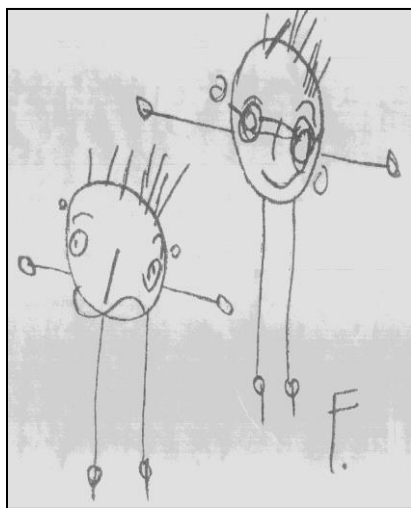


**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
FOR VERY SPECIAL CHILDREN**



**by**

***Flo Longhorn***

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## **Foreword**

*The children and people referred to in this book are individually described as "the very special child" or "the very special person". This description applies to those who have profound multiple learning disabilities, usually linked to sensory and physical impairment. It also applies to those who have chaotic or catastrophic behaviours which are linked with severe learning disabilities. Such people find it very difficult to sense, manipulate and/or respond to their own environment, or to other human beings, in order to learn from either.*

*This publication is dedicated to all the very special children in Romania and to all the special people who endeavour to make their lives **extra** special.*

*Grateful acknowledgements also to Roger Longhorn and his information technology wizardry, to Marlene Spencer, a special mother, and to Christine Smith, a special teacher and the very special children at St. John's School, Bedford*

*Flo Longhorn, March, 1993  
Text updated and revised January 2019*

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## Chapter 1. Introduction.

School provides an education and relevant environment within which very special children can stretch, reach and attain their full individual potential - whatever that may be. One aspect of this growth of individual potential is the development of a whole personality. Religious Education can help with this by revealing a deeper dimension to life. Very special children may develop their personality at a very slow pace and simple level. This does not mean that their awareness of a deeper dimension to life is limited. It may be that it is at a perfect level of understanding which the mass of humanity is still struggling to find.

### 1.1 Why Religious Education?

Legally, a school must offer religious education to all pupils throughout their school career, unless parents request otherwise. The family is the most important factor in helping to develop the very special child's awareness of religion in its many shapes and forms. This is how one Mum views her very special son and his spiritual needs:

***Religion, or the awareness of a deeper dimension to life, is everyones right and even the most "very special child" is capable of experiencing a "wholeness" or personality, if given the right opportunity and guidance.***

This mother describes more fully (in Appendix A) the way her family and her son's school endeavour to work together in promoting his spiritual education.

School can offer Religious Education in order to widen the children's opportunities for religious awareness. Working together, a family and school can offer children a religious dimension to life and learning, at their own unique level. The dignity to choose, interpret and understand, as any other human being, must also be whole heartedly given.

This choice, interpretation and understanding by very special children is unique to them - just as it is unique to you and I.

### 1.2 What Is Religious Education?

Religious Education is defined as a curriculum which:

**"promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and ... prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experience of adult life" <sup>1</sup>**

This curriculum is seen as part of a school's overall curricular provision. This includes the very special child, providing the curriculum is offered at their level of development and understanding.

---

<sup>1</sup> Education Reform Act, 1988, Clause 1.2.b

### 1.3 Linking to the National Curriculum

Religious Education has equal status with the National Curriculum. It is to be provided for all pupils at maintained schools, throughout their school careers. There is a clause in the Education Reform Act, which mentions special schools. According to the legislation, religious education is not mandatory, however, all children require a framework within which they can begin to develop spiritually.

"Provisions shall be made in the regulations to secure that, so far as practicable, every pupil attending a special school will attend religious worship and receive Religious Education or will be withdrawn from attendance at such worship or from receiving such education, in accordance with the wishes of his parent."<sup>2</sup>

This should encourage, as far as is practicable, every effort to bring Religious Education to the very special child. It also covers, unlike the National Curriculum, the seventeen years of schooling children will probably receive.

Religious Education is not subject to nationally prescribed attainment targets, programmes of study or assessment arrangements. This is helpful in removing unfair comparisons between children and very special children in their widely varying educational achievements. However, locally agreed syllabus may include these factors in locally determined form. If this is the case, it is very important to ensure that access to the planning stages of such documentation is undertaken. This will make sure that any syllabus drawn up by a County will contain some relevance for the very special child. Any syllabus should see that the viewpoint of every person is respected, whilst what is taught should not be narrow or infer a particular faith or point of view.

### 1.4 Linking to the Very Special Child.

Consideration needs to be given to Religious Education being offered to the very special child, at their particular level of understanding and development. Many of the skills needed to learn efficiently, are not developed by the very special child. They may have great difficulty in communicating, showing interest, curiosity, imagination or expressing themselves in any way. They will probably be on the developmental level of a young infant throughout their lives. This means that Religious Education should be practical and meaningful. For example, a very special child will not comprehend a Biblical story such as the Good Samaritan but they can be involved in caring for others. They could not understand the story of Noah and the Ark but could explore and experience the importance of water in their lives.

Certain aspects of Religious Education become more prominent for the very special child. On a sensory level, it can extend sensory learning into new areas of sensory awareness touched by the sense of mystery, awe and wonder. No one has defined this sensory element, but no one can deny this unusual aspect.

Areas of prominence for very special children in Religious Education are shown in Table 1. All these areas will be reflected throughout the school career of the very special child. Priority must be given to ensure that any curriculum is age appropriate and realistic. Repetition is a crucial element of learning for the very special child and this requires ingenuity and diversity of teaching.

---

2 Education Reform Act, 1988, Amendment Schedule 1.9

Religious Education begins where the very special child is and is likely to remain throughout their lives. Their experiences of life should reflect in the planning for Religious Education - celebrating, exploring, belonging, caring, sharing, feeling, loving and developing whole personalities.

