

curriculum in primary practice

# religious education

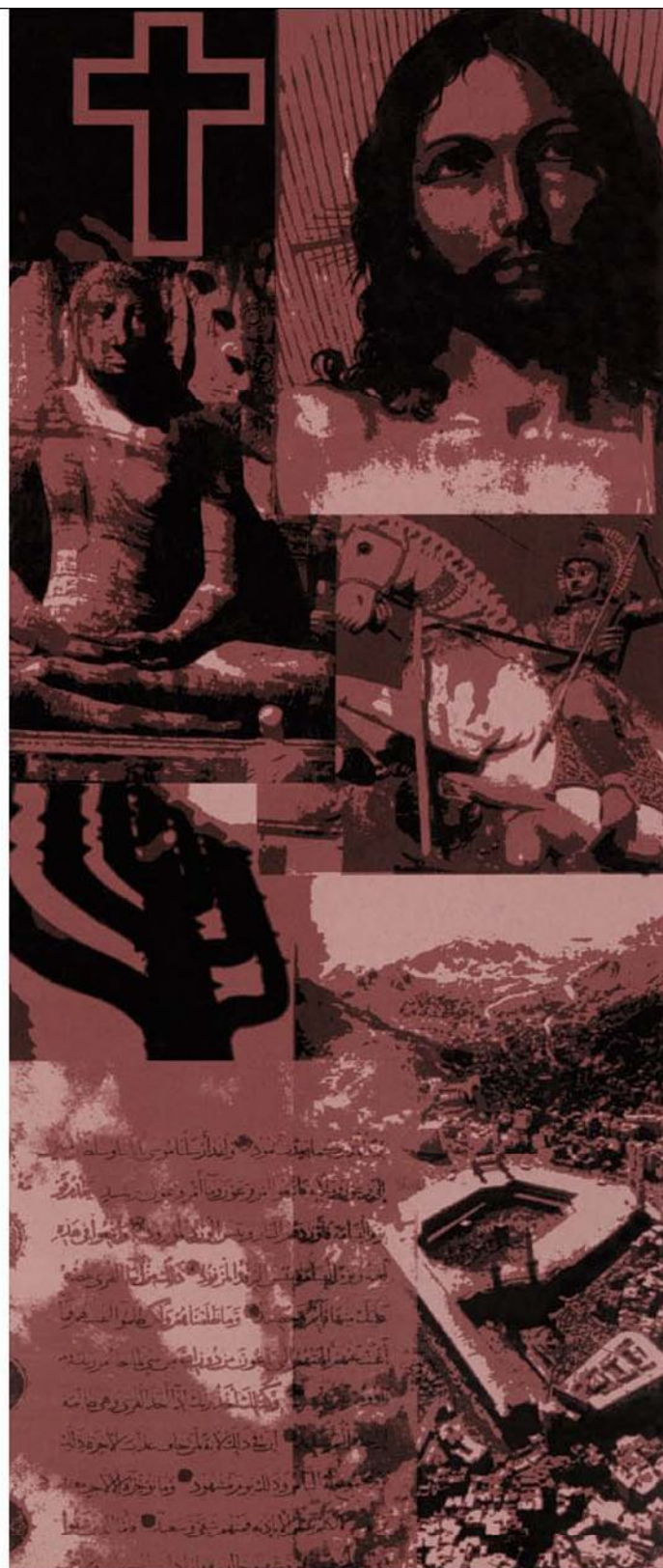
# 7-11

developing primary  
teaching skills

terence copley



ROUTLEDGE



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## Religious education 7–11

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The place of religious education in the primary curriculum is an ambiguous one for many teachers. Terence Copley, well known for his many publications in the RE field, here clarifies the legal framework, including problem areas like the withdrawal of children from the subject. He looks at the key principles and concepts involved in teaching the main areas of religious education—world faiths, Christianity, education for spiritual development and so on—and also at practical issues of classroom organisation, for instance how to obtain artefacts and how to prepare for visits to places of worship. The book contains work on teacher competencies to enable teachers to monitor their own performance and hints on how RE work can fulfil curriculum requirements in other subjects.

**Terence Copley** is currently senior lecturer in RE at the School of Education, Exeter University.

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General editor: Clive Carré

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The Curriculum in primary practice series is aimed at students and qualified teachers looking to improve their practice within the context of the National Curriculum. The large format, easy to use texts are interactive, encouraging teachers to engage in professional development as they read. Each contains:

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Developing primary teaching skills

Terence Copley



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# Contents

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List of figures	vii
Preface	ix
Acknowledgements	xi
1 The legal framework for RE	1
2 Planning for RE	11
3 Story and truth in RE	25
4 Exploring world religions	37
5 Exploring Christianity	43
6 Exploring spirituality	53
7 Using visits and visitors	63
8 Assessment in RE	67
9 Important issues associated with RE	79
Appendix I Etiquette in places of worship	85
Appendix II Jehovah's Witnesses	88
Appendix III Answers to questions in the text	90
Appendix IV How SACREs are organized	93
Bibliography	94
Index	99



