

DIOCESAN POSITION PAPER REGARDING LEVELS OF ATTAINMENT IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

FAO: HEADTEACHERS, S48 INSPECTORS, RE COORDINATORS, HEADS OF RE DEPARTMENTS

The document *Levels of Attainment in Religious Education* should be used by all schools to make judgements about attainment and progress in Religious Education from the beginning of the Foundation Stage until the end of Year 9. Thereafter schools and the diocese measure attainment and progress using GCSE and GCE grades.

Whilst National Curriculum levels in other subjects were intended to provide a levelling tool up to the end of Year 9, *Levels of Attainment in Religious Education* was written to allow for assessment of attainment and progress up until the end of Year 13.

This means that “levels” in Religious Education have a different value and meaning to National Curriculum levels in other subjects and our expectations of attainment and progress in Religious Education need to be adjusted accordingly.

By the end of Year 6, pupils will do well to achieve level 4 and by the end of Year 9, pupils will do well to achieve level 6. In general, pupils are likely to make *at most* two levels of progress between key stages and many are likely to make less than two levels of progress. By September 2014 we will have exact comparisons available following an academic year where all schools are using this amended – and correct – understanding of the *Levels of Attainment in Religious Education*. It must be stressed that this does not reflect a “dumbing down” in expectation. Religious Education remains a rigorous academic discipline whose demands are just as exacting as those in other subjects.

This places all of us in a unique situation in this academic year. Historically schools were told that there should be parity between Religious Education and English/Literacy. This is not the case. During the academic year 2012-13 we have been working to correct this message through RE co-ordinators’ meetings, Head of Department meetings and moderation training in the summer term. Following these, all teachers should now have access to the training materials that were made available at these meetings and should now have a more accurate understanding of which levels pupils are likely to achieve by the end of Years 6 and 9. These are likely to be lower than the levels schools were historically awarding to pupils. Therefore, in this current academic year, pupils in all years may appear to attain less well and appear to make less progress than pupils did at an equivalent point in previous academic years. As a consequence we anticipate the diocesan averages for attainment and progress will be lower for 2013-14 than for 2012-13. This should not be taken as evidence that pupil progress and/or the quality of teaching has dipped but merely as an indication of the recalibration of the meaning of levels in Religious Education within each school.

We recognise that the discrepancy between *Levels of Attainment in Religious Education* and levels of attainment in the National Curriculum is unhelpful and confusing for pupils, parents and teachers. However *Levels of Attainment in Religious Education* is a national document, produced by the Bishops’ Conference Department of Education and all dioceses in the country use it. The current situation reflects our local attempt to use the levels we have accurately. We would welcome a national review of the *Levels of Attainment in Religious Education* and we are working with other dioceses to try and bring this about.

Moving forward, attainment and progress in every school year up until the end of Year 9 will be benchmarked against diocesan averages and not against comparable attainment and progress in other subjects. This is the

methodology inspectors will be using to inform their judgement about how good attainment and progress are in Religious Education in our schools.

However, we acknowledge that we will not have reliable diocesan averages until September 2014. Therefore during this time of transition, for the academic year 2013-14 the following form of words will appear in all S48 inspection reports:

“Due to the state of transition in level expectations across all diocesan schools, the current averages for attainment and progress are not reliable benchmarks. Therefore no judgement will be made in this report against diocesan averages for either attainment or progress.”

In this period of transition, inspectors will make judgements about pupil outcomes in Religious Education and the quality of teaching and learning using other evidence sources such as lesson observations, work scrutinies, pupil interviews and the moderation portfolio.

Finally, it needs to be stressed that this only affects assessment data up to the end of KS3. For KS4 and KS5 the GCSE and GCE outcomes provide robust and reliable indicators of attainment and progress. Their reliability is augmented by the fact that the benchmarks at these levels are national and not just diocesan.

Joe Hughes

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