**Table 1. Areas of Prominence in Religious Education for the Very Special Child**

|   |                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • | <b>Awareness of "me"</b>             | feelings, emotions, senses, awareness of reactions to events.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| • | <b>Awareness of others</b>           | relationships at school and home and within the community, awareness of the needs of others and achievements, stages of life, from cradle to grave                                                                                            |
| • | <b>The needs of myself</b>           | beginning to recognise own worth, self esteem, achievements, privacy, acknowledging a range of positive and negative feelings, choice, accepting oneself, being able to communicate "no" and to know that it is respected, a purpose in life. |
| • | <b>The needs of others</b>           | awareness of worth and self esteem in others, caring, sharing, giving, acknowledging the rights of others to have different feelings.                                                                                                         |
| • | <b>The world around me</b>           | awareness of the beauty and uniqueness of the natural and man-made world, the sensory world, caring for the natural and man-made world.                                                                                                       |
| • | <b>The numinous sense</b>            | developing the sense of mystery and wonder, extending sensory awareness into unknown territory, awareness of religious feelings, curiosity.                                                                                                   |
| • | <b>Celebrating life</b>              | awareness of personal events, school events and home events, awareness of festivals and celebrations, both secular and religious, exploring the common elements of religion.                                                                  |
| • | <b>Reflecting on life as a whole</b> | stillness, privacy, awareness of being alone, awareness of belonging, meditation, awareness of other life styles.                                                                                                                             |

## 1.5 Linking to Other Areas of the Curriculum.

Religious Education links to many other areas of the curriculum. It permeates the main aims of many of the curriculum areas of importance for the very special child. Look at these main aims in one school curriculum<sup>3</sup>. Religious Education complements the aims but also adds a deeper significance and a more reflective approach.

### Personal Social Development - Main Aims

- To develop as far as possible as a "complete personality".
- To be able to form relationships and enjoy the company of others.
- To experience and control a range of emotions in relation to self and others.
- To appreciate the difference between right and wrong.
- To be sensitive to the feelings and needs of others.

### Visual Stimulation - Main Aims

- To stimulate the child's vision to the fullest extent, in order to encourage the child to begin to look spontaneously and to regard the world around him.

### Developmental Therapy - Main Aims

- Based on the inherent worth of each individual, recognising that each human being is worthy and valuable simply because **he exists**, not because of his intellectual functioning, potential for productivity or other traits.

### Communication - Main Aims

- The very special child should be able, whatever their level of development, to be part of a two way communicating world, be able to receive and understand the communications of others and to communicate in return.

### Further Education - Main Aims

- To stimulate and develop relevant skills, experiences and relationships for adult life.

## 1.6 Linking to the Senses.

The first steps in learning come through the development of the senses of taste, smell, sound, vision, touch and bodily experience. Religious Education offers a new sense with which to enhance and deepen sensory learning. This is the numinous sense.

The numinous sense incorporates:

- a sense of mystery, awe, wonder and attraction,
- feelings beyond understanding,
- a non-rational element of religious experience,
- a sense of communion with nature, divinity or the unknown.

This unusual and reflective numinous sense offers a new dimension with which to explore the unknown for everyone! As Dogen Kigen, a 13th-century Zen master, writes:

<sup>3</sup> St. John's School, Curriculum Documentation, 1988, Bedford, Beds, UK.

***Being in the World.***

***To what might it be compared?  
Dwelling in a dew drop,  
Fallen from a water fowl's beak,  
The image of the moon.***

and T. C. McLuhan<sup>4</sup> writes:

***What is life?***

***It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of  
a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the shadow which  
runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset.***

For very special children, the numinous sense could be seen in Nick crying and sobbing as he listens to a certain piece of sad music or Julian carefully dissecting a rose and smelling each petal as he laid it down in a bowl.

---

4 Touch the Earth, 1973, by T. C. McLuhan, published by Abacus Press.

## Chapter 2. Planning Religious Education.

### 2.1 County Policies in Religious Education

Each County will have its own policy on Religious Education and will expect schools, as far as they are able, to follow their guidelines and advice. They will have a local authority SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) to oversee the development of policies in religious education. Some Counties will insist on some form of assessment to enable everyone to know what pupils have undertaken and understood. This should mean that a carefully planned and followed Religious Education curriculum should reflect these answers back. The skills of staff of very special children will rate highly and accurately in this area. Means of recording are given later in this publication.

If a very special child's educational requirements are stated in a County syllabus, it will ensure that these requirements are met within the school's Religious Education programme. As with all curriculum areas, there will be a necessity to adapt, refine and simplify these policies to ensure relevance to the very special child.

Look at these two targets taken from County Policies and think about how they may translate into suitable targets for the very special child.

#### Human Experience - The Natural World

Explore and reflect on the natural world and perceive their place within it and their response to it.<sup>5</sup> For example:

- rolling a child in a field of long grass,
- placing a child on the back of a donkey or pony,
- sitting the child in a muddy puddle,
- making snowballs and a snowman.

#### Festivals and Celebrations (Key Stage 1)

Pupils should be offered opportunities which enable them to:

- begin to be aware that people celebrate special occasions, e.g. birthdays, anniversaries, religious festivals,
- begin to identify elements in common to many celebrations, e.g. coming together, special clothes, food, giving cards and presents,
- begin to find out about stories, customs and traditions associated with some major religious festivals.<sup>6</sup>

For example:

- celebrating a child's birthday with a class party,
- visiting a local shrine or grave yard,
- making and giving a Mother's Day card,
- rolling an egg down the hill at Easter.

<sup>5</sup> Cambridgeshire County Council, Learning Now - The Cambridgeshire Experience in Religions Education, 1989

<sup>6</sup> Attainment and Assessment in Religious Education, Bedfordshire County Council, 1991.

Erica Musty, in her booklet "Signposts and Milestones - Guidelines for Implementing the County Agreed Syllabus and Topic Outlines for Religious Education", suggests the structure illustrated below for implementing an agreed syllabus.

