

How does Discovery RE support the 2018 SIAMS inspection framework?

From September 2018, a new schedule for the ‘Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools’ (SIAMS) will come into effect. This article details how Discovery RE can support our Church of England schools in fulfilling and evidencing elements of this new framework.

Whilst Discovery RE explores Christianity it does so from a non-denominational perspective, but offers Church schools an excellent structure for teaching about Christianity and its underpinning beliefs and concepts, building children’s religious and theological literacy. The skills, knowledge, open-minded and open-ended enquiry ethos, and the opportunities for children to enhance their own spirituality, are embedded throughout Discovery RE, supporting schools in fulfilling the criteria for the 2018 SIAMS inspection framework.

The values underpinning Discovery RE’s approach to Religious Education align with those expected of Church schools in the Church of England’s Vision for Education, thus enhancing the respectful and positive ethos.

This is complemented further by Discovery RE’s sister programmes: Jigsaw, the mindful approach to PSHE (Nursery to Year 11), the Jigsaw Families Programme and the Jigsaw R.E.S.T. (Resilience and Engagement Scale and Toolkit). These PSHE-focused curriculum programmes also contribute significantly to fulfilling the expectations of the 2018 SIAMS inspection criteria.

[See the article on www.jigsawpshe.com ‘Jigsaw and SIAMS’.

The seven areas of inspection in the 2018 framework are:

1. Vision and Leadership
2. Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills
3. Character development: hope, aspiration, and courageous advocacy
4. Community and living well together
5. Dignity and respect
6. The impact of collective worship
7. The effectiveness of Religious Education (RE).



What can Discovery RE contribute?

1. Vision and Leadership

“How effectively does the school’s distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, enable its pupils and adults to flourish?”

As stated above, Discovery RE has not been written to promote Christian values in an explicit manner. However, the approach advocated by Discovery RE’s enquiry pedagogy values respect, inclusion, morality and commitment.

Equally, it has always been our belief, at Discovery RE, that RE should offer children opportunities to learn about and from religion and human experience but should also encourage their spiritual development. Therefore, throughout the planning, children are given the opportunity to revisit their initial answer to the enquiry question, and the final lesson (Step 4) of every unit allows them to express what the learning has meant to them personally. Will it impact on their life? How?

The descriptors for “Excellent” in the ‘Vision and Leadership’ element, state that the school should have “innovative and imaginative practice that helps pupils transform their lives”.

We believe that this Step 4 reflection and expression lesson does exactly that. By helping children identify aspects of their studies that resonate with their own beliefs we aim to encourage and respect the development of personal belief systems. These may reflect Christianity.

2. Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills

“This section looks at how well the school’s leaders use the school’s Christian vision and associated values to serve the academic needs of all pupils and to ensure curriculum opportunities for spiritual development.”

The second part of this section examines how well the school supports all pupils in their spiritual development, enabling all pupils to flourish. In the “Excellent” section of the grade descriptors it states that aspects of the curriculum should,

“reflect a pedagogical approach that actively plans to enable pupils to reflect and explore the spiritual and ethical dimensions of all subjects”.

Without doubt, RE is an academic subject and Discovery RE aims to provide opportunities for deep enquiry and learning, a solid academic base. Because it provides detailed medium-term planning, teachers have the flexibility to embed the school’s vision and values into their teaching to make it distinctive. As previously stated, the discussions, reflections and expression lessons in Discovery RE allow the pupils to develop spiritually as they explain and reason about how learning the beliefs, values and practices of the religions being studied have impacted on their own lives.

More vulnerable pupils and who may have additional learning and personal needs can be supported by individual differentiation within the RE lesson, as medium-term plans and open questions allow the class teacher plenty of scope for adaptation.

A key aspect of this section is that schools develop their own understanding and definition of spirituality, and this is in no way the remit of non-denominational RE scheme of work, but once this has been established, embedding this vocabulary into the questioning and discursive elements of Discovery RE will ensure that children’s spiritual vocabulary is enhanced.



