



Guidance for the publishers of educational resources

Publishers, editors, authors – are you sure that when your publications deal with religion, they...

- are factually correct?
- are sensitive and will not cause offence to readers?
- convey a fair and balanced view of religious traditions?
- carry an authentic voice?

We do not underestimate the difficulties of writing about religion. The subject matter is complex, dynamic and sensitive, far from easy to convey in the concise and straightforward way required in some school resources. In Religious Education, there is a wide variety of locally agreed syllabuses, and different kinds of school approach the subject differently, but there is a shared concern that resources should be lively and accurate.

The Religious Education Council therefore offers the following guidance in order to:

- assist in the provision of well resourced, good quality Religious Education.
- facilitate the accurate presentation of beliefs and practices in textbooks and other resources for primary and secondary schools, and across the curriculum in subjects such as Citizenship, Sociology, PSHE, Geography, and History.
- foster better understanding of religious beliefs and practices.
- encourage adequate research and fact-checking.
- help authors navigate the complexities of the subject and avoid misrepresentation and offence.

What is the Religious Education Council of England and Wales?

The REC represents the collective interests of a wide variety of professional associations and faith communities with an interest in deepening and strengthening provision for RE.

Contact the REC, c/o RE Today / CE, 1020 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6LB.

www.religiouseducationcouncil.org

Publishers and editors – please feel free to photocopy this advice and distribute it to staff and authors who may find it useful. Further printed copies can be obtained by contacting woodg@methodistchurch.org.uk. The guidance can also be downloaded from www.religiouseducationcouncil.org

● BALANCE ● AUTHENTICITY ● ACCURACY ● SENSITIVITY ●

● Accuracy

It is possible (and often necessary, particularly for younger and less able pupils) to summarise beliefs and practices clearly. However, care needs to be taken to avoid over-simplification or omissions that can lead to distortion. Authors and editors should bear in mind that religious traditions are rarely homogeneous, and that they develop and change.

Expert advisers should be involved at all key production stages, right up to completion of a book

● Sources

It is good practice to consult academics, faith organisations and primary sources to ensure accurate representation of religious traditions.

Relying solely on single or secondary sources is liable to result in inaccuracies; for example, using previously published school textbooks as the main source of information may perpetuate errors or distortions.

Provenance and context of quotations, e.g. from individuals, sacred texts and other documents, should be given.

● Consultation

Ensure that all advisers are aware of the educational purpose of the resource (for example, it is not aimed at converting pupils).

We recommend seeking advice from a range of believers. The beliefs and practices of one person, however senior or committed, rarely represent the diversity found within his or her religion.

An authentic authoritative voice is essential.

● Diversity

If the beliefs and practices represented are typical of one section of believers but not of others (for example, on the role of women in Judaism) this should be made clear in the text. If one voice is featured (for example, in an interview) it should be made clear that this is one of many possible perspectives. Ideally a range of voices would be included.

● Perspective

Make clear the viewpoint and credentials of your writers and advisers (e.g. in an author's preface).

● Revisions

Text books, even the most popular ones, should be revised and updated regularly – reprinting can be an ideal opportunity to do this.

● Terminology

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) publishes a *Glossary of Terms* for RE that has been widely circulated and checked. We recommend that this glossary is used by authors and editors to check that the currently acceptable spellings, definitions and terminology are used. It can be downloaded from

<http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/subjects/re/>

● Illustrations

Photographs, artists' impressions, cartoons, omitted / incomplete illustrations and mislabelling can offend and distort as much as textual errors.

● Assumptions

Authors should be aware that the assumptions underlying some questions and discussion topics can offend some religious believers.