### Implementing the Agreed Syllabus

- Look at the children's stage of development and decide which *AIMS* and *OBJECTIVES* outlined in the agreed Syllabus are appropriate.
- Identify *TOPICS* to be taught and list as many ideas as possible associated with the topic.
- Check whether the topic will develop some of the *CONCEPTS*, *ATTITUDES* and *SKILLS* listed.
- *SELECT* ideas from the topic list best suited to Religious Education in either a *SUBJECT SPECIFIC* or *CROSS CURRICULAR* topic.
- *DEVELOP TOPICS* at appropriate level of children's ability, outlining more *SPECIFIC AIMS* and *OBJECTIVES*.
- *RESOURCE* the planned topic.
- *IMPLEMENT* the topic.
- *RECORD* the outcomes.
- *EVALUATE* the scheme of work in the light of, children's achievement, content of the topic, teaching methods and classroom organisation.

## 2.2 Documenting the Religious Education Curriculum for Very Special Children.

Many special schools do not have a written religious education syllabus or policy. The school relies on religious education being "implicit" or hidden in other curriculum areas. While this is very admirable and in many cases true, it **is** important to document what **is** actually taking place.

Take a close look at the cross curricula aspects of religious education and you will be surprised at the number of links already in place. Some of these have been mentioned in section 1.5 linking to other areas of the curriculum. One school was visited by the HMI to examine the school's policy on religious education. Initially the school said that it had no clear view of the subject. However, on closer inspection, there was much being undertaken. Religious education strands were seen in fund raising for others, in health education, in movement, in expressive arts, in multicultural activities, and in social and emotional development, to name but a few.

The problem was lack of any documentation or explicit link to the county policy on religious education. Written documentation enabled the school to define philosophy, aims and objectives, resources and a simple record sheet for inclusion in a child's file.

The following chart gives an outline for documentation of religious education for very special children. Be careful to keep the document brief and to the point so it will be used and not put away in exasperation.

### Documenting a Religious Education Policy for Very Special Children

|                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statement of the reasons why a very special child needs to grow spiritually.</li> </ul>                                            | e.g. developing a whole personality, finding a deep dimension to life, nurture and growth.                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statement on what the Education Act (1988) or subsequent statements say about religious education and special children.</li> </ul> | The local education authority should provide this for you.                                                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A description of <b>how</b> religious education is taught in the school, showing examples of good practise.</li> </ul>             | <b>Explicit</b> examples can cover themes and topics,<br><b>Implicit</b> examples can be extracted from other curriculum areas. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A list of resources available which are relevant to the very special child.</li> </ul>                                             | Human and material resources in the school, home and community.                                                                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A statement on funding for Religious Education.</li> </ul>                                                                         | How much is the budget and examples of expenditures, e.g. special trips, artefacts, etc.                                        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Samples of children's work and responses.</li> </ul>                                                                               | A chance to celebrate the child's achievements using photos, video, etc. and record sheets.                                     |

## 2.3 Setting Your Aims.

The main aims of any County Policy should cover all children. It should be just the same for the very special child. It is up to the school and the staff working with very special children to interpret such an aim with full regard to the children's particular levels of development. The following is a main aim which could be used for any child.

### The Aim of Religious Education

The AIM of Religious Education in schools is to contribute educationally to the development pupils as individuals and members of society by taking a reflective approach to life in the context of growing understanding of the experience, attitudes, beliefs and religious practices of mankind.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Religious Education, A Planning Guide. Bedfordshire Religious Education Series, 1985.

## 2.4 Setting Your Goals.

The goals for Religious Education are not set in graduated steps. There is not a set of developmental goals for each individual. For example, some people are Agnostics, others worship Allah, many follow Catholicism and some may be Humanists. The same differences will apply to very special children, who will exercise their own choice or preference, in so far as they are able.

The goals which are set should link to other areas of the curriculum. For example, the goal of "observing the beauty and mystery of the natural world" will link strongly with science. The goal of "exploration of feelings and emotions" may link with the personal social, health or art curriculum.

The main relevant goals for Religious Education may include:

- enjoyment and fun,
- exploration of feelings and emotions,
- communication with the world and others,
- a developing awareness of relationships with others,
- enrichment of aspects of personal social development,
- an exploration of multicultural and multifaith themes,
- stimulation and awareness of the beauty and mystery of the natural world,
- stimulation and awareness of the man-made world,
- celebrations of achievements in life,
- developing choice and the right to say "yes", "no" and "maybe",
- developing spirituality.

One or two goals would be highlighted for a particular child to be used as priority areas. However, Religious Education has a strong opportunist streak and should come into its own as an occasion arises. As with any other curriculum, planning consideration should be given to issues of race, gender, class and disability.

## 2.5 Setting Your Timetable.

It is important to plan **when** Religious Education is to take place in the school week so that it is seen to be valued as curriculum. However, the majority of the work undertaken will be at the appropriate moment, whether planned or unexpected.

**For example**, Wayne had an epileptic fit and the children in the class all helped him through it. They knew how to comfort him, see to his physical needs and look after him with caring and sensitivity. After he had a fit and recovered, the teacher then helped to reflect on their caring, their feelings and their attitudes to others. The caring aspect shown to Wayne could be followed through in the planned Religious Education lesson that week.

There could be a combination of the following elements to ensure success in the area of Religious Education:

- fixed periods on the time table, e.g. meditation and quietness at the end of the school day, listening to special music,
- a theme across a range of activities, e.g. light and dark, happy and sad, journeys,
- an element in assemblies, e.g. recognising achievements, smelling incense, participating in dance or mime,
- on a personal level, e.g. learning to trust, looking at someone, expressing joy,

- unplanned occasions as they arise, e.g. snowflakes on faces, the visit of a new baby, smelling a cake cooking,
- an enrichment to personal social education, e.g. caring for an animal, helping choose a present, learning greetings, going to a birthday party.

## Chapter 3. Planning Units and Programmes in Religious Education

This chapter covers practical suggestions for implementing a Religious Education curriculum for the very special child, including sensory and multisensory elements.

### 3.1 Introduction.

This section offers a range of sensory based activities and experiences to plan a realistic Religious Education programme. Many of the activities will be familiar and will link closely with a school's general projects and themes. However, with the Religious Education input, there should also be a different dimension.

