

Discovery RE and the Scottish Primary Curriculum: Curriculum for Excellence

An introduction

The Curriculum for Scotland is called 'the Curriculum for Excellence'. This curriculum is seen as a lifelong learning strategy installed by the Scottish Government. It intends to help young people gain the experiences and skills they need for 'learning, life and work'.

This paper offers our thoughts on how Discovery RE, the enquiry-based approach to primary Religious Education, can contribute significantly to the general aims of Curriculum for Excellence, and particularly to its Religious Education requirements.

Curriculum for Excellence

Two overarching aims:

- To ensure that children and young people can individually and collectively develop the personal beliefs and values, resilient attitudes and life skills to support them through the complexities of human existence and co-existence.
- To ensure all children and young people achieve well and that their learning and achievement impacts positively on their individual life chances.'



Four capacities

In the 'Building the Curriculum' documents it states that the purpose of 'Curriculum for Excellence' is to make sure that,

'Learners acquire the four capacities and become

- Successful learners
- Confident individuals
- Effective contributors
- Responsible citizens.'

Enquiry-based RE, taught well, can contribute greatly to both the 2 aims and the 4 capacities.

For example,

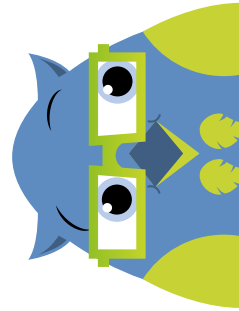
'Building the Curriculum' - the four capacities		Discovery RE
Developing successful learners	'considers challenging questions and responses, and encourages young people to learn about different kinds of thinking and how faith and reason can help people to find meaning in life'	Discovery RE is an enquiry-based approach to Religious Education. It offers enquiries lasting at least 6 sessions which explore one 'big' question each time, e.g. Does God want Christians to look after the world ? Children are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills by investigating these big questions and using their subject knowledge to evaluate different potential answers.
Developing confident individuals	helps young people to 'learn to be secure in expressing their beliefs and values.'	Discovery RE builds into all its enquiries the need to examine and develop personal views, whilst respecting the opinions of others and the rights of others to hold and express their own beliefs and views. The ability to express and share these views is an essential part of learning, and Step 4 of every Discovery RE enquiry enables children to express their own thoughts and opinions in a judgement-free environment.
Developing responsible citizens	helps young people 'learn to act with concern for others and for the world we live in.'	Discovery RE believes that we can all make a difference - many enquiries are about how people can show commitment and put their beliefs into action to improve the world for themselves others. Discovery RE encourages personal and spiritual development and empathy by examining how religious teachings guide people to make moral decisions, and strongly recognises that young people should be encouraged to make a positive contribution.
Developing effective contributors	helps young people 'put their values and beliefs into action in positive ways which benefit others in the local, national and global communities.'	

Principles

In the principles for Curriculum design the Curriculum for Excellence document says,

'The curriculum should be designed on the basis of the following principles:

- Challenge and enjoyment
- Breadth
- Progression
- Depth
- Personalisation and choice
- Coherence
- Relevance.'



Discovery RE helps to fulfil these principles. Some examples:

Principles	Discovery RE
Challenge and enjoyment	Discovery RE employs an enquiry model based on exploring challenging questions - the content allows an in-depth investigation into personal values and the beliefs of others - this is an engaging and enjoyable process for children and teachers.
Breadth	Discovery RE includes enquiries on the six principal religions: Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism whilst also including Humanism. Such a broad palette helps young people develop a knowledge and understanding of issues in the world today and to see how and where they may fit.
Progression	Discovery RE introduces each religion by concentrating on the basic building blocks ensuring understanding before progressing to a deeper examination. In Christianity each year group looks at Christmas and Easter in a manner that allows continuity and progression - this enables an exploration beyond the superficial.
Depth	Each enquiry is designed to set the foundations before digging deeper into the lives of believers aiming to see how their beliefs affect their values and daily lives. This depth brings the world of religion to life by looking into and through the eyes of believers. Addressing such 'big' questions inspires a philosophical approach.
Personalisation and choice	Discovery RE includes enquiries on many aspects of the 6 principal world religions and builds in opportunities (in Steps 1 and 4 in particular) for children to explore and express their own views. Schools are offered choices as to which religions they study when and the chance to choose material that suits their own unique situation. Each enquiry has detailed is medium-term planning so is ideal for personalisation .
Coherence	Discovery RE has been written to be easily accessible. It is succinct in design yet points to opportunities for development and areas for potential development. Each enquiry tries to get to the root of the issue in a clear, coherent and precise manner. The Scheme allows children to study religions in a coherent and holistic way.
Relevance	Discovery RE aims to be fresh, engaging and relevant . It also does not shirk at difficult topics - Discovery RE asks the questions that young people will want to answer - for example, rather than ignore the issue of extremism, Discovery RE helps children understand the complexities of interpretation between and within religions. One of the enquiries for 10/11 year olds asks, 'Does belief in life after death help Muslims lead good lives?'