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Examples of good practice

- Using “Many Hindus believe...” or “Some Hindus believe...” rather than “Hindus believe...”
- Reflecting accurately gender balance, range of practices, ethnicity and cultures within religions, in text and illustrations.
- Checking acceptability of terminology to the faith group in question, for example “the Bahá’í Faith”, not “Bahá’ism”.
- Using original terminology rather than inaccurate translations, for example “dharma” rather than “religion”.
- Focusing on beliefs and practices which are of real importance in each religious tradition, rather than making all religions conform to one model. For example, festivals are not of equal importance in all religious traditions.
- Focusing on genuinely significant festivals, rather than those that conform to a pre-chosen theme or are easy to illustrate. For example, Hannukah is not a major Jewish festival, though it appears in many primary school texts.
- Focusing on religious and spiritual dimensions rather than simply or mainly on transient political issues.
- Relating beliefs and practices to the life experience of the reader.

What other guidance is available on Religious Education

- on the law on RE?

In most schools the content of RE is determined locally, but there are some basic legal requirements that:

the school curriculum should promote the “spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils”;

the agreed syllabus should “reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are, in the main, Christian, while taking account of teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain” (*Education Act 1996*).

Further guidance was given in DfE *Circular 1/94 (10/94 in Wales)*, for example that “syllabuses must be non-denominational... [and] not be designed to convert pupils or urge a particular religion or religious belief on pupils.”

- on Agreed Syllabuses?

Local Standing Advisory Councils on RE and local RE advisers, the National Association of SACREs and the Association of RE Advisers, Inspectors and Consultants (AREIAC) may be able to help. Though syllabuses vary, and local Agreed Syllabus Conferences make efforts to reflect the range of beliefs found in the local community in their syllabuses, they also have much in common, arising from the legal requirements and (often) QCA guidance.

- on the RE curriculum?

The QCA and, in Wales, ACCAC are good sources of general (though non-statutory) guidance. For example QCA's *Religious Education Model Syllabuses* (1994) offers guidance on content, and QCA's non-statutory schemes of work for RE and *Non-statutory guidance on RE* (2000) give further guidance:

“RE develops pupils’ knowledge and understanding of, and ability to respond to, Christianity and the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. By exploring issues within and across faiths, pupils learn to understand and respect different religions, beliefs, values and traditions (including ethical life stances), and their influence on individuals, societies, communities and cultures.

RE encourages pupils to consider questions of meaning and purpose in life. Pupils learn about religious and ethical teaching, enabling them to make reasoned and informed judgements...

RE develops pupils’ skills of enquiry and response. RE encourages pupils to reflect on, analyse and evaluate their beliefs...

RE does not seek to urge religious beliefs on pupils nor compromise the integrity of their own beliefs by promoting one religion over another...”

- on the requirements of faith groups?

Please consult the faith groups, which can provide recommendations and advice. See over.

Who can authors and editors consult?

It is not always easy to find people who represent the diversity found within any worldview and who understand what pupils and teachers need, and there is a wide range of organisations within different faith groups. The list that follows is of member-organisations of the REC that may be willing to offer authoritative advice and fact-checking. These organisations represent, or can find, members from the diverse elements within their communities, and many of them have education officers or departments that understand the requirements of schools. They should be able to provide assistance, accurate information, quotable literature, and readers. Some of these organisations may charge a fee to cover their costs.

Bahá'í Faith

Bahá'í Office of Religious and Educational Affairs (BOREA),
c/o 27 Rutland Gate, London SW7 1PD.
Phone: 020 7584 2566; email: borea@oxenton.demon.co.uk

Buddhism

General Secretary, The Buddhist Society, 58 Eccleston
Square, London SW1V 1PH. Phone: 020 7834 5858;
fax 020 7976 5238; email: info@thebuddhistsociety.org.uk ;
website: <http://www.thebuddhistsociety.org.uk/>

Education Officer, The Clear Vision Trust, 16–20 Turner Street,
Manchester M4 1DZ.
Phone: 0161 839 9579; fax: 0161 839 4815; email:
education@clear-vision.org ; website: www.clear-vision.org