The last 'good' descriptor in this section states that *“pupils will be able to talk about the value of their learning and how they enjoy questioning, listening and responding creatively...”*

Children have the opportunity to discuss their learning through every 6-week enquiry cycle of Discovery RE, and within every assessment task is a question aimed at them identifying their own thoughts and feelings around the topic they have been studying.

3. Character development: hope, aspiration, and courageous advocacy

This section investigates how well the school's Christian vision and values supports the character and moral development of all pupils. It goes on to examine how well this gives pupils aspirations for themselves and hope for the communities of which they are a part. The final expectation is that schools inspire social action and help children to gain a sense of agency to become courageous advocates for change.

The character and moral development of pupils is supported through the investigative approach and the open-ended nature of the questions. Many encourage the children to consider what they think is right or wrong, to weigh up evidence, analyse and synthesise information, all important skills supporting pupils' moral and character development.

Although Discovery RE is not intended to be a specific vehicle for social action, aspects of some enquiries could be enhanced with this aim in mind, and evidence from these enquiries could help to improve children's understanding of the need for social action. For example, when looking at Islam, children encounter Muslim Aid which leads them to consider what they would give or how they feel about the concept. This could then act as platform to investigate what aspirations they might have for their local community.

In these ways, children are encouraged to be advocates of change both within themselves and the wider community.

Jigsaw, the mindful approach to PSHE, has a 6-week module for each year group entitled Dreams and Goals, which specifically nurtures agency and social responsibility as well as personal goal setting.

4. Community and living well together

This section is not only about forgiveness and reconciliation, but also specifically refers to the need to *“embrace difference”*.

The descriptors for this section include mental health, forgiveness and behaviour policies, most naturally supported by the PSHE programme but enhanced by Discovery RE in its study of the concepts underpinning the core beliefs of the religions considered, e.g. forgiveness is explicitly studied in the Year 4 Easter enquiry “Is forgiveness always possible for Christians?”. Each enquiry starts by helping children resonate with the underpinning core concept they will encounter in that enquiry e.g. commitment, love, peace, reconciliation, thus constructing a 'bridge' between their own world and the world of the religion to be studied.

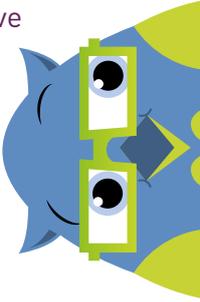
The areas examined here include how the Christian vision and values underpin relationships at all levels allowing pupils to disagree and practise forgiveness, and expect to see this reflected in the school behaviour (and exclusion) policies. Obviously, Discovery RE has no explicit role in designing behaviour policies (unlike Jigsaw PSHE), but the enquiry approach allows children to disagree in a context of acceptance and understanding, using the knowledge about the religion they have been studying to support their views. This leads to discussion and debate allowing learners to *“feel they can confidently express their views and concerns and... be listened to”*.



5. Dignity and respect

This section looks at how the school environment enables all pupils to be able to flourish, no matter what their background, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, nationality, religion or sexual orientation.

Experiencing high quality RE, using the Discovery RE programme, will enable children to recognise and see past prejudices and stereotypes to consider the religions they study from a rational and positive starting point. Christian aspects can easily be interwoven into this by including specific language relating to how we are all *“unique and wonderfully made”*.



6. The impact of collective worship

Although Discovery RE has no direct impact on Collective Worship, a suite of assemblies is in the pipeline (with Bible references, hymns and prayers for Church schools) based on each of the enquiries studied within Discovery RE. This will allow all children to gain further understanding of the principal religions studied including Christianity.

7. The effectiveness of Religious Education

As stated in the SIAMS documentation *“RE should be non-confessional and is considered an academic subject.”*

It goes on to say that inspectors will consider the Locally Agreed Syllabus for VC schools and former VC schools. Discovery RE has been mapped to nearly every syllabus in the country and these mapping documents can be requested from www.discoveryschemeofwork.com/agreed-syllabi/

The creator and authors of Discovery RE absolutely believe in the academic rigour of high quality RE. Within Discovery RE there is a 4- step learning process: Engagement – Investigation – Evaluation – Expression with a colour-coded assessment system built in. Assessment is rigorous with both descriptors and exemplars provided to assist teachers to assess children’s learning progress. This enables the subject leader to easily monitor the subject as the expectation of what will be recorded is explicit in every enquiry (although more could easily be added if desired) and tracking grids are provided to enable both the class teacher and subject leader to identify and address any gaps.

