impact on the representation of the religion. The Muslim consultant is enthusiastic about the *'excellent quality of the photographs, appealing and positive'*; the photographs that '*colourfully and appealingly represent this as a living religion'* (IF), and noted in another resource, *'stunning photography which is conveying a spiritual ethos'* (IF). Where the pictures are not so good, or well selected and interpreted, they can have a damaging effect on the image of the religion. In some Buddhist texts images '*with an old-fashioned, out-dated feel give [young people] the impression the religion is boring and irrelevant to their lives'* (BFi).

The use of digital imaging in one series of books received negative reactions from reviewers. For a Jewish reviewer the '*weird plastic appearance of Tomb-raider struck me as strange*' (JF). In the Christian version they were seen as '*off-putting and even funny'* (CF), and for the Sikh consultant they were viewed as culturally insensitive: the '*strange juxtaposition of incongruous images in accounts of the lives of Gurus' were 'in cases comical or even offensive'*; '*for Sikhs such images lose confidence in the book's ability to be balanced and culturally sensitive'* (SF). In response to what he described as 'joke pictures' of the Buddha, a Buddhist reviewer commented *'Buddhists would prefer the Buddha to be portrayed with correct anatomical proportions and life-like'* (BFii); similarly a Christian reviewer comments; *'I have problems with the cartoon illustration on pX ... It slightly verges on the offensive' (CF).*

Maps were used in some texts and found by one reviewer to be '*good and clear, definitely aiding understanding of the historical narrative'* (JF), however the maps could also prove misleading, particularly when the names of places marked were wrong or anachronistic (HA). It was recognised that with basic maps it is hard to give a more sophisticated understanding of the religions, for example a map on the distribution of Sikhism gave the impression *'that Canada and the USA and Australia are solidly/evenly Sikh - the centre of Australia shouldn't appear as if inhabited by (many) Sikhs'* (SA).

(b) Texts

Reviewers welcomed the use of scriptural sources and other texts and those materials that used a variety of texts were particularly commended: *'a wide and excellent range of texts – biblical, rabbinic, medieval and modern'* (JA); '*a good variety of texts used - Qur'an, hadith, Islamic stories and contemporary voices'* (IF); *'a good varied selection of written source material - biblical, ecclesiastical, modern situations'* (CF); *'quotes from the scriptures and Buddhist teachers, at a level comprehensible to the target age group, were included in relevant places throughout'* (BFii)..In some cases, though, the selection of texts was deemed inadequate. Sometimes it seemed that texts were chosen to fit in with an educational agenda rather than for their authenticity, authority or centrality to the tradition: *'textual sources are mainly Manu, a source which is open to wide differences of interpretation which are not mentioned here, and the Shikshapatri of Swaminarayan, which is authoritative for only one tradition within Hinduism. These seem to have been selected because they provide the sort of prescriptive material the approach calls for, rather than because of their importance within Hinduism'* (HA); *'the [Buddhist] scriptural sources are in some places chosen for their educational value rather than their authenticity - e.g. Wagon of Life and Weeds and Flowers - whereas it might be argued that pupils ought to be getting to grips with its primary sources'* (BFii).

There was a suggestion that there should be more non-scriptural sources in a book on Islam and that post-scriptural sources should be used *'to show development of religious thought'* (IA). Similarly with Judaism there was an issue that the sources were sometimes limited to Torah or Biblical sources *'though there are many helpful biblical quotations there are very few from post biblical literature'* (JA); there is *'no reference to the Talmud and the huge panoply of associated commentaries that flesh out the Torah in the Jewish view'* (JF). This was so much the case in so many of the materials on Judaism that the Jewish reviewer summed up much of his reading for the review task with this comment: *'taken overall, there was a woeful lack of grip on the rabbinic tradition and a failure to quote from it, which is, after all, what most Jews deal with now. Today's Jews talk about Rashi and Rambam more than they do about Isaiah and the Psalms. The latter provide the backdrop for the grapplings of the former'* (JF)

There was also the sense that the interpretation and use of the scriptures needed more support, and the links between them and the lives of the followers of the religion needed to be made more strongly. Quoting profusely from the Qur'an was seen as a positive feature in one resource, however the text was not fully used, there was a *'need to explain some of these passages to contextualise and give them contemporary relevance ... the Qur'an is quoted abundantly but with no explanatory comment' (IF).* This is where some in depth understanding could be developed and it constituted a lost opportunity to deepen students' understanding of Muslims and what motivates and inspires them (IF).

(c) Stories

For younger pupils retellings of stories were often their first introductions to the scriptures of the religions they were studying. Several story books were reviewed for the project. They were often assessed as attractive and appealing to the age group for which they were designed: *'the stories give children an attractive and unthreatening view of the Hindu tradition'* (HA). The use of illustrations for the stories means that they are communicated through a combination of image and text. The reviewers were particularly appreciative of those story books that used the opportunity to introduce children to the artistic traditions of the religions: '*pictures are attractive and use features of traditional Hindu art e.g. the background vegetation, and the inclusion of two phases of a story in a single picture'* (HA); *'illustrations sensitively produced, taking account of Sikh sentiments and the traditions of Sikh painting in depicting the Gurus and people of the time'.*(SF). They also observed examples where conventions of portraying the characters in the story were not observed, such as the lack of halos in some pictures of the Gurus and depicting Guru Nanak when he was a child with a fringe (SF).

In some cases the stories were seen as well chosen and true to the religion: they are *'key stories from the lives of the Gurus'* (SA); *'the retellings are fine as they are true to the tradition'* (HF); '*the stories are well and clearly told, without distortion, and remain true to traditions found in Buddhist scriptures'* (BA). They convey important elements of the religion to this younger age group: *'the story and festival are related to Hindu belief in a way which is appropriate to the age group, and which gives an impression of the place of the struggle of good and evil in the tradition'* (HA); '*the selection of stories allows for moral lessons to be set alongside historical accounts'* (CA). The Hindu reviewer appreciated the ability of a book of Hindu stories to offer a breadth of information to aid understanding of Hinduism, *'The following messages emerge from the book: a) triumph of good over evil; b) values such as respect and devotion (Prahlad); c) concepts such as Brahman and avatar; and d) religious practices such as puja and festivals'* (HF). However, she would have wished to see more that related the stories to beliefs and values:

In the case of the two Christianity storybooks reviewed, central events in the faith's history were portrayed (Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection), but their significance was not spelled out: '*there is no suggestion that Jesus was anything other than a man who was put to death, prayed to God and then was resurrected*' (CA); '*the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus was not dwelt upon*' (CA). There were more reservations about the book of Jewish stories where the choice of stories was seen as an '*idiosyncratic selection requiring significant effort by the teacher to help pupils understand the significance of the stories*' (JA).

(d) Contemporary voices

The reviewers valued the use of contemporary voices of people from the religions. A reviewer of Buddhism texts wrote '*a particularly strong feature is mention of a very wide range of contemporary figures including celebrities but also political figures*'(BA). For another reviewer (CA); '*the occasional voices of contemporary Christians add a sense of living faith not easily affirmed in the real world*' (CA), while '*quotes from Muslims are powerful and effective*' capturing their views and feelings about being Muslim (IF). With books for young children, the use of a child's point of view was understood to bring the faith to life for a child audience (IF). Accounts of contemporary Sikhs and Christians active in relief organisations were particularly appreciated (CA; SA).

Although reviewers appreciated the opportunity for young people to hear a variety of voices, traditional and contemporary, from the religious tradition, this variety did raise the problem of the relative status of the different voices; which voices are speaking for the tradition, which for themselves? Reservations about using voices of Sikhs with only a cursory knowledge of their tradition as opposed to the voices of '*practising / reflective Sikhs*' (SF) and the plea for more authoritative voices of Islam to be heard than that of Amir Khan (IF), are expressions of this concern about the status of the people's views in relation to the tradition with which they identify.

(e) Examples of 'great lives'

Some of the resources included the lives of prominent members of the faith traditions in their presentations of each religion. In several cases the choices made were found to be puzzling. A Christian reviewer criticised the use of over familiar stock figures in Christianity such as Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa (CF) but also noted the randomness of the selection in other books, for example a book on Roman Catholicism which included Trevor Huddleston and Martin Luther King in a section on working against prejudice, though neither was Roman Catholic, and another text which co-opted Nelson Mandela as an example of Christian practice without any explanation of why he had been thus chosen (CF).

The selection of controversial figures as 'great lives' was more problematic. In one text on Islam (part of a series of books on different religions commonly used in community schools) the reviewer was surprised to find that five of the eight 'great lives' celebrated were very controversial figures, '*revolutionaries from Islamist and modernist traditions giving a very conflictual image of Islam*' (IF). Both he and the Sikh reviewers found a selection of other controversial figures in other books. The choice of Farid Esack and Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale were surprising to the reviewer and, because of the simplistic presentations, potentially divisive (IF; SF). The Islamic consultant saw this choice as an example of the author's lack of knowledge of the Muslim community (IF). The selection of Bhindranwale '*risks sanctioning violence and is insensitive to other understandings of the violence in the 1980s and 90s*' (SA). In another book Bhindranwale was pictured in the company of Mahatma Gandhi and others as "*politician and martyr*", something the reviewer felt would be offensive to Punjabi Hindus and would concern some Sikhs (SA).

3.3.7 Contemporary relevance

(a) Living religions

The reviewers want their religion portrayed as contemporary, with a relevant contribution to make to today's world, and appreciate resources that do this. The Buddhist consultant welcomed a resource that '*makes Buddhism seem normal*', '*accessible and normal rather than strange and exotic*' and was pleased to find one of the books that is '*contemporary and colourful*' (BFi). The Hindu reviewer noted of one book, '*the pictures show that Hinduism is part of British society*' (HF). The reviewers of resources on Islam found books that made '*Islam and Muslims accessible as citizens of western and global societies*' (IA); that '*presents Islam as a living faith that is young, vibrant and colourful*'; '*as a living phenomenon that is colourful and international*' (IF), and where '*the author successfully depicts Islam as a 21st century religion by using images of contemporary people and places, ultra modern mosques and young people*' (IF). A reviewer of Christianity resources commended a book for its emphasis throughout '*on presenting Christianity as a living religion which can be an exciting and instructive conversation partner in the consideration of important life questions*' (CA). The importance of students being able to relate to people of the faith as people like themselves was behind one reviewer's recommendation (as one of the best books he had seen in the project) of a resource that '*gives a clear message to non-Hindus that Hindus are people like themselves, and that being a Hindu is an important part of their lives*' (HA).

A book that was generally well received was one that introduced students to inter faith dialogue through an imagined conversation by young people of a variety of faith backgrounds. This encouraged students to identify and empathise with people of different religions. The topics that feature are everyday concerns that young people would recognise and the message conveyed was one of '*living traditions embodied in real people*' (CA). A counter example where a religion is not brought to contemporary relevance, is the portrayal of Roman Catholicism in one book where '*its dry presentation and absence of 'living' examples fails to give the impression that the Roman Catholic Church is a living, culturally engaged entity*' (CA). One reviewer demonstrated how the small details of lived experience can bring life to the portrayal of a religious tradition with his own description of what was missing from an account of synagogue worship: '*surely though, anyone who's been to an Orthodox synagogue can't keep saying that children sit in the gallery with the women. They don't. They mostly run about and they frequently sit with their fathers or just their friends*' (JF).

Several of the resources were found to have a particular problem presenting Judaism as a living tradition. The Jewish consultant highlighted an issue with many resources that took a thematic approach, the difficulty they seemed to have in seeing Judaism as '*a tradition in its own modern right. It keeps slipping – unintentionally - into a pre-cursor of Christianity by sticking with biblical material*' (JF). A notable example of this was the selection of 'holy people' to represent the Jewish faith: '*Hence, for example, under holy people, we have Christian monks and nuns, Buddhist monks and nuns, Muslim imams, Hindu sadhus ...But who do we have for Jews? Rabbis? No! Prophets!*' (JF). Another, different, issue that emerged from a couple of texts was that the references to Judaism were almost exclusively in relation to the Holocaust or anti-Semitism, again not presenting Judaism as a living and vital modern religion but '*making the suffering of the Jewish people the focus rather than more positive aspects of Jewish life*' (JA)

(b) Contemporary issues

Many resources for older students relate religions to ethical and global issues relevant to today. This means, for example, a Christianity textbook can be found that *'deals strongly with the issue of human rights and links declaration of human rights to its foundational teaching on a number of issues, capital punishment, war/peace, discrimination etc.'* (CF), and a text on Buddhism with a contemporary slant, includes information on the political situation in Tibet, Buddhism and Dalit rights, engaged Buddhism, peace activism, drug rehabilitation and prison work (BA). The emphasis on the relevance of religions to modern life was seen as a positive feature: '*It is the kind of book that will help students realise the Buddhists and Buddhism have positive things to contribute to contemporary issues'* (BFi).

As has been seen, the focus on contemporary issues can also lead to some distortion of the representation of the religions, particularly when opinions on contemporary issue are stated as though they have authoritative teaching of the whole tradition behind them. This point was made most strongly by one of the reviewers of texts on Sikhism who acknowledged the positive move towards a wider coverage of the religions that this trend encourages but recognised the danger of *'blurring opinion and authority'* (SA). In an attempt to spread the significance of a religion's teaching as far as possible, to use contemporary voices and cover contemporary issues, there is *'a blurring of opinion (whose?), the religious authority of e.g. what the Gurus said and a failure to alert pupils to real life diversity and divergence'* (SA). The problem the reviewer identifies is partly generated by careless use of language so that the 'beliefs' that are taught by authoritative sources become confused with opinions or responses to contemporary situations and dilemmas. In the textbook in question there is '*too much 'Sikhs believe' and 'belief' so overstating and generalising ideas that are not necessarily distinctive or characteristic of Sikhs and which are better termed views than beliefs - e.g. "Sikhs believe that getting angry in the long run hurts those who get angry" (SA), or "Sikhs believe they must take care not to disturb the balance of nature"* (SA).

(c) Controversial issues

Interest in contemporary affairs involves engagement with controversial issues. The reviewers gave credit to materials that did this effectively: *'an excellent coverage of various themes and contentious issues'* (HF). They recognised the difficulty of getting the right balance in the presentation of controversial issues, of being honest and encouraging informed consideration of these issues without giving greater emphasis to them (particularly to situations of violent conflict) than was helpful. They found that resources tackled controversial questions with varying degrees of success. Sometimes there was a sense that concerns to promote the right attitudes for community cohesion led authors of religious education resources to play down the role of religion in situations of conflict: *'I felt that the resource is clearly 'keen' on and committed to issues like community cohesion and at times seemed to play down divisions, or the role of religion in hostilities and conflicts. e.g. page X- some of the conflicts were not simply about 'land rights' - there were overtly religious dimensions to several of the conflicts in spite of the text of the book'* (CF). Where a text was found to have a particular bias towards one faith, there might also be a downplaying of the place of conflict and controversy within that religion. This was found to be the case in a book on Buddhism (BFi), and in a book on Hinduism which offers *'a sanitized representation of Hinduism. Hindu attitudes to controversial issues are not problematised* (HF). One reviewer of the Christianity materials found that, though those designed for older students did engage with moral issues and acknowledged their complexity, *'there is also a sense that the crux of the matter is not being opened up for full and open consideration (e.g. contraception, abortion)'* (CA). Again the text on the Roman Catholic Church shows willingness to address morally controversial issues, *'but not in a full and frank manner - this impression of avoiding uncomfortable truths is enhanced by the absence of any real life accounts or scenarios (i.e. we do not learn from Catholics, historical or contemporary, struggling to live out their lives in their own context)'* (CA).

There were examples where the reviewers felt that political and violent conflicts were handled very effectively. One reviewer admired the preparedness of a book to engage with the Middle East conflict: *'emphasis is given to the significance of Israel, which is both brave and commendable'; 'the book is the only text I have read so far which tackles the Israel-Palestinian conflict in any detail. It handles the topic with sensitivity'* (JA), and another commented on a '*very interesting chapter on Mostar Bridge and the Balkans War*' (IA). She also appreciated the text's readiness to address the question of Islamophobia (IA). On the other hand, reviewers sometimes felt that texts gave undue emphasis to political tension and violence. A Sikh reviewer found that *'in one book a chapter on Sikhs in the 20th century focuses almost exclusively on troubles in Punjab - not on how Sikh values might contribute to contemporary life locally and globally (*SF). Another instance where there was understood to be an exclusive focus on conflict and violence is the already mentioned use of a picture of an Israeli soldier arresting a Palestinian to depict the state of Israel (JF).

One of the questions the reviewers considered was how balanced or how partisan the presentation of controversial issues was in the textbooks, remembering that these portrayals have implications for attitudes towards and relations between religious (and cultural) communities. The partisan portrayal of Sikh history during the violence of the 1980s and 1990s has been noted and the reviewers suggestion that *'the complex situation should have been given less space and presented in a less one-sided way'* (SA). Among the Judaism resources the reviewers found a text where *'the conflict in Israel is addressed fairly - simplistically though reasonably and fairly and without criticism to either side'* (JF) and one where *'it deals with Israel but does not demonise or idealise it'* (JF). Although portrayals of the Chinese handling of Tibetan Buddhism was generally presented in a fairly one-sided way, one book was found that, while taking nothing away from the real persecution in Tibet, *'deals better than most with the issue by including a line that notes that the Chinese believed they were freeing Tibetans from years of pointless, evil traditions. Most other books give no consideration to possible motives for Chinese oppression of Tibetan Buddhism*' (BA). A Buddhist reviewer helpfully pointed out the sensitivities involved, given that Chinese migrants are one of the biggest Buddhist migrant communities in the UK (BFii). Taking a rather different issue, the reviewer of Hinduism textbooks set out guidelines for handling controversial issues when he wrote that *'it is necessary to deal with the controversies surrounding untouchability and other forms of caste discrimination but it could be done in a less confrontational, more historically informed and nuanced way'* (HA).

3.3.8 Other religions and traditions

a) Interreligious activity

In their analysis of the texts, the faith consultants and academic experts were sensitive to the viewpoints of people from religious traditions other than their own focus, and were thus aware of elements in the materials specific to their religion that might be troubling or offensive to those of other traditions. An ideal is expressed in one review of a Christianity book: *'other traditions are described fairly and without judgement and sections on interreligious co-operation illustrate the capacity for fruitful collaborating relationships between faiths. The humanist tradition is treated with respect throughout the book. As an important source of moral insight and the moral issues addressed ...emphasise the single reality that faith traditions face in negotiating the challenges of human life'* (CA). The book of inter faith dialogues in particular, offered a model of positive faiths relations between: *'the format of the book - presented as a lively discussion between children of different religions implicitly allows and encourages the sense of a shared humanity (in relation to things like birth, death etc)... an interesting and unusual way of introducing the idea of harmony between people of different faiths'* (CF). It is a model of *'respectful curiosity'* (HA). In a story book designed for primary age children another model of friendship and sharing between faiths was presented: *'The facts that Guru Nanak was from a Hindu family and "had many*

Muslim friends" and that the Guru Granth Sahib includes hymns *"by some Hindu and Muslim holy men"* is conducive to cohesion' (SA). Reviewers sought examples where the contribution their focus faith has to make to interfaith dialogue were recognised: *'Sikhism's respect for all faiths and efforts to promote religious freedom and tolerance are well brought out'* (SF). Sometimes reviewers identified places where opportunities had been missed to illustrate or promote this fruitful inter-religious collaboration. Both Islam and Christianity consultants remarked on the failure of a resource in which Islam and Christianity were covered to engage the two religions in dialogue (IF; CF);

b) Potential for offence

The Christian reviewer was particularly sensitive to the underlying messages given in texts about the relationship of Christianity to the 'other faiths'. In some she found that Christianity was treated as the 'default religion'. Trying to categorise the approach taken by one series of three books she observed that the main focus is Christianity which is expounded partly through comparison with others: *'it seeks to be both Christian and multi-faith. Books 2 and 3 begin with a chapter that is overtly Christian in focus; then in other chapters which are thematic eg Holy books, worship , religious buildings, attitudes to suffering the Christian position on these normally is first, followed by the Jewish position - and then that of other religions. I think the approach probably leads us to think of Christianity as the default religion'* (CF). In another text the same reviewer finds in the descriptions of a number of chapters as *"Attitudes to XXX in one religion other than Christianity"* rather off-putting: '*this constant description of non-Christian faiths as "a religion other than Christianity" ultimately comes over as demeaning to them'* (CF). To be treated as a 'default religion' can have a negative effect on the portrayal of Christianity not just on that of non-Christian faiths. In the dialogue book mentioned above the reviewer found that *'somehow the Christian children acted as a 'baseline' in a way that actually means we learned more about other faiths rather than Christianity'* (CF).

Some of the concerns about potential offence to other faiths were not so much criticisms of the resources but recognition of inherent difficulties. The closeness of the Abrahamic traditions creates some sensitivities; a Jewish reviewer, for example, notes that *'allocating Abraham to Jews might be offensive for some Muslims'* (JF). With Christianity resources one reviewer acknowledged difficulties for people of other faiths in presentations of some of the key tenets of Christian faith that could be offensive to them - *'explicit Christological claims, the crucifixion of Jesus etc.'* (CF). The avoidance of these problematic elements was found to lead to a sanitised, incomplete presentation of Christianity in some texts that was in turn unfair to that tradition. Thus one book for Key Stage 2 children provides '*supplementary information which is largely descriptive and rarely mentioned Christian beliefs that could be likely to provoke a sense of difference or exclusivism'; 'the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus is not dwelt upon'* (CA); in another '*the messages taken from this book are very basic and generic, chiefly a sense that Christianity is based on the life and teachings of Jesus, whose message was one of compassion and encouraging care for others ...this reflects the absence of controversy and conflict as featured themes in Jesus' life and teaching'* (CA) .

One reviewer suggested that the presentation of Christian beliefs qualified by frequent phrases such as *'Christians believe that...'* might lessen the problem for members of Jewish and Muslim traditions (CF). However inconsistency in the use of such qualifiers led to the comment, *'I found the resource seemed to be somewhat biased AGAINST Christianity. It was interesting to notice that the qualifying phrase 'Christians believe that' seemed to be used far more often than the comparable 'Muslims / Jews believe that'. e.g. page X why is the Christian belief in Jesus' resurrection qualified - but not the Jewish belief about God's promise to Abraham.'* (CF)

The relationship with Christianity and Judaism was viewed as particularly problematic *'even when the book seeks to be judicious and fair to Judaism given that it's very difficult to avoid a degree of supersessionism in any simple presentation of Christianity'* (CF) and *'some comments on the Old Testament might conceivably be offensive for some Jewish readers'* (CF). The other reviewer of Christianity materials picked up the same issue and highlighted textbooks where this was indeed a problem and had been handled with insensitivity to the Jewish tradition. In a Key Stage 3 book, students were presented with *'stories in the Old Testament involving violence and slaughter, describing the people as "savage and primitive" and commenting that "the further on you get in the Bible, the more enlightened people become"! Given that two pages earlier, we learn that the Old Testament is also holy to Jews, it is not difficult to see how some readers may draw some disturbing conclusions about the relative merits of different faith traditions'* (CA). Signs of implicit anti-semitism were found in some of the art work used in Christianity textbooks (CF) and another book was criticised for an unbalanced presentation of the crusades very much from the Christian side (CF).

With religions that began in the Indian subcontinent, too, reviewers found instances of insensitivity towards other faith traditions in the textbooks they reviewed, partly because of the close relations of their histories. The reviewers of Sikhism materials felt that terms like *'idol worship'* and *'caste system',* though used by Sikhs as a rationale for their faith, might cause offence to Hindus (SF): '*Hindus would rightly take exception to "allowed Hindus to set up their idols"'* (SA). There was also reference to '*Buddhism's critique of the caste system that preceded it in India [which] may be offensive to some Hindus'* (BFii).

c) Sensitivities in suggested activities

Reviewers also considered the appropriateness of the activities suggested in the materials. There were rarely issues with these, but there were a few examples where activities were not sufficiently sensitive to others' religious traditions and positions. Some comments on three different books on Hinduism illustrate this: *'pupils who are not from this religion might not feel comfortable drawing or copying pictures of Hindu deities (suggestions in 3 texts) or making a replica of a Hindu shrine'* (HF); *'some pupils might find it objectionable to draw a picture of a Hindu god'* (HF); *'some would not feel comfortable to dress up as Vishnu, Shiva or Rama, or make a temporary shrine and carry out a puja ceremony'* (HF). Some activities in other books were found to be '*off-key'* such as a role play of making a confession to a Catholic priest seen as *'inappropriate as non Roman Catholics may not know what supposed to do and Roman Catholics may find 'pretend' confessions offensive'* (CF).

d) Partisanship

A series of two texts on Hinduism (one for primary, one for secondary pupils) designed for use in community schools was found by the reviewers to be confessional and evangelising in its approach: *'it aims to show the superiority of Hinduism'* by comparing *'the best of ours with the worst of others'* (HA); *'the claims about Hinduism and science and the superiority of the (Vivekananda-inspired) Hindu approach to inter-faith dialogue might be disputed ...or whether Hinduism has the answer to [global economic issues] is justified'* (HA). Within the text *'the phrases on pX: "an exclusivist religion trying to gain supremacy" and "a hard-line religion" could be offensive to Muslims, and seem to attribute terrorist action to Islam itself rather than to certain Muslims'* (HA). Reviewers of Buddhist textbooks found instances where comparing Buddhism favourably with other religions created simplistic, negative and misleading images of these religions. For example, Buddhism was compared as a peaceful religion with conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland and Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq (BFi). Also one text linked Creationism with Christianity and contrasted it with Buddhist beliefs that (by contrast) it claimed can be reconciled with scientific theory (BFi); *'in places the text presents Buddhism as a much more rational religion than some others e.g. Christianity or other forms of theism. Bishop Usher's account of creation is the only Christian*

one given, for example, and enlightenment is said to come from within a person "not from blindly following someone else's rules or believing in a God ..." (BA). The same reviewer noted partisan treatment of particular traditions within Buddhism with *'a comment on Soka Gakkai "that many Buddhists have criticised its approach". This is entirely true but does not give Soka Gakkai a chance to put its case. Also many Buddhists have criticised FWBO but this is not mentioned'.* (BA). Other examples of a bias towards one tradition within a religion that might cause offence to others are given in section 2.

e) Balance between religions

Another issue is the balance in the treatment of different religions in texts that cover more than one. Where one of the books included both Christianity and Islam, the Christian reviewer found an imbalance with the text more critical of Christianity than of Islam *'e.g. "Christians believe that..." used to preface the Bible as the Word of God but the Qur'an presented without qualification as the word of Allah, and the use of the Arabic colophon after name of Muhammad'* (CF). Several of the reviewers felt that their focus religion was unfairly represented in the thematic resources that covered more than one religion. The reviewers of references to Hinduism, for example, found the representation of Hinduism was thin in some texts (HA; HF): *'as an introduction to religious ideas the book makes very little use of the insights available from Hinduism'* (HA); *'by omitting it from several topics, and saying little coherent about it ... it perpetuates the idea that it is too difficult to study'* (HA). In several of these texts and in a book for AS level, in particular, the Jewish reviewers were struck by the lack of representation of Judaism: *'It is appalling that Judaism is mentioned in any detail only once (yes, only once!), which is the same amount of space devoted to Paganism! - numerous opportunities to include discussion of Judaism and commonalties with Christianity and Islam This portrait of Judaism is unacceptable'* (JA).

3.3.9 Summary and conclusion

While examples and comments from reviewers who are members of and/or experts across the six religions are used to illustrate general issues raised by the review of the religious education materials, there are some issues which are of more concern to certain religions than they are to the others. The distinctive themes from the templates of each religion are set out briefly in this section.

a) Islam

The main concern of the Muslim reviewers appeared to be the public image of Islam. With some reservations, the response to the resources was generally positive. The content and quality of the presentation of Islam (in the photographic representations, for example) was seen to be helpful in conveying a rich and positive picture of Islam as a living religion that has a place in British society as well as in the wider world. There was, however, an impression that accounts of the religion were sometimes rather simplistic that they would have liked students to have been given the opportunity to engage with Islam at a deeper level.

b) Hinduism

A key theme in the reviews of the Hinduism specialists was the high number of inaccuracies in the portrayal of Hinduism. Though the picture of the religion was often appealing and engaging, particularly in resources designed for younger students, carelessness over details and confusion about Hindu beliefs and teaching were real issues. There seemed to be an unspoken assumption that Hinduism was too difficult to study, and perhaps for this reason the coverage in the texts for upper secondary was often rather thin. Few resources conveyed the internal diversity of the religion.

c) Sikhism

Sikhism seemed to suffer more than the other religions from a rather superficial, descriptive treatment that focused on the externals more than on their deeper significance or the religion's power for transformation in the lives of the individual or its contribution to wider society. The lack of coherence in some representations of this religion, made it particularly susceptible to the misleading attribution of fashionable views on contemporary topics to Sikhism and to the authoritative voices of the tradition.

d) Buddhism

A prominent point of discussion in the Buddhism templates, was the representation of the community. Reviewers expressed concern about images and text that make the tradition appear exotic and foreign. At the same time there is debate about the relative weight given in the materials to white British and migrant Buddhist communities, and how to reflect the distinctive perspectives and experiences of each group. The position of Buddhism as a non-theist tradition means that it can be drawn into the current theist v atheist debate in a way that may skew its interpretation.

e) Judaism

Though positive examples were found and praised, the portrayal of Judaism was particularly problematic. A tone of exasperation was often evident in the comments of both reviewers. The inadequate coverage of Judaism in thematic texts and series was noted. A particular issue was the failure of many of the resources to engage with the long tradition of Jewish thought over the last 2000 years, a loss not only to the study of Judaism, but also to the general discussion of religious ideas presented in the Key Stage 4 and 5 texts. Instead the religion all too often comes across as the Old Testament religion that preceded Christianity, an image that is unhelpful for understanding and good relations between communities. The visual images of Judaism selected for the materials often presented unhelpful stereotypes.

f) Christianity

The status of Christianity, as the majority and historical religion of the country presented particular issues. In several resources Christianity came across as the default religion, a fact that gave Christianity both too much assumed presence and too little actual attention. There were implicit assumptions in some of the resources, in particular questions and activities, that they were addressing students with a Christian background. Non-Christian religions were often presented through the lens of, or in comparison with, Christianity. At the same time the reviewers noted in several resources, both primary and secondary, a reluctance to engage with the real core of the Christian faith. There was in some a reductionist tendency to present Christian faith in terms of belief in Jesus as a good man and teacher, rather than belief in Jesus as God incarnate and in the cosmic and salvific significance of his death and resurrection

It needs to be acknowledged that overall the team of reviewers found much that was admirable in the materials they viewed. Different books and series were commended for their approach, their tone, the comprehensiveness of their coverage, and there was appreciation of the quality of production in many cases which gave an immediately positive message about the religions being presented. There is much here to support education for community cohesion. The fact that the books generally showed an interest in broadening young people's knowledge of religions, were generally promoting positive attitudes of respect towards those religions as well as emphasising possibilities for peaceful existence between them, was appreciated and frequently commented on. It was often the case that a reviewer would remark on the overall value of a resource before qualifying this with detailed examples where

the book had fallen below the general standard. Nevertheless the number of errors and points at which criticisms could be made in the coverage of religions (of some more than of others) was concerning. The lack of attention to detail and accuracy, in the views of a number of reviewers (faith consultants and academic experts) was in danger of undermining the credibility of religious education as an academic subject. Though there was an evident interest in activities to promote thinking, the content of the books was frequently inadequate to support that intellectual exercise. As examples of scholarship to serve as models for the students' academic endeavour, the resources all too often fell short. Another related problem was the way that external influences (syllabus and examination requirements, the influence of other religious and non-religious perspectives, national agenda) rather than the internal logic of the religions often structured their presentation, supplying different emphases than would have come from the religions themselves and underplaying important elements.

These findings also have consequences for the two (interdependent) areas of attention of this project: the enhancement of understanding of world religions and the promotion of community cohesion. Students' understanding of the six religions would undoubtedly be impaired by inaccuracy, distortion and omission. The problems of this are compounded where teachers lack of subject knowledge and rely on the resources for lesson content. The need for authors and publishers to consult with experts was cited on several occasions. The inaccuracies in some of the resources (those recorded in this report are only a fraction of the long lists of incorrect spellings, wrong dates and other factual errors that the reviewers produced), indicate a carelessness about other people's beliefs and practices which is not helpful to community cohesion. A key theme in many of the reviews was the inability of the resources to convey a real sense of the deeper significance and power of religion in the lives of the believer, without which it is difficult for the young people to get a full sense of the influence and motivating force of faith in the lives of people of religion in the society in which they live. The community cohesion agenda (and this project) is predicated on the assumption that such understanding is a condition for positive and fruitful relations between people with different religions and worldviews in the future.

3.3.10 Useful qualities in religious education materials

From the reviewers' comments, it is possible to identify a number of qualities that they valued in religious education materials. They appreciated them when they were present and missed them when they were not.
The representations of religion that were valued were:

- accurate - they do not need to include every detail but to be accurate in every detail that is included

- coherent - content should be selected according to internal logic of the religion rather than on other principles which could give a distorted and unbalanced picture.

- comprehensive - a variety of aspects of religions should be presented including practice and belief, moral values and identity, aspects of culture'

- authentic - the religion is to be understood in own terms, through its own voices, (including the voices of its authoritative texts) either directly or through consultation and the knowledge of experts

- internally diverse - the portrayal should not be dominated by one viewpoint unless that viewpoint is made explicit and becomes part of the learning

- numinous and transformative - the power of religion in people's lives and in society should be recognised and also the transcendent power that religious people discern in their narratives and in the cosmos

- living - the religion should be portrayed as active, relevant and contemporary with contributions to make to present society

- challenging - the complexities of religious traditions and religious lives should not be downplayed or used as an excuse to ignore them but rather should become the content of stimulating and challenging learning

- valued - well produced, attractive materials demonstrate respect for the religion in their quality and attention to detail

- fairly represented - care should be taken to do justice to the different religious traditions in religious education teaching and give due time and attention to each ...

- in relationship - emphasis should be given to the relationship between religions and between people of different religious and non-religious traditions

3.4   Faith Consultants' and Academic Experts' Perspectives: Web-Based Materials

The following analysis of the templates focuses on the observations made by the faith and academic reviewers in the check boxes and in the open-ended comments for the templates on the web resources that they reviewed. The open-ended comments were often made by way of explanation or illustration of their answers to the closed questions. It is important to realise that the reviews were given a cross section of the kind of web resources that are being used in classrooms but these, by the very nature of on-line resources are not comprehensive or exhaustive.

The analysis of the reviewers' comments involved:

- Reading through the templates submitted on the web resources

- Plotting this on a comparison spreadsheet

- Grounded analysis to identify key categories for each reviewer

This report looks at these common themes identified across the reports from the academics and recognises that there are common groups and also shared ideas but that there are also different interpretations from the closed question and different emphases from the different reviewers.

It is important to note that in this analysis some decisions had to be made about the websites that were being given for the reviewers to look at. The web resources were chosen as a sample of the web resources that are being used in classrooms based on the experience of the researcher and drawn from sources such as Ofsted reports and surveys. Resources were chosen to represent the major religions being taught in classrooms and were the resources deemed to be the most used. The choice of sites was given to indicate a range of the kinds of resource that are being used in schools. The return of analyses of web reports was a little disappointing given the common use of web resources in schools. This may have been because of the amorphous nature of web resources and the extent of some of the sites made reviews more difficult. Whenever possible reviewers were therefore asked to focus on a sub-section of a site but this was not always possible.