Christianity

The Church of England Board of Education, Church House,
Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ.
Phone 020 7898 1491 or 020 7898 1518;
fax:020 7898 1493; email: info@natsoc.c-of-e.org.uk or
pat.barton@natsoc.c-of-e.org.uk ;
website: <http://www.natsoc.org.uk>

Catholic Education Service for England and Wales,
39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX.
Phone: 020 7901 4880; fax: 020 7901 4893; email:
general@cesew.org.uk ; website: <http://www.cesew.org.uk>

Free Church Education Unit, 25 Marylebone Road, London
NW1 5JR. Phone: 020 7467 3783;
email: woodg@methodistchurch.org.uk

Hinduism

ISKCON Educational Services. Bhaktivedanta Manor, Hilfield
Lane, Aldenham, Herts, WD25 8EZ. Phone: 01865 304309;
email: ies@pamho.net ; website: www.iskon.org.uk/ies

The Secretary, The National Council of Hindu Temples,
The Sanatan Mandir, Weymouth Street, Leicester, LE4 6FP.
Phone: 07958 464072

Humanism

Education Officer, British Humanist Association,
47 Theobalds Road, London WC1X 8SP.
Phone: 020 7430 0908; fax: 020 7430 1271;
e-mail: education@humanism.org.uk ;
website: www.humanism.org.uk

Islam

Education Officer, Muslim Educational Trust, 130 Stroud
Green Road, London N4 3RZ. Phone: 020 7272 8502;
fax: 020 7281 3457; email: enquiries@muslim-ed-trust.org.uk ;
website: <http://www.muslim-ed-trust.org.uk>

Education Department, The London Central Mosque Trust &
Islamic Cultural Centre, 146 Park Road, London NW8 7RG.
Phone: 020 7724 3363; fax: 020 7724 0493;

email: islamic2000@aol.com ;
website: <http://www.islamicculturalcentre.co.uk>

Judaism

Education Officer, Board of Deputies of British Jews,
6 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2LP.
Phone: 020 7543 5421; fax 020 7543 0010;
email: education@bod.org.uk ; website: www.bod.org.uk

Sikhism

Working Group On Sikhs and Education (WORKSE),
32 Elsham Road, London W14 8HB.
Email: WORKSE_UK@yahoo.com

General

The RE Directory website is an invaluable source of
information and contacts. See www.theredirectory.org.uk

The Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants
(AREIAC) is a source of potential consultants who could be
accessed through the association but would give advice
personally. See <http://www.areiac.org.uk>

National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on RE
(NASACRE), Westhill RE Centre, University of Birmingham
School of Education, Selly Oak Campus, Birmingham B29
6LL. Phone: 020 7901 4880; fax: 020 7901 4893

Welsh Association of SACREs (WASACRE), 2 Penilys Terrace,
Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2AT. Phone 01248 353121;
email: meinirevans@hotmail.com

Welsh National Centre for RE, University of Wales Bangor,
Normal Site (Meirion), Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2PX.
Phone: 01248 382956; fax 01248 383954;
email: I.j.francis@bangor.ac.uk ;
website: <http://www.bangor.ac.uk/rs/wncrc>

Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education,
PO Box 38580, London SW1P

Stapleford Centre, Education Projects Manager, The Old Lace
Mill, Frederick Road, Stapleford, Nottingham NG9 8FN.
Phone:0115 939 6270; email: afarnell@stapleford-centre.org ;
website: www.stapeleford-centre.org

Christian Education / RE Services / PCFRE,
1020 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LB.
Phone: 0121 474 4242; fax 0121 472 7575;
e-mail: director@christianeducation.org.uk ;
website: www.christianeducation.org.uk

Inter Faith

The Inter Faith Network for the UK is willing to give advice
and contacts on inter faith issues.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK, 5–7 Tavistock Place,
London WC1H 9SN. Phone: 020 7388 0008;
fax: 020 7388 7124; email: ifnet@interfaith.org.uk ;
website: www.interfaith.org.uk