As a stand-alone scheme of work, through the addition of three extra Key Stage Two Christianity units on The Trinity, The New Covenant and The Gospels, Discovery RE more than meets the Church of England Statement of Entitlement (e.g.in Key Stage 1, 4 out of the 6 enquiries studied each year focus on Christianity). Some schools are choosing to integrate Discovery RE with Understanding Christianity to ensure that they are utilising Church resources to teach Christianity. With the Church’s support, these have been fully mapped to Discovery RE and a mapping document showing where Discovery units can be exchanged for UC is shown. www.discoveryschemeofwork.com/using-discovery-re-and-understanding-christianity-together/



Point (b) in this section asks,

“How well does RE enable all pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of other world religions and world views and their impact on society and culture”.

Discovery RE gives the potential to study Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism alongside Christianity (we advise to teach only Christianity plus one other principal religion per year group). Wherever possible or relevant to the learners, the concepts/beliefs/theology of these religions are explained in a way which also incorporates an element of “the believer in today’s world/culture/Britain/wider community” and considers how their faith impacts on the way they live their lives.

Point (c) asks ***“How well does RE give pupils a safe space to critically reflect on their own religious, spiritual and/or philosophical convictions”.***

As stated above, pupils have ample time, as allotted by the class teacher within the short-term planning, to consider their own convictions regarding the Enquiry Question during the Investigation phase. Explicitly within the evaluation (assessment) lesson (week 5) and the expression lesson (week 6) pupils have these opportunities. Children also have the facility (and the training) to respond critically and responsibly to their learning.

As far as the second section of the questions within this section are concerned, although the remit of Discovery RE is exhausted insofar as these are decisions for senior leaders of the school, our Subject Leader Manual (and the training we can provide for subject leaders) could be invaluable. Subject leader and Discovery RE training is available by contacting sue@janlevergroup.com and can be tailored to meet the needs of each school.

The second descriptor for a ‘Good’ school describes RE teaching in the light of Christianity only and discusses the need for an understanding between British culture (for a detailed mapping of Discovery RE against British Values see www.discoveryschemeofwork.com/british-values/ and the school’s need to keep an open and diverse view of Christianity. Discovery RE goes some way towards this, incorporating views that include branches of Christianity such as references to Catholicism and the Salvation Army. Because of its structure as medium-term planning, teachers or RE leaders can always specify more.

Several of the grade descriptors focus on the leadership of the subject, and the data available through assessment. Through rigorous and termly assessment of children’s learning progress, enabled by Discovery RE, it is possible for subject leaders to collect this data and make comparisons with both progress over time and other subjects.

In larger schools with more than single-form entry, it also allows them to compare classes within a year group and thus identify where teachers may need more support or training. This allows them to identify and close gaps. As far as the time allowance is concerned, Discovery RE assumes approximately an hour per week, although e.g. the investigative lessons could be rolled into one ‘RE day’ to allow uninterrupted depth and breadth of study. Although it is medium-term planning, Discovery RE aids the subject leader in resourcing as much as possible through suggested texts and online resources and provides all assessment tasks and resources for every enquiry. This will support the RE leader in feeling confident that age and religion appropriate resources are being utilised in every lesson.



At Discovery RE, we fully embrace the role of Diocesan Advisers in supporting schools pre-SIAMS and particularly in facilitating the design of their vision and values rooted in a Christian narrative. However, if you would like Discovery RE training, or as the subject leader you would like training or a bespoke visit from a Discovery RE specialist consultant, to support with any aspects of SIAMS and/or RE, you are welcome to contact the Discovery RE Team.

All quotations in italics taken from “Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) 2018 which can be found at www.churchofengland.org/more/education-and-schools/church-schools-and-academies/siams-school-inspections

Alison Harris, Senior Discovery RE Consultant
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