Remember that very special children respond in their own way. This may be very clear or very obscure. This does not indicate success or failure, but rather a need for long term repetition of programmes in a variety of different and stimulating ways. The child will be aided in learning by physical help, two way interaction, reassurance, prompting and a reflecting back on how it is perceived that they have reacted. It may also be helpful, if the adults reflect back to the child how they themselves have personally reacted or responded to an activity or experience.

In planning the main Religious Education programmes, there should be a balance of **explicit** and **implicit** experiences. The **implicit** experiences might cover:

- feelings and emotions,
- myself,
- the wonder of the natural and man-made world,
- the numinous sense,
- choice, the right to say "yes", "no" and "maybe".

For example, the **implicit** area of "developing choice" could include work in the areas of:

- developing preferences in taste, smell, visual preference, sound,
- bodily movement and touch,
- learning to choose or decline from favourite objects or activities,
- experiencing a range of emotions.

The **explicit** experiences might cover work in the areas of:

- multicultural and multifaith themes,
- celebrations,
- lifestyles,
- yearly cycle of events.

For example, the **explicit** areas of "exploring lifestyles" may include:

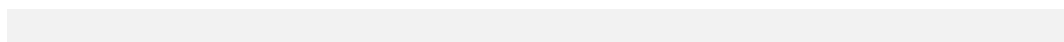
- me,
- my family,
- my friends,
- cats and dogs,
- environment

For example, cats and dogs would cover looking at pets, how we care for them and love them and how they trust and love us and provide us with happiness.

### 3.2 Sensory Religious Education Programmes.

These units give a variety of ideas that have been used with very special children. The adult, with the help of the children, as far as they are able, will select and adapt those that are relevant for their particular group. They will also add or emphasise elements that are particularly significant. There is a multicultural and multifaith theme threaded throughout. Remember to ensure that race, gender, disability and class are portrayed positively and that programmes are age appropriate.

Tables 2 through 7 on the following pages present sensory ideas for sound, visual aspects, tastes, smells, touches and bodily experiences, respectively, in relation to planning the Religious Education programme. Also, Appendix B contains some sources for sound and vision sensory materials.



**Table 2 - Sounds of a Religious Education Curriculum.<sup>8</sup>**

| <b>Types of Sounds</b>               | <b>Suggestions</b>                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| sounds and language of nature        | bumblebees, hooves, bird song, waves                                                                                                                                        |
| noises of our immediate surroundings | minibus, dinner trolley, music time "hello"                                                                                                                                 |
| body noises                          | tummy, mouth, hands, feet                                                                                                                                                   |
| voice noises                         | community singing, dialects, foreign languages, singing, chanting, calling the faithful to prayer                                                                           |
| emotional sounds                     | happy, sad, agitated, "The Messiah"                                                                                                                                         |
| vibrational sounds                   | drums, tambours, Gregorian chants, Rastafarian drums, bass, fundic repeater, aborigine music, rainmaker                                                                     |
| voices we love                       | family, friends, TV and radio voices taped                                                                                                                                  |
| sound of silence                     | in the dark, in a large box, in the crypt, meditating                                                                                                                       |
| bells                                | church, hand, Indian bracelet bells, Chinese bells                                                                                                                          |
| music                                | church organ, tambourines, blowing the horn for Rosh Hashanah                                                                                                               |
| readings                             | Bible, Qur'an, church services, canticles, poetry                                                                                                                           |
| song                                 | negro spirituals, evangelical choir, pop music with a message                                                                                                               |
| seasonal song and hymns              | Christmas, Divali, Easter, Fiesta                                                                                                                                           |
| ritual sound                         | Amen chants, Rasta talk, Harikrishna, prayers, Sutra recitations                                                                                                            |
| celebratory                          | Chinese New Year, Nativity, Jamaica carnival                                                                                                                                |
| musicals                             | "Jesus Christ Superstar", "Sound of Music"                                                                                                                                  |
| relaxing or special music            | Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" by Nigel Kennedy, "The Enchanted Forest - Melodies of Japan" by James Galway, Orff's "Carmina Burana", "You Are the Ocean II" by Schawkie Roth |
| patterns of sounds                   | ticking clocks, marching feet, heart beats, breathing, clapping, rhythms, chanting, praying                                                                                 |

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix B for sound and vision resources.

**Table 3 - Visual Aspects of a Religious Education Programme.**

| <b>Types of Visual Aspects</b> | <b>Suggestions</b>                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| sights of nature               | flowers, plants, rivers, insects, animals, sea                                                                                              |
| seeing those we love           | friends, helpers, Mum, Dad, the dog                                                                                                         |
| exploring lights               | torches, blinking, flashing, calm lights, warning                                                                                           |
| candle light                   | candles, Paschal, Easter candle, Divali lights, 7-branched Jewish candlestick                                                               |
| festivals of light and colour  | Divali, Candlemass, Advent, Christmas, Shabbat, birthdays, Aarti celebrations, Christingle, Chanukah, Holi                                  |
| colour patterns                | stained glass windows, mandala, American Indian sand circles, Celtic cross                                                                  |
| religious artefacts            | statues, gravestones, carvings, Buddhas, Rama and Situ statues, Islamic tiles, mosaics and calligraphy, up in a belfry or down in the crypt |

**Table 4 - Tastes in a Religious Education Programme.**

| <b>Tastes</b>               | <b>Suggestions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| exploring tastes            | sweet, sour, fizzy, hot, cold, frozen                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| choosing tastes             | likes, dislikes, preferences                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| sharing food                | friends, those in need, birds and animals                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| making food                 | special occasions, every day food, bread, food for others                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| food in a religious context | hot cross buns, Easter eggs, pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, Rastafarian I-tal food, Zen tea ceremony, bread, salt and wine at Shabbat, the Sikh food Karah parshad, Chinese food, food offered at a Hindu shrine, bread and wine at communion, harvest bread, Christmas foods, Latkes for Hannukah |
| celebratory meals           | birthdays, weddings, Christmas, 18th birthdays, christenings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