Curriculum areas

Building the Curriculum 1' focuses on the curriculum areas, each of which makes its own unique contribution to developing the four capacities. Each does so both individually and in connection with others.

The eight curriculum areas are:

- Expressive arts
- Health and well-being
- Languages
- Mathematics
- **Religious and moral education**
- Sciences
- Social studies
- Technologies



Although Discovery RE links to many of these areas the main focus is in the Religious and Moral education area.

'Religious and moral education is a process where children and young people engage in a search for meaning, value and purpose in life. This involves both the exploration of beliefs and values and the study of how such beliefs and values are expressed.' Building the Curriculum 1

Learning through religious and moral education enables children and young people to:

- recognise religion as an important expression of human experience
- learn about and from the beliefs, values, practices and traditions of Christianity and the world religions selected for study, other traditions, and viewpoints independent of religious belief
- explore and develop knowledge and understanding of religions, recognising the place of Christianity in the Scottish context
- investigate and understand the responses which religious and non-religious views can offer to questions about the nature and meaning of life
- recognise and understand religious diversity and the importance of religion in society
- develop respect for others and an understanding of beliefs and practices which are different from their own
- explore and establish values such as wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity and engage in the development of and reflection upon their own moral values
- develop their beliefs, attitudes, values and practices through reflection, discovery and critical evaluation
- develop the skills of reflection, discernment, critical thinking and deciding how to act when making moral decisions
- make a positive difference to the world by putting their beliefs and values into action
- establish a firm foundation for lifelong learning, further learning and adult life.

Religious and moral education is therefore an essential part of every child's educational experience.

The curriculum gives a great deal of flexibility to schools, flexibility to design a curriculum that best suits their situation and local environment. As such schools are free to choose content from world religions that mirror the presence in their communities, although Christianity is still taught in every year group to reflect the contribution the religion has made to the history of Scotland and the Scottish moral code.

The curriculum states that,

'In addition to the study of Christianity, decisions have to be made about which world religions will be selected for study to develop depth of understanding.'

Whilst also recognising that

'It is also important to avoid superficial coverage of too many religions and too many aspects which is potentially confusing.'

With this in mind it may be appropriate in many primary schools to focus on a maximum of two world religions in addition to Christianity. However, while one or more religions will be studied in depth, teachers may also want to draw upon carefully selected aspects of other religions, possibly in the context of interdisciplinary learning.'

Discovery RE studies Christianity in every year group and offers a choice of which other religion to study in each year group and across the school.

The same religion is offered in more than one year group to allow progression.



RE content and an enquiry-based approach

The curriculum for Scotland does not prescribe detailed specific content but does give a sense of the overall requirements by saying that

‘From the early years through to the senior stages, children and young people will demonstrate their progress through increasingly reflective responses to the beliefs, values, practices and traditions of others, in their skills of discussion of moral issues and in their own personal response’

With this in mind, schools are left with a blank canvas, free to design a curriculum that works for them. This flexibility is liberating as it allows opportunities for topic-based learning, student-centred learning responding to the interests of the children and collaboration with other subjects. Achieving continuity and progression in RE could be challenging, as religious traditions and other worldviews need to be studied through introductory units before the deeper detail can be explored. Using an enquiry-based model, like the 4-step process used in Discovery RE, can help children study an introduction to these belief systems whilst encouraging active questioning, developing critical thinking and personal reflection.

Discovery RE sets a framework that can help schools deliver the content needed and enables children to consider their own spiritual and moral development by making the journey into the worlds of religions whilst being respectful of their own starting points.