3.4.1 Accuracy

Reviewers were, overall, positive about the accuracy of materials: '*this is an accurate account of Jewish religion and history*' and '*simple but accurate descriptions*', though there were comments that the extent of some websites made this difficult to track: '*I haven't searched all pages and all links and download*'; '*the site is vast*' and also the nature of constant update and change that is inherent in web-based materials made it impossible to comment on the continued accuracy of materials. Comments were made about the links between the website and the sponsoring or producing body if this body had status: '*It is after all the British Library*'. Often the accuracy was situated with the tradition or partial tradition that the web-resource was covering: '*Information on the Kalachakra Tradition is outstanding*', '*the website is accurate, but proceeds from an evangelistic perspective*'. Recognition is given that accuracy needs to be tempered by age appropriateness: '*The coverage is fair and accurate - for the age range*', *Portrayal centres Christianity as living tradition, descriptive and simple*', '*good information but rather basic*'. There were however comments on inaccuracies within the sites and on the bias of some sites. In keeping with other reports there are a number of sub-themes within the main theme of accuracy.

(a) Factual inaccuracies

There was in general a lot of praise for the websites under review: '*the material appears accurate*'; '*this is an accurate account of Jewish religion and history*' and '*simple but accurate descriptions*'; '*accurate and wide-ranging*'. Where errors did occur there were errors of dates and figures or of wrong spellings (or lack of clarity over the problems of transliteration from other languages). Some examples include: '*some small spelling inaccuracies (e.g. Pavarti for Parvati).*'; '*Puja statement is inaccurate ignoring home Puja*'; '*Phalunga is a error for Phalgun*' and '*The statement that Prajapati means the community of artisans is misleading, however, because Prajapati is primarily the name of a deity*'. In this resource there was also a noted image error: '*In the picture of Shivalingum, the lingam is hardly visible; the picture is mainly of the bull Nandi. The lingam appears in the next picture, called Shri Shiva*'.

(b) Confusion

Some of the reviewers felt that there was not always clarity in the internal divisions of religions and also of the perspective of the author or authors of the site. This sometimes led to a confused or simplistic presentation of the materials. This was commented on by one reviewer in relation to the presentation of the history of Hinduism: '*The site presents a standardized Hinduism, mainly of recent origin, and tends to identify Hinduism with India*', and by the same reviewer: '*Generally very accurate with some muddles over academic views of history.*' The Sikh academic felt strongly about the misidentification of language within the context of sacred text: '*To use the term that the language of the scriptures is Punjabi is misleading*'. One reviewer felt that more care needed to be taken when defining particular terms which may apply across more than one religion: '*mention of Nirvana in connection with Jainism includes a link, but leads to an explanation of the Buddhist view of nirvana, which is confusing*'.

However credit is also given where complex issues are dealt with well and fairly: '*Author draws on historical sources in a fair way offering balance*'; '*The rest of the website is far better at enhancing understanding*' and a comment from the Muslim Academic on how a website used current news alongside historical data on Islam: '*This is an excellent website for integrating current news items with Islam and online discussions with scholars*''

(c) Omissions

It is harder to talk about omissions in the reviews given (i) the extent of the websites and (ii) the particular nature of some of the sites. Many of the reviewers accepted the limitations of sites with a particular focus: '*This is a very specific resource'*, and *'Information is accurate but sparse'* and there were comments when the structure of a site promised more than was delivered: *'Site is balanced though often unfinished'* and *'Omissions but the site is developing'* and *'because of the local orientation of the website, there are numerous omissions e.g., there is no reference to Reform Judaism, nor to the significance of the state of Israel. No information is given to secular Judaism'*

Much of that which could be considered omission was in fact a desire to keep things simple and relevant to the age group for which it was being considered. This will be looked at in a later section of this report. Another form of omission, which is picked up, is that of giving guidance to the users of the site on the ways in which the materials could be explained or used: '*The omission is guidance given the diverse range of materials'.*

There are a number of possible explanations for the errors and the confusions that occurred in the web materials reviewed.

(d) Lack of expertise

One of the ongoing issues with web-based resource is that it can be difficult to determine the author or authors of the site, and even if these can be determined it is often difficult to know what credibility they have. In a significant number of the websites the reviewers were unable to determine an author. Thus it is hard to know the expertise that was on offer from these writers. Also there is no need for the editorial and review procedure, which takes place with a printed text where an author would be commissioned by a publisher to write; on the web the author can be self-selecting. So, where there are inaccuracies it is reasonable to conclude that authors lack the necessary knowledge of the subject, the reviewers on occasions made this link. The Sikh academic comments that there are: *'Inaccuracies and unwarranted interpretations such as: 'Jesus did not cut his hair, being a Nazarene, and he wore a turban'.* Adherents of the traditions write many of the websites and the reviewers see this as a positive thing. Of one Jewish website written by a Rabbi the reviewer commented *'An extraordinarily broad and well presented website on Jewish history and religion'.*

(e) Simplification

The nature of religions is that they are sophisticated, complex entities in their history, doctrine and traditions and many of the reviewers found that the sites tended to go for a simplistic approach: *'The site does provide some idea of what Hindu worship is like. As a 'tour' it is unsatisfactory, because it does not give any idea of the spatial relation between the different scenes: where they are in relation to each other. A plan of the temple showing the location of the shrine, pictures, bell, etc. would have helped'* and *'some of the key words such as sharia are simplified'.* It would often have been helpful for these complexities to have been acknowledged even it was not in the scope of the website to develop the entire complexity due to the focus of the content or the age range for which it was intended.

However simplicity is not always seen as a negative thing and it can be very useful to keep the content simple and on one focus: *'Portrayal centres Christianity as living tradition, descriptive and simple'; 'Simple but accurate descriptions. It is only about the Hajj.'* and '*Very simple and factual website most probably suited to the younger members of this age group.'*

(f) Generalisation

Another occasional cause of inaccuracy was found in generalisations whereby the mistaken impression is given that all members of the religion conform to certain generalised beliefs or practices. More comments will be made on this in the section on the use of images and other resources. This was seen as a danger in certain areas and the Hindu academic commented a number of times about the dangers of *'Over generalisation of statements.'* and *'All the pictures are of Varanasi, so the title 'Hindu Pilgrimage' is a bit misleading. Varanasi is the most prestigious place of pilgrimage, but there are countless others'* and from the Sikh reviewer: *'In terms of diversity the target audience is Sikhs 'worldwide', and so viewers of many types/groupings are included. But the visuals are all of turbaned men and women,'*

3.4.2 Integrity, balance and diversity

The reviewers thought that, when religions are portrayed there should be a sense of balance and integrity. Even when a website it not attempting to cover everything within a religion it needs to be clear that there are differing viewpoints and a range of opinions between adherents of the religion. Some of the web resources were seen as excellent examples of balance and integrity. The reviewers appreciated those web resources that presented the diversity of their traditions both in the variations of denominations, schools or movements within the traditions, and in the variations of individual practices and interpretations. There are a number of examples of reviews where the text's ability to achieve this is commented on positively The Sikh academic comments on one religion: *'A site that encourages young Sikhs to think further about such issues as Sikhs and other faiths'* and the Jewish academic comments: *'An extraordinarily broad and well presented website on Jewish history and religion'* and *'one website provides an excellent insight into the diversity of Judaism'.* The Hindu academic was especially positive about one resource's approach to the variety of traditions within the religion: *'Though coming from one tradition it is very open about the diversity of Hinduism and quite successful in maintaining a balance about different traditions. Also a balance between traditional and academic views of ancient Indian History'* and *'Aim is to flag the diversity of human expressions of faith within the tradition.'* Even when, as one reviewer commented: *'[it] is obvious that this site is driven by a Christian Charity',* it does not mean that there is automatic bias as the reviewer went on to comment: *'The information in unbiased'*

The reviewers found other websites were biased towards one tradition or section of the religion. The Sikh academic comments: *'The featuring of 'dastaar bandi' - merged with Khalsa initiation - is misleading and suggests that a Sikh contributor may have wished to get across a particular view'* and *'The site presents a standardized Hinduism, mainly of recent origin, and tends to identify Hinduism with India.'* This can also happen in a very focused resource where there is no attempt to contextualise the resource within the wider tradition: *'A guide to an interesting temple which is not typical; the presentation is not intended to be typical',* and the Islamic academic found one site a *'problematic website as it aims to give info on Islam as well as more seemingly personal views on Christianity and Judaism'.* The Buddhist academic comments on a number of resources: one where *'information is accurate but sparse, balance towards Theravada Buddhism';* another where *'FWBO interpretation only provides a partial picture of Buddhism'* ,and a third where *'focus on one set of teachings. Information on the Kalachakra Tradition is outstanding'.* The Christian academic found one site particularly problematic and commented: *'The website is accurate, but proceeds from an evangelistic perspective.'*

3.4.3 Focus of site - believers or school students?

The web is a mélange of resources and it is not always easy, or necessary, to distinguish between sites that are aimed at school students and those which are aimed at practitioners of the faith. Depending on their pedagogy of religious education teachers may wish to examine both of these. The reviewers found that some of the sites recommended for examination were primarily aimed at faith members rather than at schools.

For most of the reviewers this seems to be a negative concept in an educational setting: *'Site set up as a resource for thought, language sometimes presumes faith community, the explicit agenda is to encourage faith'; 'Mostly for those wishing to practice Buddhism'; 'Website is more evangelistic than for teaching'; 'Site seems to be aimed at adult Hindus or other adults interested in Hinduism'; 'It appears to be aimed at Sikhs of all ages, though it states "Our work is to inspire youth to experience Sikhi and awaken love of the Guru in everyone's heart"'; 'Influenced by its focus for practising Buddhists so forms a cyber-sangha'; 'A site that encourages young Sikhs to think further about such issues as Sikhs and other faiths'* and *'Designed for initiated in the Kalachakra tradition'.*

3.4.4 Depth v Superficiality

The criteria by which the reviewers evaluated the resources included not just the breadth of coverage but also the depth, the degree to which the materials engaged at more than a superficial level: *'These materials were more challenging'.* These comments focused on the learners themselves, the degree to which they were challenged by the content of the resources and the ways in which they were encouraged to engage with this content. They also considered the representations of the religions, their deeper meaning and significance in the lives of their followers.

(a) Challenges for learners

In several cases sites were commended for their ability to challenge young people's thinking with a particular emphasis on the activities and questions presented for the students in a way that would lead to higher order thinking. Thus, the Christian academic commented as follows on a site: *'Activities are in the form of questions for reflection'* and the Buddhist, '*Tasks are well chosen and nicely illustrated'.*

There are some caveats though from the reviewers where they offer a warning against unfettered use of the site and suggest rather that this is a resource which would be very positive in the hands of the teacher but could be counter-productive if the pupils were left to their own devices: *'Whether the resource is exciting, enjoyable, engaging or not would depend very much on how the pupils were prepared'; 'Lots of invaluable resource material here, and many pitfalls for the unwary teacher or student'* and '*This is a passive resource and its success will depend upon the teacher using it rather than depending upon it'.'*
Some of the resources received more negative comments on the activities: *'Activities are more 'fun' than educational'; 'Invites engagement that is based on casual browsing, which may not foster a focused learning experience'* and *'Activities are too few and the pages often lack imagination. Not challenging enough for KS4'.*

3.4.5 Selection of images, video, audio, interactive examples and texts

There was an expectation amongst reviewers that the web resources would be rich in audio-visual materials and some disappointment in those sites that seemed to offer a *'text book on the screen'.* Variety appears to be what the reviewers most appreciated in the selection of images; video and audio materials, though accessing these was not without issues (see later).

(a) Images

There was enthusiastic reception, particularly from the Islam and Hinduism specialists, of many of the high quality pictures and photographs used in the materials: *'A mainly visual resource - consisting of panoramas, and photos'; 'The 14 pictures are striking and typical images of the banks of the Ganges at Varanasi and the people and activities on them'* and *'The pictures are authentic representations of British Hindu practice.'*

It is not just the content of the pictures, but also the quality of the images, that has an impact on the representation of the religion: '*The visual images are well-chosen and attractive. They are specific to the subject'; 'Images are striking and well produced. All can be enlarged and examined and so small details can be examined effectively.'* and *'Use of images, diagrams, photos is engaging.'*

Images were seen as a vital part of a good web resource and there were strong comments when the images were not present: *'Yes, though not many pictures'* and *'Odd selection of pictures here'* and *'This is just one page, and there are no photographs'.*

(b) Video and audio

A real advantage of web-based resources is the possibility of including video and audio material. Whilst the general impression is that the sites have not made the best possible use of video and audio material, there were some places where there was praise for the way sites advanced the teaching and learning possibilities:

> *The xxx Buddhist videos are excellent'* and '*The facilities to listen to Gurbani Kirtan and to read the daily Hukamnama offer access to the heart of Sikhs' daily devotional experience'* and *'The Multi Media provides an empowering experience'* and *'Biblical stories are well illustrated with image and videos'* and *'Features like 'day in the life of bishop' are illuminating.*

> *Very creative use of web based media…Highly imaginative in use of images and video.*

(c) Interactive exercises

There are an increasing number of sites that offer interactive experiences. However, in the field of RE, most of these are in the areas of moral and ethical development. However, positive remarks about more interactive resources that dealt specifically with religions included '*The use of virtual tours is effective'* from the academic covering Christianity, while the Sikh academic remarked: '*This is a useful site for anyone wishing to have a virtual tour of Harmandir Sahib.'*

(d) Texts

Reviewers welcomed the use of scriptural sources and other texts and those materials that used a variety of textual sources were particularly commended: '*The website provides an array of Jewish texts and voices'; 'Scripture references are used well.'; 'Scripture references are good illustrating differing approaches to interpreting Christian teaching.'* and '*Main Sanskrit texts are described, with a few useful sample quotations. Vernacular (non-Sanskrit) texts are also mentioned, but only briefly and without quotations'.* There was praise not only for the use of sacred texts but also other narratives: *'The Stories section, which includes the Bhagavadgita, is the most interesting'.*

3.4.6 Contemporary relevance and activities

(a) Contemporary voices and living religions

The reviewers valued the use of contemporary voices of people from the religions as this gives access to the '*living' faith* and does not just portray religion as for the '*old or dead!'* Several of the reviewers commented on resources that put an emphasis or an accent on this aspect of religious education: *'Emphasis on contemporary Christians not festivals or history';* *'This is perhaps the most unusual website as it is news based and features interactive sessions with scholars of Islam. Much of this can be based on individual opinion'*, and where the use of contemporary voices added an opportunity for reflection or further thought: *'Contemporary voices' are the authors of essays and of Pause for Thought (Gopinder Kaur) and Thought for the Day (Indarjit Singh)'.* A number of the reviewers thought it was important they there were excerpts from young practitioners of the traditions: for example, *'Sections on denominations are very impressive, with a young member of the traditions talking about their ideas and feelings'.*

The reviewers wanted the religion they practised or specialised in portrayed as contemporary with a relevant contribution to make to today's world, and appreciated resources that do this. There were also positive comments about resources that engaged users: *'This is a personal and engaging account of Judaism'* and *'These texts are open and very accessible giving a genuinely personal viewpoint.'* Some reviewers drew attention to the way in which the sites enabled the student to recognise the living nature of the religions. However, in one case the reviewer felt that there was a lack of attention drawn to important contemporary voices: *'Little attention was given to anti-Semitism and the Holocaust.'*

(b) Contemporary issues

The requirements of the curriculum for older pupils mean that resources for this age group relate religions to ethical and global issues relevant to today. Moves over the last few years have been for public examination syllabuses to emphasise ethical issues rather than the study of religions. A number of the reviewers drew attention to this issue. For example, the Muslim faith consultant commented on a resource aimed at older students: *'Moral issues are not covered in great depth.'*

Also several reviewers noted the use of contemporary rather than historical resources, including the use of news media. Interest in contemporary affairs involves engagement with controversial issues, and reviewers found that these were tackled with varying degrees of success, as discussed below.

3.4.7 Other religions and traditions - causing offence

On the whole the messages coming from the reviewers were positive. Most of the websites reviewed did not seem to be pushing an isolationist viewpoint. About half mentioned the religion as being part of British society. There were very few references to religions as promoters of conflict. The resources reviewed give a positive view of inter-religious dialogue and communication and where they are mentioned there seems to be a respectful, tolerant and open approach to dialogue.

In their analysis of the texts academics and faith consultants were aware of elements in the materials specific to the religion they specialised in or practised might be troubling or offensive to those of other traditions. A simple counting of the responses shows that few of the resources reviewed were considered to cause offence, however, there were occasions when the reviewers felt that materials were potentially offensive:

The visual exclusion of non-keshdhari, unturbaned Sikhs means that many Sikhs may feel marginalised/second-rate as Sikhs, and also non-Sikh users will assume that turban-wearing is the norm for women, whereas it remains a (growing) minority practice;

'Much of the material is useful or harmless, but the historical section implies a politicization of Hinduism which identifies it with India and opposes it to Islam and Christianity';

Offence could be caused by the presumption throughout that Christianity is the route to truth, so all should embrace it;

The historical section could well be offensive to Muslims, since it presents them as invaders and oppressors in the past;

3.4.8 Accessibility and technical issues

The very nature of on-line materials, as distinct from print materials, gives rise to problems or issues with accessibility. There were a number of the reviewers who found that some websites gave them technical problems. These came in a number of forms.

(a) Broken links and linking out

Websites are able to link to other sites. Whilst this can sometimes cause a problems of 'click and flick', where students might not be able to focus and concentrate on one website, this ability to be able to draw in other sites is very valuable and lies at the heart of the web browsing experience. However, it is important that the links work, as the Sikh reviewer comments: '*Some links were broken and the site is vast'.*

There were many comments about the positive and well-used nature of links both external to the resource: *'Sources range very widely. Huge portal to other sources on-line'*; '*link to sites provide much more information'; 'the resource provides useful a variety of web links'.*

(b) Accessibility

Most the reviewers were able to access the materials on the sites but there could be technical problems as sites use more complex technologies such as video, audio, Flash and animation. Only one reviewer mentioned a specific problem: *'GT video wasn't accessible'.*

3.4.9 Conclusion

Several issues emerge. Firstly, there is the changing nature of web resources. Many websites are very large in scope and content and thus it is difficult to make comments pertinent to the whole site. Secondly, sites reviewed are not necessarily aimed at schools; the content is not focused on the educational process in terms of language levels, the nature of activities and the more neutral and inclusive language to describe practice. Thirdly, the fact that websites can be easily updated gives the advantage of coverage of contemporary issues and allows the correction of errors. However, the disadvantage is the difficulty of determining the provenance of contributors. Fourthly, the websites do not utilise sufficiently the available technologies, especially in terms of not making sufficient use of video and audio material, and in not utilising Web 2.0 technologies.[26] Of course, the issues raised in this review of free or open resources online may not be the same in the case of paid web-based materials designed specifically for schools.

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[26] Web 2.0 technologies are web based tools in which the user has a more interactive role in developing and inputting content.

4. The Case Studies

4.1 Introduction

This section reports on the findings of fieldwork in twenty diverse schools, ten each of primary and secondary, located across England in or on the outskirts of the cities of Birmingham, Bradford, Leicester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Oxford, Salford, Truro, London (north and south), and in other rural towns and village locations in Cornwall, Hampshire and Norfolk. The section is an analysis of detailed reports from members of the Case Study group who conducted studies in schools (see Appendix A.4.1). The sample was selected purposively for educational, geographic and demographic factors. Among the primary schools, there were two church of England voluntary aided primaries, one in a village setting (St Adwen's), the other serving a predominantly West African population in South London (St Adelard's), a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary in the suburbs of a northern town (St Sofia's), a Jewish voluntary aided primary school (Nitzanah), an independent Muslim primary (al-Hikmah) both in London, and the junior school of a selective independent school (Swann's) in south London. There were also four community primary schools, one in a mixed faith setting in a midlands city(Lingard), another in a predominantly Muslim inner city area (North Street), the third (Sunnyside) on a socio-economically deprived estate on the outskirts of the same northern city, and the last (John Hawkins) in an area of recent immigration in East Anglia.

The secondary schools included a Church of England voluntary aided girls school in South London (Christ Church) also in a predominantly African community, a Roman Catholic high school in a northern city (St Finan's), a Jewish voluntary aided school in another northern city (Ben Gurion), a Muslim voluntary aided school in the midlands (al-Falah), an academy with a Christian foundation in the north (Eden), a highly selective independent boys boarding school in the south of England (Flintmead), a community comprehensive school in the south west (Moorside), a community girls secondary with a predominantly Muslim population in north east London (Woodhouse), and two community schools with religiously and culturally mixed populations in cities in the south midlands (Headley) and east midlands (Trent Vale).

A brief profile of each school can be found in the appendices giving relevant contextual information. The names used for the schools are all pseudonyms; the particular character of the schools is indicated by the use of religion specific names for the church schools and Arabic and Hebrew names respectively for Islamic and Jewish schools.[27] In these diverse schools, observations of lessons, interviews with teachers and school managers and pupil focus groups enabled the research team to see how religious education was delivered, what resources were used (research question 2) and how (research question 4). The case studies investigated the various contextual factors that influenced these choices (research question 5). Particular attention was given to the position of religion in the school, and to pedagogical and practical considerations in the delivery of religious education. The aim of the research was not to make judgments about the quality of the schools' provision, but to find out and describe their different approaches and consider the implications of these for the understanding of world religions and promotion of community cohesion. Group interviews with the students gave an indication of the messages they received from their religious education. Their comments on the resources used in their lessons mean that their perspectives can be added to those of the faith consultants, academics and religious education professionals evaluating religious education materials for the review strand of this project.

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[27] To aid identification further the schools will be coded throughout the text with (s) for secondary, (p) for primary, (inf) for infant, (i) for independent, (va) for voluntary aided and (a) for the academy. The minority status of some of these schools means that they may be identifiable by those who know them. Research at these schools has been carried out with this understanding.

The data collected from each school were handled at different levels of analysis (see 2.3.2 above). All twenty studies were then analysed to produce this overview of the schools' religious education approaches and choices and their contextual influences. The report is organised under the following headings.

- 4.2 - Religion, ethos and religious education

- 4.3 - Pedagogies of religious education

- 4.4 - Influences on teacher use and selection of materials: general educational issues

- 4.5 - Pupil perspectives

- 4.6 - Community cohesion

4.2 Religion, Ethos and Religious Education

This section focuses on the role of religion (school or pupil) in the schools' life and ethos working on the premise that each school's position on this is likely to be a key factor in the selection and use of religious education approaches and materials.

The selection of schools for the case studies was carefully made to ensure a mix of schools 'of a religious character' and schools without this status. Such schools are often known as 'faith schools' and 'non-faith schools' and these terms are used as short hand in this report. The diversity of school understandings of and approaches towards religion within each of the 'faith' and 'non-faith' groupings was very evident in the case study findings. These differences have an impact on the delivery of religious education in the separate institutions, and on the selection, use and interpretations of the religious education materials and are therefore significant for the answering of the fifth research question, 'what are the key factors for schools to consider when determining which materials should be used to teach world religions?' In several of the schools, approaches to RE are better understood by making some reference to the relations between religious education as a curriculum subject and other manifestations of religion in the life of the school, such as collective worship (or assemblies), the perspective of the chaplain in some of the church and independent schools and community links with local clergy or places of worship. In some schools there were synergies between these different elements, occasionally there were tensions, and in other schools strict separation was maintained.

4.2.1 In 'non-faith schools'

The ethos of the multi-ethnic and religiously plural Headley School (s) was described by the Head of Internationalism there as *'determinedly secular'* or *'agnostic'* and he expressed a degree of wariness about the influence of religion in school.

> *The greatest energy is in a kind of secularism, and a kind of scepticism. And while we have absolute regard for the individual faiths of the individual, we find the collective energies about religion and faith things that we want to be watchful and careful of because they can result in anxieties and tensions. (Headley Head of Internationalism)*

In keeping with this statement, what the head of religious education describes as 'the best' religious education at the school is founded on a philosophy of liberal individualism and open-mindedness by which students were encouraged to express their personal viewpoints freely and to be open in their thinking to the influence of the different ideas of others. He

wants the students *'to understand that religion does not mean the same thing to all people in all places at all times'* and that *'you can study other world views that challenge your own'*. The position set out here may be compared with that held by senior staff at Trent Vale Community School (s), another ethnically and religiously diverse school. At Trent Vale (s), the principles underlying RE correspond more closely to the conventions of multiculturalism. The deputy speaks of the significant impact of the school's multi-cultural character on the school's ethos and the religious education policy recognises that the students belong to cohesive, though internally diverse, religious communities and traditions. The head of RE comments on the importance of the children seeing *'that we respect their own traditions and the things these traditions bring to the school'* and includes as a subject aim that students *'develop the understanding of their own tradition and the tradition of others within the school'*.

At Moorside Community College (s), where few pupils have practising religious backgrounds, religious education is seen as offering an alternative to the dominant secular discourse.

> *We are the only subject to show students that there are alternatives to secularism.* (Moorside RE teacher)

In a small market town at the other side of the country, the head teacher of John Hawkins (inf) sees the school itself (not just religious education lessons) as providing the context for encounter with a different perspective from the secularism of the home backgrounds of many.

Another factor that influences the schools' approaches to religion, particularly in the case of primary schools, is the recognition of the community dimension whereby relationships with local churches and clergy are important aspects of the school's community involvement. John Hawkins School (inf) and Sunnyside School (p), though not 'faith schools', are both supported by local clergy on their governing bodies, have their regular input into school collective worship and visit local churches for the celebration of key Christian festivals. At Sunnyside School (p), visits to places of worship are seen as having a double function, educational and social. As one teacher says these visits are *'another avenue to becoming part of the community'*.

In some 'non-faith schools' the religious affiliation and degree of commitment of students influences the school ethos and approach to religion. The influence of pupil religion on religious education will be explored later. At Woodhouse (s), where the majority of pupils are from practising religious backgrounds, the head teacher acknowledges that religion is an important feature of school life, and characterises the school ethos as *'to do with meeting the needs of all students, all religions'*. As outward signs of this, the girls are allowed to wear one item of religious significance and select between Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Christian or Multi-faith assemblies.

The affirmation of the children's religious identity is also one of the aims of religious education at the North Street community primary school where separate faith acts of collective worship are held twice a week.

Another opening for the inclusion of religious elements in school life is a broadening of the understanding of religion to encompass an inclusive spirituality that is not seen to undermine the school's neutrality in matters religious. One of the aims at Swann's School (p:i) is to *'develop the children's sense of contemplation and spirituality'*, a spirituality which is closely related to self reflection and which may, but does not necessarily, lead into a more religious orientation.

The examples above indicate that learning about and learning from religion in 'non-faith schools' is not necessarily confined to the RE lesson.

4.2.2 In 'faith schools'

Within the 'faith' schools too there is a variety of approaches to religion which affect the choice of resources and the ways in which they are used. In some of the schools there is an explicit agenda of nurture of the students into a particular faith tradition. Part of the mission of St Sofia's Roman Catholic primary school (p:va) is *'to contribute successfully to the development of the faith of each individual in the school'* and religious education includes preparation for first communion. Al-Hikmah School (p:i) sets out its educational vision in its prospectus.

> *The first purpose of education should be to know our Maker, Allah, and the purpose he has given us for life. We aspire to develop an educational establishment that fosters true iman and love for Islam in the hearts and minds of our children with the focus on promoting excellence in this life, to earn excellence in it <u>and</u> in the hereafter. (Al-Hikmah Prospectus)*

The aim of the Jewish education at Nitzanah School (p:va) is to transmit to the children:

> *A love of their religious heritage; a sense of their spirituality; a sense of belonging to the Jewish people; a love of Israel; a desire to take on the performance of mitzvoth; to promote, identify and celebrate doing the right thing from the Jewish perspective. (Jewish Studies Policy)*

Teaching children to perform religious rituals and familiarising them with patterns of worship and prayer is part of the education in many of these schools.

While nurture into a particular religion or religious tradition might be the aim of some of the 'faith schools' in the sample, the institutional faith identity is not necessarily dependent on the religious identity or commitment of the students. For example, Ben Gurion (s; va) has a majority of non-Jewish pupils who are not being inducted into the Jewish religion. Even if the pupils are not of the same faith or tradition there is an expectation that they will gain something from the forms and ambience of the institutionalised religion and worship of the school.

The deputy head of Christ Church (s:va) felt that the girls, many of whom faced difficult challenges in life outside school, found a strength and security in the reliable traditional format (hymns, Bible reading, address) of the school assembly. At the boys' public school, Flintmead (s; i) there are regular 'Faith Circle' meetings for boys of different faith traditions (Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim), but attendance at chapel for Anglican worship once or twice a week is compulsory for all boys whatever their religion.

Managers and teachers of the 'faith' schools presented other ways in which the religious ethos of the school might support the development and learning of the young people through the establishment of values which, though rooted in the religious tradition of the school, can also be taken by non-believers as foundational for their own lives and actions, and by teachers and students as a basis for educational activity.

Other principles or themes, rooted in the school religion, that have an impact on curriculum choices, pedagogies and selection of materials include the great importance of knowledge in Islam recognised in the prospectus of al-Hikmah school and reflected in the heavy content base of the religious education programme with information about beliefs and practices of five religions covered in one year and regular assessments, through tests, of the knowledge acquired. When speaking of the Jewish values promoted within her school, the head teacher of Nitzanah School (p:va) acknowledged the central role of text in these and therefore the emphasis on text and story in the children's Jewish education.

4.2.3 Teaching the school's religion

This section considers how, in 'faith schools', explicit teaching about the school religion is organised and the resources are used to support this teaching. As the school's religion is also one of the world religions, the teaching of which is the focus of this project, consideration of how it is presented to the pupils is important to consider.

Religious education in all of the case study schools contains elements of teaching about religions other than the school religion, though the proportion of teaching time spent on these and on the school faith varies between the institutions. At St Adwen's Church of England School (p:va), priority is given to the need for pupils to 'acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and its impact on the local community and on our society today' and teaching about Christianity occupies 75% of RE time. At, St Adelard's (p:va), the other Church of England primary, religious education lessons are dedicated to Christianity until the children reach Year 5 and 6 when they include, alongside their continued studies of Christianity, units on Judaism and Islam. In the two Roman Catholic schools too, Christianity dominates the religious education curriculum and in these cases it is particularly Catholic Christianity and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church that are studied. This dominance of the school religion in religious education programmes was not the case with all the 'faith schools'. While the religious education department at St Finan's (s:va) opted for a GCSE exam course that involved a study of St Mark's Gospel in Year 10 and in Year 11 follow a study of religion and life based on Catholic Christianity, the department at Christ Church (s:va) (Church of England) School has recently changed the GCSE course from a Biblical option to a less faith-specific one based on philosophy of religion and ethics.

Ben Gurion Jewish High school (s:va) was established to provide a suitable Jewish education for *'all the young Jewish students in the locality'* but demographic changes in the city mean that Jewish pupils now account for just 18% of the school population. The school addresses this current situation by providing different religious education paths for its Jewish and non-Jewish students with the Jewish pupils taking Jewish Studies and Modern Hebrew until the end of Key Stage 3 and non-Jewish pupils studying religious education and German. In Key Stage 4 all pupils take a Christian ethics paper and a Judaism paper, while at post 16, Jewish students may take Jewish Studies A level courses or participate in a weekly discussion lesson on Jewish issues.

At al-Falah (s:va) Year 11 students meet with the head teacher for one lesson a week for work on *tarbiya* (the development of character) and citizenship, and with their RE teacher for another lesson with a focus on *tafsir* (quranic commentary) and *tajwid* (recitation).

At primary school level both Nitzanah School (p:va) and al-Hikmah (p:i) run distinct 'own faith' religious education (Jewish Studies and Islamic Studies respectively) and multi-faith religious education programmes requiring all children to participate in both. At al-Hikmah (p:i) Islamic Studies covers a third of the total curriculum timetable of the school and is taught by designated Islamic Studies teachers (known by the Arabic term *ustadh*).

In teaching their own faith tradition the schools use a combination of exam board requirements, faith community guidance and adaptations by school managers and RE departments to suit their understandings of religion and pedagogy. St Adwen's (p:va), on advice from the diocese, uses the local agreed syllabus, St Adelard's (p:va) works with an adaptation of diocesan schemes of work. Religious education at St Sofia's Roman Catholic Primary School (p:va) follows guidance from the Bishops Conference of England and Wales and the Roman Catholic Church's scheme of work for primary schools. The diocesan website provides background notes and planning sheets for each term based on this scheme of work.

At St Finan's Roman Catholic High School (s:va) the RE department also utilises a generic scheme of work approved by the Roman Catholic Church, though they have chosen to develop their own curriculum from this starting point. One aim of the changes is to use innovative styles of teaching that ensure *'pupils are constantly engaged'* and able to relate to what they are learning, the staff recognising that although the majority of pupils identified as Catholic very few were *'church goers'*. The department has come across resourcing problems in its concern to develop religious education that is engaging yet Catholic. The Roman Catholic educational materials on offer are deemed to be outdated and uninteresting for students, and while there were plenty of good secular images and video clips to serve as an 'emotional hook' for students in religious education, the links between these and religious or Catholic themes were less obvious or memorable for the young people.

At Nitzanah (p:va) the Jewish Studies programme follows a set curriculum which was developed through the collaboration between several Jewish schools. Following this curriculum the school's Jewish Studies policy emphasises the importance of ensuring a gradual increase in the level of skills, knowledge, understanding and experience offering progressive learning objectives in seven different areas: Prayer and spirituality; Jewish Year and Shabbat; Torah and text; Jewish thought, ethics, morals and philosophy; life cycle; living Judaism and community; history, culture, Israel and the diaspora. Modern Hebrew lessons are also run throughout the school taught in engaging, interactive lessons by Israeli teachers with expertise in early childhood pedagogies.

Islamic Studies at al-Hikmah (p:i) entails for each class from Year 1 to Year 6, four hours of Qur'an studies (reading, recitation, memorising, translating), one hour of Islamic studies (beliefs, moral values, lives of prophets) and four hours of Arabic taught as a modern foreign language. In the reception class the children have a combined Qur'an and Arabic hour long lesson each day. The formulation of the curriculum has come from the school itself and the new assistant head teacher has responsibilities for its development. He is concerned that the programme should be rigorous and progressive and is conscious that he does not have the support in this task of an existing Islamic Studies curriculum at this level that can provide guidance on levels, strategies for assessment and appropriate resources to support this work.

> *So you end up with all sorts of books ...some are for adults, some are for children, some are story books, but it's back to that pulling together into a format where you can actually teach it and assess it as a unit. At the moment teachers are doing that individually, because there isn't a national curriculum for Islamic studies ...but how much they know by the time they get to Year 3 or Year 5 or 6? What are the level criteria, national descriptions of levels? That's something we're trying to develop here. (al-Hikmah assistant head teacher)*

At both al-Hikmah (p:i) and al-Falah (p:va) the schools have had to look to resources from other countries, particularly the United States, to support teaching of Islam.

The focus in this section so far has been on teaching within discrete religious education lessons (including Islamic Studies and Jewish Studies) but there were several instances where elements of religion are taught within other curriculum areas or included alongside other disciplines in cross-curricular topic-based learning. This combining of subjects is not particular to 'faith schools' there being a number of examples observed in the 'non-faith schools', nor is it always the case that it is the school's own faith that is introduced into other curriculum areas in this way. Nevertheless, in some of the faith schools, the cross-curricular approach is used to convey the sense of the relevance of their faith to many different aspects of the children's lives and learning. Nitzanah (p:va) Jewish Studies policy states that the subject is integrated into other curriculum areas when appropriate *'in order for pupils to realise the centrality of their heritage to the rest of their lives'*.