**Table 5 - Smells in a Religious Programme.**

| Smells                        | Suggestions                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| noses                         | exploring smells that are sweet, strong, herbal, medicinal, situational food, drink which tickles the nose         |
| choosing smells               | smells that are liked, disliked, preferred                                                                         |
| memory of smells              | smells remembered, of home, of school, of an animal, of family members                                             |
| smells of nature              | herbs, soil, flowers, vegetables, sea and sand, animals                                                            |
| smells of special foods       | Christmas, Easter, Divali, Chinese New Year, harvest, Shrove Tuesday, I-tal food, bread and wine, Zen tea ceremony |
| smells of familiar places     | home, school, bathroom, rabbit hutch, swimming pool, car                                                           |
| smells in a religious context | inside a church, a synagogue, incense, candles, oils, special foods                                                |

**Table 6 - Touches in a Religious Education Programme.**

| Touches                      | Suggestions                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| touches                      | messy, rough, smooth, soft, hard, woolly, liquid, scratchy, hot, cold                                                                                                                                                                    |
| hands                        | touching, feeling, moving, signing, telling rhymes, showing feelings, clapping                                                                                                                                                           |
| helping hands                | comfort, hold tight, feel warm, handshakes, talking hands, hugging, hands clasp, tickling hands, show you are not alone, helping others                                                                                                  |
| greeting hands               | handshakes, thumbs up and down, hand clasps, waving hands, Namaste greeting, salute                                                                                                                                                      |
| creative hands               | art, craft, sculpture, Indian dance, mime, puppetry                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| respectful hands             | praying, greeting, blessing, ritual washing, make a cross, anointing                                                                                                                                                                     |
| touch in a religious context | Hindu hand patterns, mudra positions of the hands of Buddha, praying, touching, church hangings, sculptures, architecture, vestments, pews, thrones, pulpits, feeling worry beads, a crucifix and beads, icons, saints, statues, Buddhas |

**Table 7 - Bodily Experiences in a Religious Education Programme.**

| Types of Experiences          | Suggestions                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| moving                        | dancing, rolling, pushing, swimming, tossing, horse riding, up and down, trampoline, sliding, bouncing                                                                      |
| dancing                       | Indian dance, calypso, wheelchair dance, dancing hands and feet, disco, rapping                                                                                             |
| moving in a religious context | bowing, praying, kneeling, processions, folding of hands, egg rolling, maypole dancing, Jamaican Calypso, Chinese Dancing Dragon, Divali dance, musicals such as "Godspell" |
| special clothes to wear       | a Kippah skullcap, monks robe, nativity clothes, chador, burka, yashmak prayer shawl, Buddhist robe, Rastafarian scarf and tam                                              |

### 3.3 Multisensory Events and Celebrations.

A multisensory approach to Religious Education unifies the sensory work undertaken in the curriculum. It reflects all the child's sensory learning in one experience and helps them to begin to deepen their awareness and perceptions. It also enables the very special child to participate in school events and experiences. The multisensory approach enables others in school, family and the community to join in, providing a two-way approach to learning.

Many of the multisensory experiences come from a wealth of cultural backgrounds. It is advisable to refer to the multicultural resources within a school, County or from the resources given at the end of this chapter. This will ensure proper planning for these celebrations and also ensure that no offence is given to any religion.

Find links to many global festivals on Wikipedia, religious, secular, cultural and historical at  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_multinational\\_festivals\\_and\\_holidays](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_multinational_festivals_and_holidays)

#### *Multisensory Events and Experiences.*

There are numerous events from which multisensory experience can be drawn:

|                |                  |                     |                   |
|----------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Divali         | Halloween        | Christingle         | Christmas         |
| Hanukah        | Valentines Day   | Easter              | Mothers Day       |
| Advent         | Succoth          | Harvest             | Red Nose Day (UK) |
| Holi           | Children in Need | World Childrens Day | Baptism           |
| Spanish Fiesta | Wesak            | Shiva               | Saints days       |

Look at some elements from these experiences and see how they are appropriate for the very special child. These celebrations enable them to leave the humdrum of every day life to experience significant events in the year or in their personal life.

**Christingle.**

Make a Christingle orange for the service. Use an orange (the world), with a candle (Christ) stuck in it, a red ribbon to tie around the orange (love around the world), and four cocktail sticks to pin currants to the orange (people in the four corners of the world).

Main Religious Education objectives include:

- awareness of others,
- celebrating life,
- awareness of a religious festival,
- numinous and sensory aspects.

**A Hindu shrine.**

Make a Hindu shrine with all the elements of the world included and involving all the senses in worship. Set up a brightly covered table with images of Krishna and Shiva washed and anointed in scented oil, plus fruit and flower offerings, lit incense in holders, candles in candle holders, a bowl of water, small bells, tinsel and glitter, and brightly coloured photos of Hindu gods.

Main Religious Education objectives include:

- awareness of a religious festival,
- awareness of the beauty of natural and man-made objects,
- numinous and sensory aspects.

**Sikh sharing of food regardless of creed or caste.**

Make *Karah parshad*, a mixture of semolina, ghee, sugar and water, to share with everyone at school and at home.

Main Religious Education objectives include:

- awareness of others and their needs,
- caring, sharing, giving,
- celebrating life, awareness of others and their religions.

**Candlemass.**

A display of candles lit at Candlemass including night lights, many different sorts of candles in holders, e.g. 7-branched Jewish candle stick, Divali candles, Christingles, Paschal candle, and an Aarti tray of candles to pass hands over and cover in light and warmth.

Main Religious Education objectives include:

- the beauty of the natural and man-made world,
- numinous and sensory aspects,
- celebrating life,
- awareness of the common elements of religion.

### **Celebrating a Jewish harvest - Succoth.**

Build a little *Succa*, a temporary shelter, in the classroom, decorated by leaves, fruit, paper chains, and decorations. Fill it with harvest produce to give to others.

