

Appendix Q: Learning outside the classroom

Sacred Space

For all pupils visiting sacred spaces can be a powerful learning experience. Such visits are always for learning, never for participation: to visit a church and learn from it does not involve participation in Christian prayer and worship. Taking a trip to a mosque and observing the reverent communal prayer or the happy celebration of Eid does not imply acceptance of Islamic belief or submission to Islamic law, but rather an open minded willingness to explore the new and the different, to learn from religion. In this spirit, this Agreed Syllabus encourages teachers to plan for trips to places of worship.

Learning outside the classroom in RE is not only about visits to places of worship though: the experience of the natural world is celebrated in many religions and by spiritual people everywhere. The sense of place and the possibility of being uplifted, catching that 'glad to be alive' feeling that promotes spiritual development is not always evident in the classroom: it can be accessed through the learning that happens beyond the classroom. At every key stage, learning outside the classroom is encouraged in this syllabus. Some examples of the intentions and activities involved are given below, but the opportunities are limitless.

Age group	Learning in relation to sacred space: examples of practice	Learning in relation to the natural world: examples of practice
4-7s	How do Christians welcome a new baby? Children visit a local church and learn about the community life of the church, watching a Christening enacted by the minister and asking questions. They each contribute one drawing to a class book called, "Thirty things we liked at Saint Andrew's".	Curiosity about the natural world. In a unit on creation, children walk the school grounds and find / choose a leaf, an acorn, a feather and a blade of grass. They take these four things back to the classroom to try and work out what a human would have to do to make these four things. They explore some mysteries of the natural world in small scale natural world enquiry.
7-11s	What makes a place sacred? Class 4A visit a Mosque or Gurdwara in Swindon or Bristol, and class 4B visit a Church near the school. Each class plans its multi-sensory enquiry into the sacred space, and presents its findings to the other class. All pupils consider the general question, "What makes a place sacred?" in relation to both buildings.	Peaceful, thoughtful and friendly places. The class decide what the most peaceful, thoughtful, friendly places are in the school and grounds. They go to these places, and do something as a class that is peaceful, thoughtful, and friendly. When they then visit a place of worship, they choose and photograph the most peaceful, thoughtful, friendly places. They also choose the place where believers might feel close to God. They recount their choices (with photographs?) back at school.
11-14s	What is a place of national religious or spiritual significance? Pupils consider 12 candidates for this title, including sites from many different religions, and also Stonehenge, Mount Snowden etc. They visit two of them in half year groups (E.g. St Albans Abbey, Neasdon Swaminarayan Hindu Mandir). They present the findings of a group enquiry into British religion to the rest of the class, and vote for their choices after analysing the different sites of religion and spirituality in the UK.	Rejecting evil, remembering wisdom, seeking answers to confusion. Stations of reflection and the Islamic Hajj. Pupils take turns to do three reflective activities designed from the experiences of stoning the Shaytan, running from Safa to Marwah and recalling the last sermon of the Prophet. The creation of a "Labyrinth" would help focus thinking. From these experiences, pupils move to a deeper exploration of the significance of Hajj as memory, search for wisdom and rejection of evil.
14-16s	How do objects speak across the decades? Students visit the Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial War Museum. Through the day of their visit they see hundreds of objects, and select four that, for them, express the anger, the sadness, the evil and the spiritual lessons of the holocaust. They collect information and photographs to support their selections. They justify their choices in a debate back at school.	Night sky: mysteries. For homework, pupils are asked to stand alone in the open air and look into the sky on a dark clear night for 5 minutes. What thoughts come? In class they compare their experience of night sky watching with scripture records from Abraham, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and from Immanuel Kant. They create a list poem of questions inspired by the night sky. They consider what Professor Richard Dawkins and the Archbishop of Canterbury would say about the experience of being overawed by the night sky.

See further information at: <http://www.lotc.org.uk/> and www.refuel.org.uk/sacred-space/