This approach is also taken at al-Hikmah (p:i) school. One area of integration that the assistant head has been working on recently is the integration of teaching about Islamic character (*khuluq*) and the national SEAL programme for PSHE. In one Year 1 lesson, the teacher used the national SEAL (Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning) materials to teach the lesson on pride but gave them an Islamic slant by distinguishing between *'a type of pride Allah loves'* and *'a type of pride which Allah doesn't like'*. This inclusion of Islamic elements reflects an underlying Islamic epistemology as set out in the school's 'Islamisation and Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural Policy'.

The blurring of boundaries found in several of the 'faith schools' is not just the blurring of curricular boundaries but also of boundaries between education and religious devotion. Pupils and staff at St Sofia's Roman Catholic Primary School (p:va) do not make a clear distinction between curriculum religious education and collective worship when discussing religious education. The religious education curriculum theme for the term is reflected in some of the assemblies and class liturgies. At St Adelard's Church of England Primary School (p:va) the RE co-ordinator has been responsible for the creation and maintenance of prayer corners as foci of worship in each classroom. Their use is included in her understanding of the scope of religious education at St Adelard's (p:va). This ambivalence has a significance for religious education resources in 'faith school' settings, some of them having devotional as well as educational meaning, an issue that will be revisited later when pupil perspectives are considered.

4.2.4 Teaching other people's religions

Teaching about other people's religions is part of the educational programme at all of the case study schools whether they are 'faith schools' or 'non-faith' schools. The rationale for their inclusion and approaches taken may vary from institution to institution but is often found to be linked to each school's stated ethos. In many cases the comments of staff and wording of policy documents stressed the importance of developing attitudes of tolerance and respect for others in their diversity of beliefs and practices whether, for example, at the prestigious public school, the multi-cultural city comprehensive, the inner city Church of England secondary, the market town infant school or the Jewish primary. Behind this emphasis on tolerance there is often a sense of the potential for conflict between different religious positions and the importance of religious education in promoting harmonious relations. The deputy head at Trent Vale (s) suggested that the religious education programme at her school was a key factor in the positive relations between the students there with their diverse religious backgrounds.

> *RE plays a vital role in developing understanding of other people's religions and faith cultures, where they are coming from, why they are thinking the way they do, what their beliefs are. RE is one of the main vehicles for doing that. (Trent Vale deputy head)*

The school uses a combination of systematic approaches focusing on different traditions individually, and thematic approaches viewing major themes across traditions, a combination based on the principle that greater understanding of different traditions combined with a sense of commonalty between them will lead to greater tolerance. At Sunnyside Primary School (p) the syllabus is constructed along thematic lines with themes such as sacred writings and places explored at different stages in relation to different religions, the emphasis on similarities being viewed as a contribution to positive relations and fitting the school's ethos of 'respect'.

At Headley (s) the head of department argues that *'factual knowledge about religions only gets you part of the way'* and puts an emphasis on the development of skills of interaction and the dialogue between different views that the school's philosophical approach to religious education allows. The head of department at Flintmead (s:i) promotes a

combination of rigorous knowledge of other religions and dialogue skills for the development of positive attitudes towards difference.

At the primary schools, in particular, the 'celebrating diversity' ethos of multiculturalism is strong and in many cases interpreted literally with celebrations of the festivals of different religious and cultural communities taking place in school assemblies and through other activities such as the creation of festival art and sharing of festival food. At North Street Primary (p) there was a joint display in the entrance hall combining information and art work related to Yom Kippur and 'Id ul Adha. The emphasis on celebration of other cultures within religious education is evident at Nitzanah Jewish Primary (p:va) where the case study visit coincided with the season of Chinese New Year and the RE lessons were given over to learning about the traditional Chinese story of the naming of the year and to producing festival artwork. In other cases the occasions of religious festivals were used as opportunities to introduce children to religions that were not covered in the school's religious education syllabus, such as at John Hawkin's Infant School (inf) where the only religion other than Christianity studied in religious education lessons was Judaism, but the celebration of Diwali was a chance to teach the children about Hinduism, share the Diwali story and make Indian sweets.

At St Finan's Roman Catholic High School (s:va) there has recently been a significant change in the selection of world religions that the students learn about in Key Stage 3. They previously studied Hinduism for the same reasons of celebration and diversity found in traditional multi-cultural approaches but have now changed the focus to Islam for reasons of 'social necessity' with a reference to perceived interreligious tensions in society.

> *[Hinduism] was colourful, it was so different, the kids loved it, but ...we felt Islam post 9/11 [it was] essential to have that. (St Finan's RE head of department)*

For the same reason the RE co-ordinator at St Adwen's (p:va) criticised as too narrow the local syllabus from which a study of Islam was absent as *'with the things going on in the world not to know anything about Islam is - you know…'.*

Some of the 'faith schools' in the study gave greater emphasis to other faiths than legally required (see 1.1.1).[28] The two-to-one religious education and Islamic Studies time allocation for Year 7 and 8 at al-Falah (s:va) is a case in point, as is Nitzanah Jewish primary's (p:va) weekly multi-faith religious education lesson during which the pupils follow the local agreed syllabus and study Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. At al-Hikmah independent Islamic primary school (p:i) the timetable is already very crowded with the national curriculum covered in two thirds of curriculum time and another third used for Islamic Studies. Nevertheless special arrangements have been made to ensure that the children study other religions with a weekly 45 minute lesson held after regular school hours for the Year 5 class. The children spend six lessons on each of the five religions Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism, thus giving greater coverage to more religions than is the case in many community primary schools. The maintenance in these last two schools of separate courses of study, own faith and other faiths, means that the purposes and significance of the lessons are not confused. It is a distinction that the Year 6 children at Nitzanah (p:va) understood clearly when they appreciated the interest shown by their non-Jewish class teacher when he sits in on their Jewish Studies lesson.

> *For us it's Jewish Studies and for him it's religious education.*

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[28] Schools with a religious character, VA or independent, are not required to follow the locally agreed religious education syllabus.

The 'faith schools' in the sample have similar reasons to the 'non-faith schools' for introducing pupils to other religions, as some of the examples above show. At al-Hikmah (p:i), particular emphasis is placed on the importance of learning about diversity as part of the pupils' development as British citizens. The RE co-ordinator describes how the importance of a multi-faith religious education is accepted by children and parents.

> *We tell them that it's an important part of their learning and them being British citizens and to learn about each other and to learn about diversity so they know what's around them ...[the parents] know that it's a service for the British and the community and that so it creates cohesion as well as an understanding between people. (al-Hikmah RE co-ordinator)*

In addition to these secular reasons, teachers, managers and policy documents from 'faith schools' suggest other reasons particular to their faith perspectives. At al-Hikmah School (p:i) Qur'anic teaching on neighbourliness, is used as a reason for gaining a greater understanding of and learning how to relate to those of different religious backgrounds. Both the head of religious education at Al-Falah (s:va) and a school chaplain at Flintmead (s:i), neither advocating theological pluralism, share the theological argument that God's working is beyond humans' limited understanding, for recognising the faith of others outside their own tradition.

> *...and the example is that when Muhammad was living in his society, in Medina ...it's not for us to put opinion on people, because we don't know what's in people's heart, it's for us to coexist with people, and that's what we put across to kids*
> *(al-Falah Head of RE)*

> *Christians must be prepared to be surprised by the presence of God in any faith.*
> *(Flintmead chaplain)*

An existing focus on religion within some of the schools is also seen as a reason for extending that interest to other faiths and the fact that the children have a firm grounding in the school's faith is viewed as a secure base from which to learn about different religions. Delaying the systematic study of other faiths within religious education until Year 5 in both al-Hikmah (p:i) and St Adelard's (p:va) is in keeping this understanding. A teacher at al-Falah (s:va) commented that the pupils' thorough grounding in Islam gave them an enthusiasm for learning about other faiths.

> *I mean, they've been learning Islam since day one; obviously they've been raised in very religious families ...A lot of them, after school, they go straight to the mosque for the hifz sessions, two hour sessions – so I really respect them for their dedication ....I think they're hungry for other faiths. I think they're hungry for variety and knowledge and comparative study. I think that it's worked out very well in this school'*
> *(al-Falah teacher)*

The co-ordinator at St Adelard's Church of England School (p:va) combines the concepts of enthusiasm and security, and the school's Christian ethos, in her assessment of her pupils' attitude to learning about other faiths.

> *I was talking to the children yesterday - they are very excited learning about Judaism. I think there's a real sense of value and ethos about the school because it's a Church of England school that's incredibly positive - that also gives a real basis for children to learn about other religions, to be interested and to feel quite secure to do that*
> *(St Adelard's RE co-ordinator)*

The basis of the children's enthusiasm and the importance of the faith of the school in its educational aims encourage comparative approaches to learning about other religions with parallels and distinctions made between own religion and the religions that are the focus of study.

4.2.5 Relating to pupil religion

(a) Content of religious learning

Quite apart from the faith status of the schools, their geographical location and demographic context means that there is a diversity of faith profiles in the sample which also have an impact on religious education curriculum choices and delivery. The religious education curriculum in 'faith schools' is strongly influenced by the religious identity of the school which is usually (though not necessarily) related to the religious identity of their pupils. Though not strictly speaking a 'faith school', Flintmead School (s:i) is a Christian foundation with a strong Christian ethos. This is combined with a concern to provide for the pupils' individual religious upbringing recognising that a number of faiths other than Christianity are represented among the student population, Buddhism being the largest minority because of the presence of around sixty Chinese boarders at the school. The website claims that:

> *We will cultivate a strong sense of community, personal reflectiveness and responsibility in all our pupils, regardless of their religious background…We will assist boys from non-Christian cultures to study and understand their religious inheritance. (Flintmead website)*

The headmaster explained that he would be pleased if non-Christian pupils came to affirm their own religious heritage. Some of the 'non-faith' schools, also accepted some elements of nurture for their pupils, providing prayer and worship opportunities specific to the pupils' faith, as in the separate faith assemblies at Woodhouse (s) and the two Muslim faith worship events held each week at North Street (p) (one for the infants and one for the juniors) supported by Muslim faith tutors, and the Christian faith worship assembly held at the same time for a small minority of six pupils. These events are in addition to the daily, inclusive, collective worship.

In several of the 'non-faith' schools the religious education curriculum has been adapted to the religion of the students. Islam is taught in all phases at North Street Community Primary (p) because as the religious education co-ordinator said, *'the majority of children in the school are Muslims and you start with where the children are at'*. The GCSE choices made at Woodhouse (s) and Trent Vale (s) are examples of this accommodation. The girls at Woodhouse (s), the majority of whom are Muslim, take the Islam and Christianity option for their GCSE. At Trent Vale (s) the GCSE programme is organised in such a way that the students must study Christianity but otherwise can choose from Hinduism, Islam or Sikhism for the second religion to study. This means almost all students are able to study their own religion for the examination, even though supporting learning about three different religions concurrently is more challenging for the teachers.

(b) Pupil religion as a resource

When the pupils' own religion is the subject of study then the pupils themselves and their experience can become a religious education resource. At Lingard (p) the teacher felt she had ready access to materials to resource her lessons as *'we have such a resource in parents and in the children themselves so when we do Islam we will have children bringing things in'*. The Head of Subject at Trent Vale (s) was keen to develop the use of students' own experience within class but recognised that this approach needed to be complemented with a study of the wider tradition to which the young people belonged.

Some students are very valuable - but they are not experts on the whole tradition but their contribution is valuable. We sometimes have to remind children that their way is not the only way of doing something. For example the Gujarati Hindu way is not the only way. (Trent Vale head of department)

The student religion that becomes the content of religious education is not just at the level of faith identity and affiliation to a religious tradition but also at the level of personal religiosity and beliefs. Thus at Moorside Community College (s) a series of Year 7 lessons included an exercise that engaged the pupils at a very personal level. The students were asked to *'imagine your soul is a bag - what would you put in it?'* They then drew or made a bag and put inside it those things that they identified as being to do with the soul, for example photographs of friends and family and lists of likes and dislikes.

This individualised and reflective attitude to personal faith is intellectualised at Flintmead (s:i) where the head teacher uses St Anselm's fides quaerens intellectum[29] to describe the way he hopes the boys will engage with their faith.

The head of department explained this process.

It may be that some of the pupils have faith and some don't ...You'll understand why you believe what you believe and examine that as some sort of process of self-examination. (Flintmead head of department)

Schools following liberal approaches to religious education, for example, Headley (s) and Christ Church (s:va), emphasise the individuality of belief and self expression as well as self reflection.

In the best practice RE here, you will find open discussion by people of differing views, who don't feel intimidated and feel they can share things that are in fact quite personal, and where that happens you can see other students who had no idea about those experiences and thoughts and listening in, and it's opening up their world to different ideas. (Headley RE head of department)

(c) Starting points for learning

Students' existing knowledge and experience of religion or of their own religion make a difference to the starting point for the presentation of religious education content and the selection of resources. While the Year 5 teachers at al-Hikmah (p:i) and St Adelard's (p:va) schools are able to use comparisons in religious education lessons between the children's own religion and the practice and beliefs of Hinduism and Judaism respectively, the Year 5 teacher at Sunnyside School (p) reflects on the conceptual difficulties many of his pupils have with religious practice.

Some of the things that happen in religion seem very unusual and very strange and the children's language, even though they don't mean to be offensive, can be like 'weird' or 'crackers'. (Sunnyside Year 5 teacher)

The children's lack of familiarity with religion was sensitively handled in a Year 2 lesson where the teacher was careful to build bridges between their own experiences and the focus of the lesson, 'Why do Christians go to church?' The teacher began with a story book with which the children were already familiar considering the places that were special to the heroine of the story and showing a picture of the church on her island. She progressed to the children's own special places and so set the context for pupils thinking about places that are

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[29] 'faith seeking understanding'

special for others. The lesson included a set of projected images of the church in their village with the outside of which, at least, the children were familiar. The teacher then provided them with photopacks she had prepared herself from website images containing a variety of photographs of Christians in churches. These combined to give a positive impression of the life and work of church communities.

The students at Eden Academy(s:a) are similarly unfamiliar with things religious and, in response to this, the head of subject has promoted a *'starting where they are at'* approach to religious education which he contrasts with the *'complicated'* language and ideas of the religions which often seem foreign to the majority of students at the school. This educational philosophy has led him to focus less on understanding the different world religions and instead to move towards more thematic approaches and issues-based approaches that help young people to *'develop their thinking skills so that they can look at any kind of evidence and make opinions for themselves and make a choice of the kind of person they want to be'*.

By contrast Islamic Studies teachers at al-Hikmah (p:i) work with their pupils' detailed knowledge of and commitment to Islam. In both lessons observed, one on Adam and Eve for Year 3 and on Shoiab for Year 6, the children already knew the outline of the stories. Some of the year 6 children had already memorised the surah that was the focus of the lesson's learning. This meant that the lessons were opportunities to build on this knowledge, offer interpretations of the stories and focus on their messages. Thus the Year 6 children learnt that the story of Shoiab was about 'greediness' and its consequences. The messages that the teacher drew from the story of Adam and Eve were about racism (Iblis was the first racist when he assumed that because of his different origins, fire not clay, he was superior to Adam) and about the common ancestry of all human beings through Adam and Eve; 'Muslims, Christians, Jews and Hindus are all related to Adam so all are brothers and sisters'. The resources used were dependent on careful listening (the year 6 pupils heard a recorded lecture on Shoaib designed for adults), but the children, were very engaged in the lessons and keen to answer the detailed questions they were given about the stories and their meaning.

The teachers at St Adelard's (p:va) found that the children's enthusiasm for their religion, their depth of knowledge and religious thinking was a source of inspiration in their own teaching. In a Year 4 lesson on the book of Jonah, the teacher let the interpretation of the story develop from the children's own words, for example, when she reached the storm in the story and asked what Jonah's *'barrier to praying'* was at this point, they suggested without prompts that it was that *'he's ignored God'*, *'he might be afraid to pray because he's ignored God'*, *'maybe God has sent a terrible storm so he would listen'*. When the class was asked whether it would have been better if Jonah had obeyed God straightaway, one of them answered *'I think he should have run away otherwise he wouldn't have learnt that everyone is forgiven by God'*, another interpreted Jonah's bad mood when God refrained from punishing the people of Nineveh as a sense of injustice, *'because he got into trouble for disobeying God and they didn't'*. A third child turned this sense of injustice around saying, *'God's forgiven him for not obeying him and now he's upset when he forgives the people doing bad things, so it's not fair'*. The actual resource used to stimulate this discussion was a very straightforward retelling of Jonah's story with simple text and images on the classroom interactive whiteboard. The quality of the resource used did not determine the level of learning but the children's prior knowledge and enthusiasm and the teacher's preparedness to let her pupils' religious understanding and language guide the lesson and serve as a foundation for the development of their thinking.

(d) Messages and language

Biblical stories, such as the story of Jonah, are prominent in the religious education programmes in the primary schools in particular, following guidance about the use of stories and religious texts from the National Framework and local syllabuses. The treatment of these varies from school to school partly in response to the religious backgrounds of the pupils. At St Adelard's (p:va) the messages taken from the stories are Christian messages, in both lessons observed they were about God's forgiveness. The teacher's summing up of the parable of the Prodigal Son reflected her pupils' Christian perspective, *'even if you have made a mistake, if you say you are sorry and you mean it, you can be forgiven and come back to God'.* At John Hawkins school (inf) where the number of practising Christians is far fewer, the main messages the Year 1 children were encouraged to take from Jesus' parables were of a different nature, *'to share our things'* (the Rich Man's Barn), *'to never give up'* (the Lost Sheep), *'to be kind'* (the Good Samaritan). In the observed lesson the teacher used a book directed at a Christian market to tell the story of the Pearl of Great Price. The book ends with the words, *'Jesus says God is like a merchant's pearl. It costs everything to know him but it is worth more than anything'*, but the teacher used distancing language to translate the story's meaning to the children *'people who believe in God and believe in Jesus believe he is the most precious thing to them'.* This was not the main message for the children that the teacher wanted to draw from the telling, however, instead the parable was used as a stimulus to get children to think about what was precious in their own lives.

The language used at Nitzanah Jewish School (p:va) was carefully tailored to recognise the diversity of Jewish practice and traditions within the school. The deputy head frequently used the word 'Jewish' in her Year 1 Jewish Studies lesson on the synagogue, such as *'Jewish people pray in a synagogue'*, but this was not so much a distancing device as a way of reinforcing the Jewishness of the practices described and emphasising the particularity of the children's Jewish identity. At the same time she acknowledged and valued the internal Jewish diversity represented in the class by including comparisons between her own and other Jewish traditions, *'in some synagogues they might have someone who does the singing - I don't in mine but you might in yours'.*

(e) Minority faith positions

Many of the teachers' decisions about curriculum content and delivery described above have been made in acknowledgement of the majority faith positions of their classes. There are also examples where distancing devices, neutral and impartial approaches and language are adopted in the understanding that minority positions are thereby not disadvantaged in relation to majority positions, or where a valuing of each individual's beliefs and opinions, as in the philosophical approaches, means all students' views and experiences have equal status. In 'faith schools' there tends (almost by definition) to be priority given to one faith over the others. Nevertheless, at those schools with small minorities of children of other faith, the teachers were often keen to share how those children were encouraged to talk about their religion and to explain where it differs from the faith of the school, at St Adelard's (p:va) where they are prepared *'to say, "we don't believe that ..." and "we do this ..."'*, at St Sofia's (p:va) where the reception teacher explains how she discusses the other faith traditions with the minority Muslim and Jewish pupils in her class.

At Trent Vale Community School (s) the Head of Subject is aware that not having a faith is a minority position and a position that is often viewed as strange and unusual by other students at the school. She tries to overcome this by designing tasks to affirm the position of the 'white "post-Christian" British' students without a religious background in the class.

> *In Year 9 I was trying to design in the idea of a non-religious birth ceremony to be more inclusive of those without a religious background but also to show to those that do have a religious background that there are those who do not have a religious background and they have found it very hard to design a non-religious ceremony as they were immediately lapsing into religious language. (Trent Vale head of RE)*

Some other minorities were found to be under catered for; at John Hawkins (inf) the religious education and multicultural resources and the school's annual programme of festivals, recognise and celebrate the lives of traditional and long-standing ethnic minority communities within Britain from the Caribbean, South Asia and China. However, there is less attention given to the faith (largely Roman Catholic) and cultural traditions of the European migrant communities represented in the school. The educational resources catalogues used by the school offer the teachers very little support for the development of this area.

Among religious minorities, the position of evangelical and fundamentalist Christians emerged several times as one that members of religious education departments found difficult, partly because they were under represented in religious education materials and partly because they were understood to maintain religious positions that conflicted with the liberal, open-minded approaches advocated in several of the schools. At Moorside (s), the greatest number of students with any religious affiliation, attend two independent evangelical churches in or near the town. Their tradition is not included in most of the religious education department's resources on Christianity and the teachers note a lack of engagement from the pupils in class discussions. As one teacher said, *'they generally keep their head down'*. Another admitted that though *'we try to give them a chance to say their piece in lessons ...they're usually quiet'*, and so, paradoxically, some of the most religiously committed members of the class feel unable to express their views in religious education. The girls at Christ Church (s:va), a sizeable number from black-led Pentecostal churches, whom the religious studies head of department describes as *'literalist'* and *'fundamentalists'*, are less likely to be quiet in lessons and anyway live in a context where religion is publicly expressed and recognised. Their position challenges the staff who have more liberal views. The chaplain finds that some of the students' religious positions on the literal truth of certain Biblical passages, the creation, the position of women, the concept of God, conflict with her personal views. She is sometimes asked by the religious studies teachers to contribute her own perspective in lessons in order to show the girls another Christian viewpoint.

4.2.6 Conclusion

This section has focused on the role of religion (school or pupil) in the schools' life and ethos on the basis that each school's position on this is likely to be a key factor in the selection and use of religious education approaches and materials. In our twenty case study schools this has proved to be the case. Nevertheless, it has become evident that the designation of the schools as either 'faith' or 'non-faith' is not a straightforward indicator of what the place of religion within those institutions will be. The situation is complicated by a number of factors, such as history, community and demography. The role of churches in local communities, for example, means that links between community schools and local churches and clergy are often strong and active; a school population of pupils with a strong religious affiliation can put religion at the centre of even a 'non-faith' school. 'Faith schools' and schools with faith foundations are found to take different approaches to their founding religion according to the faith profile of their pupils. In religious education terms the faith of pupils is often a major influence on the selection of themes and content for religious education, with a necessary impact on the materials selected to support this selection. There was some evidence, however, of minority religious positions in the school, particularly that of evangelical Christians, being overlooked. Comparison of two schools with similar mixed faith profiles has also demonstrated that the matching of school approach to religion with pupil religion is not an exact science, but that emphases, choices and policies vary according to the different philosophies and responses to religion of key members of staff.

The case studies have shown the interrelationship of the school interpretation of the place of religion in its life and the position or nature of religious education. In some cases the boundaries between the subject and other faith-related aspects of school life, particularly collective worship, are blurred, and in others carefully guarded; in some the nurture of pupils into their religion and religious education lessons are viewed as separate activities, in others they are part of the same thing.

The case studies provide examples of 'faith schools' where two forms of religious education, confessional and multi-faith, are being taught using separate educational programmes (distinguished as Jewish or Islamic Studies and 'religious education'). In cases where religious material is used in other subjects, or where other subjects are presented with religious interpretation, it could be said that religious education spreads right across the curriculum. In the teaching of the school's own religion one of the issues that emerged in some places was the lack of good materials that presented learning from a religious perspective yet in a way that was engaging and appealing for the students (particularly in Catholic education) or that was structured and progressive enabling a rigorous tracking and support of pupil attainment (particularly in Islamic education). The teachers discerned gaps in the market here.

One of the encouraging findings was the seriousness with which most of the faith schools took the teaching of other religions. There was not deemed to be a conflict between such teaching and the maintenance of a parallel confessional approach to education in the schools' own religion. Indeed positive reasons were found from within the faith traditions for learning about neighbours' religion, and the existing interest and experience of pupils in religion was seen as a firm foundation for learning about other faiths.

In schools where the pupils had very little experience of religion, teacher strategies may involve the careful selection of material to bridge the gap in their pupils' understanding between a religious and a non-religious worldview. They may also decide to give more attention to life issues relevant to the pupils and to the development of dialogical skills, than to the systematic study of different religions, a choice that influences the kind of religious education materials used. The problem with such an approach is that, while students may learn to listen to and respect other people's rights to hold different views and opinions on a variety of issues, they may still lack the insight into the religious lives and motivations of others that will enable them to understand where those opinions are coming from and what their force and significance is for those who express them.

Working with twenty schools reinforces the view that, although the teaching of world religions has a place in all these diverse settings, there cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to teaching and resourcing religious education; different contexts call for different approaches. Some of the different approaches used by teachers in their religious education classes will be considered further in the next section, as will additional practical considerations that combine with the influences reviewed here to determine their choices.

4.3   Influences on Teacher Selection and Use of Resources: Pedagogies of Religious education

The fifth research question asks about the factors teachers consider in their selection of religious education materials. This section elaborates on one answer to this question; that they select materials to suit the diverse religious education pedagogies they adopt in class. If we try to classify the different pedagogical approaches to religious education in the case study schools (and they were often used in various combinations), four approaches emerged which can be termed: world religions approaches, emphasising teaching about the main religions; scriptural approaches, using story and text; experiential approaches - using anything from outside visits to artefacts, to (especially in some faith schools) engaging in

devotional activity; and philosophical and ethical approaches - using thinking skills, debating ethical issues and taking more philosophical options in public examinations. Their inter-relationship with the current attainment targets is considered, and how teachers often combined these different approaches.

The third research question is concerned with how materials are used by teachers in the classroom. This section identifies different modes of use and analyses a number of examples taken from across the case study schools.

4.3.1 World religions approaches

When learning about world religions was a primary goal, published and web-based religious education materials were particularly important as sources of information providing key content for the lessons. Sometimes they were used in class as textbooks from which the students would extract their own information, as in a Year 10 lesson observed at Trent Vale (s) where the main activity of the lesson involved working from textbooks on Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam to find the answers to given essay-style questions. On other occasions the teachers used materials to extract information themselves and then convert it into a format that would be accessible for the students. A course of religious education lessons on Hinduism at al-Hikmah (p:i) required a good deal of research by the teacher using a variety of sources, websites, material designed for adults and a selection of primary education resources, so that she could select what was most suitable for her Year 5 class. In classrooms in a number of the primary schools there was often a display of books, posters and artefacts relating to a particular religion being studied which children could view and learn from at odd times during the school day. The displays on Judaism in the Year 5 class at St Adelard's (p:va) and the Year 2 class at John Hawkins (inf) were instances of this.

Access to information was the prime concern but within this theme, the main issues for teachers concerned accuracy, the diversity within religions, and contemporaneity. Many teachers were concerned that resources, particularly textbooks and websites, should be *accurate* in their representation of different religions. They wanted to represent religions accurately, but they often recognised the difficulties in achieving this. Many teachers were comfortable with either their own religion or denomination, or one they had studied, but beyond that they were conscious of their lack of expertise. It could be difficult for those without secure subject knowledge to identify bias.

> *My own knowledge of Islam is only secondary, from textbooks, and when you it show to others who are actually following the faith, they have pointed out that what is on offer is really only an interpretation, but is being presented as if all Muslims agree. (Headley head of department)*

This raised the question of whether it was an advantage for an author to belong to the particular religion they described. For some it was important that the information should be was *'written by believers…'* (Headley [s]). This was also one of the reasons why many teachers liked to use visitors; for instance at St Sofia's (p:va), they had welcomed the local (Roman Catholic) parish priest, a Jewish parent, and the Muslim head teacher of the school's twinning partner in Pakistan. In Sunnyside (p), the Key Stage 1 teacher talked with great warmth about *'Id when they had a 'visit'* by their own Muslim pupil who was *'dressed up beautifully - a living resource that walked in through the door. Fantastic!'* Nevertheless there were problems with this, of, as the same teacher commented, falling into the trap of tokenism. A Muslim visitor had come in and it was relevant *'but it was someone so out of their realm of experience, and so it was almost tokenism and I don't want anything to be tokenistic'*.

For others, however, it could also be useful if the author did not belong to that religion:

> *I found it very useful…because there is a misconception that you can't know about a religion unless you believe in that religion, and for the kids to see that it makes them think themselves, they find out about other religions. We always discuss that in the lesson and they always say, 'A lot of people know a lot about Islam'. I said. 'Exactly, that's why we need to know a lot about others'. (Al-Falah head of department)*

One question to be considered was whether the material should present an insider's view or be more distanced. At Headley School (s), one teacher was emphatic that the advantage of a particular video was that,

> *They are talking to real Muslims and they are putting across their faith as they practice it, so you've got some spirituality there…I want the real feelings of what it means to believe (Headley teacher)*

She wanted pupils to experience individual Muslims presenting their own beliefs. This however was not a simple choice. At John Hawkins School (inf), the Year 2 teacher used both an insider's perspective, with a book from a Jewish viewpoint, and an imaginative outsider's viewpoint, from the perspective of a spider looking on. These reinforced the teacher's approach, which combined involvement and active engagement with a sense of distance, as the spider too is an outsider, looking on as the family enjoy their Shabbat.

Some teachers would cross-check material. This was particularly an issue for the many teachers who used the internet for materials - one teacher at Al-Falah School (s:va) humorously referred to *'Sheikh Google'*, recognising his reliance on it; at St Finan's (s:va), they would cross-check internet material with GCSE textbooks. Another method of checking was to turn to personal contacts. At North Street School, where there were a number of people from ethnic and religious minorities on the staff, the teacher often went to colleagues in school to ask advice, but the school had no Buddhist or Jewish members of staff. At Headley School (s), the head of department placed qualified trust in certain publishers: *'I kind of trust X series, though they are not entirely correct'*. However, at North Street School (p), a teacher pointed out a difficulty in using catalogues: *'If you look in the catalogue there's only a picture, you don't know what's inside. Publishers assume that the person who's ordering it knows what they're doing'*, but she said that was not the case. This also affected the use of artefacts, for instance, at Lingard School (p), the teacher commented that *'Mrs M [the teaching assistant] was a very valuable resource'* on Hindu artefacts, and later when commenting on using materials she said that she could use Mrs M to *'check if my assumptions were correct'*.

This points to the second concern: *difference and similarity*. Some teachers were concerned that the internal diversity of a particular religion was not shown, and criticized the tendency of many textbooks to present a unified image of a religion, rather than the differences within a particular religion:

> *I think there is a tendency of textbooks to want to say 'All Muslims think' or All Muslims agree', which is almost never accurate, in fact. There are very few things on which all Christians, or Muslims, would agree. It's certainly true for resources on Judaism - often what is being presented is a relatively orthodox Jewish position, and many British Jews aren't living out that orthodox life - (Headley head of department)*

One primary school, St Adwen's (p:va), tackled this by comparing different denominations, through visits and through a website. The RE co-ordinator recognised that the school is 'lucky to have Anglican and Methodist churches in the village; and that they are so ready to contribute to our work'. Visits to both churches are used to help the children understand the

similarities and differences between the two denominations. However, this was not without its complications; the RE co-ordinator believed that the contemporary style of the Methodist church could confuse the pupils: *'The younger ones think that the Church of England is old and the Methodist church is new'*. At Al-Falah School (s:va), a teacher used YouTube for examples of evangelical worship, to supplement a traditional Anglican and Catholic focus on the textbooks. He was however concerned not to show anything too *'extreme'*; thus even though he wanted to show the diversity within Christianity, this still had to be a representative, positive diversity.

Schools could also compare the impact of different settings for the same religion. For example, at Christ Church School (s:va), Year 8 pupils were asked to consider the question *'How different would it be practising Buddhism in Britain and practising Buddhism in China?'*, a question designed to bring out internal differences within Buddhism, the contrast between majority and minority situations, and the issues entailed in relating one's religion to a society that was in some ways founded on alien principles.

By contrast, other teachers, particularly in primary schools, were keen to emphasize that all religions had something in common: the similarity of religions. For instance at Sunnyside (p), teachers liked the thematic approach (e.g. sacred writings, places of worship) in the local Agreed Syllabus. As the Year 5 teacher said: *'I like that approach very much because religions are so similar'*. At Lingard (p) school, the teacher felt that the use of artefacts had enabled pupils to gain a deeper understanding of Hinduism if they were not Hindu, and in the discussion they were able to relate this to similar practices in their own traditions, as a way of *'accepting that things are not so different in different traditions'*. Among the secondary teachers, one suggested that

> *They come to understand that there is more in common with the different religions. It's as simple as that, or as complicated as that, if you like to put it that way: "Well, that's what my imam says", "Well, we do that". (Headley teacher)*

This could be a theological position; at St Sofia's (p:va), a Roman Catholic primary, a teacher explained that when teaching about other faiths,

> *What I try to do and what other staff in the school do…we have got one God and we call God by different names …Allah or Buddha or whatever God is. I always say he is the one God. We just call him by different names …in different countries, people have different traditions. (St Sophia's teacher)*

It could also be ethical:

> *Religions are basically very similar ... all the gods' rules are basically saying the same thing of how we must be patient and how we must be respectful. The more I go into religion the more I point this out (Lingard RE co-ordinator)*

The third possibility was to highlight both the similarities and the differences; it was not a simple dichotomy. Thus at al-Hikmah (p:i), the independent Muslim primary, the RE co-ordinator hoped that,

> *They get to see how their religion and other religions in some ways are the same, and how they can compare them and understand where the differences maybe are – what differences they are, and at the same time be stable and firm in their own beliefs. (al-Hikmah RE co-ordinator)*

This was often exemplified by a comparative approach in lessons at Al-Hikmah (p:i). In a lesson on Hindu beliefs, the teacher made links between Hinduism and the children's own cultural and religious background and experience. Hindus were introduced first of all as neighbours *'Do you know any Hindus? Have you ever seen people you know are Hindus in the neighbourhood? Have you ever seen or visited a Hindu temple?'* The south Asian pupils found that they were familiar with the haldi used for tilaka as a spice used for cooking in their own homes, Hindu prayer was related to *salah* and *du'a*, and *karma* (*'it depends how you were in your previous life'*) was compared to the Islamic concept of destiny/*qadar* (*'what Allah has willed for us'*). When one child asked *'How do they believe that gods give stuff to them?'* the teacher answered *'How do you know Allah exists? You look at his signs. So they look at the blessings in their life and say their god has given them'*. The teacher thus highlighted how the theological reasoning was similar between religions.

The same point was also made about internal diversity. At Flintmead (s:i), the head of department was concerned with an *over*-emphasis on internal diversity; there was a *'risk that pupils think that [members of one religion] don't agree on anything'*. The issue for him was the 'subtlety of diversity'.

A final aspect was that it should be *contemporaneous*; it should show current practices. Thus,

> *At KS3, I just found that the text books that were there, the information at times was dated. The pictures, even when it was an up-to-date edition, sometimes it would have pictures ... from 1980s, and I'm sort of like trying to say to the girls ... 'Sorry, this picture was taken maybe even before I was even born' or something like that (Woodhouse teacher)*

St Finan's (s:va), a Catholic school, found that a particular textbook presented an *'outdated'* view of Catholicism. This led them to search the internet for more up-to-date material, but then they had to be sure that it was accurate. The issue became circular. The accessibility of material on the internet means that contemporaneity is not difficult, but the representativeness of this material is in question.