Main Religious Education objectives include:

- caring, sharing, giving,
- numinous and sensory aspects,
- beauty of the natural world,
- exploring common elements of religion.

### **Ethiopian Orthodox Church procession.**

Have a special outside procession using multicoloured, decorated umbrellas which are used to hold over the head of the Ethiopian priest. Use the umbrellas afterwards, suspended from the ceiling in a huge moving mobile.

Main Religious Education Objectives may include:

- awareness of others,
- celebrating life, awareness of other religions,
- numinous and sensory aspects.

**Raksha Bandhan - Hindu festival.**

Hindu girls make *raki*, coloured, twisted braid bracelets, to give to their brothers or special friend. The boys give a gift in return. The exchange of gifts shows looking after one another and both boys and girls are of equal importance. Make bracelets to exchange with special friends or family.

Main Religious Education objectives may include:

- awareness of others, relationships,
- caring, sharing, giving,
- celebrating life,
- awareness of other lifestyles.

**Wudhu**

This is the Islamic ritual of washing in preparation for worship of Allah. The ritual consists of washing hands, rinsing the mouth, rinsing the nose and face, right and left arms to the elbow and right and left feet to the ankle, all three times - a preparation for assembly!

Main Religious Education objectives may include:

- awareness of common elements of religion,
- numinous and sensory aspects.

**Red Nose Day (UK).**

Join in the national fund-raising day by organising events in which very special children can participate. Examples include painting red noses on all visitors to school, baking and selling "red nose" cherry cakes or selling red balloons.

Main Religious Education objectives may include:

- fun!
- caring, sharing, giving,
- awareness of secular festivals,
- exploring the common elements of secular and religious festivals,
- numinous and sensory aspects.

**Harvest Time.**

Participate in the harvest festival and blessing with the rest of the school. Collect a variety of fruits and vegetables to give to those in need in the community. Harvest the vegetables and flowers from a garden and hold a harvest supper for the class.

Main Religious Education objectives may include:

- awareness of the needs of others,
- numinous and sensory aspects,
- celebrating life, experiencing a religious festival,
- exploring the common elements of religion.

**Wesak.**

Take part in the Buddhist ceremony of pouring water over the statue of Buddha, sprinkling perfumed oils over the statue and floating flowers on water.

Main Religious Education objectives may include:

- awareness of religious festivals,
- exploring the common elements of religion,
- numinous and sensory aspects,
- awareness of other lifestyles.

**Make Your Own Festival!**

Plan and develop special days especially for the very special child. Ideas include a rainbow day with rainbows everywhere, a watery day, special people day to celebrate their help, a day for pets to visit, a sound day full of music, harmony and voices.

Main Religious Education objectives may include:

- fun and enjoyment,
- relevance for a very special child,
- celebrating life,
- exploring the common elements of religion,
- numinous and sensory aspects.

**3.4 The "I Am" Memory Chest.**

For very special children, many of the areas in Religious Education cover the developing awareness of themselves as human beings. This also reflects in many areas of curriculum. Religious Education can add a new dimension to this awareness by developing a special **"memory chest"**. This chest can be used to collect the special memories of a child throughout their school career. It should be strong, attractively decorated and distinctive for the child. It will collect the memorabilia that will remind the child of their humanity and place in the world.

This "memory chest" of memories can move with them through their school days, a visible record of their achievements and uniqueness as a valued human being. The contents may reflect a wide range of religious education aims, for example:

#### **Contents of a "Memory Chest"**

- "I am" - what is unique to me,
- special days in my life,
- choices I make,
- patterns in my life,
- likes and dislikes,
- people I love,
- things that make me happy or sad,
- beauty of the natural world,
- beauty of the man-made world,
- celebrations,
- achievements.

Look at the contents of 7-year old Joey's "memory chest":

#### **Joey's "Memory Chest"**

- a bottle of mum's perfume,
- a tape of favourite music, songs from assembly, etc.
- candles from Christmas and Divali,
- a mirror to see "who I am",
- Joey's first pair of shoes and socks,
- a ball of fur from Patsy the rabbit,
- a book of hand prints, one each year, getting bigger,
- a class timetable,
- a ball of string to twiddle,
- a tin of favourite baked beans,
- party hat and squeaker from Joey's birthday party,
- a rosette won at riding,
- photographs of the new baby in the family and her christening,
- collage book of special pictures and objects,
- granddad's pipe and tobacco,
- ribbons from Maypole dancing

Items change or are replaced as time goes by and the very special child develops new interests, acquiring more age appropriate materials as they grow older.

## Chapter 4. Assemblies.

Assemblies are an integral part of school life, when everyone comes together to celebrate, reflect on individual and group worth and explore secular and religious themes. The very special child should be part of this valued gathering to heighten their perceptions of a deeper meaning to life and belonging.

### 4.1 Assembly Themes.

Many of the themes taken for assembly will be of relevance to the very special child and will help consolidate the weekly work undertaken in Religious Education. For example, if the school is celebrating Holi, a Hindu Spring festival, then the very special child may have experienced the following during the weeks preceding the main assembly:

#### Holi, a Hindu Spring festival

- the story of Holi, read by an Indian mum,
- throwing of colour paint and confetti,
- hearing Bhajan songs,
- preparation and eating of foods to celebrate such as raita or popcorn,
- exploring the artefacts of Indian clothes and jewellery,
- watching a bonfire being lit.

Very special children can actively participate in the main assembly and see their experiences brought together as a whole Spring celebration.

Care needs to be taken to make sure that each assembly, regardless of theme, is meaningful, relevant and appeals to the senses. **Form 1** shows a checklist to help ensure the full participation of each child, as far as that child is capable of participating.

There are many themes for assemblies which can be interpreted on a variety of levels. The very special child will understand and take part in assembly in so far as they are able. Even the basic feeling of belonging to the corporate body of a school is welcomed by them and by those who work with them. Many of the assembly themes undertaken by a school will link with a cross curricular approach. Here are some examples of assembly themes of particular interest to a very special child:

|                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| me                     | foods I taste            |
| people who care for me | bread                    |
| I can help             | water                    |
| I love                 | sounds I hear            |
| babies, new life       | thank you, God           |
| rainbows               | greetings "hello to you" |
| I am special           | light and dark           |
| hands and feet         | lighting a candle        |
| my nose                | precious things          |

**Form 1 - Assembly Checklist**

To ensure **all** children can participate in assembly, insofar as they are able.

