

How to use levels of attainment - a summary

Purposes

- assessment of pupils' work is a necessary part of the learning process;
- its purposes include the affirmation of attainment and achievement, the necessary recording and reporting of pupil progress, and helping the pupil to take the next step in learning;
- the levels of attainment provide a 'criterion-referenced' measure of attainment.

Planning

- teachers should use the language of the level descriptors to inform the way intended learning outcomes are expressed;
- teachers should clearly identify the focus and method of assessment from the outset;
- the critical question to address at the planning stage is 'what must I do, in this topic, to enable the pupil to consolidate working at their present level and create the opportunity to begin to work at the next level?'

Gathering evidence

- when gathering evidence teachers will be able to draw on the full range of work produced by pupils, in the normal everyday teaching and learning process;
- teachers should focus on the clarity of evidence collected and on making brief telling annotations in relation to significant attainments.

Best-fit

- more 'a subtle art than an exact science';
- made across a range of work over a period of time;
- in relation to single pieces of work they can be deemed to contribute to the best-fit judgement.

Making judgements

- teachers will be making professional judgements about pupils' performance almost continuously to ensure further learning;
- these judgements will lead to a cumulative judgement about attainment;
- teachers will need to decide whether a pupil's performance taken as a whole over a period of time has been more one level than another (best-fit judgement);
- the attainment within any level may be described as 'hesitant', 'secure' or 'confident';
- the process of making judgements about pupil attainment will inform decisions about future planning.

A chart of progression

- the levels of attainment provide a chart of educational progression;
- however, progress through the levels will not be accomplished automatically, appropriate challenge will have to be provided.

Reinforce good religious education

- addressing the question 'what must I do to enable pupils to achieve a particular level, to demonstrate understanding?' will necessarily promote clearer thinking about the purposes of assessment and their contribution to good religious education.

Levels of Attainment in Religious Education

AT1: Learning about Religion:
Knowledge and Understanding of:

AT 2: Learning from Religion:
Reflection on Meaning

Strand	i) beliefs, teachings and sources	ii) celebration and ritual	iii) social and moral practices and way of life	i) engagement with own and others' beliefs and values	ii) engagement with questions of meaning and purpose
Level	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils
1	Recognise some religious stories	Recognise some religious signs and symbols and use some religious words and phrases	Recognise that people because of their religion act in a particular way	Talk about their own experiences and feelings	Say what they wonder about
2	Retell some special stories about religious events and people	Use religious words and phrases to describe some religious actions and symbols	Describe some ways in which religion is lived out by believers	Ask and respond to questions about their own and others' experiences and feelings	Ask questions about what they and others wonder about and realise that some of these questions are difficult to answer
3	Make links between religious stories and beliefs	Use a developing religious vocabulary to give reasons for religious actions and symbols	Give reasons for certain actions by believers	Make links to show how feelings and beliefs affect their behaviour and that of others	Compare their own and other people's ideas about questions that are difficult to answer
4	Describe and show understanding of religious sources, beliefs, ideas, feelings and experiences; making links between them	Use religious terms to show an understanding of different liturgies	Show understanding of how religious belief shapes life	Show how own and others' decisions are informed by beliefs and values	Engage with and respond to questions of life in the light of religious teaching
5	Identify sources of religious belief and explain how distinctive religious beliefs arise	Describe and explain the meaning and purpose of a variety of forms of worship	Identify similarities and differences between peoples' responses to social and moral issues because of their beliefs	Explain what beliefs and values inspire and influence them and others	Demonstrate how religious beliefs and teaching give some explanation of the purpose and meaning of human life
6	Explain how sources and arguments are used in different ways by different traditions to provide answers to questions of religious belief, ultimate questions and ethical issues	Explain the significance for believers of different forms of religious and spiritual celebration	Explain how religious beliefs and teaching influence moral values and behaviour	Express insights into the reasons for their own and others' beliefs and values and the challenges of belonging to a religion	Explain with reference to religious beliefs their own and others' answers to questions of meaning
7	Show a coherent understanding of faith, religion and belief using a variety of sources and evidence	Use a wide religious and philosophical vocabulary to show a coherent understanding of religious celebration	Critically evaluate the ways of life of religious groups with reference to their history and culture and show a coherent understanding of differences	Articulate their own critical response(s) to different religious beliefs and world views	Evaluate religious and non-religious views and beliefs on questions of meaning and purpose
8	Analyse a range of faiths, religions, beliefs and teachings, making reference to the texts used and how adherents interpret them	Use a comprehensive religious and philosophical vocabulary to analyse and interpret varied religious and spiritual expression	Show a coherent understanding of the impact of a belief system on the way of life of individuals, communities and societies	Critically analyse and justify own and others' religious beliefs and world views	Synthesise a range of evidence, arguments, reflections and examples to justify their own views and ideas on questions of meaning and purpose
EP	Provide a coherent and detailed analysis of faith, religion and belief	Evaluate in depth the nature of religious and spiritual expression in contemporary society	Provide a coherent, philosophical and evaluative account of the relationship between belief systems and ways of life	Provide independent, well-informed and highly reasoned insights into their own and others' religious beliefs and world views.	Provide an independent, informed and well-argued account of their own and others' views on questions of meaning, purpose and fulfillment with reference to religious and moral traditions and standpoints

What the strands are about

AT1 Learning about Religion: Knowledge and Understanding of

i) beliefs, teachings and sources

Here pupils will be learning about what people believe, about the faith they hold and how that helps them to make sense of the world; they will learn about the teachings of different religious traditions and the answers those traditions give to questions of meaning and purpose; they also will learn about the sources that different traditions use to guide them in their understanding of faith, belief and practice; they will learn how to engage critically with such source material.