Overall, the issue of representation was not clear-cut. Resources needed to be accurate, and unbiased, but it was not straightforward checking these. This raised the question of the author as insider or outsider. For some teachers, different kinds of diversity within a religion needed to be demonstrated, but for others, the unity of a religion or all religions was also important. There were also practical issues about the contemporaneity of the material.

4.3.2 Scriptural approaches

Many schools adopted an approach based on the interpretation of scriptural texts. This was very common in Key Stage 1 classes, usually with a narrative focus, and within faith schools. One example comes from Swanns' school, the independent preparatory school. The Year 1 class comprised sixteen children who, because of the selective nature of the school, were of above average ability. The lesson was divided into two parts, a whole class session with the children sitting on the carpet around the teacher's chair as she introduced them to the story of the first Christmas, and a practical activity where the children worked in table groups writing and making a star decoration. The teacher selected two principal resources for the lesson,

- A 'Big Book' telling the Christmas Story with lavish illustrations and a text written for children but modelled on the Gospel accounts

- A photocopied template of a star requiring writing and folding taken from a practical lesson ideas book on Festivals

The teacher had deliberately chosen this combination of a content-based resource and practical activity. She found the festivals book useful for its versatility and simplicity and appreciated the story book for its attractive illustrations and text which she found to be at the right level for her class though with some challenging words, such as *'worship'* that the children needed to learn for their progress in religious education. The book gave a full account of the Christmas story including the Annunciation, journey to Bethlehem, shepherds, wise men, King Herod and the Flight to Egypt so there was *'more to delve into and get out of it'*. The main message that the teacher wanted to get across to her pupils was that the Christ child was special, not just for being a baby but as a special king. For this reason she chose to start with the story and not use the common way in of the children's experiences of receiving presents. The focus was to be on what was distinctive about this baby. The words *'hope'* and *'excitement'* were frequently used in the lesson to convey this message.

The teacher chose to read through the whole story in one sitting *'so that the children would get a sense of the totality'* rather than break it down into segments for study. She intended to return to the book and break the story down into its component parts to explore in more detail over the next two or three weeks. The practical activity in the lesson observed was designed to reinforce the main message drawn from the story of the Nativity.

Another example of scriptural approaches was from the Nitzanah School (p:va). Familiarity with Jewish scriptures and other writings was an important element in the school's Jewish Studies curriculum. The attainment targets for the end of Key Stage 2 for Torah and Text included:

- Be familiar with the contents of the Mishnah and Talmud

- Be able to use the Torah text to make links with the Mishnah and Talmud

- Be familiar with a range of major Biblical characters from Prophets and Writings and their historical content

- To read and explore commentary both old and modern e.g. Rashi, Rambam, Plout, Nechama Leibowitz

These descriptors show that by the end of their career at Nitzanah it is hoped the children will possess an ability to engage with religious texts at a sophisticated level including engagement with Jewish traditions of commentary. .

The final examples are those secondary schools that used scriptural approaches. Some focused on one text. For instance, at St Finan's (s:va), all students follow the Edexcel GCSE exam course that includes the paper on St Mark's gospel. At Flintmead (s:i), pupils also studied this gospel, and a more panoramic study of scriptures, when looking at 'Making sense of the New Testament', which focused on some the theological themes that arose from the text. However, it should not be assumed that all faith schools followed this approach: Christ Church (s:va) had recently abandoned a textual GCSE paper to concentrate on issues-based RE. By contrast, this approach could also be found in community schools; at Headley (s), pupils in Year 7 considered 'what's the big story in the Bible?' which explored Christian views of the Bible as salvation-history.

The case studies also showed that scriptural approaches made intellectual demands on the pupils revealing the conceptual challenge posed by some of the scriptural texts and stories for young children. Year 3 children at Swann's (p:i) found it difficult to make meaning from the extracts from the Bible used to support work on Jesus' 'I am' sayings. Year 1 pupils at John Hawkins (inf) had difficulty understanding the meaning of the parable of the Pearl of Great Price and why it should be anything other than foolishness to sell everything to obtain it. At St Adwen's School (p:va), the Year 2 teacher used the story of Joshua from the Bible to show the idea of trust, by acting out the role of one of Joshua's spies, but pupils found it hard to identify this as a theme.

4.3.3 Experiential approaches

Some schools, only primaries in the research, made use of experiential approaches in the religious education class that attempt to offer pupils a sense of the numinous or sacred in their own lives, so as to understand better the religiosity and spirituality of others. An obvious example of this is the use of guided meditation at Swann's School (p:i) with a Year 3 class on Jesus' 'I am…' sayings. The beginning and end of the lesson demonstrated the concern to promote spiritual awareness and self-reflection, expressed by the RE co-ordinator when, in interview she outlined her curriculum aims. In the lesson she adopted an experiential approach by using guided imagining in order to encourage her pupils to imagine what it was like to be in complete darkness and the difference that light (illustrated by the lighting of a candle) brings. The children considered how their feelings would change as they moved from a state of complete darkness to light. After the activity the children discussed the experience.

> *If I were in complete darkness I'd feel scared or lonely ...if the darkness were suddenly lit up by a candle I would feel safer, happy that someone was caring for me, thankful. (Swann's Year 3 boy)*

The teacher was able to relate the children's ideas to how Christians might feel about Jesus and to their understandings of Jesus as being like a light. This was a clear example of how experiential methods can be used to increase understanding of other people's religious lives and inspirations.

Another example is in the use of artefacts as a portal for the understanding of different religious traditions and for empathising with those who belong to them. These can be used simply as a form of active learning, but they can also be used in a more atmospheric way, for examples in the enactment of Shabbat at John Hawkins' School (inf) which involved 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. At St Sofia's (p:va), one teacher talked of a recent course she had attended on 'Godly Play'. Godly Play is about creating 'Sacred Space', by working together, learning religious language, and using religious language to make meaning. It is multi-modal and multi-sensory and again aims to inspire attitudes of wonder. However, she had not developed it yet in her teaching though when it is introduced in the class it would be within a context of religious nurture rather than being used as a bridge into the experience of others.

Resourcing such experiential sessions requires collections of objects and artefacts to engage the senses and inspire awe. Most of the primary schools had collections of artefacts, from different religious traditions, that could be used in this way.

There were examples of religious learning outside the religious education class that encouraged a similar experiential engagement and approach to the numinous and sacred.

The compulsory chapel attendance at Flintmead (s:i) for all boys whether or not they were worshipping as Christians, was viewed as a way of introducing them *'through imaginative appeal'* to *'the beauty of holiness'*. Although students come from a variety of religious backgrounds this experience of *'real quality Christianity'* is offered to them as an opportunity to gain a greater awareness of what it is to have a religious dimension in one's lives and so support a more general understanding of people of faith.

The question to be considered carefully with all these approaches, however, is whether the young people are being required to step over the threshold between experience and empathetic engagement into worship, a question that may lie behind the hesitations of a small minority of parents (reported at North Street (p) and Nitzanah (p:va) for example) about religious education visits to places of worship.

4.3.4 Philosophical and ethical approaches

A very common pedagogical approach, particularly in secondary schools was to focus on a particular issue, and then explore religious responses to it, whether from one religion / denomination, or from several. This kind of approach is very evident in many of the GCSE specifications that schools chose, which either entirely consist of or include various philosophical, theological and ethical issues, e.g. life after death, the problem of evil, the nature of belief, environmental ethics and human relationships. The contemporary and topical nature of the issues covered lend themselves to resourcing from news media and extracts from television and film. As an example of this approach, at Christ Church (s:va), a Year 10 lesson was observed that was part of a series of lessons on religion and medical ethics; it focused on issues surrounding fertility treatment. The list of key words on the board at the start (infertility, artificial insemination, artificial insemination by donor/by husband, surrogacy) indicated that the main emphasis of the session was on the medical ethics rather than on religious teaching, though the homework activity required the students to relate their learning and discussions to Christian attitudes. The materials used in this lesson had been produced or selected by the teacher and included a newspaper article as a handout with related images projected on to the board, an activity sheet and six A3 posters with statements for discussion. As this example shows, this style of lesson can sometimes have very little explicitly religious content. Similarly, at Headley School (s), at Year 11 lesson on religion and crime, the concepts of sin and crime were compared, but the remainder of the lesson was: a study and discussion of Milgram's experiment, and a comparison and discussion of different attitudes to child murderers, contrasting the James Bulger case with that of Silje Raedergard in Norway, which stimulated further discussion on attitudes to criminals.

This approach was often linked to a sense of progression from Key Stage 4 to 5. All the secondary schools that offered religious studies at 6th Form studied philosophy of religion and religious ethics, including the faith schools; of these Flintmead (s:i) offered the Pre-U[30], not the A level, but the content was similar. Headley School (s) offered philosophy at A level rather than religious studies, but this further emphasized this approach. At Christ Church (s:va), the 6th form lesson took a similar form to the Year 10 lesson, above. The Year 13 group consisted of eight girls who were in the final stages of their A level studies. The focus of the previous lesson had been a dualist response to the statement, 'the only point in behaving morally is to be rewarded after death'. In this lesson the students were to consider this question from a materialist point of view. The materials used in support included power point slides prepared by the teacher, a set of cards for an initial categorising exercise, an article on materialism and ethics from *The Philosopher* journal, and an exam question for

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[30] Pre U is an alternative qualification to A level, offered by Cambridge Examinations Board, which is not divided into AS and A2, and is assessed on essays in examinations at the end of Year 13

homework (asking for the students' response to the statement linking morality and an afterlife) complete with self-assessment sheet. Teachers were therefore keen to ensure progression from further down the school, and this also encouraged recruitment for the subject at 6th Form. This lesson as other lessons that take a philosophical and ethical approach, gave room to the consideration of non-religious as well as religious perspectives.

This approach is also found at with younger pupils. Thus, at Flintmead, a Year 9 class was considering capital punishment from a Jewish perspective, focusing on whether or not Eichmann should have been executed. The pupils considered the main principles on capital punishment under Jewish law, from a textbook. This set out three principles, outlining the difference between orthodox and reform positions. It then provided details of the arguments some Jews put forward after Eichmann was sentenced to death, arguing that he should not be executed. Pupils discussed the issue in pairs, and then after a summary of the arguments, there was a teacher-led class discussion. The class was divided evenly for and against pardoning him. At primary level a religious education lesson delivered at Lingard (p) also used ethics and issues-based religious education. The lesson dealt with the question of what is just or unjust. Pupils were given a variety of social situations to decide whether or not they were just in a card sort activity. They were required to argue the case for their judgements.

This approach has implications for the variety and content of material used in religious education, because teachers want material that portrays these issues effectively, rather than the religious content. While material explicitly prepared for religious education can do this, teachers also used a range of other resources, notably YouTube, and DVDs, including *Vera Drake* (on abortion), *Saving Private Ryan* (on just war), and *The Simpsons.* The head of department at Christ Church (s:va) endorsed this series as a religious education resource for philosophical and ethical approaches.

> *The Simpsons - you can teach everything from The Simpsons, for example, evolution and creationism, the ideal of the soul and Pascal's wager - everything - vegetarianism. Lisa becomes a vegetarian. (RE head of department Christ Church)*

The issue of contemporaneity also arose with this; at Woodhouse School (s), the teacher used a CNN video sequence on recent cases of people who have chosen euthanasia, e.g. James Dan's assisted death in Switzerland, which had been the subject of national interest in October 2008. Clearly there could be some overlap between these resources and some materials designed specifically for RE which both raise the issues and present religious points of view at the same time.

However there was also a caveat to these approaches for some teachers, which was when materials lost sight of the religious content altogether. Teachers at St Finan's (s:va) noted the lack of resources that addressed the issues being studied and gave a Catholic perspective, another commented on a section in a textbook on Martin Luther King,

> *We feel they go too much into the citizenship "how would you make the world a better place?" kind of project, and the historical information about King, and miss out…on his religious inspiration.* (Headley, head of department)

Some religious education resources could thus lack religious content.

4.3.5 Variety and breadth

One might assume, from what has been set out above, that particular schools or teachers adopted one approach. This, however, was far from the case. What was demonstrated instead was a tendency towards a variety of approaches and breadth of experience of

religious education, particularly in year groups where learning was not tailored to meet the requirements of particular examination courses. The variety found reflects that advocated by the National Framework for RE, demonstrated in the QCA schemes of work[31] followed in some schools (e.g at Swann's) and replicated in most of the agreed syllabi used. Following this guidance, teachers were concerned that their lessons or modules should achieve an effective balance between the two attainment targets: 'learning about religion' and 'learning from religion'. This strongly affected the choice and use of resources in a lesson. At al-Falah School (s:va), the teachers considered that a particular series of textbooks was good for factual information but that tasks were weaker, particularly in terms of 'learning from religion'. A more extreme view was put forward at Woodhouse (s) where a preference for basing learning in pupils' experiences meant that textbooks were treated with caution:

> *Text books don't work for us, because we need to engage them ...with the religion that is in their day-to-day life, what they see around them, what they learn from other people, the discussions that they have with each other over the way that they should dress or the way that somebody should behave ... All of that. RE is a forum in which to do it. The reason we don't use text books is because I find them limiting; they don't allow the discussion that I would like to have. (Woodhouse head of department)*

A contrasting position is expressed by the head of department at Flintmead (s:i) who was concerned by the lack of content in textbooks because, *'while it is fun to talk about these ideas'* one should also *'know the details'*. Teachers' views of the interplay between the accurate representation of religion and the development of dialogical skills are a key issue in their choice of resources. It was also linked by teachers to the development of pupils' own beliefs, as well as their engagement with the beliefs of others:

> *You'll understand why you believe what you believe and examine that as some sort of process of self-examination, and that you understand why it is that other people hold the beliefs that they do, and how that impacts on the way that they live their lives and the choices that they make. (Flintmead head of department)*

One striking feature of two of the primary schools, John Hawkins (inf) and St Adwen's (p:va), was the inclusion of a third attainment target, the development of thinking skills; Swann's school (p:i) also highlighted that *'we want them to be thinking deeply in RE'*. This will be picked up in the next section when discussing the influence of the pedagogical issues on religious education, what it shows here is how these two schools did not consider that thinking skills were already included in the learning from religion, which was conceptualised as the personal growth of the individual child in its social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects, rather than the development of more critical reasoning. Thus at Swann's (p:i) the Year 3 children were asked to follow their reflections on the meaning of Jesus' saying, *'I am the light of the world'*, with consideration of the question, *'What makes me a shining light for those around me?'*. At John Hawkins (inf), a reading of the story of the Pearl of Great Price to a Year 1 class was followed by reflection on what was precious in their own lives.

Lesson observations, teacher interviews and review of the relevant documentation showed that the schools were fairly eclectic in their mix of approaches. This eclecticism could be within a lesson, within a module, a Year or Key Stage, and across the school.

The diversity of approaches to resources within a single lesson can be seen in detail from John Hawkins School (inf), for the Year 2 lesson on Shabbat referred to above. The teacher had gathered together a number of resources to be used for this lesson.

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[31] accessed through http://www.qcda.gov.uk/5265.aspx 9th September, 2009

1.   'Sammy Spider's First Shabbat' (a 'big book')

2.   *Shabbat* Artefacts: *challah* cover, *havdalah* spice box, *havdalah* candle, *Kiddush* cup, Shabbat candlesticks with candles

3.   *Challah* bread

4.   'Let's Celebrate Shabbat' (small picture book with rhyme)

5.   Spices (cloves and cinnamon)

6.   Playdough for making *challah* bread

7.   Candle worksheets for wax pictures

8.   Spice box worksheets to glue spices on

9.   CD of *Shabbat* songs

The lesson began with the children gathered on the carpet before a display of *Shabbat* artefacts. After a recall activity, recognising different artefacts, the lesson provided a sensory experience of *Shabbat*. All five senses were used in the lesson as the children viewed the objects, handled some of them, passed round the *havdalah* spice box and smelled the spices, listened to a *Shabbat* story, rhyme and music, tasted the *challah* bread. The children were encouraged to reflect on their experiences, the activity combining the teacher's interest in experiential learning and in language development. The teacher designed and delivered the lesson in such a way that there was a balance between 'hands-on' direct sensory engagement and a sense of the special and even the sacred; the uncovering of the challah bread and the passing round of the spice box and bread had an element of ritual and reverence. The teacher related *Shabbat* observance and practices to underlying meanings, (teacher) *'they believe God created the world in six days and on the seventh God ...' (child) '...rested',* they smell the spices *'in the hope that the week will be sweet and fragrant'*.

The story book chosen for the lesson achieved more distanciation; a spider observes the customs of the Jewish family in the house where he lives, and sighs, 'I wish I could celebrate Shabbat' and his mother replies 'spiders don't celebrate Shabbat, spiders spin webs'. The book has a strong emphasis on the Jewish family and included elements of family living that the children could link to their own experience (the boy in the family tidying up his room, the father unpacking the shopping) as well as the particular Jewish rituals surrounding *Shabbat*. As the teacher told the story she also acknowledged diversity of practice within Judaism explaining that some families would attend the synagogue at *Shabbat* but others would stay at home. Pupils then worked in groups on craft-activities, either decorating a *havdalah* spice box, with the spices that the teacher had brought in or creating a wax picture using a candle design or using play dough to make a plaited *challah* loaf. When these activities finished they were to draw and label some of the *Shabbat* artefacts in their books. The children shared their completed work with the other groups and the *Shabbat* rhyme from the 'Let's Celebrate Shabbat' picture book brought the different elements of the lesson together. This lesson used: different insider and outsider perspectives; experiential techniques; perspectives on learning about and learning from religion.

Similarly at secondary school, in a Year 10 lesson on *hijab* from Woodhouse School (s), a different range of resources and approaches were used. It started with (1) a recording of a Muslim *nasheed* (Islamic song) to provide an atmosphere as students entered the room and looked at the poem. Then pupils tackled a (2) home-produced worksheet containing a poem from the perspective of a woman who wears the *hijab,* plus three open questions ('What do

you think the poet is trying to say in her poem?', 'Why do you think she is trying to say this?', 'What have you learnt about her attitude to *hijab*?'). The teacher then used a (3) power point slide sequence showing a GCSE-type question about *hijab*, learning objectives, pictures of women wearing *hijab* (plus *niqab* etc), verses from the Qur'an, key statements (e.g. that *hijab* applies to both men & women). Pupils then watched a (4) video sequence taken from the internet of Baba Ali (the US Muslim rap artist) doing a rap on *hijab*, together with a (5) home-produced worksheet for recording notes and their responses. Finally, a further (6) power point sequence outlining Taliban gender policies and the use of the *burkha* in Afghanistan had been prepared but there was insufficient time to work through them in this lesson. This lesson did not use any traditional resources, but instead used: experiential techniques in the use of the *nasheeds*; different insider and outsider perspectives, in the power points, the poem and the video sequence; and opportunities for learning from religion, in the responses section.

It was apparent from reviewing documentation and interviewing teachers that approaches could vary across the religious education curriculum as well as within lessons. For instance, at Flintmead (s:i) the head of department was concerned to balance life questions, world religions and scriptural approaches. Thus, in Year 9 pupils studied: Religion - the Big Questions; Judaism - Belief and Practice; Mark's Gospel; Islam - Belief and Practice. This approach continued through Year 10, but in Year 11, it became exclusively a philosophical and ethical approach, on: philosophy and theology; the problem of evil; crime and punishment; wealth and poverty; and gender and race. The first two were exclusively Christian; the others identified Christian and 'other religions' attitudes'. A similarly eclectic mix was apparent at Lingard School (p). For instance, in Year 2, pupils studied: myself; celebrations; stories; special people; belonging. However in Year 5 they studied: Islam - believing; Islam - belonging; life's big questions; marriage and relationships; justice; poverty and wealth. Thus, the school's planning incorporated a focus on personal development, life and big issues, systematic world religions approaches and thematic world religions approaches.

The final example of eclecticism was in schools that had different approaches for different groups of pupils. The most striking example of this was in Ben Gurion School (s:va), where Jewish pupils were taught Jewish studies, while the non-Jewish pupils studied religious education; further for their modern language, Jewish pupils learnt Modern Hebrew, while others learnt German. However in Nitzanah School (p:va), the Jewish primary, all pupils were taught both Jewish studies and multi-faith religious education, thus supporting both a nurturing approach with a non-confessional one.

4.3.6 Pedagogy of religious education: conclusion

This section has considered the links between pedagogies for religious education and the teacher selection and use of resources, drawing examples from the classroom and particular lessons observed across the schools. The variety of religious education approaches and foci has been noted and particularly addresses the fourth research question, on how teachers used materials to support learning. This variety is the outcome of a long history of religious education in England, debates about its role in school and society and the prominence of different interpretations of its purposes over the years (see 1.2.1 above). The scope given by the National Framework for inclusion of a diversity of approaches is a reflection of this history. One of the dominant religious education interests currently is the contribution the subject can make to community cohesion and this project's focus is on world religions and the materials schools are using to develop an understanding of these. Only one of the pedagogies discussed in this section was described as a world religions approach to distinguish its focus on increasing knowledge of the different religious traditions in society. By this understanding of religious education a primary purpose of the religious education materials is to provide information about the different religions that can be used in class. In

the case studies the representation of world religions in religious education materials raised a range of issues. Prominent were questions of accuracy, whether the material offered an insider's perspective or a more distanced one, the various stances on similarities within and between religions, and the extent to which examples portraying the religions offered a picture of contemporary life.

The fifth research question is concerned with the key factors for schools to consider when selecting RE materials. Religious diversity is an important factor for all approaches to RE, whether or not studying world religions was the main focus of learning. Thus scriptural approaches engaged with the primary sources and inspiration of the religions. Together with the use of artefacts in experiential approaches, they promoted the skills of interpretation of different levels of meaning, and, in some cases, encouraged a sense of the sacred, important to a deeper understanding of the power and influence of religions. As will be seen later in this report, the use of both scripture and artefact can lead to a blurring of boundaries between education and devotion that may or may not be viewed as appropriate for religious education depending on the character of the school. The philosophical and ethical approaches open up possibilities for linking the teachings of the major religions to the questions and problems of contemporary society but review of lessons and materials reveals that sometimes they can allow a sidelining of religion in religious education lessons by reducing the religious content and relying instead on other sources to fuel discussion and debate.

This account of the influence of religious education pedagogies ended with examples of ways that teachers and schools would mix different approaches, within lessons or across the school. These examples show how complicated and varied are the decisions about the choice and use of materials. However, these were not the only factors. Teachers also gave other educational reasons for their choices, which are explored in the next section.

4.4 Influences on Teacher Selection and Use of Resources: General Educational issues

This section continues consideration of the fifth research question and the factors for schools to consider in their selection of religious education materials, this time recognising wider pedagogical influences as well as practical issues that influence choices. The subheadings provide a series of answers to this question by listing individual factors involved. At the same time the examples of practice given will provide further information in response to the fourth question that asks how the materials are used in class.

The teachers in the case study schools were not only concerned with specific issues to do with religious education; they also had more general educational concerns when choosing and using resources. These had important implications because teachers then tended to generate their own materials, to mix and match. If teaching materials are teacher-generated, there are significant implications in terms of teacher knowledge, expertise, and training. Six broad themes emerged.

- Methods of learning

    o   Inter-disciplinary approaches
    o   Constructivist approaches

- Literacy

- Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

- Examination requirements

- Expertise of staff

They will be considered in turn.

4.4.1 Methods of learning

(a) Thinking skills

Across the case studies, several teachers and departments had adopted a general pedagogical approach and applied it to religious education. This could be an interdisciplinary strategy such as the promotion of thinking skills as required by the National Curriculum. For instance, the co-ordinator at Swann's wanted resources that encouraged higher-order thinking because she felt these would be particularly suited to the high attainment level of children at Swann's: (p:i)

> *Some of the books that didn't encourage higher-order thinking I wasn't looking at with so much interest because of the kind of children we have here. We want them to be thinking deeply in RE, we don't want them to do tasks that aren't challenging. (Swann's RE co-ordinator)*

Thus, she rejected certain resources because they did not offer this. Similar was the use of de Bono's 'thinking hats' at St Adwen's (p:va), and a range of mind maps downloaded from a thinking skills website. Each map shape was designed for a specific purpose, e.g. a 'bubble' for identifying qualities and using descriptive words, a 'flow' for sequencing and ordering information or a 'tree' for classifying things and ideas. Thus in a Year 5 lesson on how Christians respond to the story of the Good Samaritan, pupils used a 'bridge' map for spotting analogies between the parable and the Samaritan's Purse charity website. The children thought of ways of showing care for others and created ten bridge maps to illustrate how their imagined actions are like those of the Good Samaritan. Then they evaluated the bridge maps using three of thinking hats. As the red hat is displayed they considered their 'gut reaction' to the maps. They moved on to 'yellow hat' thinking, deciding what was good about each map and finally to 'green hat' thinking as they considered how the justification for the selection (i.e. how closely each item matched the Samaritan's action) could be improved. What is striking about this approach is that while the thinking skills are a method of analysing the connections between the charity's aims and the parable, the lessons are also about the development of these thinking skills. The general pedagogical approach, i.e. the development of thinking skills, is as important in St Adwen's School (p:va) as an understanding of the religious motivation behind a charity.

(b) Learning styles

An alternative approach was for schools to produce their own materials in order to match a theory of learning; for instance, Moorside School (s) based their decisions on the theory of learning styles.

> *We tend to produce our own materials for Key Stage 3 in order to meet the needs of different kinds of learner. We need resources that will facilitate visual, literary, auditory and kinaesthetic learning. (Moorside head of department)*

During the course of the lesson on Buddhism at Christ Church School (s:va) a number of different learning strategies (mind-mapping, card sort, analysing text, group discussion, creative writing) were used employing visual, aural and kinaesthetic learning styles. Most of the materials used had been prepared by the teachers, the only exception being an end of

topic quiz from an interactive whiteboard programme. Another approach was found at the Eden Academy (s:a), where all lessons are given a four-fold structure: connect, activate, demonstrate and consolidate. For these teachers, such strategies were not an end in themselves, unlike the thinking skills example above, but they certainly influenced the nature of the resources, in that pupils came into contact with their teachers' redaction of other resources into forms that suited these learning approaches.

More generally, many teachers spoke of the need to engage the pupils. This approach was often used to justify the use of artefacts, i.e. in terms of their kinaesthetic appeal rather than as an encounter with the sacred. At John Hawkins School (inf), this was strongly emphasised by the RE co-ordinator for Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. There was a focus on resources that provide sensory experiences, artefacts the children can look at and touch, recipes for festival related cooking and eating, and music for the children to listen to. At another level there may be tensions between a primary school pedagogy of concrete, 'hands-on' learning and the particular nature of religious artefacts which often have sacred significance. This can lead to confusions or inconsistencies as observed at North Street School (p) when in the same lesson the Qur'an was introduced with due reverence and awe, and thorough washing of hands before opening it. The lack of representations of humans in Islamic texts was emphasised because of the disrespect they would imply.

(c) Creativity

Several of the schools showed a concern to introduce creativity into their religious education teaching. At Swann's (p:i) the RE co-ordinator emphasised the importance of creativity as a criterion for the selection of materials. She had purchased a number of activity based resources for her school as well as pictures, packs of religious art and samples of music from different religious traditions. The RE teacher at Nitzanah (p:va) liked to include craft activities in her RE teaching. As part of their study of Hinduism the children produced large rangoli patterns on the playground, and engaged with different wedding customs by creating plaster casts of their own hands and decorating them with mendhi patterns. Cross-curricular work at Christ Church (s:va) included a Faith and Art guided tour of their cathedral during which they viewed Christian art from Zimbabwe and South Africa. They used this as inspiration for their own art work. These lessons emphasised the relationship between faith, practical activity and artistic expression. They also engaged students because they were enjoyable.

At Moorside (s), staff had re-written the syllabus so that 'pupils should enjoy RE'. An example is the use of songs at Woodhouse School (s), e.g. the contemporary letter from God to man, a rap song by the band Dan le Sac Vs Scroobius Pip, or the use of Monty Python clips at Flintmead. The reasoning was very explicit:

> *I think it's really important when you access any topic that you provide a stimulus that's going to get the students interested - I call it the 'hook'… maybe a little bit whacky, maybe something they've never seen before, maybe a bit of comedy, a picture - a song even, but you've got to have a hook…At the start of the lesson you've got to get them somehow (Woodhouse head of department)*

4.4.2 Literacy

A critical issue in the selection and use of resources was the appropriateness of the language used for the pupils. This was vital when English was not the pupils' first language, for instance, at North Street School (p), where English is the second or third language for the majority of pupils. The co-ordinator had difficulty in finding resources that were appropriate for pupils whose reading levels were below their chronological age. Simple texts might be available but they often could not be used comfortably with older children, because the style was too immature.

This was also linked to differentiation. At Woodhouse School (s), the head of department relied on a particular series, written to meet the needs of less able 11 to 14 year-olds, but as a stop-gap in lieu of home-produced differentiated material that was yet to be written, with collaboration from the Special Educational Needs department due to lack of time. Thus, textbooks were seen as a second best way of differentiating the material, but inferior to home-produced resources. The aim was to differentiate more fully:

> *Obviously when we are designing resources ourselves, we are taking into account the individual needs of students in terms of their language needs ... With a resource that we are adapting ourselves, we're able to progressively go about differentiating that resource so that ... for the more able students there is language there that will challenge them as well. (Woodhouse head of department)*

Another strategy for dealing with this issue was a school library. For instance, the exceptionally well-stocked library at Trent Vale School (s) had over two hundred different titles for students' RE research and independent learning; which not only provided a range of views of and approaches to different religions, but also catered for different reading abilities.

For some teachers the question was not so much how to find material that was readily accessible for their students in terms of their existing levels of literacy, but how to find material that would support pupils' language development. This was a major factor influencing the selection of resources by the RE co-ordinator at John Hawkins (inf), an infant school where some children came from linguistically deprived backgrounds and where for others English was an additional language. Large, bold and simple pictures and photographs, particularly those that could be projected on to the class whiteboard, and artefacts were valued as stimuli for discussion. The element of excitement generated by religious artefacts in particular encouraged language use. The small Torah used with a Year 2 class had been the focus of a language rich lesson.

> *I like resources that will provide lots of language development because language development is a very big thing at this age - some of our children aren't that great at that and we've got quite a few with English as an additional language so anything they can describe. Recently the Torah provoked an enormous amount of language and some of the words that were used were just outstanding and that was another thing that just inspired a lot of awe and wonder moments really - really it was so special that you mustn't touch it. (John Hawkins RE co-ordinator)*

4.4.3 Information and Communications Technology

One important element in teachers' selection and use of materials is ICT. The use of the internet and software packages has been mentioned in the previous section, in terms of content and pedagogy. It is a source of information for teachers, through various websites and software packages. It is also important as a vehicle for delivering the lesson, though access to websites and software (e.g. *Espresso*), or particularly through teachers' own power point presentations. The presence of ICT facilities in the classroom opened up all kinds of possibilities for resourcing religious education that had not existed before and also by making so much and such varied material readily available, gave the teacher a greater freedom and independence in selecting materials. The RE head of department at Christ Church (s:va) described the process.

> *I use YouTube a lot, for everything. If you're stuck and you need a quick starter there are some really fantastic clips - just things like the other day on conflict, I thought I needed to look at conflict in Ireland so I found a YouTube Sunday Bloody Sunday video just at the click of the button and there were stills and images and everything on that with a power ballad in the back that the girls loved - and they said that was really brilliant. (Christ Church RS head of department)*

In addition, teachers wanted to encourage the development of ICT skills in religious education lessons. This could simply be through the use of laptops for presentations, for example, on why we need laws, at Eden Academy (s:a), but could be more complex. For instance, at Sunnyside School (p), the Year 6 teacher used the interactive whiteboard to share a Sikh story, *Malik Bhago and Lalo,* and then gave the children an Islamic story, *Hazrat Ibrahim and the Old Man,* taken from a different website. The teacher gave the children a worksheet with four photographs representing parts of the story and spaces to write a summary of each. In groups, the children prepared their sentences, recorded them using microphones and then all watched their summary of the story, with the photographs, on the interactive whiteboard. Such lessons combined ICT with literacy and religious education, and clearly part of their rationale was to enable pupils to combine different skills. Sometimes, however, the ICT skills used could be fairly sophisticated while the actual religious education learning remained at a fairly simple level, for example the retelling of a story rather than its interpretation in the light of the beliefs, values and practice of a religious tradition.

4.4.4 Examination requirements

In secondary schools, an important factor influencing selection and use of materials was the examination requirements. On the one hand, teachers are free to choose out of a range of syllabuses, so they can select the one which they find most suitable, whether a scriptural approach, world religions approach or a philosophy and ethics approach. Thus at Christ Church School (s:va), the head of department had switched from a world religions approach to a philosophy and ethics approach. Further, they can select the number of religions that they wish to study: none did more than two, usually Christianity and Islam. On the other hand, this choice could be constraining. Firstly, teachers had an eye to results: vital in an often marginalised subject. This could mean having to adopt a particular type of qualification in order to 'compete' in the 6th Form. At Flintmead (s:i), the whole school had switched from A levels to the Pre-U qualification because the A level was not viewed as having the same intellectual weight as the Pre-U. Having spent four years trying to build up the intellectual credibility of the subject in the school, the head of theology and philosophy did not want the numbers of 6th Form students to drop.

This could also affect the focus of learning. At Headley School (s), with a successful GCSE record, the head of department observed that,

> *I think we have too strong a focus on knowledge… certainly our KS4 was very exam-focused, and we have gone that way in order to have status both in the eyes of the pupils and senior management (Headley head of department)*

Another teacher there explained the impact on her teaching:

> *I always have in that back of my mind that they have an exam to sit, and you can't spend the whole of the lesson just having a discussion, without them having something to take away from it, testing and assessing what's gone in, for you to know at the end of the lesson, and so all those other teacher things need to go on as well. You could easily sit in an RE lesson and see a fantastic discussion, and on the surface you think this a fantastic lesson …You always have to have at the back of your mind the fact that they are going to sit an exam. (Headley teacher)*

Some schools felt constrained to purchase sets of the 'official book' written by the chief examiner. Their reasons were pragmatic:

> *He's the chief examiner. He writes the syllabus and writes the questions, and edits the textbooks. It is therefore sensible to buy it and use it so that we know we'll be on track... However, it doesn't allow for creativity - it's functional but not inspiring so we do not use it on a regular basis ... If we used it a lot it would bore them to tears. (Moorside head of department)*

Thus the school had acquired a set of textbooks that pedagogically they disliked, but which was pragmatically useful. This was also the case for teachers who prepared their own material; they often relied on approved textbooks as a blueprint. Textbooks and other resources approved by GCSE boards are therefore likely to have a significant impact on some pupils' learning, because they supply the 'right' answer in an examination context. This could also affect the presentation of material. For instance, at Trent Vale School (s), the stated objective of a Year 10 lesson was to write an answer to a question from the exam paper on the area studied during the lesson. The core activity of the lesson was for the students to work from the textbooks and a grade criteria worksheet to construct this answer. At the end, the teacher had prepared some examples of A, C and D grade answers and asked students to comment. Thus two of the materials used in the lesson were teacher exemplars and the grade criteria worksheet.

This process might simply be inevitable in examination courses. However, examination pressures could affect the representation of religions. The feeling that GCSE courses exclude certain Christian perspectives in favour of others was reported anecdotally by the head teacher, as a parent:

> *My son (we're Baptists) argued with his RE teacher over baptism. She told them that any answer to a question on baptism must describe infant baptism in a font. He told her that was wrong and she warned him that he must write what she said, 'and if you don't mention candles you won't get full marks'! (Moorside head teacher)*

While this may have been a faulty perception of the exam criteria, it nevertheless shows the power of these issues on teachers' thinking.