**Background to Assembly**

(✓)

|  |               |                                                                                          |
|--|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | visual        | space free of junk or disorder                                                           |
|  | focal point   | central focal point, e.g. bright table with flowers and sculptures                       |
|  | lighting      | well lit, use of a spotlight to draw attention or a dimmer switch                        |
|  | temperature   | not too hot, cold or draughty                                                            |
|  | sound         | audible, microphone, no background noise, such as blow heaters                           |
|  | smell         | a special smell for assembly, e.g. incense or a floral spray                             |
|  | seating       | comfortable, able to see                                                                 |
|  | setting       | room set in a circle, semi-circle or a square, so all can participate                    |
|  | helping hands | co-active participation, a helper to move body parts and encourage and reassure children |
|  | belonging     | very special child absorbed into the main body, not huddled at the back of the group     |
|  | anticipation  | talk about assembly beforehand, increase excitement and anticipation                     |

**During Assembly.**

(✓)

|  |                |                                                                                                                            |
|--|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | the unexpected | be prepared for the noises of children, unexpected dashes for freedom or epileptic fits                                    |
|  | structure      | a beginning, middle and end; a set format                                                                                  |
|  | participation  | opportunity to join in, such as "special mention", dance, percussion                                                       |
|  | reflection     | a time to think, reflect and be still - a short time                                                                       |
|  | sound          | a range of music, modern and old; real musicians, tapes and records                                                        |
|  | verbal sound   | (augmented by signing) short, varied in tone, in the language of the child, a variety of voices, not just the head teacher |
|  | movement       | not static, drama, mime, puppetry, instruments                                                                             |
|  | artefacts      | to show, pass around, eat, smell, examine                                                                                  |
|  | speakers       | well primed, been to assembly as an observer, given clear guidelines, reassured if they feel overwhelmed                   |
|  | the senses     | awareness of their importance for everyone to enjoy aspects of assembly                                                    |
|  | the end        | a definite rhythm to everyone leaving in an orderly fashion - music helps.                                                 |

**Photocopying and Re-use of this form is permitted by the author.**

Special schools held the assemblies described below especially to help very special children to participate and explore in a religious context. A brief description of the main events that took place during each assembly is listed.

### **Assembly Themes**

#### **Sounds I Hear**

A Rastafarian poet and band came to assembly as part of a term's project on music. The exuberant use of voice, reggae and rap music exploded in assembly and everyone celebrated the joy of sound. An extra experience for the very special children was to explore, touch and smell the dreadlocks and tams of the performers and feel the vibrating drums in action. The performers kept on performing until all the children had left for home!

#### **Bread**

The school cook was invited to take part in an assembly about bread. She came in her cooks outfit and with a huge bowl of dough. About 130 adults and children helped themselves to the dough and proceeded to make their own little loaf. The dough was collected and at the end of the afternoon, each child took home a little bread roll that they had helped to make, together.

#### **Fog Assembly**

A visiting theatre group agreed to let their stage fog machine be used for an assembly. Fog was part of the school's theme of water for the term. The assembly took place in a fog, with ghostly electronic music. The fog did get a little over enthusiastic and the sense of being alone and isolated became very realistic!

#### **Glove Assembly**

This assembly arose out of a project on hands. Songs about hands were used, "you need hands", "twenty tiny fingers", "these are my hands" and hands were linked together during assembly. Everyone had brought their gloves to assembly and wore them, waved them and swapped them with each other. Very special children had extra special gloves that glittered and sparkled, so that they were aware of their hands.

#### **My Nose Assembly**

"Red Nose" day meant that noses were very important for the assembly that afternoon. Everyone had a decorated nose and special incenses and incense holders were brought into school by the local priest.

**Assembly Themes (continued)****Music Assembly**

A grenadier guard playing his trumpet came to assembly. He played classical, pop and religious tunes. His uniform also provided a good tactile "feel" for everyone.

**New Life Assembly.**

The local farmer brought half a dozen lambs to assembly and new life was felt, touched and explored by everyone.

**Chinese New Year Assembly.**

Chinese visitors led to assembly with special prayers, lucky money and a Chinese dragon. Chinese food was cooked and passed around with Chinese music, Chinese costume and fortune cookies.

**Precious Things Assembly.**

All the children brought their most precious possession to school and then to assembly. The vicar also brought his precious spiritual possessions to share with the children.

**The Head's 40th-Birthday Assembly.**

Unexpected assemblies are fun - the author experienced an unexpected assembly when every child sang for her, presented a daffodil and helped to blow out 40 candles in a darkened hall. The assembly embodied caring, sharing and experiencing a practical outpouring of love.

**Special Mention Assembly.**

A special weekly assembly is described in the following section.

## 4.2 Special Mention Assembly.

### BACKGROUND

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The School</b>   | A county special school for children with <b>severe and profound learning difficulties</b> in a multi-racial town. There are 100 pupils aged between 2 and 19.                                     |
| <b>The Children</b> | The whole school.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>The Project</b>  | <b>A weekly assembly</b> held every Friday afternoon at 2.00 p.m., for which a different theme is chosen each term. Following the burst water pipes in school, the theme for this term was 'Water' |

### Objectives

|                  |                                                                                                     |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Myself</b>    | To encourage a sense of personal worth and value.<br>To have fun.                                   |
| <b>Others</b>    | To encourage respect for the achievements of others.<br>To encourage a sense of belonging together. |
| <b>The world</b> | To appreciate the wonder of the natural world.<br>through water.                                    |

### THE APPROACH

#### Preparation

1. The Hall was set up 'in the round' so that everyone could see and hear, including children in wheelchairs and standing frames. Toddlers were put in the first ring of the circle.
2. Parents, families and staff sat amongst the children.
3. A table was placed at one edge of the circle to receive the week's work and to look beautiful, e.g. a nice cloth, plants, flowers, etc.
4. Music for the sound system was arranged for when people entered and left the hall.

