

Section Five

A Checklist for RE Co-ordinators

The Development of Religious Education

The sub-title for this publication has always been 'a handbook to the handbooks'. It has set out to help schools make the most of the two primary handbooks but its focus is limited. It was only ever intended to cover planning and assessment but it is worth setting these into a framework of development which might create an agenda for an RE Co-ordinator, although other aspects of the role are outside the scope of this book.

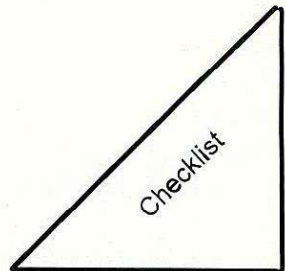
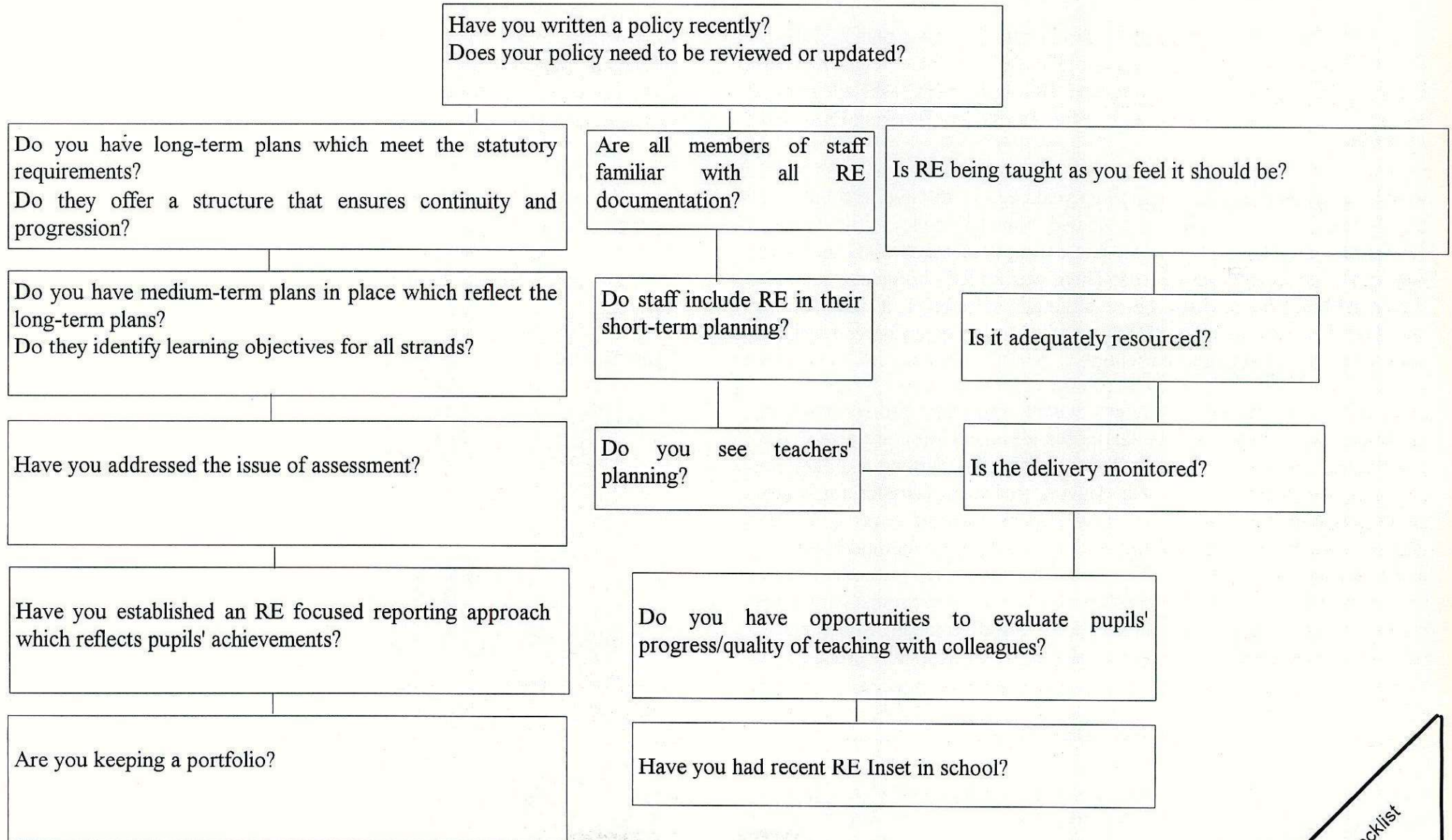
There are many factors influencing the development of religious education. Obviously the Co-ordinator is a key player and much of what is done and the pace at which it is done will depend on his or her specialist expertise and experience. Primary teachers are seldom RE specialists; more often than not religious education is a subject which concerns primary teachers and for which they have insufficient training. The experience and level of confidence of members of staff in a school will also influence the development of RE. Opportunities for both curriculum development and also professional development are likely to be linked to the School Development Plan which will determine when and how much attention is given to RE. External support is also frequently linked to the process of whole school development planning. The timing and pace of this development will vary from school to school.

Sound development is a long process. It needs to involve everyone and take all staff along with it. Within the areas of planning and assessment there will be an on-going process of development and review and, however ideal it is to see assessment as integral to the business of planning, consideration needs to be given to all the factors listed above. Teachers will be unlikely to take assessment on board enthusiastically until they are secure with the plans and feel confident that RE is working in their classrooms.