How the age ranges compare

In Scotland students are grouped in Primary 1-7 and S1-6 rather than Key Stages 1-4 as shown below

Scotland	Age at start of school year	Age at end of school year	England and Wales	Northern Ireland
Primary 1	4 - 5	5 - 6	Year 1	P1
Primary 2	5 - 6	6 - 7	Year 2	P2
Primary 3	6 - 7	7 - 8	Year 3	P3
Primary 4	7 - 8	8 - 9	Year 4	P4
Primary 5	8 - 9	9 - 10	Year 5	P5
Primary 6	9 - 10	10 - 11	Year 6	P6
Primary 7	10 - 11	11 - 12	Year 7	P7
S1 (First Year)	11 - 12	12 - 13	Year 8	Year 8 (1st Year)
S2 (Second Year)	12 - 13	13 - 14	Year 9	Year 9 (2nd Year)
S3 (Third Year)	13 - 14	14 - 15	Year 10	Year 10 (3rd Year)
S4 (Fourth Year)	14 - 15	15 - 16	Year 11	Year 11 (4th Year)
S5 (Fifth Year)	15 - 16	16 - 17	Year 12 (Lower Sixth)	Year 12 (5th Year)
S6 (Sixth Year)	16 - 17	17 - 18	Year 13 (Upper Sixth)	Year 13 (Lower sixth)

This translates in the following way

Level	Stage	England/Wales equivalent
Early	The pre-school years and P1, or later for some.	Foundation and Year 1
First	To the end of P4, but earlier or later for some.	Years 2-4
Second	To the end of P7, but earlier or later for some.	Years 5-7
Third and Fourth	S1 to S3, but earlier for some. The fourth level broadly equates to SCQF level 4.	Years 8 - 10
Senior phase	S4 to S6, and college or other means of study.	Years 11-13

Discovery RE focuses on Key stages 1&2, this equates to up to the end of Primary 6 in the first table and Early through to midway through the second level in the second table

How the explicit religious content can be covered

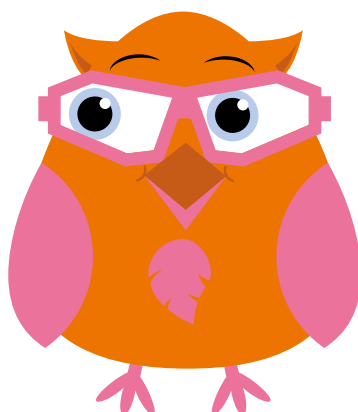
In the grids that follow an attempt has been made to show how the six principal world religions can be studied across the primary phase. Although the Scottish curriculum advocates the teaching of three faiths, by showing how the six religions can be mapped, Discovery RE gives the choices to the school itself. Discovery RE also allows reference to other world views, like Humanism, in most enquiries.

The grids display the religious content using the three lines of development recommended in the Scottish curriculum

‘For the major religions, the lines of development are

- Beliefs,
- Values and issues, and
- Practices and traditions’

This content can be moved around and used as an introduction or can be used as a starting point into a deeper exploration.



1. Foundation Stage/Early years

In Discovery RE the Early Years RE is taught through the following units

Special People, Christmas, Celebrations, Easter, Stories, Special places

Each of these enquiries include aspects of the lines of development in the Curriculum for Scotland a flavour of which is shown in the grid below.

Scotland - Curriculum for Excellence and Discovery RE

Scotland: lines of development	Discovery RE content includes (Early Years)
Beliefs	<p>Christian focus Giving and Giving thanks Christmas including What does Christmas say about Jesus? The church as a special building - personal experiences</p> <p>Stories in the Bible including Moses - a special person Jesus - some teachings and parables including the lost sheep</p> <p>Stories from around the world - different faiths and cultures showing kindness and equality</p> <p>Beliefs and teachings from stories What can I learn from these stories?</p>
Values and Issues	<p>What makes people special? Who are our special people at home - how do we value them? Role Models - Who helps me learn new things? Why is home special? Are we all special at school? What makes religious buildings special to some people? Church? Mosque? Synagogue?</p>
Practices and Traditions	<p>Have you been to a family occasion in church? Harvest - practices and traditions Signs and symbols in a church - what is a church and what is it used for? What symbols are there at Christmas? How do they help tell the story? How does my community celebrate Christmas? What Easter symbols are linked to the story? Easter New Year, practices and traditions Chinese new year, practices and traditions Persian new year, practices and traditions Holi (Hindu), Spring - How is the family involved in Holi celebrations?</p>

As Christianity must be taught in each year the grids below offer a sample of some of the content covered using the lines of development in the Religious and Moral Education curriculum area.