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# Figures

---

1.1	Key Stage 1 map, Solihull syllabus	4
2.1	What does God mean to you? Year 4, Hindu	12
2.2	What does God mean to you? Year 4, Muslim	13
2.3	What does God mean to you? Year 4, Christian	13
2.4	Newham KS1 EKSS	15
2.5	Sefton KS1 EKSS	16
2.6	Newcastle upon Tyne KS2 map	17
2.7	Solihull KS2 map	18
2.8	Easter, March 1991. Finding the hidden eggs	21
3.1	Adam and Eve: how true? Year 5	26
3.2	Adam and Eve: how true? Year 5	27
3.3	Adam and Eve: how true? Year 5	27
6.1	(a) A thank you tree	58
6.1	(b) Parents visit an 'outdoor classroom'	59
6.2	'Stilling'	61
8.1	Journeys self-assessment, KS1, FARE Project	69
8.2	Christmas prioritizing exercises, KS1, FARE Project	70
8.3	Visit record sheet, KS2, FARE Project	71
8.4	Reflective diary	72
8.5	KS2 assessment scheme from the FARE Report: What Happened When?	75
8.6	KS2 assessment scheme from the FARE Report: Good Friday Thoughts	76



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# Preface

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Surely RE is covered by the PSE programme?

If RE's everywhere in the curriculum I suppose I can do anything I like and call it RE.

I'm rather confused about my own beliefs, so I leave RE to the teachers who're sure.

As a non-Christian I couldn't in conscience teach RE.

We may all have heard these sorts of remarks in primary school staffrooms by teachers who for various reasons are diffident about treating RE as they treat other subjects. At its extreme I saw this attitude in an INSET session I was leading. During a perfectly routine and uncontroversial discussion I noticed a middle-aged infants teacher in the group *crying*. The reason was not because she had been sent on the course by her head—though this was true!—but because she had never faced up to all sorts of doubts and confusions in her own mind about RE and her own religious beliefs and disbeliefs, nor had she studied RE since her own childhood, and all these issues had suddenly come to the surface. She was positively and helpfully supported at the time by colleagues on the course, but I have often wondered what happened to her afterwards. This book is for her, and all teachers with similar doubts and confusions. It aims to set the record straight for RE, which would probably not, as many claim, get the prize for the hardest subject to teach, but could well be the winner of the award for the most misunderstood or the one for which teachers are least prepared during their initial training.

It is sometimes said that children are antipathetic or apathetic towards religion and therefore to RE. This is misleading. What children are hostile to or at best politely indifferent towards is having religion thrust down their throats. Experience teaches the teacher that children find fascinating the questions religions grapple with, the stories that religions tell, and the opportunity to question and discuss or argue with religious people or to visit religious shrines and sites. Much that religions have to tell in a secular society is 'new' to children and far from being hostile to RE they are readily prepared to be interested in the issues raised.

Some teachers find that their own attitudes towards RE stem from their personal attitudes—of enthusiasm, dislike and all the stages in between—towards religion itself. Many are very much aware that they received insufficient initial training in RE and all teachers are subject to the pressures imposed by the delivery of the National Curriculum. There is sometimes an understandable tendency to reduce RE to a very low priority in the classroom.

This book is intended to provide theoretical and practical help to enable more effective teaching and learning in classroom RE. It may also be useful to students in training and to staff groups undertaking school-based INSET.

Religions have learned over many millennia long before popular education or national curricula existed to use story, to use symbols, to use simple teaching, to put over profound truth claims. Without that they would have been intellectual hobbies for a minority and not world religions at all. Religious education can cash in on these teaching insights from religions as well as using the latest, modern educational techniques and technologies of delivery and assessment. In the primary school, RE is likely to continue to be taught in wider topics as well as in the discrete subject units with older children currently favoured by government. I have tried to write with both user contexts in view, because they do not constitute an either-or approach to the subject but complement each other. Whatever the current government trend in teaching and learning might be, there are good educational reasons for creating some RE-led topics. Without them the rather random appearances of RE within other topic work (journeys, our village, India, etc.) are not likely in themselves to provide sufficient or coherent understanding of religious material nor to meet the requirements of agreed syllabuses or of OFSTED inspection. When RE appears as a topic leader or as a legitimate part of another project, sensitively undertaken, teachers and pupils will enjoy learning together and parents will be equally intrigued by the issues and questions that are raised at home in the course of the exploration.

Terence Copley  
School of Education,  
University of Exeter, 1994

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- The KS2 map from the Newcastle upon Tyne syllabus available from Newcastle upon Tyne LEA, Civic Centre, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 9PU
- The KS1 EKSS from the Sefton syllabus, available from Sefton LEA, Education Offices, Burlington House, Crosby Road North, Waterloo, Liverpool L22 0LG
- The KS1 EKSS from Newham syllabus, available from Newham LEA, Education Offices, 379 High Street, Stratford, London E15 4RD
- The KS1 and 2 maps from Solihull syllabus, available from Solihull LEA, Education Offices, PO Box 20, Council House, Solihull B91 3QU

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