The whole process from policy to monitoring and evaluation is set out on the checklist opposite. This is not included here to increase pressure on an RE Co-ordinator. It is included rather as a postscript to help schools identify where they are in the process and where they need to go. It is not necessarily sequential. There will be budgetary constraints which hold back the resourcing of RE; similar limitations are likely to prevent full scale monitoring by the Co-ordinator, but the checklist has proved to be a useful document if updated annually and used as the basis of a development plan or for target setting. It is worth remembering that the checklist provides an opportunity for a Co-ordinator to see what has been achieved as well as what needs to be done!



A CHECKLIST FOR PRIMARY RE CO-ORDINATORS



A personal note

Four more half-termly strands to finalise, an updated year plan grid to sort out, RE targets on the School Development Plan to meet, eight mid-term mapping-the-strand plans to complete, 180 assessment tasks to interpret and sort out ... and I am a member of the Assessment Working Party and I love RE!

I took up my first teaching post three years ago to discover a situation all too familiar; a school with an outdated, thin RE policy, little religious education going on in classrooms and a couple of token Sikh and Hindu artefacts which were seldom used. There was no RE coordinator and, as a specialist, I was the obvious choice, although, as an NQT, it was daunting. The first task was to take a lead in the adoption of an agreed syllabus, since this is a grant maintained school.

In a subject which many teachers would frequently rather avoid, my colleagues were crying out for the usable ideas and structure provided by the Solihull Agreed Syllabus and the handbooks. Writing a policy and stranding the material came next. Having trialled my strands for a year, alterations had to be made as many strands tried to cover too much material or simply lacked coherence. I am completing modified mid-term plans as they are needed this year, using the examples in this book as a base. I have trialled the assessment procedures with the groups I teach and my next target is to introduce this material to staff gradually in September, when I have concrete examples to show them and a workable procedure to follow.

Having begun from a position way behind other areas of the curriculum, I feel that religious education is now streaking ahead in my school. This planning and assessment procedure is proving to be workable, realistic and worthwhile. Identifying tight learning objectives makes lessons more focused and the assessment meaningful and relevant. All of this results in

good quality religious education and will ensure statements on reports actually relate to children's development in RE.

I know there is still a long way to go. I want to explore the possibility of setting up regular links with a synagogue and a mandir, to establish a portfolio and to introduce a new system for storing RE documents and resources ... and so much more!

With the support of colleagues whose enthusiasm for teaching RE has really developed, I know so much more is possible. But what it is really all about is overhearing children ask each other, "What lesson is next? Great, it's RE!" or say, "I love RE - it's always exciting!" That proves that time spent on paperwork and establishing systems is worthwhile and justifiably rewarded.

Lynn Hampton.



Another personal note

I find it surprising to see my name on a book about religious education. Like many teachers, my own RE learning terminated long before I left school. However, despite a complete lack of expertise in the subject, I became RE (and science ... my specialism!) co-ordinator four and a half years ago at the end of my first year of teaching. At that time there was very little documentation and planning in RE. Slowly and with a great deal of advisory help, the policy and scheme were constructed around the Solihull agreed syllabus and Key Stage 1 handbook.

When the school began to discuss assessment across the curriculum and questioned just what should be reported to parents, it was suggested that I might join the working party which had just been set up to look at this issue in primary RE. I was rather reluctant at first, convinced that I would not be able to contribute because of my lack of subject knowledge. It was felt however that my contribution would be useful, on the basis that if I could do it, anyone could! My experience in helping to develop the process has been a very positive one.

Although this book describes a whole process from planning through to assessment and reporting, I see and use it in much smaller "chunks" and am reassured by the fact that I can take it one small piece at a time.

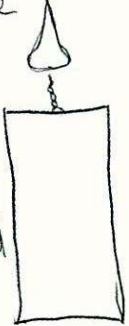
For me one of the first steps was the most important. Being able to pull my strands together into a more solid focus and then identify learning objectives really helped to shape RE teaching in my mind. By having learning objectives I could see ways that I could then assess and I now feel quite happy producing a simple assessment sheet for my year two class. Whilst my average and more able children are completing the assessment, I can quietly talk to the less able, enabling them to explain rather than record and to question them more simply if necessary. This, along with teaching jottings from discussions, gives me a good idea of where my children are. I am very aware that for my reception colleagues it is much more labour

intensive due to the restricted recording abilities of their younger children. These teachers, however, are used to the challenge and come up with innovative ways of assessing, perhaps using class discussions and pictures during which many of the children will contribute their ideas.

My staff have found the mid-term planning sheets with the learning objectives and assessment opportunities very useful and now feel more comfortable in reporting RE. This is the stage my school is at now.

Religious education recently passed the "OFSTED" test but more importantly all my colleagues are enthusiastic about teaching RE; they appreciate the help that they have had with the Key Stage 1 handbook and now the focused mid-term planning. Many of the children say RE is one of their favourite lessons and with the stages described in this book, we can see the way forward. The process is not always easy and, like everything else, takes time but the process is clear and is now in writing and I hope you will find it as useful as I have. Good Luck!

Tracey Price.

<i>Jodie</i>	What have you learned about Light?
Draw the candle and write around it all the words that it makes you think of and say how it makes you feel:	
<p>It reminds me of Gods love. It makes me feel happy. It makes me feel safe and welcome. I feel like love is coming to me</p>	
<small>ASSESSMENT YEAR 2</small>	