2. Christianity in Key Stage 1 (Primary 1&2)

Scotland - Curriculum for Excellence and Discovery RE

Scotland: lines of development	Discovery RE (Years/Primary 1 and 2)
Beliefs	<p>Creation and the Environment - the nature of God What does the creation story say about God? Looking after God's world. Does God want Christians to look after the world? How does the creation story tell us how to behave? How should we care for the world? Should we pick up litter? Grow vegetables?</p> <p>Who was Jesus? Why is he important to Christians? Why did God give Jesus to the world? What does this say about Jesus? Why were gifts given to Jesus? Jesus stills the storm - what does this story say about Jesus?</p>
Values and Issues	<p>Values and issues present in the Christmas story Progression in each year includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christmas Story - What about the gifts Jesus was given? How is the Christmas story remembered? What beliefs are there? <p>Values and issues present in the Easter story? Progression in each year includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did God give Jesus to the world? • Palm Sunday - why was Jesus welcomed? <p>What did Jesus teach? How should this affect Christians and their values? What issues are raised? How do Jesus' stories help? Could I show kindness like he did? How can I follow Jesus' example of the story of the Good Samaritan (Kind man) Jesus stills the storm - what does this story say about Jesus? Was it easy for Jesus to be a friend? (Jesus and Zacchaeus) How can I be a good friend like Jesus?</p>
Practices and Traditions	<p>What happens at Christmas and Easter - what symbols are there? What do they mean? How do Advent calendars help us? How do we feel? Look at symbols - What are they for? How do they help people prepare?</p> <p>Why did God give Jesus to the world? How do people prepare? (Church?) How would they feel? A period of preparation - what would they need to prepare? Prepare for Jesus' arrival</p> <p>Celebrations at Christmas and Easter - What do people do? Why do they do it? How the church is used in the Christmas and Easter celebrations</p>

3. Christianity in Key Stage 2 (Primary 3-6)

Scotland - Curriculum for Excellence and Discovery RE

Scotland: lines of development	Discovery RE (Years/Primary 3-6)
Beliefs	<p>During each key question reference is made to the sacred writings and the beliefs within. This highlights the different kinds of writing for example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Origin stories - creation • Rules -the 10 commandments <p>What is the best way for a Christian to show commitment to God?</p> <p>Nature of God, of life and the afterlife Is anything ever eternal?</p> <p>Jesus - the teacher, the healer, the miracle worker Is forgiveness always possible? Could Jesus heal people? Were these miracles or is there another explanation?</p>
Values and Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules -the 10 commandments - what issues are raised? Are they still important today? • Creation story - issues of stewardship • The Lord's Prayer - values within <p>How does Jesus' teachings encourage positive behaviour? Examine teachings (and interpret them) including 'love your neighbour'</p> <p>What can we learn from these stories? Is it possible that God's love can heal?</p> <p>What is the best way for a Christian to show commitment to God? including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support charities • Stand up for rights (like Martin Luther King and other examples) • Look after the planet
Practices and Traditions	<p>How is the church used during festivals? Do people need to go to church to show they are Christians? What is the best way for a Christian to show commitment to God?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going to church • Pilgrimage to the Holy land
Christmas and Easter progression	<p>Symbols and their meanings in church</p> <p>Christmas KS2 progression - Key Questions Has Christmas lost its true meaning? What is the most significant part of the nativity story for Christians today? Is the Christmas story true? How significant is it that Mary was Jesus' mother? Do Christmas celebrations and traditions help Christians understand who Jesus was and why he was born?</p> <p>Easter KS2 progression - Key questions What is good about good Friday? Is forgiveness always possible? Did God intend Jesus to be crucified? Is Christianity still a strong religion 2000 years after Jesus was on earth?</p>

4. Coverage of other faiths

Discovery RE includes enquiries on the 5 other principal religions. The table below gives a flavour of some of the content that is studied.

Religion/ faith tradition	Beliefs	Values and Issues	Practices and Traditions
Buddhism (Years/Primary 4)	The Buddha as an enlightened being Teachings of the Buddha - Noble truths	Accepting the three universal and Four Noble truths - how to end suffering	Following the Eightfold path - including Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood Vegetarianism, meditation
Hinduism (Years/Primary 3 or 5)	One God in many forms The importance of worship Significance of the Ganges	Importance of Karma (good deeds) and Samsara (cycle of life, death and rebirth)	Festival of Diwali Pilgrimage to the Ganges
Islam (Years/Primary 2&6)	Allah, the one God - creator The Qur'an Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)	Treatment of the Qur'an Life after death - how it impacts on daily life	5 pillars (belief, prayer, giving, fasting, pilgrimage to Makkah) The Mosque
Judaism (Years/Primary 1,2&4)	God the creator, Special books, laws, History and stories Special people: Abraham & Moses	Covenant with God Chanukah - story and Meanings	Festivals - Chanukah - Passover Bar/Bat Mitzvah (coming of age) Use of synagogue Food rules - Kashrut
Sikhism (Years/Primary 3 or 5)	Belief in one God - respect Guru Nanak - his teachings and example The Khalsa (special commitment)	Messages from Sikh stories Values of honesty, hard work and equality	Visiting the Gurdwara and the sharing of food (Langar) Pilgrimage to the Golden temple of Amritsar (Harmandir Sahib) The 5 K's

