

Mary Immaculate Catholic High School

Religious Studies More Able and Talented Policy

Identifying MAT Pupils in RE

When identifying More Able and Talented pupils in Religious Studies, the following is considered when the pupils transit from primary to secondary school:

- Primary school recommendations and assessment levels;
- NRT standardised test scores;
- Subject teacher nominations; and
- Pupil and peer nomination.

In order to quality assure this information, Religious Studies staff must make their own assessment before any pupils are added to the MAT list. Teachers should use the following as evidence that a child may be MAT in RE:

- The type of questions that young people ask in the classroom;
- Verbal responses to questions, tasks, visiting speakers, visits;
- Contributions to class discussions and debates;
- Classroom written assignments;
- Homework assignments; and
- Level of interest and attitude in the classroom.

In order for staff to make these assessment correctly, the following criteria is shared:

Reflect:	Can reflect on experiences with ease
Enquire:	Can enquire with ease: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• planning appropriate methods of enquiry• finding out about religion from various sources• applying knowledge• using appropriate forms of questioning• asking insightful questions• listening carefully• acquiring new religious vocabulary• selecting, organising, recording and recalling information
Empathise:	Can empathise with ease: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identifying religious phenomenon• appreciating feelings of religiously committed• appreciating forms of worship, beliefs, commitment of others
Reason:	Can reason with ease: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• analysing information• responding to assumptions• discerning beyond the obvious and ordinary• classifying arguments• formulating logical arguments• supporting personal views with sound reasons and evidence• displaying original thinking• willing to explore and try to understand conceptual ideas• sensitivity to or awareness of the numinous/mysterious in life

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making connections between and within religions • making sense of and drawing meaning from religious symbols, metaphors, texts and practices
Evaluate:	<p>Can evaluate with ease:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognising the significance of religious phenomenon • assessing evidence • considering implications of beliefs and actions
Communicate:	<p>Can communicate with ease:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describing religious experiences • displaying a depth of understanding • using appropriate methods to explain religious ideas • using appropriate religious language

Teaching MAT Pupils in RE

MAT pupils in RE should have access to high levels of attainment at all levels, whether they are at KS3 or KS4.

Activities should be:	It can be demotivating to experience:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • challenging • stimulating • developing their thinking skills • offering a variety of teaching and learning styles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extra work • more of the same

Planning for Teaching MAT Pupils

1. Write extension questions that will require pupils to reflect, enquire, empathise, reason or evaluate in depth e.g. as well as being able to: 'Explain **what** Christians believe about abortion'. MAT pupils could be asked to:
 - Find out whether Christians agree with the views taught in Christianity about abortion. If they do, evaluate why they agree; if not, evaluate why they may not agree.
 - Questions should go beyond 'What' to 'What if', 'What might', 'Why', 'How', 'How might' (Question Matrix).
2. Effective and valuable extension activities where pupils: record summaries on iPad technology to use as revision resources; become 'Literacy Police' to assess their peers' learning; become lead learners to support and teach their peers to develop their own mastery of a topic etc.
3. Have appropriate level source material available e.g. Pupils are involved in research using sacred texts or information from faith communities.
4. Pupils find out about different cultures where a belief system is followed and present and analyse the differences.
5. Pupils are presented with more complex uses of metaphorical or symbolic language and are encouraged to reflect upon, understand and apply these to tasks set. There should also be opportunities to look at the limitations of metaphorical language e.g. limiting the concept of God to anthropomorphic statements.
6. Use cross curricular links to extend pupils' understanding of topics e.g.