4.4.5 Expertise of staff

It is common knowledge that many non-specialists are teaching religious education[32]. Of the teachers interviewed or observed in this research most were highly committed to the subject, and had strong and articulate views on resources and pedagogy. This was particularly the case in primary schools; for instance, the co-ordinator at St Adwen's (p:va), in his second year of teaching, but with a vision for thinking skills in religious education, or the co-ordinator in John Hawkins School (inf), who had taken it on because in was *'very stimulating for the kids'*. At secondary level, non-specialists could draw on their other areas of expertise. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson, a historian at Flintmead (s:i) drew on his knowledge of the holocaust to pose the question of whether under Jewish law Eichmann should have been executed.

Nevertheless, many heads of department and co-ordinators recognised that they had to meet the needs of non-specialists, often teaching their main subject as well, and only teaching religious education temporarily; this impacted on the choice of materials. At Ben Gurion School (s:va), religious education (rather than Jewish Studies) was taught by seven non-specialists, and the head of department was also a music teacher. She took the decision that given the number of non-specialists teaching it, often for only a year, the best course of action would be to purchase a published scheme for Key Stage 3, and at GCSE, the exam board's approved textbook forms the syllabus. When the current head of department arrived at Moorside (s) three years ago, she found the subject dominated by non-specialists and textbooks:

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[32] An issue reiterated in OFSTED Report: Making Sense of Religion 2007 and confirmed in findings of the survey strand of this study

The non-specialists felt safer with text books, which the kids didn't like. They kept going from week to week by going from one page of the book to the next. (Moorside head of department)

Thus, when confronted by the management of a team of non-specialists, many heads of department turn to a textbook to provide a basic level of content and structure. At primary level, the RE co-ordinator at Swann's was herself a religious education specialist having taught the subject at secondary, but recognised that her colleagues did not have the same expertise, nor did they have time to research the subject in detail for themselves, and therefore she was particularly interested in finding 'teacher-friendly', resources with 'ready-to-use' teaching ideas requiring little preparation.

Even for experienced teachers, however, there were still issues of expertise: in gaining the skills in judging and using materials and in finding time to familiarise themselves with all the resources available. For instance, even though the coordinator in North Street School (p) is an experienced teacher and deeply committed to teaching religious education, she still felt the need for more detailed guidance on resources, including artefacts. What they are, how they are used in a religious context and how one should handle them in a classroom are all matters about which she would have liked more support. Local RE specialist advisers provided valuable guidance for teachers in the classroom and helped to address the issues of lack of specialism. RE co-ordinators at St Adelard's (p:va), Nitzanah (p:va) and John Hawkins (inf) all spoke warmly of the support they had received from local authority and diocesan advisers including recommendations for the resourcing of their subject.

4.4.6 General educational issues - conclusion

This section has shown how general education issues can affect teachers' use and choice of materials, such as other pedagogical strategies, the exigencies of examinations and literacy. Teachers do not only consider issues specific to teaching and learning on world religions; wider educational issues come into play. This is particularly relevant to the ,research question 'What are the key factors for schools to consider when determining which materials should be used to teach world religions?'. The fourth research question speaks of the enhancement of learning

How are [the materials on world religions] used by teachers in the classroom to enhance teaching and learning?

There is evidence from the case study schools that general educational developments and cross-curricular strategies have contributed to the quality of learning. The employment of tools for thinking can lead to a more detailed engagement with religious education materials and issues; creative approaches reflect the fact that response to religion in people's lives is often practical, active and artistic; developments in ICT enable students to explore interchanges between religion and popular, contemporary culture. Learning is enabled and enhanced when the content is accessible and engaging and attention to pupils' learning needs and stages of development is found to be important here, as with the focus on literacy levels and concrete learning for younger children. Even the pressures of examinations can act as powerful motivators for teachers and students. Thus teachers see some of these other issues as supportive of teaching and learning on world religions, by being innovatively harmonised with religious education. They wanted to combine these strategies creatively, to deliver broader, richer lessons that connected with other aspect of learning. However, there are also indications that some of these influences can impede effective teaching on world religions, most obviously the need to cater for non-specialist teachers and a restricting anxiety to guide pupils towards the 'right' answers in examinations. Both of these concerns influence the selection of lesson materials. Even the repertoire of teaching methods set out in this section has potential to impede as well as to enhance learning if an interest in the

development of thinking skills or ICT skills, for example, diverts the lesson away from its focus on the specific skills and content of religious education.

4.5 Pupil Perspectives

One of the aims of the case studies was to ascertain the views of the young people themselves on the nature of the religious education and of the religious education resources they are engaging with at school, and the messages they are receiving from these. Their comments on the subject and its purposes often reflected the approaches adopted by their teachers and the criteria used in the selection and use of resources; thus there was an emphasis on the development of attitudes of tolerance and respect for others, on the free expression of one's own opinions and beliefs and a consciousness of the current pedagogical interest in learning styles. There were variations between the Key Stages with a greater interest in story among the primary age students, in examination requirements among older students, and references to the religious motivations and meanings from the children in 'faith' schools.

This section will explore three main themes: the purpose of religious education; resourcing religious education; religious perspectives. The first of these themes provides a heading under which to report the pupils' understanding of the purposes of religious education and so of the messages that are conveyed by the teaching of the subject and the materials used. This evidence of pupil learning supports the fourth research question with its interest in how materials are used to enhance learning and promote community cohesion. The other two themes are interested in the pupils' evaluation of the religious education materials both as students of religious education and as members of the religions being represented, they thus contribute another perspective to the evaluation of materials carried out by faith consultants, academic experts and RE professionals in the review strand.

4.5.1 The purpose of religious education

(a) Awareness of diversity

An interest in the human level of 'other people's lives', is evident in the words of several of the students as they set out their understanding of religious education. This was expressed in different ways by primary age pupils, *'[Muslims] are not the same like us so it's nice to learn about other people'* (Year 5 pupil, St Adelard's); *'with the [Jewish] objects you can learn a lot from someone's culture - learn about their life and how they use things'* (Year 5 pupil, Swann's); and secondary pupils, *'[it's about] knowing about other people and knowing about other religions and what they go through'* (Year 11 pupil, Headley); *'it's not so much learning about the religion as learning about what it is to be a religious person in a modern society, which I think is important'* (Year 11 pupil, Headley). The interest is often a comparative one, as with the children at St Adelard's who were keen to compare what they had learnt about Jewish weddings with weddings in their own culture, and the Year 6 children at al-Hikmah School who started a discussion among themselves about which of the five religions they had studied in Year 5 was closest to their own Islam.

> *It was interesting to learn about them, like the way that there are similarities and differences between our religion and other religions. (al-Hikmah, Year 6 pupil)*

Sometimes the interest was in the unfamiliarity of the community being studied, like the Jewish community for one boy at St Adelard's, *'it's not actually people you always see on the street and it's nice to learn something you don't see often'*, sometimes in the fact that learning about the lives of people from different religions enabled a greater understanding of someone close to the child. One Year 2 boy at John Hawkins chose a book about a Muslim child as his favourite, *'because it's from Ali's country and he's my friend'*, and a Jewish child who found out more about the Catholic heritage of his mother.

(b) Tolerance and respect

Several of the young people related their religious education to a tolerance and respect agenda, though the emphasis tended to be on the development of personal attitudes of tolerance and respect rather than on a wider impact of religious education on society. One pupil at Headley (s) recognised that the transformation of society was too big a project for religious education.

> *We are not saying that just because of RE lessons, people are going to get along with each other, and people are going to understand; there are other factors such as your upbringing, and your parents. But you can say that RE does teach you what other religions say about stuff, and why they say that, so you can form your own opinions about that. But RE is not going to solve all the problems, but it does give you other people's reasons (Headley, Year 11 pupil)*

In terms of personal attitude development, a Year 5 pupil at Nitzanah Jewish Primary (p:va) made a distinction between the disrespectful ignorance of those who have not studied multi-faith religious education and the respect shown to others by those who have.

> *So if you see someone you've never seen before, like a Muslim going on a prayer mat, your friend or someone who doesn't really do RE might laugh, but you'll stay quiet and say, 'shush, he's on a prayer mat and you should learn' (Nitzanah, Year 5 pupil)*

The Year 9 Muslim girls at Woodhouse School were clear that knowing about other religions means both that you would not want to offend people of other religions and that you would have the necessary knowledge to know how to avoid offence. Pupils at al-Falah recognised a religious imperative for such attitudes, 'Islam teaches us to respect other people's religions as our own'.

It is not only the systematic study and increased knowledge of different religions that has generated positive attitudes towards others. Students studying the philosophy and ethics religious studies option at Christ Church shared how the course and their discussions have helped them to be more *'respectful of the opinions of different faiths and beliefs'*, and open towards the views of others. A girl who identified herself as an atheist expressed her view that this was due to the combination of her studies and the Christian character of the school she attends, while a Christian girl explains how she has come to a greater understanding of the difficulties others might have relating to her religion.

> *[The course] has helped me to empathise with other views. If I'd gone to a school that wasn't religious I'd be more set in my ways - and in the way I think about morality, for example. (Christ Church Year 13 girl, atheist)*

> *I've become more aware of why people say certain things - and more aware of my religion and what other people might think is inappropriate and flawed about my religion. (Christ Church, Year 13 girl, Christian)*

(c) Social awareness

The young people spoke of the impact of religious education on their attitudes not just to the religious other but to those living in difficult or dangerous circumstances. Social justice themes were included in religious education in several of the schools. At Swann's School (p:i) where many come from economically privileged backgrounds, pupils commented on a religious education activity which engaged with examples of Christian and Hindu social action.

> *It just makes children think how lucky they are and makes them want them want to do something about how other people are not so lucky. (Swann's, Year 5 pupil)*

At Lingard (p) pupils had learnt that people *'have different lives'*, that *'there are unfair things in the world'*, that *'people should help other people'* and at St Adwen's (p:va) a Year 5 class studied children's rights which *'made you realise how lucky you were to have food and water'*. They viewed a film about children in need in Afghanistan and one girl reported that the film was *'heartbreaking'* and how all her family now pray for the children and are involved in charitable work to help set up campsites for them. At al-Hikmah (p:i) Year 6 children were proud to show poems they were preparing for an assembly on the plight of orphan children remembering that Muhammad had himself been an orphan. At Nitzanah Jewish primary (p:va), where themes of social justice are linked to the Jewish concept of tikkum olam ('repair of the world'), Year 6 children were able to empathise with people suffering on both sides of the 2009 Gaza crisis which had escalated during the time of the case study visit.

> *There's another side to each story. Both sides shouldn't get hurt because they're people as well. Everyone should have a good life - why should they suffer? (Nitzanah, Year 6 pupil)*

(d) Developing own points of view

Although the young people did not themselves use the language, it was evident that religious education was understood as both 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion. The interest of teachers in several of the schools on the promotion of thinking and the development of philosophical approaches, engagement with ethical issues and dialogical methods was reflected in the understanding of some of their pupils. The boys throughout Flintmead School (s:i), for example, understood religious education to be about the development of their own perspectives on religious issues and questions in the light of the material that they studied. It was being able to *'formulate an opinion, with research'* (Year 9), *'not learning as such but the development of ideas'* (Year 10), *'to learn to think for yourselves on these kinds of issues'* (Year 13). There was some reference to learning content in their words but in some comments from different schools learning content appeared to take second place after a focus on skills and the points of view of the individual students to be given priority over the study of religious traditions. Girls at Christ Church (s:va) expressed this understanding of the subject.

> *We're developing our own point of view as opposed to just learning about traditions. (Christ Church, Year 13 girl)*

> *RS is a really good subject to learn especially if you want to get away from academic things. It's a really good way of getting to know yourself, to think about religion and what your belief is. (Christ Church, Year 11 girl)*

A pedagogical focus on the pupils' intellectual freedom is evident here. One Flintmead (s:i) pupil spoke of his school's approach as *'values fused with intellectual freedom'* (Year 12 pupil, Flintmead). An outcome of this approach could be a relegation of religion to second place as a focus of religious education, with a greater emphasis laid on the development of thinking skills and individual students' points of view. Describing the shift to more philosophical perspectives on religious issues, the 6th Form students at the school suggested that *'we don't really do religion'* and '*any religion is evidence of theory'*. This is paralleled in the ethics modules in other schools where girls from Christ Church (s:va), for example, saw much of the subject content as being the ethical issues themselves, with the variety of religious and non-religious perspectives serving as lenses through which these issues are viewed.

> *The things that we learn about are topical issues like violence and abortion,
> euthanasia, equality and that sort of stuff that affects us on an everyday basis - it's
> having a better understanding of everyone's beliefs on these'*
> *(Christ Church, Year 11 girl)*

(e) Transmission of faith

In schools where both the element of faith nurture in religious education and the faith of the
pupils themselves are strong, the young people's understanding of the subject's role has
another dimension supported by learning in class and learning through other interconnected
aspects of school life. Students at al-Falah School (s:va) see their education as providing
them with a secure identity to support them in relations in the wider world. One Year 10 girl
explained how the school gave her a firm understanding of her own religion that would
enable her to defend it against the negative views of others including views found in the
media, for example about the wearing of hijab. A Year 11 boy offered a similar perspective.

> *If you come to a Muslim school you are taught about the Islamic ethos, you learn how
> to live or act as a Muslim as well. So when you leave school you are prepared to go out
> into the real world and mix with other people and, when people ask you questions
> regarding your faith, you know how to answer them (al-Falah, Year 11 pupil)*

The impression that children are receiving a tradition through religious teaching at school for
them to carry on in their own lives was evident among pupils at al-Hikmah school (p:i) where
pupils spoke of their enthusiasm for learning about their prophets.

> *We want to know about the prophets from before and we want to copy their actions and
> we learn new things (al-Hikmah, Year 6 pupil)*

This sense of being part of a chain of transmission (very different from the focus on individual
views and opinions in philosophical approaches) was clear in a discussion of the African
Christian children at St Adelard's (p:va). These pupils, when asked to set out their
understanding of the purpose of RE, linked the priority they gave to Christianity to the
previous day's assembly (led by the parish priest), the story of Jesus' baptism and the
liturgical act of aspersion that had been part of that assembly.

> *Boy N: Because yesterday when Father Douglas came, he put water over us and it's
> like he baptised us a little bit and gave us a squirt of water and like that's what
> Christians do, so that's kind of like Christianity.*

> *Boy M: And how John the Baptist baptised Jesus in the River Jordan.*

> *Girl X: It's like the story's going on so now they baptise children - it's a bit like God
> when Jesus got baptised, we're like carrying it on.*

> *Girl Y: Like a tradition. (St Adelard's, Year 5 children)*

They agreed that their personal preferences for topics to cover in religious education classes
would include Islam and Judaism, Christianity for the reasons given above, and the Bible
'because that's the big thing'. In these examples from a faith school, religion was seen as
having a given element and the students not just expressing their views and beliefs as
Muslims or Christians but developing their knowledge of what to believe and how to act as
followers of these faiths.

(f) Examination success

An account of pupil perspectives on religious education materials would not be complete without reference to the influence of examinations on the older students' evaluation of resources and their experience of their use. Students' concern to pass the examination means that they welcome materials where their learning has been pre-packaged by the teacher and ready-made for revision purposes. Many of the resources used in secondary schools are produced by the teachers and an element of the teacher-generated resources appreciated by many of the students is their relevance for examinations. In their comments there is the idea that teachers have pared the curriculum down so that only what is essential for passing examinations is left. The Year 11 pupils at St Finan's (s:va) appreciated the work the teachers had put into producing module and revision booklets for them that save them time by presenting only the relevant *'bits', 'everything we need to know in a format we can understand'*. Christ Church (s:va) students also felt confident that their teachers had given them the guidance they needed to assess their levels, work out where they needed to concentrate their efforts and structure their answers, in the series of worksheets and guidance sheets they use in class and for homework activities.

> *I found this [worksheet] particularly helpful because when you're practising exam questions and maybe you don't know which scriptures to use it gets you to think about what scriptures to use and how to relate to the topic and also how you should go about structuring your answer. (Christ Church, Year 11 pupil)*

The emphasis on examinations means that the students sometimes viewed various exciting learning activities in which they engage in religious education lessons, in terms of the support they might give in examination preparation. A video on war and peace was recommended by girls at Christ Church (s:va) because *'we can refer to it very easily'* in examinations and one of the positive features of the film Million Dollar Baby was that *'it helps us to structure our writing'*. Pupils at Headley (s) welcomed opportunities for discussion in class and saw these as helpful for examinations.

> *I think it is really good how the lesson is structured, because with everyone sharing their opinion you learn these different viewpoints, which are really good, so you can use them in your arguments and exams. (Headley, Year 11 pupil)*

> *Memorisation is of key importance for examination preparation and topics that are discussed are 'easier to learn'. (Headley, Year 11 pupil)*

Commenting on religious education textbooks, the pupils at Headley (s) were very exam-focused. It was about *'the facts we need to know for the exams'* and *'it gets you more marks if you can explain it from a non-religious point of view'*. The young people acknowledge and several appear to accept that the requirements of examinations can lead to a limitation or distortion in the representation of the religions, including their own. In particular the internal diversity of religions seems to suffer.

> *Sunni/Shia - you don't need that for the exam. It's not false [to ignore it] (Headley, Muslim Year 11 student)*

Students at St Finan's (s:va) commented that, in their religious education booklets, the information was in some cases presented in a *'black or white'* format, when they knew that there was a diversity of opinions on the matter, but they felt that for the purposes of revision it was better as *'the exam is black and white'*. The Jewish pupils at Ben Gurion School (s:va) recognised the strong Orthodox bias of their religious education materials but knew that in the examination they would be expected to answer from an Orthodox perspective.

4.5.2 Resourcing religious education

(a) Books and stories

Generally there was a marked difference between the attitudes of the children in the primary schools and the pupils in the secondary schools to the use of books in religious education. The younger children tended to be positive towards the use of books, as one Year 2 boy stated when presented with a selection of religious education resources: *'I love books!'*. The older pupils were often more negative: *'reading is boring'* (Year 7 pupil, Moorside), *'[using books is] difficult and boring and we tend to write too much'* (Year 7 pupil, Trent Vale), *'I like [religious studies] because we don't really use books'* (Year 11 pupil, Christ Church).

A Year 8 pupil at Headley (s) expressed dissatisfaction with the textbook used in his class, finding the activities, with their reference to aliens from *'Planet X'* too childish: *'we are old enough to try to understand it straight'*, and objected to the low level language: *'we are not learning new words, which is the point of school!'*. However the impression given by several secondary students, particularly those in their GCSE years, was that they find using books challenging, they find it difficult to extract the information they need (particularly for revision purposes) and prefer those books that are set out simply, that *'don't write in posh language; make it colourful, but not too colourful'* (Year 10 pupil, Headley). As has been seen, they are happy for teachers to simplify the material for them through teacher-generated worksheets or course booklets and they prefer resources that are *'fun'* and *'interactive'*. There seem to be issues of stamina and cognition and also a reliance on the teacher to resource and plan activities for learning, in particular examination oriented learning.

> *My teacher puts it in a way that's fun for the whole class not just to read it in a book. (Christ Church, Year 11 pupil)*

> *I prefer interactive things because if you're reading it from the book sometimes you don't get it all in and everything because you don't understand what it's about ... but when you talk to the teacher and you do interactive stuff and that, you get more involved, you learn a lot more. (Christ Church, Year 11 pupil)*

> *That's why I think [teacher power points] are better than textbooks, a lot of the book is stuff you won't remember or need for the exam, whereas the Power Point is stuff you'll actually need. (Headley, Year 11 pupil)*

There were few comments from these students that valued the attitudes and skills of scholarship, though those studying for A level examinations at Moorside (s) and Christ Church (s:va) did accord greater value to their course books than students in Key Stage 3 and 4. Students at Flintmead (s:i) tended to be more positive about the books they used than some of their peers in other schools, the main issue being not so much the value of books vis à vis other resources as whether those books should use more historical approaches because they were *'objective'* or more personal, subjective approaches that allowed them to *'feel what Buddhism for example, is like - an insider's view, and less what it was.'* (Year 10 pupil). Opinion was divided on which approaches were better.

The disparity between the primary pupils and secondary pupils' attitudes to books might partly be a consequence of the emphasis placed on learning to read and love books in the primary schools as well as the ready accessibility of books in the primary classrooms. Staff at both John Hawkins (p) and al-Hikmah (p:i) specifically mentioned drives to promote appreciation of books among their pupils, and classrooms across the primary schools often had displays of books related to their religious education topic that the children could pick up and browse through at odd times during the day. Viewing books about other people's religious lives and practices, children expressed appreciation at their usefulness for conveying information about different traditions.

> *It tells you about the Christians and we like it because it gives you stuff they do and what they wear and their church and what they pray and then Easter and because it also has Christmas in and shows you what they did a long time ago.*
> *(John Hawkins, Year 2 pupil)*

Interesting details, such as the breaking of a glass at a Jewish wedding (St Adelard's) and river baptisms in Africa (Sunnyside School), were noted and commented on. The personal approaches that use first person (often a child's) perspectives to introduce the faith were also valued.

> *Boy A: And what it's done, it's put it in the perspective of them speaking - when <u>we</u> pray, not when <u>they</u> pray.*
>
> *Girl B: It's quite personal and it's like they're talking to you so you know how that person actually feels about doing that - it shows you respect that.*
> *(Swann's, Year 5 pupils)*

However, the books that really captured the primary school children's imaginations were those that told stories (including histories) from the different religions. At Swann's School (p:i) the Year 5 children interviewed commented that in comparison with stories the *'sort of "day in the life of ..." books'*, or *'books that tell you, "we go downstairs and wash our hands and now we're ready to pray"'* are rather *'boring'*. They appreciate stories because they are 'more interesting and easier to work with', they supply the reasons (the 'because') behind religious practices and often convey special messages. Given the choice between different kinds of religious education books children in other primary schools generally chose the story books. At Nitzanah School (p:va) a Year 5 child gave as a reason for liking religious education that *'when you're learning something sometimes there's a story with it'*, and a Year 6 pupil at al-Hikmah (p:i) said he enjoyed Islamic Studies because *'I like people telling stories to me'*. Children at St Sofia Primary (p:va) appreciated the stories produced for their Roman Catholic scheme of work that translated Biblical stories into modern settings, *'they are set now ...to help us know what it would be like now'*, but the most popular stories were often those that were removed from the children's experience and fired their imagination. One Year 2 Polish child at John Hawkins (inf) was particularly struck by a Bible story with a bright illustration of an angel.

> *I like that man - because he's flying, he's an angel - because I like flying.*
> *(John Hawkins, Year 2 pupil)*

The story of Rama and Sita with its exciting mix of monkeys, demons and battles, was a favourite with children at several schools and recognised as such by the teachers. The focus group children at John Hawkins (inf) and at Nitzanah (p:va) gave it an enthusiastic response, and wanted to recount the story, while teachers at Swann's (p:i) and St Adelard's (p:va) volunteered that it was very popular with their classes, too. The children enjoyed the story for its adventure, and also because, as the teacher of Swann's reception class acknowledges, *'it contains more violence and fighting than is normally found in books for this age child'*. Another story that captured the children's imagination was the story of Jesus' passion and resurrection.

> *And he's going to come back to life - yeah, he will come back to life! [I know that] because I go to church every Sunday (John Hawkins, Year 2 pupil)*

A boy at Sunnyside School (p) was ambivalent about the choice of a crucifix as a religious education resource when he recalled the story with *'sad memories of Jesus dying'* but then remembered *'he comes back to life so it's really happy'*. Children at St Adelard's School (p:va) were keen to interrupt the teacher's account of Jesus as a storyteller by their telling

and interpretations of the Easter story, *'if Jesus didn't go on the cross everyone would be naughty'* and *'he rose again to save us'*. The stories do not only come in book format. Enthusiasm for stories also explains the popularity of the DVD The Miracle Maker (an animated version of Jesus' life) at Sunnyside School chosen as a favourite in a group of Year 5 children because *'it's showing you all about God and his stories'* (Sunnyside Year 5 pupil).

Among the secondary school students there were indications that greater coverage of some of the narratives of religious traditions would have been appreciated. Commenting on one series of religious education text books used at Headley, pupils found that *'some of the stories are just kind of short. You want to read on more, on all religions'*. A Sikh pupil with reference to the representation of his own religion felt that the power and significance of a key moment in the history had been lost by omission of the full story.

> *This one has the picture [of Guru Arjan], without the story behind it. Which is kind of confusing for people who aren't Sikhs: the men with five heads, what does it mean? They are on the point of giving up their lives. Then it says 'find out more'!*
> *(Headley, Year 9 Pupil)*

(b) Human resources

Books are not very popular as resources among many of the secondary students. Instead there is a general appreciation of more interactive, person-to-person approaches to teaching and learning whereby teachers, fellow students and occasional visitors are valued as resources. At St Finan's School the Year 11 students preferred to have the teacher explain things to them rather than the textbook.

> *[It is] easier to remember stuff if you can hear them saying it ...teachers are better because they have been teaching you for a while ... [you can] ask a teacher questions you cannot ask a book questions. (St Finan's, Year 11 student)*

The teacher was described by Year 3 pupils at Swann's School (p:i) as *'the best resource'* because of her knowledge and ability to *'talk about it all out of the top of her head'*, but at Trent Vale (s) the Year 10 students wanted to widen their human resource base by including more discussion in the class so they get *'everyone's viewpoint and not just from one person, like the teacher'*. In the same school other pupils expressed the view that they did in fact have a good deal to learn from each other and would value more opportunity to share that wealth of experience.

> *Some of us are really religious, some of us are a bit and some of us not at all but we don't get the chance to share that. (Trent Vale, Year 11 student)*

Discussion in the lesson would be more interesting, they felt, if it focused on the people in the classroom rather than on *'old traditions'*. There is a degree of tension between this opinion, shared by the students in the focus group, and the head of subject's judgement that they needed to learn more about the wider tradition to which they belonged and its diversity rather than focus solely on the manifestations of the tradition with which they were familiar.

Students at the other secondary schools commented on the usefulness of class discussion for their learning. Those interviewed at Eden Academy (s:a) said their preferred way of learning was *'discussion'* and *'big group discussion'* because *'listening to others and their opinions helps you to learn'*; at Moorside (s) Year 7 and Year 11 pupils named *'discussion'* as a religious education resource and were able to justify this designation.

You get to learn things from other people in the class - so they are resources - so discussion is a resource because without it you wouldn't learn from other people. (Moorside, Year 11 pupil)

Similarly students at St Finan's Roman Catholic High School (s:va) described how classmates from different faith backgrounds (including the Church of England) were able to teach each other and the GCSE moral issues modules were particularly valuable for this. A level students at Moorside (s) explained how their own ideas were used by the teacher as the starting point for their philosophical lessons and books are then brought in to support learning.

GIRL A: ...you start with an open-ended question - like is killing wrong? We start to throw around ideas - I might say killing in war is legitimate but murder isn't - then the teacher comes in and says, 'so is your point of view absolute or relative?'

GIRL B: We soon work it out.

BOY C: And you remember that better than if you read it in a book. But if you then go on to read more extensively around the topic you build up your knowledge. The important thing is that the teacher and us are the primary resource - the books come after experience - they help you understand it. (Moorside, Year 13 students)

In addition to the teacher and fellow students there were occasional visitors to religious education lessons who acted as living resources. Al-Hikmah (p:i) pupils remembered a visit by children from a local Roman Catholic school and those from Nitzanah (p:va), a visit from a group of Sikh children. At St Sofia's all the pupils in the Year 5 focus group judged visitors to be the best resource and recounted in great detail a Jewish visitor who came in to talk to them about Shabbat. They compare this experience to learning from a book.

[we] don't know what it is going to look like ... a book couldn't make it come to life as well as she could ...it wouldn't be the same, it made us feel like we were introduced into that dinner ...we were watching what was happening. (St Sofia's, Year 5 pupil)

(c) Electronic resources

The introduction of interactive white boards and digital projectors into classrooms in most of the schools visited has increased the possibilities for using electronic resources within the classroom, including power point presentations, interactive programmes, films and video clips. The young people generally appreciated these resources for learning and many found them more interesting and memorable than books, suggesting *'you learn better from TV because it's made interesting', 'you remember it better'* (Year 7 pupils Moorside), *'with a smartboard you can memorise it in your brain much better'* (Year 8 pupil, al-Falah). Some comments showed that these resources were valued for practical reasons of greater visibility; interactive whiteboards are *'really good because you can see everything'* (Year 5 pupil Swann's), *'it makes things clearer as you can see what people are doing'* (Year 11 pupil, Trent Vale). Other students valued power points for their economy, neatly organising learning into bullet points so *'you cut straight to the chase'* (Year 11 pupil, Headley). There were some detracting voices, however. Increasing familiarity with these forms of learning can mean that they lack the power to engage that they once had. A Flintmead student admitted that there was a danger of *'drifting off'* when DVDs were being used in lessons (Year 10 student, Flintmead) and a student at Eden Academy reported how, as power points are used in all lessons across the school, *'I don't really look at them anymore'* (Year 9 pupil, Eden). Another reason for valuing electronic resources was that videos and films are more' real' than other resources. The use of a YouTube clip of an Islamic wedding, for example, and an excerpt from a television discussion with footballers about Christianity, were appreciated by

St Finan's (s:va) students for their connection with *'everyday life'* and their ability to show *'real life'*. This recognition of a greater reality in the visual image was extended to films, exploring real issues through fiction. Year 11 students spoke about the use of the film Million Dollar Baby to support work on two issues, gender equality and euthanasia, and remarked how as a resource it helped them to understand better *'what people go through'* when faced with ethical dilemmas in real life situations. They also appreciated the use of humour through a Simpsons episode on the making of the universe which engaged them more and helped them to think about and remember the different views represented.

(d) Resourcing different learning styles

In several of the case study schools it was evident that the students had assimilated the discourse of learning styles. Year 8 students at al-Falah (s:va) valued interactive activities on the whiteboard as being *'more kinaesthetic'*, and a Woodhouse (s) student linked the impact of a CNN video sequence on her learning to her status as a visual learner.

> *Some people learn visually and I'm one of them and I remember things more if I look at them and see them going on, so it'll be in my head how that lady suffered and this lesson. (Woodhouse, Year 9 student)*

At St Finan's School (s:va) Year 11 students were clear that RE resources needed *'to make it more accessible to people'*. They explained that *'people learn in different ways'* one of them describing himself as a kinaesthetic learner, *'so if I just sat there I would not take it all in'*. There was an emphasis in these students' discussion, and in comments of students at other schools, on the need for variety of resources and activities. Variety of learning activities was one of the characteristics of religious education that students at Christ Church (s:va) particularly valued.

> *I like it when you have different things going on and I think this school actually prefers that in religious studies because you do work it's different every lesson - that's what I like about it. (Christ Church, Year 11 student)*

Students at Moorside (s) and Christ Church (s:va) gave examples of lessons where teachers had designed activities for kinaesthetic learning, to liven up their lessons, including positioning resources for pupils to find under chairs and sealing discussion stimulus in envelopes, or in one case, asking students to catch notes for essay starters as they were dropped from the classroom ceiling.

Year 12 pupils at St Finian's (s: va) explained how using post-it notes in a lesson catered for different kinds of learners.

> *Post-it notes made sure everyone got involved, gave you a chance to think about what you have seen and process it ...to reflect ...gave everyone a chance to get involved but without speaking ...helps people who are shy. (St Finan's, Year 12 student)*

The primary school children too shared the different styles of learning in which they engage in religious education lessons. Swann's School (p:i) pupils appreciated craft-based activities such as the making of palm crosses and remarked that they remember the content of the lesson more when they are practically engaged; they enjoy the use of music in lessons, *'music is part of the learning, you can relate it to what you're learning'*, and valued the extra contribution that pictures in books make to their learning.

> *They don't just show you what the writing says, they teach you something of their own also. (Swann's, Year 5 student)*

Comments from children at Nitzanah (p:va) on some of the artefacts used in their religious education lessons shows how the visual stimulus of the object engages their attention and leads on to learning about the religion thus represented.

> *[a Ganesha figure] It's got four arms and an elephant's trunk - I liked it because we did some drawing ...it's good to learn about it because you get to see how their religion is and how they pray. (Nitzanah,Year 5 student)*

At Lingard (p) and John Hawkins (inf) the children responded well to the use of another sense, that of smell, in the former case the incense used in a lesson on Hindu worship, *'I like the smell and the way it made me feel'*; in the latter the havdalah spice box, *'it smells like Shabbat'*. The John Hawkins Year 1 children also enjoyed tasting the challah bread, *'you feel the flavour and the taste when you eat it'*.

4.5.3 Religious perspectives

(a) Representing religions

During the case study visits focus groups of students were asked to comment on the representation of their own religions and religious perspectives in the religious education materials used in their schools. Though the youngest children did not approach this task in the same way as the secondary age students, their responses to the portrayals of religious lives and practices showed an eagerness to identify with what they found and relate it to their own experience. When Year 2 pupils at John Hawkins (inf) viewed a book portraying the faith of a young Christian, the Christians in the group were prompt to identify with it, *'I'm a Christian'*, *'I am a Christian, you go to church to celebrate'*, *'I've got a Bible at home'*. Similarly pupils at North Street School (p) were eager to share their own experience and knowledge of Islam. When discussing educational resources on Islam, one boy offered a recital in Arabic and translation of the bismallah shown in one of the book illustrations. He explained that he had learnt to recite the bismallah at madrassah and its meaning in English in separate faith worship at school.

The secondary students were often more critical of the portrayal of their religions in the materials used. One of the reasons for the recorded negativity about books was dissatisfaction with some of the images of religion portrayed there. Students at Trent Vale (s) felt that the portrayals were removed from their own experiences of their religion. The contemporariness of the texts was an issue.

> *They do not show our lives the way that we really live our lives ...they talk about things people used to do not the way that we live now. (Trent Vale, Year 11 student)*

Another objection was that the books focused on 'the worship side but not on the faith side' and what people believe. A Christian pupil at Headley (s), a minority in the school, was clearly upset by the portrayal of her religion in one of the school textbooks.

> *This book is just awful. I am a Christian and I hate my religion from this book. It does not portray it in a fantastic light. It makes it look so depressing. It is just outdated. I don't think it should still be used ...And I think it is quite easy, because you are talking about interesting things, to do things to make it really interesting. And this book just ruins it. (Headley, Year 11 pupil)*

Christians in the Year 11 focus group at Moorside (s) also expressed strong feelings about what they perceive to be negativity about Christians, not so much in textbooks as among their peers in religious education classes. They find it difficult to counter these views in

lessons, an instance where using discussion and students' opinions as resources for learning about religions is not working as well as it might.

> *There is a really stereotypical view of Christians in our class - they think they are good people - abortion is wrong - they're not allowed to do anything that could be considered fun. Most students believe that Christians are the wet blanket of society - you know, no fun - we're there to prove everything wrong. (Moorside, Year 11 student)*

The resources used at St Finan's Roman Catholic School (s:va) were largely teacher-generated but often produced as a collation of elements drawn from other published materials. The students found that the Roman Catholics represented in these tended to be those of an older generation and those who were *'strict'* or *'really holy'*, they were eager to make the point that *'not every Catholic is an old woman [who] goes to church everyday'*. They perceived that there was a lack of awareness of diversity within the tradition or recognition that Roman Catholics do not always *'abide by the rules'*.