Assessment

In the professional learning paper, 'Assessing progress and achievement in Religious and Moral Education', the 'Curriculum for Excellence'

'supports assessment by helping to identify significant aspects of learning including:

Learning about religion and morality

Learning from religion and morality'

Discovery RE uses an assessment model which has two attainment targets - attainment target 1 (AT1) Learning about religion and attainment target 2 (AT2) Learning from religion. Throughout Discovery RE they are referred to as AT1 and AT2.

This is very similar to the requirements of Scotland's curriculum.

Discovery RE is also soon to include end of year and end of Key Stage expectation statements offering a fuller and more detailed assessment process.

Support documents

On the Education Scotland website in the section,

Religious and moral education: Assessing progress and achievement in significant aspects of learning,

there are supporting documents including a learning paper,

'Assessing progress and achievement in Religious and Moral Education'.

This paper looks at planning for progression through breadth, challenge and application in Religious and Moral Education, stating that this includes:

- Being able to describe and explain features of moral issues and moral decision making
- Appreciating the importance of respect for the beliefs, values and traditions of others and being able to demonstrate this
- Developing the skills and attributes to make well-judged moral and ethical decisions and to justify personal beliefs and values
- Engaging in a process of personal reflection leading to a deeper understanding of personal beliefs and ideas about meaning, value and purpose in life

Discovery RE echoes the importance of these points through using an enquiry model which asks questions, seeks different opinions and suggested answers, aims to develop respect and empathy as well as the essential requirement of personal reflection and the need to revisit and evaluate issues through every stage of the learning process.

Report findings (How could Discovery RE help?)

A curriculum impact project report evaluating current practice in Religious and Moral Education in Scotland was released in February 2014.

Aspects for development in Religious and Moral Education across Scotland were listed - some of these are listed in the table below with suggestions as to how Discovery RE could help.

Aspects for development	How could Discovery RE help?
Children and young people need more learning that supports them to develop higher-order thinking skills.	Discovery RE is enquiry-based - it sets challenging and thought-provoking questions geared to stretching children and necessitating high level thinking skills.
In most schools, arrangements for assessment and moderation of Religious and Moral Education are at an early stage of development.	Discovery RE includes carefully planned assessment tasks and guidance on how to mark them, as well as exemplification. The assessments are designed to allow the child to display the depth of their learning.
In a significant number of schools, children and young people need more opportunities to develop their own beliefs and values through learning about a range of religions and other beliefs.	Discovery RE builds into each year opportunities to learn about different belief systems and encourages discussion, reflection and evaluation. This enables children and young people to look at and develop their own beliefs and values.
Young people's learning from S1 to S3 often lacks sufficient depth and challenge to ensure young people develop the knowledge and skills embedded within the third and fourth level experiences and outcomes.	Discovery RE has been developed to provide challenge through its enquiry-based approach. It also encourages depth of study in religious content as well as the development of key attitudes and skills.



Conclusion

We are confident that Discovery RE can help deliver the Religious and Moral Education curriculum in Scotland by

- Offering a clear framework that would help to deliver content for Christianity every year
- Providing enquiries on the other 5 principal religions for schools to choose from
- Setting challenging and relevant questions which engage children and teachers
- Encouraging critical thinking and enquiry
- Offering regular opportunities for personal reflection, opinion sharing and the development of empathy
- Providing carefully designed assessment tasks including resources and exemplification
- Preparing children for the world they will inherit equipped with some of the tools necessary to challenge injustice and make a difference.

To conclude it is clear that both the curriculum for Scotland and Discovery RE aim to encourage the delivery of challenging, thought-provoking RE. This is no easy task. Discovery RE can provide the springboard for teachers to help plan and deliver the sort of RE that all children deserve.

Please contact us for further information and/or to order an inspection copy of Discovery RE.

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