ii) celebration and ritual

In this strand pupils will be looking at the ways in which faith is celebrated; how that takes different forms in different times and for different traditions; they will be able to explore different liturgies (the public worship of the Church) and different rituals (such as the festivals of a different tradition) and the place of actions, words and symbols within them; they will learn about the significance of these celebrations for believers and see how the spiritual life can be analysed and expressed.

iii) social and moral practices and way of life

Pupils will learn about the ways behaviour is influenced by what people believe, whether that is in religious practice (e.g. actions) or their general way of life, for example the ways in which the Catholic Christian interacts with the world; they will learn about the ways in which religious belief shapes their lives and the way they see and interpret society and the world; they will learn to understand the religious and moral basis for certain belief systems.

AT2 Learning from Religion: Reflection on meaning

i) engagement with own and others' beliefs and values

Throughout this strand pupils will be reflecting on beliefs and values; by talking, exploring, discussing, thinking, responding and questioning, pupils will be increasingly able to structure and articulate their thoughts; they will be able to listen attentively to others and come to understand and empathise with others' views, beliefs and values; they will develop the ability to engage critically with their own and others' religious beliefs and world views.

ii) engagement with questions of meaning and purpose

In this strand pupils will be confronting the difficult questions which all people have to face; they will be thinking critically about their own questions of meaning and purpose and about the ways in which people of all faiths and none have struggled with similar questions; they will be exploring the evidence and arguments used by people of different faiths and other traditions to justify their position; they will be developing the ability to express their own point of view.

Strand	Journeying in reflection and contemplation
Level	Pupils
1	Reflect quietly
2	Participate in periods of reflection in response to a given stimulus
3	Show understanding of the importance of stillness and quiet during times of reflection and prayer
4	Demonstrate an appreciation of the elements needed for reflection and contemplation or prayer (places, times, foci, stimuli)
5	Explore how different situations are conducive to reflection and contemplation or prayer
6	Discern how different forms of reflection and contemplation or prayer can be important in people's lives
7	Express creatively, linguistically or through other media, how reflection and contemplation can give people insights into their own lives and their relationships with God
8	Reflect and analyse with others different views people hold on the worth of reflection and contemplation or prayer
EP	Reflect quietly

Reflection and contemplation

This strand, formerly part d of AT2, is presented here as a quite discrete aspect. This is to emphasise the point that it will not be subject to assessment in the same way as the levels of attainment themselves. However, these levels may inform the provision of opportunities for growth in reflection and contemplation.

It also recognises the significant part that reflection and contemplation play in the spiritual development of pupils. In this way it contributes to the pupil's ability 'to think spiritually, ethically and theologically'.

It is both improper and impossible to assess such spiritual development and so this strand simply marks out the steps that might be taken in terms of progression in reflection and contemplation. In this way it is more aspirational than evaluative and judgemental.

Nevertheless real steps may be marked out in ways similar to those used in the levels of attainment. However there is a circularity about this journey which is captured by Eliot's lines:

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploration
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."

This thought from Eliot reminds us of the sense in which 'reflect quietly' (L1 & EP) is both the starting point and the end point of the journey. Except of course that at EP the wanderer is more fully aware of the journey that has been made, of all the intervening steps which are now integrated into his/her reflection.

Above all it is a journey to be relished and delighted in.

Exemplification of work at level 3

Context

The piece of work was the pupil's evaluation of what they had learnt in the topic Signs and Symbols. The Relate aspect of this topic focused on the signs and symbols used in Baptism and Confirmation and links between the two sacraments. Children are encouraged to use key vocabulary in their evaluation.

Pupil's work

Signs and symbols - what I know now by Louise

Babies are baptised so they can become a member of God's family. John the Baptist reminds me of baptism. John the Baptist baptised Jesus.

Candles are a sign that God is the light of the world and God is always with us. Holy water is poured on your head and it means you have no more sins in you. The oil of chrism is rubbed on you and it is a sign of strength. The shawl is wrapped around you and it is a sign of you are clean.

People are confirmed so they can pick a saint's name that would be part of their name. The people that are making confirmation chose to be a Christian. You have to make your own promise. Pentecost reminds me of Confirmation. Pentecost is when the wind and flame comes.

You get the oil of chrism on you. You get a candle. You have to pick a sponsor to help you if you are stuck.

You have a very important job you have to live like God did and like a Christian. It is important after Confirmation to really expect to live like God. The cross is important because God died on it.

Teacher's annotation

You learnt lots. Signs and symbols are important reminders of our beliefs and the lessons from the Bible. To improve: Put spellings in your word book to use in the future. The teacher had written the correct spellings of the following words in the margin: Shawl, purity, choices and Holy Spirit.

Evidence

The task had a primary focus on AT1 Strand ii, but the pupil is able to make the link between the story of the baptism of Jesus and infant baptism (AT1 Level 3 Strand i). In relation to Strand ii she has gone beyond description of religious actions and symbols so she achieves better than Level 2. She uses a developing religious vocabulary to explain the meaning of the actions and symbols of the ceremony of baptism (AT1 Level 3), but struggles to explain those of confirmation. There is a beginning of the use of religious terms to show an understanding of the different liturgies of baptism and confirmation, but it is insufficiently developed to indicate any competence at Level 4.

Link to website

Further examples will be found on the aforementioned website www.cesew.org.uk as they become available.

In this publication, wherever examples of pupils work are used, any spelling errors have been corrected but the syntax remains that of the pupil.