> *[The booklet gives] a very traditional view of Catholic beliefs [it says] Catholics shouldn't use contraception, shouldn't have abortion, but Catholics do. (St Finan's, Year 11 student)*

The focus group discussion at Ben Gurion (s:va) offered a slightly more sophisticated understanding of the mismatch between real life practice and portrayal in religious education resources. One boy suggested the materials were representing what most orthodox Jews aspire to rather than achieve, but that this had not been made clear.

> *These books generalise a lot - but to what the majority thinks. When they say 'all Jews keep a kosher kitchen' what they mean is 'all Jews <u>should</u> keep a kosher kitchen'. (Ben Gurion, student)*

With this proviso the Jewish students felt that the materials they used did represent Judaism as lived at home within the Orthodox tradition. Buddhist students interviewed at Flintmead (s:i) were happy with the presentation of their religion in the textbook on Buddhism they used in class. Muslim students at Woodhouse (s) went further in their approval of the representation of their faith in religious education materials and saw them as providing a corrective to media stereotyping of the Muslim community.

> *In RE ...it doesn't have to be ...Muslims aren't shown to be how Saudi Arabians look ...they show it from like different places ...different types of Muslims. (Woodhouse, Year 11 student)*

Similarly the Year 11 students at al-Falah (s:va), whose main GCSE textbook was written by a non-Muslim, nevertheless felt that its contents presented a fair, honest and open view of what it means to be a Muslim today, *'it's actually really good'*.

Some students felt that their religious position was missing from the religious education materials. A professed atheist at Eden Academy (s:a) discerned an assumption in the resources that everyone was either religious or agnostic. Evangelical Christians at Moorside (s) felt that they were not represented in the materials, which focused on more *'formal'* manifestations of Christianity, nor within the religious education lessons. They explained that they feel inhibited about raising the issue with their teachers *'because our sort of Christianity doesn't relate much to lessons'*.

In the very different South London context of Christ Church School (s:va), where religion is normal and public, and the girls talk without inhibition about their faith, they responded differently to gaps in their religious education materials. The Year 11 focus group recognised

that the resources sometimes did not portray their Christian religion in the way they understood or experienced it, but actually saw this as a positive rather than negative aspect of the resource as it gave them a starting point for talking about their own position showing that sometimes inadequacies in religious education materials can, if well used, provide valuable stimulus for learning. They commented to this effect on a video on Christianity that they had used in class.

> *Sometimes it helps us to comment if you think, 'well, that's not what we do'. You get a different opinion either outside the religion or in the religion if there are different things from the things you know, or when you see the video if there's something that's missing it kind of makes it better as well because you have other students giving their opinion, whereas if everything was on the video I don't think any of us would give an opinion, which I find a bit boring. (Christ Church, Year 11 student)*

(b) Recognising religious meaning

The use of religious education resources is not only complicated by the fact that they are often representing the lives, communities and traditions of the pupils themselves, but that they might also be representing or symbolising deeply held beliefs and convictions and so possess a significance beyond the educational. Responses from children with committed faith positions to some of the resources available in their schools provided indications of this. For the Muslim children at North Street (p:va) material relating to their faith had a religious importance that meant it needed to be protected from too casual use or inappropriate juxtapositioning with material from different faith traditions. They objected to a photograph in one religious education book that showed non-Muslim children visiting a mosque and looking at a copy of the Qur'an, because they had bare legs. They used the words *'respect'* and *'principles'* to explain how they felt about this. In another book they found the name Satan printed in text close to a picture of hajj and explained that it was *'not respectful having the name of Shaytan next to photographs'* of something that is special or sacred in Islam. A book on pilgrimage contained pictures of pilgrimage to Makkah as well as pictures from other traditions including a laughing Buddha from Thailand. The children thought this picture should not be in the same book as pictures of Islamic holy places as the statue was not something they would be allowed to bring into a mosque. In the children's understanding, the presence within it of pictures of places holy to Islam gave the book itself a religious significance. The whole group agreed that the answer would be to *'tell the government to separate the religions'* into separate books.

The reaction of Christian pupils from St Adelard's (p:va) to a collection of resources presented to them for their comments, reinforces the idea that religious education resources can have different meaning for children of faith depending on whether or not they are from their own tradition. The seder plate from the school's Jewish collection was understood in educational terms as an aid to learning.

> *I think this [seder plate] because if they want to learn about Jewish this will be handy - if they learn about how they write in their religion they could look at this and maybe for homework they could search on the internet and find out what they mean. (St Adelard's, Year 5 pupil)*

Their attitude to the Christian artefacts was very different. When asked why the cross might be useful for religious education the children immediately spoke of its religious significance to them as a symbol of remembrance and of its role in supporting prayer. Their suggested uses of it in class and religious education were devotional.

It's to help about Jesus died for us, for our sins, it's to like teach the children how it is - to be good like the 10 commandments do that, follow all the laws God told us that we have to obey because Jesus died for us.

When you hang it up maybe you could tell the class so that write stuff about why God sacrificed hisself for us and what we should do to help God and help the world.

If we hang it on our [classroom] doors every time we come in from playtime or back from art or anywhere we could just remember - when we see it we could remember that he died for us. (St Adelard's, Year 4 pupils)

Similarly one of the Muslim children at North Street (p) thought that a prayer mat would be a valuable resource for use in a religious education class because through it *'you connect with God'.* Thus it appears that in the children's eyes, such religious items are not de-sacralised by their designation as religious education resources.

4.5.4 Conclusion

The main purpose of this section is to consider how learning is enhanced by the use of religious education materials in the case study schools and to contribute students' perspectives to the evaluation of resources. The young people's comments also give an indication of what it is they think they are and should be learning through religious education. Very important to this understanding was the idea that religious education promotes and develops positive attitudes towards other people, in particular to those from different religio-cultural communities and those who believe differently from themselves. Beyond that an emphasis on morals and social justice themes in religious education supports the growth of a general interest in the welfare of fellow humans.

The acquisition of knowledge about the religious lives of others was understood to be of value in this development of positive attitudes, but students also linked the practice of discussion and dialogue to the growth of empathy and respect for those of different faith positions, expressing a more skills-based than knowledge-based understanding of learning. As well as directing attention towards 'the other' it is was evident that students found religious education had an inward orientation encouraging self reflection and personal growth. For some students, particularly in 'faith schools', the subject, supported by a general school ethos, played an important role in their development as members of a particular religious tradition with all that that means in terms of participating in the story, belonging, regulation of action and confidence in their religious identity in their relations with others.

Though better understanding of religion and religions was viewed as part of the purpose of religious education, another perspective was evident in the students' responses whereby religions were more resources for thinking about ethical and philosophical questions than the focus of learning. This view reflected moves away from systematic studies of world religions towards issue-based religious education in some of the schools. These moves appear to be popular with students, though in some cases the young people recognised that religions had lost their position as the learning focus and took on a subsidiary role in relation to the development of thinking skills or to the ethical issues being explored.

For older secondary students examination success was a prime consideration in their judgement of their learning experiences and of the value of different religious education resources. For some the criterion against which they evaluated materials was not so much ability to enhance learning as ability to enhance potential to succeed at this level. Among GCSE candidates there was often a preference for resources that organise the material for revision purposes and help them to remember, and to structure examination answers. Often it was the teachers who had done this for the students in the selection and adaptation of

material and production of revision aids and guides. This trend towards reliance on teachers may have implications for the students' development as independent learners and their eventual ability to study at university level.

Many of the younger pupils expressed enthusiasm for books and in particular for stories from the religious traditions, an enthusiasm which has potential for development into study and interpretation of core texts of the religious traditions. At a time when there is growing emphasis among faith communities on the sharing of scriptures as a focus for mutual understanding, the primary school experience may be something on which to build. The negativity expressed by several secondary students towards book-learning and the interpretation of religious education as a non-academic subject, is a subject for reflection by religious educational professionals and by producers of educational resources who might wish to find ways of re-engaging students with text.

A clear message was given that the young people particularly appreciated direct contact with difference in their learning rating highly opportunities to learn from others about their views and lives. This direct contact does not have to involve visits and visitors but includes peer discussion in the classroom. Electronic resources were also appreciated by pupils as giving them more direct access to 'real life'. Facilitating meetings between their students and others through a variety of means, including electronic, is an important part of the religious education teacher's role.

Though some of the materials were evaluated positively by students for their representations of their religions, there were a number of points of criticism. Some voices were found to be poorly represented or missing. The representation of the lives of Christians was particularly criticised by the young people with evangelical Christians in particular finding that their perspectives were not included in resources or lessons. There was also a tension between a student-centred concept of learning whereby the young people felt that the resources should represent their own experiences and interpretations of their faith and one that seeks to present a wider tradition and its core teachings. A question for educators and producers of resources is what the balance between these should be.

4.6 Community Cohesion and the Case Study Schools

The research questions required the case study team to investigate the relationship between the content and nature of religious education materials and the duty on maintained schools to promote community cohesion, or in the case of the independent schools the duty to promote respect, tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions. An important principle of community cohesion in education is that it should be contextually relevant; each school is different and so each school will have a different contribution to make to community cohesion.[33] This principle has been recognised in the development of the case study strand. A variety of geographical, demographic and educational contexts have been studied and the impact of particular contextual factors on the schools' interpretations of community cohesion and priorities within this agenda has been noted. During the course of the research, observation, discussion and review of school policies in written form and in practice, have expanded understanding of religious education beyond the concept of a bounded school subject delivered with the support of targeted resources. This broader understanding needs to inform the project's analysis and conclusions if it is to do justice to the intricacies of the RE and community cohesion relationship, and identify the role of religious education materials within this. Four findings are of relevance to an understanding of the role or potential role of religious education materials in schools' promotion of community cohesion:

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[33] This principle is incorporated into the DCSF Guidance on the Duty to Promote Community Cohesion (2007)'Just as each school is different, each school will make an important but different contribution to community cohesion' (p7)

- The religious education that happens in the classroom is not solely, or even predominantly, determined by the RE materials used, rather it is shaped by teacher and pupil interpretation, and by other classroom activities and encounters.

- Religious education incorporates not only a world religions focus but other elements of learning and emphases, such as nurture within one's own faith or an exploration of philosophical and ethical questions. Nevertheless all religious education learning takes place against a backdrop of the religious plurality of British society.

- The religious education that the children and young people receive through school is not confined to their learning in RE classes. Understanding of religion and religions may be acquired through other curriculum areas, through experiences of religion in other aspects of school life and encounters with religion in the wider community which are facilitated by the school.

- The community aspect of religious education (in its broadest sense) engages with wider issues of citizenship alongside the promotion of harmony between different religious communities.

Interviews with school leaders explored the links between religious education (both as a discrete subject and more widely understood) and the schools' approaches to community cohesion. Few of the schools participating in the study were found to have specific community cohesion policies but most already have within their vision, in their statements and interpretation of their mission and aims, and in the work they do, the same elements that have been drawn together at national level into the community cohesion agenda. In some cases these elements are so much part of the thinking of school leaders and members that they are not explicitly stated. As the head teacher of Sunnyside School (p) commented, *'It's a bit like an unwritten constitution. It's hard to put all of that in a nutshell'*. Similarly, the head teacher of Woodhouse School (s) remarked that, *'it's something so embedded in everything that we do there isn't a written policy as such'*. In the case of the 'faith schools' the promotion of a harmonious society, of the inclusion of the marginalised and the fulfilment of potential have religious imperative. It is included in St Finan's (s:va) mission *'to follow Jesus Christ in our work, worship and relationships'* and the Gospel values of *'love, justice, forgiveness and tolerance'*, in the aim of St Adelard's School (p:va), *'to bear witness in the community to God's transforming love and his purpose in the future we are building together'*, and in recognition in al-Hikmah's (p:i) policy that *'being a Muslim naturally implies a commitment to achieving a harmonious society'* and *'Islam is a complete communal religion, or code of life; hence its messages address the societal and communal as well as the individual'*.

In relation to community cohesion, there was an emphasis on the schools' responsibility to promote positive attitudes towards religious diversity, both within school and in the wider community at local, national and global levels. The schools' responses to other elements of the community cohesion agenda were also found to be relevant to the study, however, including their responses to ethnicity and culture, and socio-economic dimensions of inequality, and a concern for equity that seeks the inclusion in society of potentially marginalised groups. In the case study schools, examples were found of RE that values religious diversity and builds bridges between religious difference. The nature of its relationship with school ethos and school religion means that religious education is also involved in the development of a vision of transformation in the lives of individuals and in society.

4.6.1 Community cohesion and the schools - summary

The case studies showed that responses to the community cohesion agenda are varied. The findings suggest that for any school they depend on a number of internal factors, such as the school's character, the pupils' religiosity, the pupils' attitudes to diversity, the teachers' particular pedagogies, the teachers' attitudes to diversity, or the challenge of meeting certain standards in attainment. They are also influenced by external factors such as the demography of the local community it serves, the main issues of concern in the neighbourhood, the identity of the key players in the local community and their willingness to work with the school. The varied models of community involvement set out and illustrated below make different demands on resources. The complexity means that educational materials and activities that support the community agenda are often produced and designed by teachers themselves. The most obvious contribution that published religious education materials can make is in the provision of comprehensive, accurate and engaging representations of religion, of a diversity within and between religious traditions and also non-religious positions. This is in order to increase young people's awareness and understanding of the beliefs, values, practices and inspirations of the different groups and communities that make up British society, and to affirm them in their own identities.

Unlike teacher-generated resources, published resources cannot speak directly to the situation of any individual school (though some materials will be of more relevance to some contexts than to others). They could nevertheless support the kinds of community engagement (described in more detail below) by supplying inspiration and examples from religious teachings, narratives and practices of: the types of positive social involvement described; models of community and action for the community; examples of partnership and collaborative action between communities; and instances where the marginalised have been brought into the centre and where lives and communities have been transformed.

The fifth research question asks for the identification of factors for schools to consider when determining what materials they should use. Relating this question to the promotion of community cohesion, in particular, four key contrasts emerge from the case studies. Firstly, schools will need to consider the tension between acceptance of pupils' background and the need to challenge certain aspects of it. Although teachers may wish to affirm pupils in their religiosity and value their home background, some of their attitudes, whether racism, prejudice or simply low educational expectations, might need to be challenged. Education for community cohesion requires that pupils hold certain types of attitudes and values, which may be at odds with their current ones - and with their parents' views. Secondly, schools would need to recognise the difference between a focus on achievement and on values. While the importance of GCSE in religious education is not to be downplayed, an approach that is dominated by examination criteria may only provide an understanding of religions and, in some schools, the skills for dialogue. It would not of itself provide the wider experiences of community that could benefit the pupils. Thirdly, there will be choices about the way that different religions are presented in different areas of the curriculum, and the life of the school.

For instance, at Nitzanah (p:va), Jewish studies and religious education can be complementary, even though one is more confessional than the other, and at al-Hikmah (p:i), science lessons can support the presentation of Islamic theology. In 'faith' and 'non-faith' schools, school worship and assemblies could impact on pupils' perspectives of their own and other religions. Finally, there is potential tension between a view of the pupil as an autonomous learner and having wider responsibilities towards the school community. On the one hand, some approaches highlighted the pupils as individual learners whose personal autonomy should be respected. On the other hand, schools also highlighted the sense of a corporate identity which, to differing degrees, shapes the religious learning and expression of their members.

During research among the participating schools the following interrelated models of community involvement were identified:

- the school as model of community

- the school as hub of community

- the school developing knowledge and understanding to enable bridge building

- the school training in skills for community

- the school contributing to transformation of lives and community

- the school as community partner and actor

These themes will now be illustrated.

4.6.2 Model of community

For many schools, it was the pupils' experience of the internal dynamics of the school community that provided helped to express its community values in a religiously plural context. The deputy head at Trent Vale (s) commented that:

> *We may all be different but we are all part of the same community. We may have these different backgrounds, faiths, beliefs, but we are all part of the same community (Trent Vale, deputy head).*

The concept of school as community was particularly marked at Flintmead (s:i) where almost all pupils were boarders. Staff considered that the process of living together with a range of pupils of different personalities, opinions and backgrounds meant that pupils learnt how to get along. The fact that the pupils were boarders meant that the school felt that it had an obligation to respect and nurture the pupils' religiosity, whatever their religious background. The internal diversity of the community was recognised with the different faith circles held for Buddhists (the largest group), Hindus, Jews and Muslims on Sundays.

A similar pattern can also be seen at Nitzanah School (p:va), the Jewish primary. Although the identity of the school is explicitly Jewish, there is a wider plurality within the school community, which contains a few children of non-Jewish faiths and a higher proportion of non-Jewish staff. Both non-Jewish children and non-Jewish staff are expected to attend Jewish prayers and learning and this was the understanding on which they became members of the school community. At the same time it is hoped they will feel confident to talk about their own faith as an encouragement to the Jewish children to learn about others. The sight of a non-Jewish teacher wearing a *kippah* as his class took part in their after dinner prayers, the children's appreciation of their teacher's interest in their religion, the non-Jewish RE teaching assistant's understanding that the staff all work as a community together with shared aims, are all signs of the working of Nitzanah's inclusive plurality. In both these examples, the shared life of the community becomes the model for the pupils' future life in the wider community. Furthermore in both examples, a clear commitment to a particular religious tradition, with formal recognition of this, accompanied, and indeed underlay, recognition of the individual religiosity of staff and pupils.

Those interviewed were not all confident that their school fully represented an ideal of community cohesion. The RE co-ordinator at Lingard (p) spoke of a tendency for her pupils to gravitate towards their own cultural groups, a situation she wanted to reverse with a focus

on commonalities in religious education. Staff at Ben Gurion (s:va) were concerned that the separation of the Jewish and non-Jewish pupils for religious education and language education did not support community cohesion within that institution. In these and other schools the promotion of community cohesion within school was a focus for school self reflection and an ongoing project.

4.6.3 Hub of community

Among the case studies several examples were found of the schools acting as a hub of the local community, proactively bringing members of the community together in school-based projects, events and celebrations. In this way the schools were important agents of social interaction and cohesion. Primary schools have a particular role here because of the often closer relationship they have with parents and families. It was noticeable in a number of cases how religious themes and links with local places of worship were the focal points for the gathering of communities not just in 'faith' schools but also in 'non-faith' schools as the following three examples show.

At John Hawkins (inf) the local context, mixed and transitory nature of the local population, means that there is a particular need for the promotion of social cohesion at the local level. The school has a programme that works to bring parents and families together around the school through children and adults sharing art and craft activities, practical science activities, and reading and listening to stories during the annual 'book week'. Religious festivals are key occasions for such events with days given over to the making of Easter bonnets, and Christmas decorations. The school's relationship with local churches is an important part of this community building with families brought together not just by the school's Christmas celebration at one of these but by the basic logistics of escorting pupils and transporting musical instruments.

A similar pattern was found at Sunnyside School (p), situated as it is in a socially deprived white outer city estate where the families are *'worthy people who have been dealt a hard hand in life'* (Sunnyside head teacher). This school also provides opportunities for them to work together at school with their children on craft activities. Again links with a nearby church are crucial to the school's work for local community cohesion with school celebrations, including families and children, held there for Remembrance Day, Christmas and Easter. A key aim of the school, shared by the church, is to affirm the local community and give the children sense of pride in local identity

At Lingard School (p) where school families represent a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds, celebrations of the major religious festivals at school ('Id, Diwali, Vaisakhi and Christmas) are occasions to bring the communities together and are very well attended by the parents. They have become 'cross-religious' celebrations as the children are eager to take part in assemblies marking each other's festivals, Hindu children participating in the 'Id assembly, for example, and parents from different communities come to all to see their children and support the school.

4.6.4 Developing knowledge and understanding to enable bridge building

Another role for the school in promoting community cohesion is the part it can play in giving pupils accurate knowledge and positive appreciation of different religions in the society in which they live. A teacher at Sunnyside Primary (p) explained that the children at that school had so little knowledge of different religions and cultures that religious education had a valuable impact by increasing awareness of pupils in different communities. The rationale was fully articulated at al-Hikmah (p:i), the Muslim primary school. Here the co-ordinator of the school's multi-faith religious education introduces the subject to parents as part of their

children's British identity and so links her teaching to the school's concern to train the children as citizens of this country, able to relate to their fellow citizens in all their diversity:

> *We tell them that it's an important part of their learning and them being British citizens and to learn about each other and to learn about diversity so they know what's around them ...[the parents] know that it's a service for the British and the community and that it creates cohesion as well and an understanding between people. (al-Hikmah RE coordinator)*

The point was also made by a pupil at Woodhouse (s).

> *If we know about different religions and what they believe in, if we are on the street and walking and talking about this we don't make any comments that will offend people because we know what we're talking about. (Woodhouse Year 9 student)*

Religious education materials have a clear role in the development of this understanding when they contribute comprehensive and accurate representations of the different religions of British society to children's learning. The comments above infer a connection between knowledge of other's beliefs and a respect for them. However, for some teachers, the acquisition of knowledge was not enough and they adopted a proactive approach to combating prejudice.

For example, at St Finan's, the Catholic secondary school (s:va), the head of department was concerned about her pupils misconceptions and misunderstandings of people from different religions and had incorporated a community cohesion module into the GCSE course to help address these.

> *Without being naïve …they come with the problems and we try and educate them in the positive …listen to their fears…[and offer] a balanced view. (St Finan's head of department)*

A teacher at Moorside (s) thought that because of the lack of Muslims in the area (a market town in the southwest), many students imitated their families and the press in identifying all Muslims as terrorists*: 'I usually try to get that out of the way in the first lesson - then we can move on'*.

Concern to break down barriers of misunderstanding led teachers to adopt various teaching strategies. (i) The inclusion of other religions within the curriculum (or, when the teaching approach is thematic or issues-based, the inclusion of other religious or non-religious perspectives on the same theme). (ii) Employing positive representations of religious communities that might be the subject of stereotype and prejudice. (iii) Interpreting religious education material and religious sources to encourage attitudes of goodwill towards people from different communities and traditions is another strategy.

4.6.5 Training for skills in community

A different view of schools' contribution to community cohesion was based on an understanding of religious education's role as developing the necessary skills for inter-religious encounter, such as collaboration and dialogue. This was particularly strong in the various secondary schools. For instance, the head of department at Eden Academy (s:a) felt that religious education would enable pupils *'to make informed choices that will help them interact better with the people they will meet in their lives'*, and the stated aim of religious education at Woodhouse (s) was:

> *To foster the development of unique individuals with the…skills…to promote community cohesion within the local community and the world beyond (Woodhouse, Staff Handbook 2008/9)*

This was often linked to a preference for philosophy and ethics approaches. At St Adwen's (p:va), a rural primary school, RE was seen as helping children *'develop their own beliefs from learning about different religions and cultures across the world'* and *'it's a fantastic subject for developing habits of the mind'*. These thinking skills are not seen only as a means to intellectual ends. The head teacher believed that they should be used in the service of attitude development; for example, children who think critically will be better equipped to question injustices. At Flintmead (s:i), a highly selective independent, one teacher was sceptical of approaches that *'skated over genuine differences'*, but he also believed that the intellectual exercise of exploring and understanding would *'engender tolerance and respect as a by-product'*. At Eden Academy (s:a), with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils, teachers aimed to *'Develop their thinking skills so that they can look at any kind of evidence and make opinions for themselves and make a choice of the type of person they would like to be'. (Eden Academy, head of department)*

At Christ Church School (s:va), the deputy head teacher described it as a *'freedom'* to express opinions without causing or taking offence, and the head of department envisaged religious education as, *'Destroying the barriers of the Other… by seeing a way in which a dialogue can take place and that a dialogue is…crucial for them as individuals but also for them in terms of society'*.

This school provides an illustration of the way messages about community living and interreligious harmony are conveyed not just by the content but by the activity of learning. The school's dialogic approach was embedded in a model of collaborative working in the religious studies classes, which also worked towards the promotion of community. Observations in the classrooms saw how throughout the lessons a variety of groupings are used: pairings, groups of four or five, whole class sessions. The students are encouraged to move and regroup at different stages in the lessons and these groupings are regulated to ensure everyone has the support needed and a part to play.

4.6.6 Transformation of lives and community

Another theme that runs through the work of several of the case study schools is that of transformation. An interest was expressed in transforming the lives of the individual young people, particularly those that might otherwise be marginalised by socio-economic status, ethnic or religious identity, by gender, by disaffection and criminalisation. Explicit links were made in the language of school policies and school leaders between the transformation of these lives and that of wider society. In this area the focus of individual schools and religious education departments, their priorities and strategies, were responsive to the particular contexts they were serving.

At Eden Academy (s:a) the challenges were the high rates of exclusion and poor levels of achievement of their *'white working-class'* pupils. The school's work in this area is linked to the *'Christian-based core values... [that] include ...working actively against discrimination and social exclusion'* (Eden school prospectus). The school has been using restorative justice (RJ) methods, bringing victims and offenders together to restore relationships and combat the tensions within the school community that can lead to exclusion and has been recognised as a *'centre for excellence'* in this work which appears to be having positive results.

We have found that from having to exclude big numbers four years ago we have had no exclusions (full or part) this year. The RJ process has been hugely successful. We are in quite a challenging area and we put this down to the RJ process' (Eden Academy, head teacher)

Religious education is seen as having a part in the process as a vehicle for exploring morality and the sense of self at Eden Academy. The school has chosen an issues-based approach to the subject rather than a systematic world religions approach. It has a focus on right and wrong and power, encouraging students to grapple with the challenges and choices in their own lives. Achievement is another major concern in this school, which has a history of very low performance. The emphasis in religious education lessons at Key Stage 4 tends to be focused on strategies for examination success and resources published by examination boards and by the chief examiner in particular are favoured.

The transformation of lives and social inclusion of a community are the principles behind the establishment of al-Hikmah Islamic primary school (p:i). The founders had been motivated by their concern both by the marginalisation of the Muslim experience in society and by the increasing levels of delinquency, criminality and drug abuse among Muslim youth. They wanted to guide young Muslims to make the right moral choices and so put them in a position to make a positive contribution to society.

Members of staff at Christ Church (s:va) were very conscious that, though their girls were often *'boisterous and vocal'* in character, they were nevertheless growing up in a youth culture context where social structures were male-dominated. The deputy head expressed particular concern about the influence of gang culture with its rigid organisation into ranks of *'youngers', 'elders' and 'generals'*, and the fact that students at the school have had to cope with the deaths of friends as a result of gang-related violence. It is part of the school's intention to teach the girls that *'they can have a bigger place in the community'* and can offer alternatives ways of being for that community. This, she sees as closely related to the Christian ethos of the school and to *'what happens in RS'*. The Head of Religious Studies picked up this theme and related it explicitly to the department's contribution to community cohesion.

I think community cohesion is about actually getting them to recognise what makes a community, what makes a good community and their role and their place – how they can be empowered to create a good community (Christ Church head of RS)

Such discussion takes place regularly through a philosophy and ethics based approach and is a focus in Year 8 in particular where students do an exercise on 'brave new worlds' and reflect on how they might build a new society.

4.6.7 Community partnership

As well as being the centre of community many of the schools work at a different level as a partner alongside other community players. These partnerships frequently have a religious or religiously motivated dimension. They include partnership links with other schools and here religious identity and an interest in building friendships across religious and cultural differences are important factors:al-Hikmah (p:i) has a link with a nearby Roman Catholic primary that involves visits of the children to each other's schools; Sunnyside School (p) is linked with a school from the other side of the city with a mainly Muslim Pakistani-heritage population, and Nitzanah School (p:va) has a partner school in Israel.

The most significant partnerships in terms of working together in and for the community are often those with local churches for 'non faith' as well as 'faith schools'. Examples have been given above of combined school and church activities in 'non faith' schools. The parish rector and chair of governors at St Adelard's (p:va), an example of a 'faith school' context, sees a continuity in the pastoral activities of school and church in support of local families and school staff, clergy and church workers co-ordinating their community work. The Jewish and Muslim schools work with their faith community networks and organisations. As another example of collaborative work with local partners for the good of a wider community, al-Hikmah School (p:i) held an event at the East London mosque to raise money for the Tsunami Appeal. In this and other cases many of the schools were found to be taking on community benefactor roles. At a local level, pupils from Ben Gurion (s:va) take part in an annual *shabbaton* visit to a Jewish care home which is seen as an opportunity for *tzeddekah* (charitable acts), the Christmas Play at John Hawkins (inf) is used as an opportunity for charitable giving the money from the last collection having been used to buy large print books for a local old people's home. Most of the schools engaged in charitable activities for causes across the global community.
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5. The Survey

5.1 Introduction

Two forms of the questionnaire were distributed, one for the primary schools and one for the secondary schools and was sent both to maintained and independent schools. The responses of the primary schools and the secondary schools are treated separately. In view of the low response rate (discussed in section 2.4.5), we are not able to report on each category of primary schools and each category of secondary schools separately as had been the original intention. Instead we provide in tables an overview of the entire set of data as collected, recognising that this is not based on a nationally representative sample of schools. Then we discuss in the narrative following certain tables whenever significant differences emerged between three routinely conducted comparisons: maintained schools and independent schools; all schools with a religious character and all schools without a religious character; and maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character.

5.2 Primary Schools

A total of 2,723 questionnaires were despatched and 627 responses were received, representing a 23% response rate. Of these 326 were primary schools. The table below shows the categories of primary schools that responded[34] and their relative response rates. Table 10.0 Number of primary schools participating in the survey by school type and frequency of response by school type

	N	%
Community schools	47	14
Voluntary Controlled Church of England Schools	58	18
Voluntary Aided Church of England Schools	54	17
Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic Schools	43	13
Independent Non-denominational Schools	5	2
Independent Church of England Schools	22	8
Independent Roman Catholic Schools	10	3
Independent Christian Schools	29	9
Independent Muslim Schools	4	1
Independent Jewish School	1	0
Type unknown.[35]	53	16
Total	326	100

In order to clarify the following presentation of data, the anonymised responses were removed to enable comparison between school types. The tables in the next section present the data from the resulting overall sample of 273 identifiable primary schools. Three sets of comparison were then conducted to compare

1) maintained schools and independent schools;

2) all schools with a religious character and all schools without a religious character;

3) maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character.

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[34] The categories used correspond with those provided on the DCSF database, Edubase.

[35] In these cases the teachers had not returned the Edubase identifier.

The Survey

The narrative following the relevant tables draws attention to the occasions where these three comparisons highlighted statistically *significant* differences according to school type.

5.2.1 The six religious traditions

Table 1.1 - Religions included in classroom teaching: all primary schools

	KS1 %	KS2 %
Buddhism	20	38
Christianity	85	88
Hinduism	47	66
Islam	48	78
Judaism	65	79
Sikhism	24	51
Other	7	7

N=266

Table 1.2 demonstrates that by Key Stage 2 all six main faith traditions are included in classroom teaching within the primary school. Around four out of every five primary schools cover Islam (78%) and Judaism (79%) while the proportion rises to 88% for Christianity. At Key Stage 2 over half cover Sikhism (51%) and Hinduism (66%), and 38% cover Buddhism. At Key Stage 1 the two most prominent faiths are Christianity covered by 85% of schools and Judaism covered by 65% of schools. Almost half the schools cover at Key Stage 1 Hinduism (47%) and Islam (48%), with fewer schools covering Sikhism (24%) and Buddhism (20%). At both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 7% of primary schools cover other faith traditions. This significant coverage of the six main faith traditions at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 underlines the importance of the availability of good curriculum resources for these areas of study.

At Key Stage 1 the following main differences occurred between types of schools. Judaism was given more prominence in maintained schools (72%) than in independent schools (48%), in schools with a religious character (68%), compared with schools without a religious character (53%), and in schools in the maintained sector with a religious character (77%) compared with schools in the maintained sector without a religious character (54%). A similar pattern occurred at Key Stage 2. Christianity was given a higher priority in the maintained sector than in the independent sector at both Key Stage 1 (90% compared with 70%) and Key Stage 2 (93% compared with 75%).

The conversation with subject leaders preparing for the design of the survey instrument drew attention to the importance of representatives from the main faith communities as a key resource in promoting and enabling classroom exploration of the six religious traditions. Following this steer from the subject leaders, Table 1.2 demonstrates the extent to which representatives from the main faith communities have contributed to religious education classroom teaching in primary schools, by giving a talk, for example. These data indicate considerable involvement across the faith traditions with 6% of primary schools having welcomed contributions from the Buddhist traditions, 9% from the Sikh tradition, 17% from the Jewish tradition, 21% from the Hindu tradition, 23% from the Muslim tradition, 77% from

the Christian tradition, and 6% from other faith traditions. These figures indicate that those who can speak about the faith traditions from the inside appear to be an important 'resource' for religious education in the primary school.

The only difference between school type was that representatives from the Hindu community participated more in schools with a religious character (24%) than in schools without a religious character (10%).

Table 1.2 - Within the past year faith communities contributed to RE: all primary schools

	yes %
Buddhism	6
Christianity	77
Hinduism	21
Islam	23
Judaism	17
Sikhism	9
Other	6

N=270

5.2.2 Way of teaching

Table 1.3 - Ways of teaching: all primary schools

	KS1 %	KS2 %
Separately (e.g. one religion at a time)	26	40
Thematically, (e.g. festivals across several religions)	24	9
Both separately and thematically	50	51

N=253 for KS1

N=256 for KS2

Different approaches to teaching religious education in the primary school have encouraged thematic teaching (for example, teaching festivals across several traditions) or approaching the different faith traditions separately. The data suggest that the majority of schools, both at Key Stage 1 (50%) and Key Stage 2 (51%) use a blend of these two methods. Good curriculum resources are needed, therefore, capable of addressing both approaches.

5.2.3 The aims of religious education

Table 1.4 - The aims of RE rated 'very important': all primary schools

	very important %
Understand the influence of religion in society	32
Think critically about religion	33
Reflect on ultimate questions	44
Develop a positive attitude toward religion	63
Promote community cohesion	54
Combat religious discrimination	59
Learn about a specific religion	33
Learn from a specific religion	38
Learn about the religions of the world	27
Learn from the religions of the world	30
Help develop good citizens	64
Promote good personal values	72
Promote spiritual development	66
Promote good social values	66
Promote moral living	65

N=270

They ways in which teachers use curriculum resources are related to what they wish to achieve by using such resources. This section on the aims of religious education was included in order to gain insight into what is in the mind of teachers when they are teaching the subject. The percentage responses suggest that there are three main groups of aims in the teachers' minds, representing high priorities, medium priorities, and low priorities.

The high priorities in teaching religious education in the primary school are represented by the following range of aims: promoting good personal values (72%), promoting good social values (66%), promoting moral living (65%), promoting spiritual development (66%), and helping develop good citizens (64%).

The low priorities in teaching religious education in the primary school are represented by the following range of aims: learning about the religions of the world (27%), learning from the religions of the world (30%), understanding the influence of religion in society (32%), thinking critically about religion (33%), learning about a specific religion (33%), and learning from a specific religion (38%),

The medium priorities in teaching religious education in the primary school are represented by the following range of aims: reflecting on ultimate questions (44%), promoting community cohesion (54%), combating religious discrimination (59%), and developing a positive attitude toward religion (63%).

Comparison between maintained and independent schools identified two differences. Independent schools gave more emphasis to the aims 'reflect on ultimate questions' (56% compared with 40%) and 'think critically about religion' (47% compared with 28%). Comparison between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character identified five differences. Schools with a religious character were more likely to emphasise the aims 'think critically about religion' (36% compared with 19%), 'reflect on ultimate questions' (48% compared with 31%), 'develop a positive attitude toward religion (66% compared with 50%), 'learn about a specific religion' (37% compared with 16%), and 'promote spiritual development (71% compared with 44%). Comparison between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character identified six differences. Maintained schools with a religious character were more likely to emphasise the aims 'think critically about religion' (32% compared with 17%), 'reflect on ultimate questions (44% compared with 28%), 'develop a positive attitude toward religion' (65% compared with 49%), 'learn about a specific religion' (39% compared with 13%), 'learn from a specific religion' (42% compared with 24%), and 'promote spiritual development' (72% compared with 45%).

