

THE USE OF 'KEY QUESTIONS' IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

One of the main aims of curriculum Religious Education is to promote a knowledge and understanding of the response of faith to ultimate questions about human life, its origins and purpose. The Bishops of England and Wales said, 'Religious Education is about engaging with deepest questions of life and finding reasons for the hope which is within them' (Religious Education in a Catholic School, 2000)

In RE we want to provide children with 'compelling learning experiences' which demands a more active and engaging approach to learning where children solve something, investigate reasons for things rather than be the mere recipients of knowledge.

By giving the learning in Religious Education direction through the use of key questions, mysteries or puzzles to answer or solve, the curriculum appears much more compelling, imaginative and challenging. A key question should also be relevant to the children's interests and concerns. Topics such as 'Rules' which explores The Sacrament of Reconciliation may not capture the attention and interest of a student in the same way as a question such as 'How do rules bring freedom?'

It is for this reason that a good approach to the Religious Education curriculum is to use key questions as headings for each unit of work. At the end of each lesson teachers could ask what the children have learned to help them answer the big question. The grid suggests some big questions for each topic. They are only suggestions and schools may come up with their own grid. Teachers may even want to approach each lesson or groups of lessons with a question which will help to answer the big question.

SUGGESTED 'BIG QUESTIONS'

Domestic church family	Myself Why am I precious?	Families Why do we have a family and who is my family?	Beginnings Who made the world and everything in it?	Homes What makes a house a home?	People Where do I come from?	Ourselves Who am I?	Loving Do you have to earn love?
Baptism/confirmation belonging	Welcome Why is welcome important?	Belonging What does it mean to belong?	Signs & symbols Are signs & symbols important?	Promises Why make promises?	Called What does it mean to be called and chosen?	Life choices Is commitment important?	Vocation & commitment What is commitment in life?
Advent/Christmas loving	Birthday Why do we celebrate Birthdays?	Waiting Is waiting always difficult?	Preparations Do we need to prepare?	Visitors Are visitors always welcome?	Gift What's so special about gifts?	Hope What does it mean to live in hope?	Expectations Should we have expectations in life?
Local church community	Celebrating What and why do people celebrate?	Special people What makes a person special?	Books Why do we need books?	Journeys Is life a journey?	Community What makes 'community'?	Mission Do we all have a mission in life?	Sources Are books enriching?
Eucharist relating	Gathering Why do people gather together?	Meals What makes some meals special?	Thanksgiving Why should we be grateful people?	Listening & sharing What's so important about listening and sharing?	Giving & receiving What's more important - giving or receiving?	Memorial sacrifice Why do we need memories?	Unity Why are we happiest when we are united?
Lent/Easter giving	Growing How and why do things grow?	Change How and why do things change?	Opportunities How does each day offer opportunities for good?	Giving all What makes some people give everything for other people?	Self discipline Is self-discipline important in life?	Sacrifice Why do we need to make sacrifices?	Death & new life Can any good come out of loss and death?
Pentecost serving	Good News What is good news?	Holidays & holydays Do we need holidays and holydays?	Spread the word Why should we spread Good News?	Energy What's the use of energy?!	New life What's so important about new life?	Transformation How can energy transform?	Witnesses What do I want to witness to in my life?
Reconciliation Inter-relating	Friends Is it good to have friends?	Being sorry Why should we be sorry?	Rules Do we need rules?	Choices What helps me to choose well?	Building bridges Why are bridge-builders important in life?	Freedom & responsibility How do rules bring freedom?	Healing Who needs healing?
Universal Church world	Our world What makes our world so wonderful?	Neighbours Who is my neighbour?	Treasures Is the world a treasure?	Special places What makes a place special?	God's people Why do some people do extraordinary things?	Stewardship Can I be a steward of creation?	Common good How can we work together to build a just and fair world?