- Factual research about the Holocaust to extend understanding of conflict, war, suffering etc.
 - War poetry to encourage empathy relating to suffering, war etc.
 - Scientific research and presentations about cosmology and evolution relating to questions about the origins of the universe, the origins of mankind and the existence of God.
 - Identify religions specific to countries studied in Geography, particularly the cultural differences compared to that religion in the UK and other parts of the world; what are the reasons for the problems with human rights in particular countries; environmental issues; ethics.
 - What is it about music used for worship that inspires believers?
 - How could you show empathy with Muslims on Hajj/Jews arriving at Auschwitz through drama?
7. Introduce wider ultimate questions for consideration and encourage a philosophical approach to enquiry e.g.
 - Question of suffering (when teaching about crucifixion, animal rights, the First Noble Truth, news!)
 - Existence of God (when teaching about life after death, judgement, morality, creation stories, abortion, birth, war)
 - Life after Death (when teaching about death, funeral rites, morality)
 8. Use A/AS level Philosophy or Religion questions and ideas to stimulate thinking.
 - What does it mean to say that something is true?
 - Who/What sets the standards for morality? (and if there's no God?) Is this 'just'?
 - What does it mean to say that you 'know' something? How can you 'know'? What does it mean to say that something is 'evil'? Do some people become evil or is it more likely that we are born with a capacity to be evil?
 9. Use the Internet to ask and respond to questions. Seek responses from people representing faith communities.
 10. Research work with an open-ended question related to levels (Agreed Syllabus) or GCSE level.
 11. Referring to and using original sources, e.g. reading the biblical account of the resurrection of Jesus, not just looking at a paraphrase; setting carefully crafted extension questions, such as 'What might it mean to a Muslim to miss Hajj' instead of 'Why is it important for Muslims to go on a pilgrimage?' etc.
 12. Students are arranged in ability sets in order for the highest attaining set to extend MAT students as fully as possible.
 13. MAT pupils (and others) have been entered early for GCSE examinations allowing them to be stretched and challenged in other GCSE subjects and / or sit an extra level two qualification (Vision to Learn).
 14. Every lesson contains different 'Layers of Learning' interweaved with Bloom's Taxonomy to ensure that during essential content lessons where the learning may be less challenging still plans for Mat pupils to be stretched.
 15. Philosophy for Children is used to allow MAT students to explore challenging and philosophical ideas.
 16. Each lesson in Key Stage Four opens with an open 'Big Question' allowing MAT pupils to explore key religious ideas at length and develop / compound ideas throughout the lesson.

Monitoring MAT Pupils in RE

We recognised that it is important to monitor those pupils identified as MAT in RE. This could be achieved in some of the following ways:

Key Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom teachers should monitor progress of MAT pupils using the Eight Level Descriptors displayed in every classroom. Visits to key religious sites and engaging activities have been arranged annually. These include visits to Kintbury, Rome and London.
Key Stage 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils with target grades of A or A* should be given very clear feedback on how to develop their ideas and maintain that standard in line with Mary Immaculate High School RS department's marking policy. Pupils are encouraged to complete self-assessment activities, identifying many of their own learning needs. A department mentoring system has been developed whereby a member of staff meets with a pupil on a regular basis (KS4). This meeting ensures that the pupil feels challenged in RE and could help development of department policy on working with the MAT. An RE club for MAT pupils, across the age range. This could involve high level discussions with topics chosen by the pupils. Outside speakers have be invited in representing local faith communities, to either teach some aspect of the faith represented or be involved in discussion or a presentation. The member of staff attending could keep a record of opportunities offered for challenging pupils. Visits to key religious sites and engaging activities have been arranged annually. These include visits to Kintbury, Rome and London.

Prospects for the Future

The Religious Studies Department realise their responsibility to continue stretching and challenging our MAT pupils. Therefore, the department is currently trialling and evaluating the effectiveness of:

- **Quotes on the wall** -Quotes from scriptures, philosophical quotes, or quotes from famous people that ask profound questions or raise important issues. Quotes are changed regularly, in order to stimulate thought and discussion. MAT pupils could be encouraged to research and provide relevant quotes;
- **Debating society** (in collaboration with English) - RE lends itself to debate, as there are so many controversial issues associated with religion and morality. MAT pupils are sometimes asked to argue the opposite viewpoint to the one they hold.
- **Philosophy club** - This provides pupils with a chance for discussion of philosophical and ethical issues. Currently delivered by Chaplin but the aim is for MAT pupils to help run it;
- Peer Mentors – MAT pupils in KS4 mentor students in KS3 to develop their understanding and enthusiasm for Religious Studies.
- **Whole school writing competitions** (in collaboration with English and other humanities subjects).

Created by: R. Aldridge

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