5.2.4 Criteria for choosing materials

Table 1.5 - Criteria for choosing materials rated 'very important': all primary schools

_____

	very important %
Price	30
Recommendation from a religious leader	9
Recommendation from a subject adviser	17
Recommendation from another teacher	20
Recommendation from a CPD programme	9
Reviews in professional journals	3
Reviews on the web	2
Promotional materials from publishers	3
Availability for loan from library/resource centre	12
Recommendation in your school's RE syllabus	27
Recommendation from SACREs	13
Your own knowledge of specific religions and beliefs	22
Your own knowledge of teaching religious education	27

_____

N=264

A key aim of the present project was to establish the criteria teachers use for choosing materials for teaching religious education. Table 1.5 demonstrates that there are five factors that come to the top of the list. These are price (30%), recommendations in the school's Religious Education syllabus (27%), personal knowledge of teaching religious education (27%), personal knowledge of specific religious beliefs (22%) and recommendations from other teachers (20%).

The second level factors include: recommendations from a subject adviser (17%), recommendations from SACREs (13%), availability for loan from libraries or resource centres (12%), recommendation from a religious leader (9%), and recommendation from a CPD programme (9%).

Very little impact on choosing materials is made by reviews on the web (2%), promotional material from publishers (3%), and reviews in professional journals (3%),

By way of summary, the three main factors determining the selection of material seems to be the teacher's own professional judgement, recommendations in the syllabus used in the school, and price. These findings suggest that the ways to influence the quality of material used are through the continuing professional development of teachers and through ensuring that good materials are affordable.

Comparison between maintained and independent schools identified four differences.

Maintained schools were more likely to identify the importance of recommendation from a subject advisor (21% compared with 6%), recommendation from another teacher (23% compared with 12%), and recommendation from a CPD programme (10% compared with 3%). Independent schools were more likely to identify the importance of price (39% compared with 26%). Comparison between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character identified one difference. Schools with a religious character were more likely to identify the importance of recommendation from a religious leader (11% compared with 2%). Comparison between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character identified the same finding.

5.2.5 Religious education syllabus

Table 1.6 - Religious education syllabus followed: all primary schools

_____

	yes %
Locally agreed syllabus	52
National church syllabus	10
Diocesan syllabus or guidelines	29
Other	19
None	6

_____

N=261

Local authorities continue to have a legal obligation to provide the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education and to monitor the use of that syllabus through their Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE). The figures reported in Table 1.6 emphasise the importance of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in shaping provision for Religious Education. Local religious education advisors have historically played an important role in advising local authorities on the development of and monitoring of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. To ensure professionalism in this sphere the advisory service is worth supporting.

Table 1.7 - Syllabus rated as 'very useful' for: all primary schools

	very useful
	%
Establishing the aims of the lesson	45
Planning lessons	38
Identifying resources	25

N=267

Table 1.7 makes it clear that the religious education syllabus plays an important role beyond recommending resource. Thus, 45% of teachers rated the role of the RE Syllabus in establishing the aims of the lessons as 'very useful' (using a five point-scale) and 38% rated the role of the RE Syllabus as 'very useful' in planning the lessons.

5.2.6 Sources for resources

Table 1.8 - Sources for resources rated 'very useful': all primary schools

	very useful
	%
Local religious groups	13
UK publishers	16
Non-UK publishers	3
UK websites	21
Non-UK websites	21

N=261

The survey makes it clear that the internet is of increasing importance in resourcing religious education in the primary school. Moreover, the internet is not guarded by national boundaries.

Using a five-point scale to rate the usefulness of different kinds of resources, 21% employed the highest rating of 'very useful' for UK websites and 21% employed that same rating for non-UK websites. By way of comparison that rating was given by 16% to UK publishers, by 13% to local religious groups, and 3% to non-UK publishers. The World Wide Web can be seen both as a blessing for religious education and as a potential danger. The problem is simply that of testing the accuracy of information that is so readily accessible.

Comparison between maintained and independent schools identified three differences. Independent schools gave greater emphasis to UK publishers (24% compared with 13%), to non-UK publishers (8% compared with 2%) and to UK websites (29% compared with 18%). No differences emerged between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character. No differences emerged between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character.

5.2.7 Type of resources

Table 1.9 - Types of resources rated as 'very useful': all primary schools

	very useful %
Websites	28
Books	31
DVDs/videos	34
Talks by representatives of faith communities	36

N=267

Table 1.9 provides greater contextualisation to the role of websites in resourcing religious education in the primary school. In fact there seems little differentiation in the usefulness that teachers in a primary school now attribute to websites, books, and DVDs or videos. Using the five-point scale, the highest rating of 'very useful' is given by 28% of the teachers to websites, by 31% to books, and by 34% to DVDs or videos. The highest rated resource of all, however, remains talks by representatives of faith communities (36%).

Comparison between maintained and independent schools identified one difference. Independent schools gave greater emphasis to books (46% compared with 26%). No differences emerged between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character (including amongst maintained schools).

5.2.8 Annual funding allocation for RE resources

Table 1.5 made it clear that within the primary sector price functioned as a major criterion in the selection of materials for teaching religious education. The information presented in

Table 1.10 on annual funding allocation for RE resources helps to emphasise the difficulties that many schools may face in purchasing adequate resources for religious education. As many as 15% of the subject leaders did not specify their funding allocation; 39% of the subject leaders said that they were allocated less than £300 for RE resources; 16% said that they were allocated between £301 and £500; 8% said that they were allocated between £501 and £800; 7% said that they were allocated between £801 and £1,000; and 15% said that they were allocated over £1,000.

Comparison between maintained and independent schools demonstrated a higher level of funding within the independent sector. Thus 32% of independent schools allocated more than £1000, compared with 8% of the maintained schools. No significant differences emerged, however, between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character or between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character.

Table 1.10 - Annual funding allocation for RE resources: all primary schools

_____

	%
Up to £100	13
£101-£200	16
£201-£300	10
£301-£400	3
£401-£500	13
£501-£600	3
£601-£700	2
£701-£800	3
£801-£900	0
£901-£1,000	7
1,000 or more	15
Not specified	15

_____

N=273

5.2.9 Background characteristics of the subject leaders

The personal profile of the subject leaders for religious education may offer important clues about how they see the subject, given the evidence of earlier research that views of religious educators are related to the age of the teacher, the generation in which they undertook their initial training, their qualification level in religious education, and their record of continuing professional development within the field (see Francis, Astley, Wilcox, and Burton, 1999).

Table 1.11 - Qualifications held by RE subject leaders: all primary schools

_____

	yes %
PGCE in RE	26
BA (QTS) in religion or RE	6
BA / BEd etc in religion or RE	10
Other teaching qualification in RE	16
MA / MEd in religion	9
Doctorate in religion	3
Professional qualification in religion	6
No qualification	29

_____

N=265

According to Table 1.11 the majority of subject leaders for religious education in the primary school hold some qualification in the field (71%). Nonetheless, this leaves over a quarter of subject leaders who have no professional qualification to equip them for the role. Enhancing the professionalism of religious education in the primary school needs to give serious attention to this issue.

Comparison between maintained and independent schools identified four differences. In the independent sector higher proportions of subject leaders held BA/BEd etc in religion or RE (17% compared with 7%), MA/ MEd in religion (18% compared with 5%), doctorate in religion (7% compared with 2%), or professional qualification in religion (14% compared with 3%). Comparison between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character identified two differences. In schools with a religious character higher proportions of subject leaders held 'other teaching qualification in RE' (20% compared with 0%). This pattern also existed *within* maintained schools with a religious character. In schools (maintained and independent) without a religious character higher proportion of subject leaders held PGCE in RE (38% compared with 23%).

Table 1.12 - Hours of CPD in RE during past 12 months: all primary schools

	%
None	36
1-9 hours	47
10-19 hours	11
20 hours or more	6

N=259

Table 1.12 demonstrates that a third of the subject leaders (36%) had undertaken no continuing professional development during the past twelve months within the field of religious education. Of the remainder, 47% had undertaken between one and nine hours CPD in the field, while 17% had undertaken ten or more hours. Ten or more hours of CPD may be taken as a significant commitment to the field of religious education.

The amount of time given to CPD varied according to type of school. While 31% of subject leaders in maintained schools undertook no CPD in RE during the past 12 months, the proportion rose to 56% of those in independent schools. While 34% of subject leaders in schools with a religious character undertook no CPD in RE during the past 12 months, the proportion rose to 53% of those in schools without a religious character. This pattern of lower take up of CPD in schools without a religious character was also found *within* maintained schools.

Table 1.13 - RE subject leaders who provide CPD: all primary schools

	%
Yes	70
No	30

N=249

The Survey

It is, nonetheless, according to Table 1.13 many of these subject leaders who are providing continuing professional development for their colleagues in the primary school.

Table 1.14 - Religious affiliation of RE subject leaders: all primary schools

	%
None	10
Buddhist	0
Christian	85
Hindu	>1
Jewish	>1
Muslim	2
Sikh	1
Other	1

N=244

Table 1.15 - Public worship attendance of RE subject leaders: all primary schools

	%
Never	9
Once a year	9
Six times a year	14
Monthly	10
Weekly	59

N=243

Finally Tables 1.14 and 1.15 examine the religious affiliation and religious attendance of the primary school subject leaders for religious education. The religious attendance figure make it clear that as a group these people are much more religiously active than the population as a whole, with two-thirds practising at least monthly (69%).

Just 10% of the subject leaders claim no religious affiliation. The majority (85%) describe themselves as Christian, with a few affiliated with other faith groups.

These data confirm the close association between responsibility for religious education as subject leader in the primary school and personal faith commitment.

5.3 Secondary Schools

A total of 301 secondary schools participated in the survey. The table below shows the categories of schools that responded and their relative response rates.

Table 2.0 - Number of secondary schools participating in the survey by school type and frequency of response by school type

	N	%
Community School	90	30
Voluntary Controlled Church of England School	9	3
Voluntary Aided Church of England School	33	11
Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic School	40	13
Academy School	14	5
Independent Christian School	5	2
Independent Non-denominational School	8	3
Independent Church of England School	25	8
Independent Roman Catholic School	12	4
Independent Christian School	22	7
Independent Muslim School	3	1
Type unknown[36]	40	13
Total	301	100

In order to clarify the following presentation of data the anonymised responses were removed to enable comparison between school types. The tables in the next section present the data from the resulting overall sample of 261 identifiable secondary schools. Three sets of comparison were then conducted (as specified by the DCSF) to compared 1) maintained schools and independent schools; 2) all schools with a religious character and all schools without a religious character; 3) maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character. The narrative following the relevant tables (as specified by the DCSF) draws attention to the occasions where these three comparisons highlighted statistically *significant* differences according to school type.

5.3.1 The six religious traditions

Table 2.1 - Religions included in classroom teaching: all secondary schools

	KS3 %	KS4 %
Buddhism	68	14
Christianity	95	96
Hinduism	70	16
Islam	91	52
Judaism	84	17
Sikhism	60	7
Other	12	5
N=	258	257

---

[36] In these cases the teachers had not returned the Edubase identifier

Table 2.1 demonstrates that at Key Stage 3 all six main faith traditions are well established. The large majority of secondary schools cover at Key Stage 3 Christianity (95%), Islam (91%), and Judaism (84%). Hinduism is covered by 70% of the schools, Buddhism by 68%, and Sikhism by 60%. Around one in ten secondary schools cover other faith traditions at Key Stage 3 (12%). The coverage of the six main faiths is much less thorough at Key Stage 4. Christianity is covered by most schools (96%), but Islam was included by 52% of the schools, Judaism by 17%, Hinduism by 16%, Buddhism by 14%, Sikhism by 7%, and other faiths by 5%.

At Key Stage 3 the main difference between type of school concerned the teaching of Buddhism. While Buddhism was included in 71% of maintained schools, the proportion fell to 59% in independent schools. While Buddhism was included in 84% of schools without a religious character, the proportion fell to 56% in schools with a religious character. The same pattern was found *within* maintained schools with and without a religious character. There were no other differences at Key Stage 3 between maintained and independent schools. There were two further differences at Key Stage 3 between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character. Schools with a religious character gave less attention to Hinduism (65% compared with 76%) and less attention to Sikhism (49% compared with 74%). Three differences emerged between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character. Maintained schools with a religious character gave less attention to Sikhism (50% compared with 73%), but more attention to Islam (98% compared with 89%) and more attention to Judaism (92% compared with 79%).

At Key Stage 4 three differences emerged between maintained and independent schools. Maintained schools gave more attention to Christianity (99% compared with 88%), but less attention to Hinduism (12% compared with 25%) and less attention to Sikhism (4% compared with 14%) At Key Stage 4 two differences emerged between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character. Schools with a religious character gave slightly less attention to Christianity (93% compared with 99%), and less attention to Islam (47% compared with 59%). At Key Stage 4 two differences emerged between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character. Maintained schools with a religious character gave less attention to Islam (44% compared with 58%) and less attention to Judaism (9% compared with 21%).

Table 2.2 - Within the past year faith communities contributed to RE: all secondary schools

_____

	yes %
Buddhism	14
Christianity	70
Hinduism	13
Islam	30
Judaism	18
Sikhism	11
Other	6

_____

N=258

Table 2.2 demonstrates the extent to which representatives from the main faith communities have contributed to religious education classroom teaching in secondary schools, by giving a talk, for example. This indicates considerable involvement across the faith traditions, with 11% of secondary schools having welcomed contributions from the Sikh tradition, 13% from the Hindu tradition, 14% from the Buddhist tradition, 18% from the Jewish tradition, 30% from the Muslim tradition, 70% from the Christian tradition, and 6% from other faith traditions. These figures indicate that those who can speak about the faith traditions from the inside appear to be an important 'resource' for religious education in the secondary school.

No differences emerged in the levels of contribution made by representatives from the faith communities between maintained and independent schools. Comparison between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character identified two differences. Schools with a religious character were more likely to receive contributions from the Christian community (77% compared with 60%) and from the Islamic community (35% compared with 23%). These same two differences emerged from comparison between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character. Maintained schools with a religious character were more likely to receive contributions from the Christian community (81% compared with 62%) and from the Islamic community (37% compared with 24%).

5.3.2 Ways of teaching

Table 2.3 - Ways of teaching: all secondary schools

	KS3 %	KS4 %
Separately (e.g. one religion at a time)	34	32
Thematically, (e.g. festivals across several religions)	17	44
Both separately and thematically	49	24
N	255	220

Table 2.3 confirms the considerable shift in emphasis in the way in which religious education is taught between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. While the thematic approach was the main method adopted by just 17% of schools at Key Stage 3, it becomes the main method adopted by 44% of schools at Key Stage 4. This shift in methodology may reflect the direction of the syllabus being followed.

The Survey

5.3.3 The aims of religious education

Table 2.4 - The aims of RE rated 'very important': all secondary schools

_____

	very important %
Understand the influence of religion in society	55
Think critically about religion	67
Reflect on ultimate questions	77
Develop a positive attitude toward religio	62
Promote community cohesion	47
Combat religious discrimination	62
Learn about a specific religion	28
Learn from a specific religion	32
Learn about the religions of the world	20
Learn from the religions of the world	24
Help develop good citizens	43
Promote good personal values	56
Promote spiritual development	52
Promote good social values	47
Promote moral living	48

_____

N=260

The prioritisation of the aims of religious education in the secondary school follows quite a different pattern from that revealed in the primary school (see Table 1.4). Once again, however, the percentage responses suggest that there are three main groups of aims in the teachers' minds, representing high priorities, medium priorities, and low priorities.

The high priorities in teaching religious education in the secondary school are represented by the following range of aims: reflecting on ultimate questions (77%), thinking critically about religion (67%), combating religious discrimination (62%), and developing a positive attitude toward religion (62%).

The low priorities in teaching religious education in the secondary school are represented by the following range of aims: learning about the religions of the world (24%), learning about a specific religion (28%), and learning from a specific religion (32%).

The medium priorities in teaching religious education in the secondary school are represented by the following range of aims: helping develop good citizens (44%), promoting community cohesion (47%), promoting good social values (47%), promoting moral living (48%), promoting spiritual development (52%), and promoting good personal values (56%).

These data suggest that religious education in the secondary school is conceived differently from religious education in the primary school but that there remains plenty of scope for further professional reflection and development.

The Survey

Comparison between maintained and independent schools identified nine differences. Maintained schools gave more emphasis to the following nine aims:

- reflect on ultimate questions (81% compared with 69%)

- develop a positive attitude toward religion (66% compared with 52%),

- promote community cohesion (55% compared with 26%),

- combat religious discrimination (68% compared with 49%)

- learn from the religions of the world (29% compared with 12%),

- help develop good citizens (48% compared with 25%)

- promote good personal values (62% compared with 41%),

- promote good social values (52% compared with 35%)

- and promote moral living (52% compared with 37%).

Comparison between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character identified seven differences. Schools with a religious character gave more emphasis to the following four aims: think critically about religion (72% compared with 61%), reflect on ultimate questions (83% compared with 70%), learn about a specific religion (38% compared with 14%), and learn from a specific religion (42% compared with 20%). On the other hand, schools with a religious character gave less emphasis to the following three aims: promote community cohesion (41% compared with 55%), combat religious discrimination (53% compared with 75%), and help develop good citizens (34% compared with 51%).

5.3.4 Criteria for choosing materials

Table 2.5 - Criteria for choosing materials rated 'very important': all secondary schools

	very important %
Price	30
Recommendation from a religious leader	5
Recommendation from a subject adviser	8
Recommendation from another teacher	19
Recommendation from a CPD programme	3
Reviews in professional journals	5
Reviews on the web	2
Promotional materials from publishers	3
Availability for loan from library / resource centre	2
Recommendation in your school's RE syllabus	9
Recommendation from SACREs	5
Your own knowledge of specific religions and beliefs	30
Your own knowledge of teaching religious education	43
Recommendation by the exam board	40

N=258

The Survey

A key aim of the present project was to establish the criteria teachers use for choosing materials for religious education. Table 2.5 demonstrates that there are two leading criteria for subject leaders in the secondary school. These are their own knowledge of teaching religious education (reported by 43%), and the recommendations made by the exam board (reported by 40%).

The next two most important criteria are the teachers' own knowledge of specific religious beliefs (reported by 30%) and the price (reported by 30%). Less important than their own personal judgement, but nonetheless significant are recommendations from another teacher (reported by 19%).

In comparison with the criteria listed above, the other criteria included in the survey received relatively low endorsement: recommendation in your school's RE syllabus (reported by 9%), recommendation from a subject adviser (reported by 8%), recommendation from a religious leader (reported by 5%), reviews in professional journals (reported by 5%), recommendation from a continuing professional development programme (reported by 3%), promotional materials from publishers (reported by 3%), availability for loan from libraries or resource centres (reported by 2%), and reviews on the web (reported by 2%).

A key finding from these data concerns the influence of the exam boards.

Comparison between maintained and independent schools identified only one difference. Price was of greater concern within the maintained sector (34% compared with 16%). Comparison between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character identified no differences. Comparison between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character identified two differences. Recommendations from SACREs were more important to schools without a religious character (8% compared with 1%). Recommendation by an exam board were more important to schools without a religious character (46% compared with 32%).

5.3.5 Religious education syllabus

Table 2.6: Religious education syllabus followed: all secondary schools

	yes %
Locally agreed syllabus	49
National church syllabus	7
Diocesan syllabus or guidelines	25
Other	25
None	10

N=260

Although recommendation in the school's religious education syllabus was relatively uninfluential among the criteria for selecting resources at the secondary level, the syllabus itself remains of public and statutory significance. Table 2.6 demonstrates that several schools are using more than one syllabus and that the Locally Agreed Syllabus is important for about half of the secondary schools (49%).

Table 2.8 - Syllabus rated as 'very useful' for: all secondary schools

_____

| | very useful |
	%
Establishing the aims of the lesson	23
Planning lessons	18
Identifying resources	14

_____

N=246

Although not particularly influential in informing the selection of resources, using a five-point scale, 23% of the subject leaders rate the syllabus at the highest level of 'very useful' for establishing the aim of the lesson; 18% apply this rating for planning lessons, and 14% for identifying resources.

5.3.6 Sources of resources

Table 2.8 - Sources for resources rated 'very useful': all secondary schools

_____

| | very useful |
	%
Local religious groups	3
UK publishers	22
Non-UK publishers	1
UK websites	19
Non-UK websites	6

_____

N=254

Websites are as crucial to religious education subject leaders in the secondary school as they are to their colleagues in the primary school, but there is now much greater discrimination regarding the location of these websites. One in five secondary school subject leaders rate at the highest level on the five-point scale (very useful) UK websites (19%), but the proportion falls to one in twenty who give that rating to the non UK websites (6%).

There is a similar preference for UK-based published materials. Again one in five secondary school subject leaders rate at the highest level on the five-point scale (very useful) to UK publishers (22%), but the proportion falls to very few who give that rating to non UK publishers (1%).

While local religious groups were rated 'very useful' by 13% of primary school subject leaders the proportion falls to 3% among secondary school subject leaders.

Comparison between maintained and independent schools identified no differences. Comparison between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character identified one difference. Schools with a religious character gave more emphasis to

UK publishers (28% compared with 15%). Comparison between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character indentified no differences.

5.3.7 Types of resources

Table 2.9 - Types of resources rated as 'very useful': all secondary schools

	very useful %
Websites	29
Books	36
DVDs/videos	42
Talks by representatives of faith communities	22

N=254

Some interesting shifts take place in the types of resources commended in the primary sector and in the secondary sector. Both groups rate websites and books in similar ways. Websites are rated as 'very useful' by 28% in the primary sector and by 29% in the secondary sector. Books are rated as 'very useful' by 31% in the primary sector and by 36% in the secondary sector. DVDs and videos, however, are rated more highly in the secondary sector (42%) than in the primary sector (34%). On the other hand, talks by representatives of faith communities are rated less highly in the secondary sector (22%) than in the primary sector (36%).

Comparison between maintained and independent schools identified one difference. Independent schools gave greater emphasis to books (52% compared with 30%). Comparison between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character also identified one difference. Schools with a religious character gave greater emphasis to books (41% compared with 30%). No difference emerged between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character.

5.3.8 Annual funding allocation for RE resources

Table 2.5 made it clear that, just as within the primary sector, within the secondary sector price functioned as a major criterion in the selection of materials for teaching religious education. In both sectors this was rated as very important by 30% of the subject leaders. The information presented in Table 2.10 on annual funding allocation for RE resources emphasises that 12% of secondary schools did not specify their annual funding allocation, and a further 20% said that the allocation did not exceed £1000; 25% said that the allocation was between £1000 and £2000, 18% between £2001 and £3000, 10% between £3001 and £4000, 10% between £4000 and £6000, and for 5% the allocation as over £6000.

No difference emerged in the funding allocation for RE resources between maintained schools and independent schools, or between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character. Comparison between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character indicated more generous funding allocation for RE resources within those maintained schools with a religious character. For example, while 37% of maintained schools without a religious character had a

funding allocation up to £1501, the proportion fell to 13% among maintained schools with a religious character. At the other end of the scale 38% of maintained schools with a religious character had a funding allocation over £3000, compared with 17% of maintained schools without a religious character.

Table 2.10 - Funding allocation for RE resources: all secondary schools

	%
Up to £500	8
£501 to £1000	12
£1001 to £1500	10
£1501 to £2000	15
£2001 to £2500	8
£2501 to £3000	10
£3001 to £4000	10
£4001 to £6000	10
£6,000 or more	5
Not specified	12

N=260

5.3.9 Background characteristics of the subject leaders

Table 2.11 - Sex of RE subject leaders: all secondary schools

| | sex |
	%
male	39
female	61

N=254

Table 2.12 - Age of RE subject leaders: all secondary schools

| | age |
	%
20-29	11
30-39	35
40-49	22
50-59	29
60 plus	3

N=253

The personal profile of subject leaders in the secondary sector (Tables 2.11 and 2.12) is significantly different from the profile of subject leaders in the primary sector. In both sectors there are more women than men, but the gap is wider in the primary sector. In the primary sector, 77% of the subject leaders are female, compared with 61% in the secondary sector. In the secondary sector the subject leaders are also younger than in the primary sector. In the primary sector 27% of the subject leaders are under the age of forty, but the proportion rises to 46% in the secondary sector.

Comparison between the maintained and independent schools revealed that there was a higher proportion of men engaged as subject leaders in the independent sector (51%) compared with the maintained sector (35%). Comparison between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character revealed a higher proportion of men engaged as subject leaders in schools with a religious character (45% compared with 32%). In this respect, however, there were no significant differences between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character.

The Survey

Table 2.13 - Experience of RE subject leaders: all secondary schools

_____

	years %
Under 6 years	14
6-10 years	23
11-15 years	22
16-20 years	9
21 year or more	32

_____

N=255

Reflecting the differences in the age profile of the subject leaders in the two sectors, so also they have different lengths of experience in teaching (Table 2.13): 59% of the subject leaders in the secondary sector have less than 16 years experience, compared with 41% in the primary sector.

Table 2.14 - Other posts of responsibility held by RE subject leaders: all secondary schools

_____

	yes %
Headteacher	3
Deputy headteacher	3
Other subject areas	18
Other areas	33
None	43

_____

N=253

Table 2.14 demonstrates that in the secondary sector it is much more common than in the primary sector for subject leaders to carry their designated responsibilities without other responsibilities (43% compared with 24%).

Table 2.15 - Qualifications held by RE subject leaders: all secondary schools

_____

	yes %
PGCE in RE	18
BA (QTS) in religion or RE	22
BA / BEd etc in religion or RE	37
Other teaching qualification in RE	15
MA / MEd in religion	40
Doctorate in religion	11
Professional qualification in religion	21
No qualification	11

_____

N=254

Table 2.15 makes it clear that subject leaders for religious education in the secondary sector carry quite a wide range of educational background, On the one hand, 40% hold a masters degree in religion or religious education, 11% a doctoral qualification, and 21% a professional qualification (such as ordination). On the other hand, even at the secondary level 11% of the subject leaders hold no qualification in religion or religious education (compared with 29% at the primary level). The future of good religious education still requires the further enhancement of qualifications in this sphere. Post-qualification M-level provision in religious education could be offered as part of the broader professional development agenda.

Comparison between maintained and independent schools identified just one difference. In the independent sector a higher proportion of subject leaders held professional qualifications in religion (36% compared with 14%). Comparison between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character identified three differences. In schools with a religious character a higher proportion of subject leaders held a professional qualification in religion (29% compared with 10%). On the other hand in schools without a religious character a higher proportion of subject leaders held PGCE in RE (28% compared with 10%) and a higher proportion of subject leaders held no qualification in the field (16% compared with 7%). Comparison between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character identified four differences. In maintained schools with a religious character higher proportions of subject leaders held bachelor qualifications in religion or RE (44% compared with 30%), master qualifications in religion (55% compared with 34%), and professional qualification in religion (21% compared with 10%). On the other hand, in schools without a religious character a higher proportion of subject leaders held PGCE in RE (29% compared with 4%).

Table 2.16 - Hours of CPD in RE during past 12 months: all secondary schools

_____

	%
None	55
1-9 hours	30
10-19 hours	8
20 hours or more	7

_____

N=251

Table 2.16 reveals that over half of the subject leaders in the secondary sector undertook no continuing professional development in religious education during the past 12 months (55%) and that for a further 30% their continuing professional development did not exceed nine hours in the course of the year. This left 15% of the subject leaders who had undertaken ten or more hours (compared with 17% in the primary sector). Ten or more hours of CPD may be taken as a significant commitment to the field of religious education.

The amount of time given to CPD did not vary between maintained schools and independent schools, or between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character. There were, however, differences between maintained schools with a religious character and maintained schools without a religious character. While 46% of subject leaders in maintained schools without a religious character had undertaken no CPD during the past 12 months, the proportion rose to 62% among those in maintained schools with a religious character.

The Survey

Table 2.17 - RE subject leaders who provide CPD: all secondary schools

_____

	%
Yes	73
No	27

_____

N=244

Table 2.17 reveals that considerably more of the subject leaders were responsible for providing continuing professional development to others (73%) than undertook continuing professional development themselves (48%).

Table 2.18 - Religious affiliation of RE subject leaders: all secondary schools

_____

	%
None	16
Buddhist	0
Christian	77
Hindu	0
Jewish	2
Muslim	3
Sikh	0
Other	2

_____

N=170

Table 2.19 - Public worship of RE subject leaders: all secondary schools

_____

	%
Never	15
Once a year	9
Six times a year	9
Monthly	9
Weekly	58

_____

N=241

Finally Table 2.17 and 2.18 examine the religious affiliation and religious attendance of the secondary school subject leaders for religious education. The religious attendance figures are much higher than the national average and close to those recorded by the subject leaders in the primary sector. In the secondary sector 58% attended weekly and a further 9% attended monthly. Just 15% never attended.

Just 16% of the secondary school subject leaders claim no religious affiliation. The majority describe themselves as Christian, with a few affiliated with other faith traditions.

These data confirm the close association between responsibility for religious education as subject leader in the secondary sector and personal faith commitment.

5.4 Summary

Among the many detailed findings, the survey highlighted some key differences between maintained schools and independent schools. For example:

- In the primary sector, price was a more important factor in determining the choice of RE materials in independent schools than in maintained schools.

- In the primary sector, UK websites were rated more highly for providing RE resources in independent schools than in maintained schools.

- In the secondary sector, maintained schools rated more highly than independent schools the aim of RE 'to promote community cohesion'.

- In the secondary sector, a higher proportion of RE subject leaders held professional qualifications in religion (e.g. ordination) in independent schools than in maintained schools.

The survey also highlighted some key differences between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious character. For example:

- In the primary sector, schools with a religious character rated more highly than schools without a religious character the aim of RE 'to develop a positive attitude toward religion'.

- In the primary sector, schools with a religious character rated more highly than schools without a religious character the aim of RE 'to promote spiritual development'.

- In the secondary sector, a higher proportion of RE subject leaders held no academic qualifications in the subject in schools without a religious character than in schools with a religious character.

- In the secondary sector, schools with a religious character gave less emphasis than schools without a religious character to the aim of RE 'to promote community cohesion'.

6.   Conclusions

6.1   Research questions

There were 5 key questions the study originally sought to answer. Conclusions from findings from all three strands have been organised under headings related to these questions.

6.1.1 Materials available to schools[37]

(a) Books and printed materials

The different ways in which religious education books are used in the various Key Stages affects the type of books available. When looking at the balance and availability of books across the Key Stages, certain trends become apparent. The case studies confirmed that primary religious education books are often used by the teacher and shared with the class in the manner of storytelling. A number of books containing religious stories are produced. Some of these story books, and others providing information about the lives of members of faith communities, come in a large format suitable for sharing with a whole class. Texts designed for primary school children may also be used for the children's independent browsing, while secondary texts are more likely to be used in textbook fashion or to support structured homework tasks and examination revision. Syllabuses and examination courses adopt different approaches to the study of religions: systematic with each religion taught distinctly, and thematic when learning about a number of religions is brought together around a theme.

- The audit (Hayward and Hopkins 2010) found that each of the six 'principal' religions is well provided for by the key publishers for primary schools; information books suitable for individual reading or browsing, project work and classroom research and for the school library, are plentiful.

- The value of story to religious education in primary schools is recognised by publishers who systematically address in RE lists those series which offer books of stories from the perspective of *each* religion. Stories from various cultural traditions and religions and stories relating to aspects of lived faiths today also appear in other collections of reading books and general story collections. Collections and retellings of individual Bible stories are numerous, as are stories which take the celebration of Christmas or its biblical narratives as their starting point.

- In addition there are series which provide a complete package for RE across the primary years; these may offer both teacher and pupil resources and include printed pictures and other media.

- Books for KS3 *and* KS4 are, in varying degree, shaped by factors relating to RE as currently understood for their respective Key Stage. Recent KS3 books, for example, offer programmes in relation to both content and learning influenced by the National Framework; books for KS4 and post-16 students related closely to the demands of examination specifications - frequently with a sharp focus on information.

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[37] Research question 1: What materials (books, ICT resources and other materials) are available to maintained and independent schools for teaching about and learning from world religions?

Conclusions

- Whilst opportunities to study the principal religions are still offered at examination level, most publications relate to popular options in the areas of philosophy of religion and ethics, and social issues. Religious education resources reflect this emphasis. There are few recent resources to support students and teachers who wish to follow options permitting the study of a particular religion in depth (with the exception of Christianity).

- A feature of many of the books at KS4 is the involvement of examiners in the writing of GCSE materials; publishers frequently use this as a selling point. The idea of a 'package' which provides a complete coverage of a particular syllabus is a further feature of the newer and of forthcoming materials. In some cases books were expressly endorsed by, and written specifically for examination syndicates. Reviewers indicated disadvantages as well as advantages of examiners being the principal authors of texts for, while the focus on what was needed for examinations might help students in their exam preparation, it sometimes offered a limited or distorted picture of the religions being studied.

- Ths Audit (Hayward and Hopkins 2010) shows that post-16 available resources are mainly those associated with the new or revised GCE AS and A2 specifications which came on stream for teaching in September 2008. In two cases there is a formal partnership between an examination boards and publisher.

- Publishers approach religions in a variety of ways across the Key Stages: they offer an introduction or overview of a religion (sometimes through the eyes of a child), bring each religion's perspective to a common theme or topic, or provide one book on a particular topic drawing on information about several religions in exploring its theme.

- One examination board publishes resources for students and teachers in its own right, whilst a range of other publishers match their publications to various specifications *across* the examination boards. The trend towards packages providing help for students and support to teachers in delivering the chosen options is evident in the audit of materials.

(b) Web-based and other electronic resources

Case studies and the survey showed how electronic resources are becoming increasingly popular in religious education, particularly with the introduction of interactive whiteboards into the classroom and the ready availability of all kinds of free video clips online. This gives teachers much greater freedom in their choice of materials, the majority of which have not been produced specifically for RE purposes. They allow for a 'mix-and-match' approach to planning lessons and units of work.

- There are many different types of resource on-line. These range from fully written materials to be found in Agreed Syllabus guidance, in commercially available websites and in downloads from resource support sites, to 'gobbets' of materials in video, audio, textual, animated and image format that teachers are crafting into lesson materials or providing as resource banks for students to use.

- e-resources can be divided into five approximate categories:

    (i) Those produced by commercial companies, or as attachments to more traditional print materials

    (ii) Those produced by the faith communities to promote understanding of their own traditions or faiths, or to educate those of faiths other than their own

Conclusions

> (iii) Those produced by government or quango support agencies, local authority officers, teacher education organisations or Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs)
>
> (iv) Those produced by teachers, student teachers, advisers or consultants to support teaching and learning in RE.
>
> (v) Those produced by individuals who may or may not have a faith tradition.

- On-line materials enable access to authentic sources, which can be used in the classroom; these may be people, sacred texts or (images of) artefacts.

- There are a number of projects which are digitising source materials from around the world (e.g. the British Library) and which make available enormous assets to teachers of RE and to students in the classroom. The collections of major museums, art galleries and libraries are all in the process of digitisation, giving unprecedented access to information and materials.

- As well as websites there are 'traditional' e-resources of film, video and DVD. These fall into two categories: those with an overt religious, ethical, moral or philosophical themes and those which are implicit and need to be drawn out by the teacher.

- Whilst there are a vast number of resources on-line, there are a limited number of open-access sites that are useful to teachers of religious education. Although the internet allows teachers in England to access a vast number of resources, their pedagogical skills are needed to turn web resources into useful and productive teaching and learning tools.

6.1.2 Materials used by schools in practice[38]

Religious education books come in a variety of guises to suit different teaching approaches in primary and secondary education, in 'faith' and 'non faith' schools, and different ways of organising the content of religious education for learning.

- In the case study primary schools, books were used by the teacher for reading to the class, for displays about the current religious education topic and for the children's own browsing in the class library.

- In the secondary schools, books were sometimes used as class textbooks or for students to consolidate classroom learning in their own time.

- Books were used as teacher resources in all phases and as sources of pictures and text for teacher-generated materials.

- In the case study schools, teachers were more likely to acquire individual books as resources rather than sets of books.

- At some of the case study 'faith' schools, independent and maintained, students were encouraged to engage at a higher level with the interpretation of religious texts, including being introduced to traditions of commentary in the Jewish and Islamic primary schools. Status as a church secondary school did not necessarily mean that there was a Biblical emphasis in religious education.

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[38] Research question 2: What materials are schools using in practice to develop an understanding of world religions?

Conclusions

- Because of a shortage of suitable resources published in the UK, Islamic schools in the case studies also make use of materials published abroad, in particular in the USA and also South Africa, to support Islamic learning. Despite this teachers commented that they found these to be of limited use in the UK educational context because they do not relate to the national curriculum and national curriculum levels.

Many of the materials used in class were generated by the teachers from the wide range and variety of resources (including online resources) available whether or not they had been designed for RE purposes. This trend means that the quality of the materials, and of the students' learning through them, is dependent on teacher knowledge, skill and commitment.

- Case studies showed that much material used in religious education classes was generated by the teachers. They put a considerable amount of thought and work into tailoring them to the learning styles, interest or assessment requirements of their pupils. Where teacher expertise is high, teachers are able to compensate for any inadequacies in the published resources available and make valuable contributions to learning. Where there is less expertise, there is more potential for inaccuracies in the presentations of the religions.

- Both the survey and the case studies show that teachers are drawing heavily on web resources, and on DVDs from the UK and elsewhere. The teachers make creative use of ICT in their lessons using a large amount of material not specifically produced for religious education purposes. They use these to stimulate interest in religious education and to relate lessons to the wider world.

- A major way for teachers and students to find resources is through using a search engine such as Google© or Yahoo© or MSN©. Those Internet sites that appear towards the top of a search engine's list are more likely to be used then those that appear subsequently. Case studies and other data showed that some RE teachers use the specific RE search engine RE Online (www.reonline.org.uk) which offers a far smaller selection of sites. These are sites which have been certificated as being useful for teachers and/or students. Some teachers are using resource sharing sites to aid their planning and teaching of RE.

There were many examples from the case study schools and evidence from the survey of the extensive use of other first-hand resources such as visitors and artefacts, with contributions to make to learning.

- The case studies found that religious artefacts were 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 the children's responses the boundaries are sometimes blurred between 'hands-on' learning, respect for other people's sacred objects and religious devotion.

- The contribution to learning of visitors from faith communities was valued highly by teachers and pupils in the case study schools, and the survey shows a considerable involvement from representatives from across the faith traditions in religious education in schools.

Religious learning had various forms and expressions other than formal religious education in the life of the different schools. Depending on the religious character and the ethos of the school, there were opportunities for students to learn about religion and religions through experience, encounter and (particularly in faith schools) through religious nurture. These experiences complement the learning about and from religions that takes place in formal religious education through the use of targeted religious education materials.

Conclusions

- Students' learning about religion in school was not restricted to the religious education classroom but many gained experiential understanding of religion through the collective worship arrangements, through opportunities for prayer, through discussions with classmates of different religious backgrounds and through active relationships between the school and local church, 'faith' schools or other faith communities. These experiences were evident not only in 'faith' schools but in a number of other institutions in the case studies, and were most prominent at primary level.

- Case studies showed that some faith schools were able to incorporate confessional teaching of their own faith *and* multi-faith religious education into their school curriculum, sometimes taught by different teachers in different lessons. These schools differentiate between materials produced by the faith community for religious nurture and unaffiliated information books on world religions and make use of both in the different learning contexts.

6.1.3 The content of the materials used by schools and its relation to community cohesion[39]

(a) Content in relation to religious education, current school regulations and community cohesion

While materials produced for primary schools made little direct reference to current initiatives in religious education, those produced for KS3 were more cognisant of them, and those in KS4 and post-16 were designed with examinations in mind.

In the main, books about religions for KS1/2 did not refer to current initiatives in RE; the reviewer's comments drew attention to the importance of teachers being able to relate them to the purposes of the subject. Since most focused primarily on 'learning about' religion, teachers would need to consider how they might be used to foster pupils' 'learning from religion'.

- It is at KS3 that books seem most likely to reflect or deliver religious education as currently understood. Books for KS3 variously demonstrated awareness of recent initiatives in RE. Most of them successfully balanced 'learning about' (having an accurate knowledge and understanding). and 'learning from' (gaining insight through reflection and discussion), achieving this in a number of ways, and most convincingly when these twin aspects of RE were well integrated in the learning process.

- At KS4 books related primarily to examination requirements; the reviewer found that some offered opportunities for 'learning from religion' if the teacher identified and developed these, but books had yet to take advantage of the extended opportunities for this permitted by examination specifications.

Often authors of KS3 resources made conscious links between the content of religious education learning and cross curricular areas, personal and moral, social and cultural, global understanding and spiritual development. In the other Key Stages links between the materials and these areas are dependent on the religious education teacher's ability to draw out the wider implications of what is being studied. As a new requirement, community cohesion is less often explicitly addressed in the resources but learning for community cohesion can be drawn out of the existing content.

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[39] Research question 3: What is the *content/nature* of these materials used by schools and how does this relate to current school regulations, in particular the duty on maintained schools to promote community cohesion and the independent school standard to help pupils to appreciate and respect their own and other cultures?

Conclusions

- At KS1 and 2 the books did not overall make *specific* contributions to the five named areas on the template (personal and moral development; social and cultural understanding; community cohesion; global understanding; spiritual development); the books were essentially about religions and would depend on teachers' ability to draw out any wider implications.

- KS3 books were found to make a significant contribution to pupils' *personal and moral development*: in their examination, for example, of a wide range of ethical and moral issues; through philosophical approaches to such issues; in the ideals they set before pupils and through their presentation of the moral framework religions offer. *Spiritual development* was included less in content more in attention given to students' personal engagement; to more reflective activities emerging from 'learning from', to the questions and themes students' were asked to consider.

- When reviewing the materials for their contribution to social and cultural understanding, the reviewers found the KS3 books included the presentation of faiths in Britain, the relation of faith and life-style, and the contribution of faiths to community life; topics selected for study in just over half of the books reviewed were considered relevant to community cohesion; books on specific religions made fewer direct contributions in this area.

- At KS4 the books' contribution in these areas was often found to be implicit and their potential subject to teachers' drawing out of relevant material and offering students opportunities to engage with the content provided. Personal and moral development, spiritual development and community cohesion emerged as areas attended to by fewer than half of the books reviewed for KS4 and post16.

- At KS3 and KS4 issues identified as controversial within and among religions tend to be those commonly addressed in GCSE courses relating to ethical and moral issues; additionally attention was given in some to divisions within individual religions, whilst a further area related selected social and political issues.

- Community cohesion is not an issue addressed by the majority of websites. Primarily they are concerned with knowledge and information transfer. A minority of sites have built in teaching or learning methodologies. However, there are a growing number of websites on community cohesion. These are listed in the Audit (Hayward and Hopkins, 2010).

(b) Nature and quality: books

The actual quality of production of the materials is important for encouraging and enabling students to learn about a religion, and for the message it gives about the value and respect due to that religion and its followers. In the Review it was found that the materials gave mixed messages. Often the initial and overall impression they gave was positive, but they were let down in the details.

- In the review, the faith consultants and academic experts found that, in many cases, different books and series, in their approach, the comprehensiveness of their coverage, and the quality of production gave an immediately positive message about the religions being presented.

- Text emerged as an area of concern across the Key Stages. Problems included, for example: font size; density of text; long paragraphs; quantity and complexity of text; design and layout which makes text hard to follow; level of literacy demanded by texts.

Conclusions

- Visuals were commonly used as illustration of the text. Where problems emerged they tended to relate to matters of imbalance of gender, insufficient ethnic diversity, stereotyping of some religious communities (for example, in some portrayals of Jewish people), or a poor or insensitive choice of visual and / or caption. On occasions, possibly through ignorance or carelessness, the pictures, and mismatch of captions to pictures were deemed to be offensive to people of the religion being portrayed. Across the Key Stages it was clear was that visuals are rarely employed to promote pupils' learning - books fail to *use* them.

Activities in religious education books can encourage students to engage more closely with the focus of their learning, increase the level of their engagement, and therefore the depth of their understanding of the religions. In the reviewed materials students were often not given the questions or resources to support this engagement.

- Activities were not common in the primary school books reviewed, but assumed importance in secondary school textbooks. Limited and unchallenging tasks - copying, drawing, matching sentences, for example - whilst still occurring in some KS3 books, were not widespread. In many of the KS4 books reviewed, where a dominant concern of activities continued to be comprehension, there were limited opportunities for the application of knowledge and understanding.

- There was a mismatch in many of the activities in KS3 and KS4 books, between challenging questions and tasks, and a lack of information and in depth knowledge of the religions to enable students to answer or carry them out. Thus, although there was an evident interest in activities to promote thinking, the content of the books was frequently inadequate to support that intellectual exercise.

The religious education print materials showed an interest in improving knowledge of and attitudes towards different religions. However, the representations of the religions raised a number of questions about accuracy, balance and relevance and were often marred by carelessness in details, recurrent errors, and skewed portrayals of the religions.

- The books generally showed an interest in broadening young people's knowledge of religions, were generally promoting positive attitudes of respect towards those religions as well as emphasising possibilities for peaceful existence between them.

- In the case studies the teachers had a number of concerns about the representation of world religions in religious education materials including the degree of accuracy, how similarities and diversity within and between religions was portrayed, and contemporaneity. The concerns expressed in schools were echoed by the RE professional, academic and faith community reviewers.

- In spite of a general concern to portray religions positively there was a high number of errors and points at which criticisms could be made in the coverage of religions (of some more than of others), a fact which was concerning to the reviewers. The lack of attention to detail and accuracy is in danger of both undermining the credibility of religious education as an academic subject and presented the students with an unhelpful model of a casual lack of respect for religions.

- Another related problem identified by the reviewers, was the way that external influences rather than the internal logic of the particular religions, often structured their representation, supplying different emphases than would have come from the religions themselves and underplaying important elements. These influences might be syllabus and examination requirements, the imposition of concepts, categories and frameworks

Conclusions

from one religion (for example Christianity) on to another religion, a secular emphasis on individual choice and intellectual proposition, and national agenda (such as community cohesion).

- Reviews of materials (and some students' comments) questioned the academic credentials of school RE, the level of content and expectations of students often being found to be insufficiently challenging. This, combined with an increasing interest in issues-based RE in upper secondary, means that the subject does not support as well as it might the growth of a detailed and sophisticated understanding of the six religions and their role in people's lives and society.

One of the difficulties observed was the lack of attention given in many materials to religious perspectives on the nature and experience of religion. Some 'faith' schools in the case studies found a shortage of quality resources from a religious perspective for faith-based religious education.

- Some presentations of religious education in the reviewed materials offered an overly secular understanding of religions and religion by presenting different religions as sets of propositions or good ideas, or as packages to accept or not. A lack of recognition of deeper spiritual and theological aspects of religions was noted.

- In the teaching of the school's own religion an issue that emerged in some faith schools was the lack of good materials that presented learning from a religious perspective yet in a way that was engaging and appealing for the students (particularly in Roman Catholic education) or that was structured and progressive enabling a rigorous tracking and support of pupil attainment (particularly in Islamic education). The teachers discerned gaps in the market here.

Reviews of the materials found a number of representation issues that were specific to particular religious traditions.

- The content and quality of the presentation of *Islam* was seen to be helpful in conveying a rich and attractive picture of Islam as a living religion that has a place in British society as well as in the wider world. Accounts of the religion were sometimes rather simplistic however.

- There were a large number of inaccuracies in the portrayal of *Hinduism*. Though the portrayal of the religion was often appealing and engaging, carelessness over details and confusion about Hindu beliefs and teaching were real issues.

- *Sikhism* received a rather superficial, descriptive treatment focusing on the externals of the religion more than on the religion's power for transformation in the lives of the individual or its contribution to wider society.

- The relative weight given in the materials to minority white British and to majority migrant communities was an issue in the portrayal of *Buddhism*. Different books had different biases. The position of Buddhism as a non-theist tradition meant it could be drawn into the current theist v atheist debate in a way that may skew its interpretation. This was found to be the case in some materials.

- The inadequate coverage of *Judaism* in thematic texts and series was noted. A particular issue was the failure of many of the resources to engage with the long tradition of Jewish thought over the last 2000 years. Instead the religion all too often comes across as the Old Testament religion that preceded Christianity.

Conclusions

- In several resources *Christianity* came across as the default religion, a fact that gave Christianity both too much assumed presence and too little actual attention. There were implicit assumptions in some of the resources, that they were addressing students with a Christian background. Non-Christian religions were often presented through a Christian lens. At the same time reviewers noted a reluctance to engage with the real core of the Christian faith such as Christian belief in Jesus as God incarnate and in the cosmic and salvific significance of his death and resurrection.

(c) Nature and quality: websites

As they are not subject to the same editorial controls, websites present greater problems of quality assurance, factual accuracy and credibility than do print materials. The changing nature of web sites and lack of clarity about the identity of the contributors present other problems.

- As websites can be produced by anybody, anywhere, without any of the editorial or production values of more traditional resources, considerable care needs to be taken when using them. Websites may be put together by experts or amateurs, and may even be seditious or malicious. Given the community cohesion requirements, it is vital that students and teachers understand that websites cannot always be taken at face value.

- A site may be of good quality and may represent accurate information. However, such information may reflect the views of particular groups or individuals, rather than pointing out the variety that exists within religions. Teachers and students need to be aware of the stance taken by particular groups hosting sites and to set this knowledge in the wider context of the religion.

- Given the unedited and uncritical nature of much on-line material, it is crucial that teachers and students become critical evaluators of on-line materials. This critical, evaluative approach is both a key skill for teachers as they look to find enriching, authentic and stimulating teaching resources, but also for students as they tackle independent and personalised learning tasks.

- The websites that are being used are not necessarily aimed at schools and so the nature of the content is not focused on the educational process in terms of language levels, the nature of activities and the more neutral and inclusive language to describe practice. There are some notable exceptions to this rule where sites have been designed with religious education in mind.

- The fact that websites can be easily updated had advantages in making available contemporary materials and facilitating the correction of errors, but disadvantages in the difficulty of determining the provenance of contributors.

(d) Pupils' perspectives

Students in the twenty case study schools gave their opinions on the nature and quality of the religious education materials used in their schools and which materials they appreciated most. Attitudes to book resources were generally more positive among primary students while secondary students stressed the importance of encounter with others and of support for examinations.

Conclusions

- In the case studies, books were given a higher value as learning tools by pupils at primary schools who showed particular enthusiasm for story books. At secondary level books were less appreciated by the students and often viewed as too challenging or too boring. In both primary and secondary schools in the survey only a minority (31-36%) of teachers saw books as very useful resources in the classroom partly because of their lack of appeal to students and also because teachers found a variety of resources useful, including DVDs and websites.

- Primary school pupils preferred religious story books, especially those that contained elements of the fantastic (angels, miracles, armies of monkeys), to books which gave information about religions and religious lives.

- Among secondary students there was general appreciation of more interactive, person-to-person approaches to teaching and learning whereby teachers, fellow students and occasional visitors are valued as resources

- The young people generally appreciated electronic resources for learning and many found them more real, more interesting and memorable than books. The few detracting voices found that some of these resources had been used so frequently that they had lost the interest of novelty.

- Secondary students' concern to pass the examination means that they welcome materials where their learning has been pre-packaged by the teacher and ready-made for revision purposes. Many of the resources used in secondary schools are produced by the teachers and an element of the teacher-generated resources appreciated by many of the students is their relevance for examinations.

Students' own faith identity and commitment affected how they viewed religious education materials, in particular how they viewed representations of their own faiths and the significance to them of some of the images and artefacts used in class.

- Younger children were excited to see their faith, or that of their family and friends, represented in the resources and were keen to identify with it.

- Older students were often more critical of the portrayal of their religions in the resources and felt they did not portray how the religion was really lived. Responses were mixed. During case studies, Muslim students interviewed found that religious education materials helped to breakdown negative stereotypes of Islam. Christian students, however, found negative stereotypes of Christianity were reinforced. This finding was reflected in the reviewers' comments.

- For children of a faith background some of the resources used in religious education - pictures and artefacts - have a sacralised and not just educational significance.

6.1.4 How materials are used by teachers in the classroom[40]

- The religious education that happens in the classroom is not solely, or even predominantly, determined by the religious education materials used, rather it is shaped by teacher and pupil interpretation of these and of a variety of other resources, and by a range of classroom activities and encounters (for example children of different religious background in dialogue with each other).

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[40] Research question 4: How are these materials *used by teachers in the classroom* to enhance learning and to promote community cohesion? How could their use be improved?

Conclusions

- The case studies showed a variety of religious education approaches and pedagogies being used (often in combination) including world religions approaches, scriptural approaches, experiential approaches (involving role-play, the handling of artefacts, guided meditation), philosophical and ethical approaches (discussing existential questions or ethical dilemmas) and (in some faith schools) nurture within a religious tradition. Teachers and schools would mix different approaches, within lessons or across the school. Whether or not studying world religions was the main focus of learning, all were being employed in the context of a religiously plural society and had potential to enhance understanding of this.

- From the survey, learning about other religions was seen as a lower priority in primary schools than the development of personal values, social values and moral living. In secondary schools learning about religions again had lower priority and the priorities (in line with changes in examination requirements) shifted to be more about ultimate questions and the development of critical thinking, and positive attitudes towards religions. This understanding of religious education is linked to criticisms from reviewers that students' knowledge of religions could be impaired by the instrumental selection and interpretation of content from the religions to suit these ends rather than respect the integrity of the traditions.

The variety of approaches, if handled thoughtfully, can enhance learning by adding important elements to the students' engagement with and understanding of religions. Sometimes though, they can detract from the main purpose of the subject or impede understanding by imposing external criteria for the selection of content about the religions.

- Scriptural approaches (including the use of stories from religious texts) engaged with the primary sources and inspiration of the religions. Together with the use of artefacts in experiential approaches they encouraged a sense of the sacred and promoted the skills of interpretation of different levels of meaning, which can be important to a deeper understanding of the power and influence of religions. The use of both scripture and artefact can lead to a blurring of boundaries between education and devotion that may or may not be viewed as appropriate for religious education depending on the character of the school.

- The philosophical and ethical approaches open up possibilities for linking the teachings of the major religions to the questions and problems of contemporary society but review of lessons and materials reveals that sometimes they can allow a sidelining of religion in religious education lessons by reducing the religious content and relying instead on other sources (news items, TV programmes) to fuel discussion and debate.

- Published materials often select and structure material to fit examination requirements. This was seen as valuable by some teachers and students, but reviewers, as well as some teachers and pupils, noted a skewing of the representations of the religions as a result.

- In the case study schools teachers employed a variety of teaching strategies creatively, to enhance learning by delivering broader, richer lessons that connected with other aspects of learning such as art, thinking skills and ICT. However, the repertoire of teaching methods being used has potential to impede as well as to enhance learning if an interest in the development of thinking skills or ICT skills, for example, diverts the lesson away from its focus on the specific competences and content of religious education.

Conclusions

First-hand experiences of religion, especially through encounter and partnership, all contribute to increasing students' understanding of religion. In some of the case study schools (particularly but not exclusively the 'faith' schools) these opportunities were linked to religious nurture and in some (both 'faith' and 'non faith' schools) to the development of community and community links.

- Pupils found direct encounter with other religions through outside visits and visitors to the school (and also on video clips) particularly helpful to their understanding. The use of visitors for religious education is part of the practice in the majority of the schools.

- Students' learning about religion in school was not restricted to the religious education classroom or to the lessons learnt from religious education materials. Many gained experiential understanding of religion through active relationships between the school and local church or other faith communities, the collective worship arrangements, and through the provision of opportunities for prayer. These experiences were not only confined to faith schools but were evident in a number of other institutions, particularly at primary level.

Several of the case study schools worked from the principle of 'starting where the children are' in the delivery of religious education prompting different approaches to learning according to the religiosity of the pupils.

- The principle of 'starting where the children are' raised other issues in schools where the pupils had very little experience of religion. Teacher responses included the careful selection of material (familiar and faith specific) and use of that material specific to bridge the gap in their pupils' understanding between a religious and a non-religious worldview, or the choice of approaches with a greater focus on life issues relevant to the pupils and the development of dialogical skills. The latter strategy meant pupils sometimes missed out on more detailed learning about religious traditions.

(b) Community cohesion

The teachers and school leaders in the case study schools worked with different conceptualisations of community cohesion, of religious education and of the relationship between the two, leading to a wide variety of purpose and practice. The 'faith' or 'non faith' character of the school had some influence on these differences.

- Responses to the community cohesion agenda are varied including learning about differences, developing and practising the idea of community within the school, striving to transform the life chances of disadvantaged students and engaging in partnerships and social action in the community. For the case study schools, in all of these areas religious education in its broadest sense was seen to play a part.

- The survey demonstrates that teachers conceptualise the aims of religious education in a variety of ways and that the promotion of community cohesion is not conceptualised generally as top priority among the aims of religious educators.

- In the case studies, the schools recognised the social and citizenship imperatives for learning about different faiths. At some of the faith schools the argument for doing so was strengthened by religious imperatives (e.g. to love one's neighbour and recognition of common ancestry in Adam and Eve).

- Very important to this understanding was the idea, held by pupils, that religious education promotes and develops positive attitudes towards other people, in particular

to those from different religious (and cultural) communities and those who believe differently from themselves. Beyond that an emphasis on morals and social justice themes in religious education supports the growth of a general interest in the welfare of fellow humans.

- For some students, particularly in 'faith schools', religious education, supported by a general school ethos, played an important role in their development as members of a particular religious tradition, with all that that entails in terms of participating in the story, belonging, regulation of action and confidence in their religious identity in their relations with others.

- Students and teachers, particularly at the secondary schools, linked the practice of discussion and dialogue to the growth of empathy and respect for those of different faith positions, expressing a more skills-based than knowledge-based understanding of learning.

6.1.5 Key factors for selecting materials for teaching about world religions[41]

- The survey highlights two key factors in determining the choice of materials at primary level, the personal and professional judgement of the teachers and the price.

- In some case study schools lack of subject expertise among teachers influenced the selection of materials. Those responsible for ordering materials for the use of non-specialist colleagues sometimes selected easy-to-use, packaged religious education materials, or 'safe' textbooks that do not seem to require extra teacher knowledge.

- The survey and case studies showed that local syllabuses and, in KS4 and post-16, the examination boards are important to the selection of material for religious education. Schools might look for materials that are structured to fit examination requirements, or create their own materials that give students firm guidance on the key things to learn for examinations and on how to construct their answers.

- Case studies show that the selection of materials is influenced by the particular religious education pedagogies being used in schools. For example, experiential approaches in the primary school might require a greater use of religious artefacts; scriptural approaches require a choice of key texts and, at primary level, books of religious stories; world religions approaches require more information-based material, while philosophical and ethical approaches draw on current materials from the media (television and newspapers) to stimulate classroom debate.

- In the case study schools teacher selection and use of materials for religious education was influenced by other pedagogical considerations and trends such as an interest in adapting teaching to pupils' different learning styles and literacy needs, to the promotion of thinking skills and creativity, and the desire to make full use of technological innovation in the classroom.

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[41] Research question 5: What are the key factors for schools to consider when determining which materials should be used to teach world religions?

Conclusions

(b) Factors for schools to consider

Reviews of the religious education identified a number of criteria (appreciated when present and missed when not) by which the value of religious education materials might be assessed. These related both to the need to respect the integrity of the religions being represented and to general pedagogical considerations.

- Among the reviewers, the faith consultants and academic experts suggested a number of criteria for teachers to assess the representation of religions to ensure that their integrity is respected and that student understanding is enhanced and not impeded:

  ➢ accuracy;

  ➢ giving attention to authentic voices from within the religions;

  ➢ coherence in the portrayal of the religion;

  ➢ recognition of religions' complexity and of their internal diversity;

  ➢ acknowledgement of the numinous and transformative;

  ➢ a sense of the religion as living and contemporary.

Reviewers considered that the religions should be presented by quality materials to show that they are valued. Each of the religions should be given due time and attention and the relationship between them should be emphasised.

- From pedagogical perspectives, the reviewers suggested that books should establish points of contact with their intended readers. Reviewers variously recommended the following strategies;

  ➢ use contemporary issues and authentic sources to engage pupils;

  ➢ offer a variety of source materials with which pupils of different abilities might engage;

  ➢ invite interaction with the text and pictures;

  ➢ provide sufficient contextual information for stories and pictures;

  ➢ enhance accessibility through clear design;

  ➢ provide a balance between 'learning about' and 'learning from';

  ➢ provide advice in information books on religions, and story books about how they can be used in / contribute to RE (especially in Primary RE)

Religious education teachers' subject knowledge should be a key factor in the selection of religious education materials. For a subject where lack of specialist knowledge is a problem, professional development for teachers is an issue.

- With regard to electronic materials, the ready availability of so many resources means that teachers and students need to become critical evaluators of materials and assess them for authenticity, content in relation to the needs of their religious education programmes, ease of navigation and provenance.

Conclusions

- The reviews of books at each Key Stage point to the importance of the RE teacher's insight in making fullest use of available books; the qualitative differences among books for the different Key Stages, however, suggest that teachers at Key Stages 1 and 2 especially require a professional understanding of RE to guide both their selection of books and their use of them, since this is not usually built into the books themselves. Whilst RE has to depend on those whose specialism is not RE at all Key Stages, it is at KS1 and KS2 where this may be most acute.

Other factors to take into consideration are ways in which materials might promote community cohesion. From the reviews it appears that this is an area that needs more consideration and input. The variety of forms that education for community cohesion takes in the case study schools implies that a creative and flexible approach, involving more than an increase in knowledge and understanding, is needed.

- Unlike teacher-generated resources, published resources cannot speak directly to the situation of any individual school but could support the kinds of community engagement found in the case study schools by supplying inspiration and examples from religious teachings, narratives and practices of:

  ➢ the types of positive social involvement described;

  ➢ models of community and action for the community;

  ➢ examples of partnership and collaborative action between communities;

  ➢ instances where the marginalised have been brought into the centre and where lives and communities have been transformed.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations for trainers, advisers and educational policy makers

1. There is a need for enhanced capacity within initial teacher training for religious education specialisation. This is of particular importance because of the number of RE subject leaders within both the primary and the secondary sector who carry no formal training or qualifications in their field and the finding that RE teachers rely heavily on their own personal and professional judgement in decisions about the selection and use of teaching materials.

2. A very large number of subject leaders in religious education reported no recent (or very little) continuing professional development (CPD). There remains the need for funding to release teachers for CPD and for appropriate CPD provision so that they may improve their subject knowledge and keep up-to-date with current trends in resourcing religious education. The role of RE advisers is important in assisting schools, especially those with non-specialist teachers.

3. Meetings between RE teachers and advisers, university academics in Religious Studies and scholars from the faith traditions should be facilitated so that they might identify ways in which they can work together to support the development of teacher subject knowledge.

4. There is considerable reliance by teachers on the contributions to RE made by local faith communities (as evidenced by the survey and case studies). Such contributions could play a crucial role in the relevance of RE for community cohesion within the local context. Formal training and accreditation opportunities in this field could help to ensure the quality of such provision.

5. SACREs and RE advisers should consult with key players to provide guidance on the establishment of community action partnerships between schools and local faith communities as a way of promoting positive and proactive relations between them and increasing pupil awareness of the role played by faith communities in social action (the case studies provide evidence of such partnerships already taking place in some schools).

6. Advisers of community and faith sectors should consult together at a local level and facilitate meetings between teachers of both sectors so they can support each other in developing RE.

7. There is considerable reliance by teachers on materials available through websites, originated either in the UK or elsewhere in the world. At present there are no reliable quality assurance mechanisms for such materials. It may be important for scrutiny, evaluation and recommendations to be offered to enable subject leaders to distinguish between sound and unsound, reliable and unreliable websites.

8. RE policy makers, examination boards and publishers need to work together to increase the academic credibility of the subject. This would address the reviewers' concerns about low levels of scholarship represented in a number of textbooks (including those designed for the examination years), and the perceptions of some students that RE is a non-academic subject.

9. RE policy makers need to investigate the move away from studying religions to issues-based approaches and explore ways in which an interest in learning about religions might be renewed in upper secondary education. This would address reviewers' concerns that issues-based RE materials present a limited understanding of religions.

10. RE professionals, advisers and teachers, should review the place of religious texts in the RE curriculum in recognition of their importance to understanding the various religions and explore ways of building on the enthusiasm for stories in primary schools to encourage a continued interest in text and the development of skills of textual interpretation as an element in religious education.

7.2 Recommendations for publishers and producers

1. A strict internal quality control procedure and particular attention to detail are needed in the production of materials for religious education (given the inaccuracies found in some of the materials reviewed in this study).

2. Publishers, authors and designers of websites need to consult with Religious Studies scholars and experts from the faith communities to eliminate errors, avoid confusion and present the religions according to the understanding of their members.

3. Publishers, authors and designers of websites should give attention to the faith-specific gaps and issues identified in the research. These include:

    - the tendency to present a Christianised view of other religions;

    - superficial treatment of the central beliefs of Christianity;

    - the need for a more intellectually challenging engagement with Islam;

    - inaccuracies in the portrayal of the Hindu tradition;

    - too great an emphasis on externals in Sikhism;

    - the need for a balanced representation of Britain's different Buddhist communities;

    - the absence in RE materials of 2000 years of Jewish tradition and thought.

4. Publishers, authors and designers of websites should promote community cohesion by supplying inspiration and examples from religious teachings, narratives and practices of:

    - positive social involvement;

    - models of community and action for the community;

    - examples of partnership and collaborative action between faith communities;

    - instances where the marginalised have been brought into the centre

    - instances where lives and communities have been transformed.

7.3 Recommendations for schools and teachers

1. Senior management in schools should support CPD programmes in religious education, both for specialist and non-specialist teachers.

2. Schools should recognise, in their policy, practice and self assessment, that an increase in knowledge about different religions and greater understanding of people's religious practice and motivations constitute an important part of education in relation to community cohesion.

3. RE teachers need, where possible, to cross-check the content and provenance of the materials (including websites) with high quality advice from specialists in the religions (including their publications) and authorities from the religious traditions being represented.

4. Given that many materials focus more on the practice, histories and moral teachings of religions. RE teachers should ensure that pupils also learn about their spiritual and theological elements in order to ensure a deeper understanding.

5. RE teachers should be aware of the presence of minority, and sometimes hidden, religious positions within their classes (for example, evangelical Christians, those without a religion and those attached to religions beyond those focused on in the present study) and ensure, through the inclusion of their perspectives in activities and RE materials, that the students who hold them do not feel marginalised or uncomfortable in their identity.

6. School leaders and RE teachers should develop community partnerships between the school and local faith communities, particularly those with an orientation towards social action, so that pupils can learn about the role of religions in society and themselves engage in partnerships for the common good.

7.4 Check list for book publishers

In each Key Stage there were a small number of books which raised the enthusiasm of the professional RE consultants; their reviews of such books - but also of those which did not serve RE so well - make it possible to identify some of the positive features which, taken together, may result in books which can make a significant contribution to pupils' learning in RE. Many of these are sound principles which are generically applicable to good publishing in a multi-faith society; for RE they are vital. The features outlined below provide a check list for teachers in selecting books and an aide memoir for authors and publishers.

The reviewers expressed their enthusiasm when:

a) books established points of contact with their intended readers e.g. a child/family in a KS1/2 book; using contemporary, 'live' issues at KS4 and using reliable sources to explore them.

b) books offered a *variety* of source materials with which pupils might engage – and, through these, extended the accessibility of the book to pupils of different abilities.

c) books invited interaction with the text (and pictures) e.g. through a question and answer format (KS1/2)

d) stories were accompanied by illustrations which promoted sensitivity towards content and offered insight into the feelings expressed in the story (KS1/2)

e)   story books provided contextual information and notes for the teacher (KS1/2)

f)   books included good quality photographs, which might contribute to learning e.g. a
      primary information book which opened up global perspectives through its pictures; a
      KS3 book which carried thought provoking images

g)   sufficient information accompanied pictures e.g. details of location; identification of
      building

h)   visuals were sensitive to issues of gender and colour and offered a balanced portrayal
      of religions e.g. of their global presence

i)   design was clear and enhanced accessibility; good design was characterised for
      example by: clear layout of pages which allowed pupils to follow the text sequentially;
      highlighting of key words; the use of diagrams to summarise or present information
      and support learning; use of colour and visuals to 'break down the text'; attention to
      density of text and pitch of print

j)   the accessibility of the text is considered from the perspective of the intended reader
      e.g. explanation of difficult words; easy cross-referencing to a glossary; use of bullet
      points and subheadings; use of prompt questions

k)   books suggested *varied* tasks and activities which:

      •   took account of levels of attainment and recognised the wide range of abilities
           which might be represented within a class (KS3)

      •   developed higher order skills; used thinking skills methods; encouraged listening
           and speaking by drawing on literacy skills ; developed concepts

      •   were imaginative and allowed for pupils' creative expression

      •   challenged attitudes

      •   explored the *processes* of ethical decision making

l)   books were concerned with more than information and achieved a balance between
      'learning about' and 'learning from religion'

m)   a balanced representation of religions was sustained

n)   books which paid attention to 'learning from' religion, encouraged personal
      engagement and raised questions; encouraged reflection and creative expression, and
      thus had the potential to contribute to pupils' spiritual development.

7.5 Check list for designers of web materials

From the review of web materials emergent considerations included both those pertinent to
good educational website design, as well as those more directly applicable to RE.

a)   The resource should be designed for the age range that is expected to use it.
      Consideration should be given to language, and size, balance and complexity of the
      text.

Recommendations

b)   There should be more extensive use of audio-visual materials to stimulate and engage pupils, including video and audio recordings of believers expressing their own ideas.

c)   Consideration should be given to how the materials and users can interact using Web 2.0 tools,[42] and how user-generated content can be incorporated. Also consideration should be given to how communication and collaboration tools can be used.

d)   Resources should include carefully constructed learning activities, targeted at the appropriate age range, which offer the opportunity to engage learners in a variety of pedagogical tasks, allowing class, group and independent learning across a range of learning styles. These tasks should be linked to curriculum activities.

e)   Sites need to be simple, focusing on a particular topic and on links between topics.

f)   E-resources need to be mediated by a teacher and, while they can include independent learning, they should be part of a collaborative, managed process.

g)   E-resources should have tools embedded, or linked, that can aid the student to develop a product from their work, be this textual, audio-visual, presentational or graphic.

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[42] Web 2.0 technologies are web based tools in which the user has a more interactive role in developing and inputting content. All the sites reviewed consisted of content selected by the website provider and are not collaborative collections of materials.

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