#### An assembly

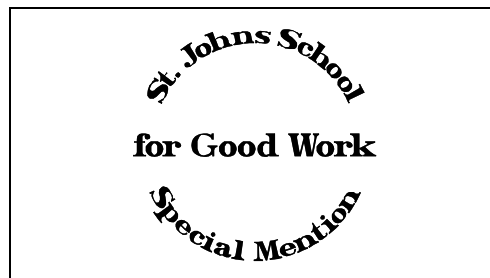
1. Handel's 'Water Music' played as the children entered the hall.
2. Everyone was made welcome, using makaton as well as the spoken word. They were reminded that the theme for Special Mention Assemblies was 'Water' and previous assemblies on the same theme were referred to - 'Noah', 'Rivers' and 'Boats'.
3. We all sang 'Michael, row the boat' during which one child was chosen to take a big sailing boat all round the circle. Two other children got in a wooden boat in the middle of the circle and rowed.

**An Assembly (continued)**

4. We all joined hands to make a School Boat.
5. A guest-speaker, who is a foster father of one of the children and also a local clergyman, brought in his toiletry bag and mimed to the audience. He washed and dried his face, cleaned his teeth and then said 'Thank you, God, for water'.
6. We all sang, 'This is the way we wash, etc.'

**Special Mentions**

These were given by the head and our guest-speaker. Each child mentioned received a sticky badge and applause from everyone in the audience.



This week's Special mentions included: Gail, who is in assembly in her standing frame for the first time; Johnny, for banging a drum; Mark, for splashing in the new swimming-pool; Roberto, for writing a story (which was read out); a group of girls who went trampolining at the local sport-centre; a member of staff, for her birthday.

## EVALUATION

Nobody misses the Special Mention assembly; it is valued by staff and children alike. Special Mentions are talked about before and after the event by everyone. The 'Birthday Persons' are often approached by many to receive personal 'Happy Birthday' greetings. Many parents say that the Special Mention badges are proudly displayed at home on the fridge, in the bedroom or even framed! The advantage of having one theme per term is that it can be carried over into project work in class. For example, classroom work on the theme of 'Water' has included a huge Noah's Ark, snow-flakes from the ceilings, frosty friezes, aquarium pictures on windows, and snow in science.

This section was written by the author and appeared in ***Practical Approaches - Religious Education for Children with Special Educational Needs***, published by Devon Education Department, County Hall, Exeter, Devon, UK, 1988 and is reproduced with the permission of the editor, Mr. Ted Huddleston.

### 4.3 Class Assembly.

Assembly is not the most appropriate word with which to describe the class gathering together at the end of a busy, hectic day. However, a gathering of everyone together, including those working with the children, will give a time to relax, collect thoughts, and end the school day on a calm note - despite what has taken place during the day.

Here is a simple outline of the end of the day gathering at one class of very special children.

The children are toiletted and prepared for home.

One corner of the room has the lights dimmed, a candle lit and relaxing music started on the tape recorder. The candle is lit by a child who also chooses the music - with help and encouragement, as necessary.

An essential oil burner is lit to fill the air with fragrance. Special oils are used, such as those used for stress<sup>9</sup>, i.e. geranium, lavender, rose or clary sage.

Everyone, with help and encouragement, tries to breathe calmly and to relax their bodies. The child (or adult!) who is unable to be calm within the group is still part of the group as they are elsewhere in the room - exposed to the group feeling of calm, relaxing smells and restful sounds.

When the time is ended, the leader (adult or child) shakes hands with everyone as all hold hands and the candle is gently blown out.

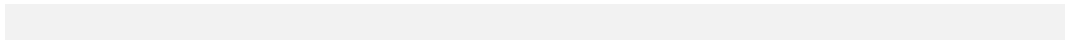
<sup>9</sup> Wormwood, V. A., *"The Fragrant Pharmacy"*, Macmillan, 1990, chapter 4, page 102.

## Chapter 5. Recording and Assessment.

The main emphasis in recording and assessment in Religious Education should be its clarity, honesty and brevity. This means that it should be useful and to the point. With the very special child's particular educational requirements, informal teacher assessment and recording is pertinent. This can build up, over the years, a profile of the child's personal development and exposure to a wide range of Religious Education experiences.

Simple self-assessment also comes from the child if they keep the "I am" memory chest. The contents will reveal the child's choice and preference for personal development and deeper awareness, both secular and religious. An ongoing video of special times, events and successes will also prove invaluable.

**Form 2** shows a simple example of a term-based planner and response form that may be useful in Religious Education. It is important not to state that **goals** have been achieved in the traditional sense of the word. As with everyone, there is a different awareness or interpretation of events by each individual. The planner should give a framework or structure for religious education and notes should be made of responses or reactions to the planned programme. There is also space to note those unplanned happenings of significance to the child's awareness of life.



**Form 2 - Term Planner for Religious Education**

(Please feel free to photocopy and use these forms - Editor).

**Term:** \_\_\_\_\_**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

|                                                  |       |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Child:                                           |       |
| Class:                                           |       |
| Staff:                                           |       |
| Main Term Goals                                  | ***** |
| Individual Responses                             |       |
| Class Responses                                  |       |
| School Responses                                 |       |
| Experiences and Events Undertaken or Spontaneous |       |
| Comments                                         |       |
| The Next Steps                                   |       |

## Chapter 6. Resources.

Religious Education resources can be found in sensory banks, for example, a tray of sea shells or a tray of smells. There can also be trays of multicultural materials and religious artefacts, for example, a tray of materials from a church or from a Hindu shrine. Parents and family friends can provide a new human dimension, such as a Muslim mother or rabbi father.

Use should be extensively made of the school's Religious Education resource, the multicultural centres in a County, and the human resources within a community. The following resources will also be of use in the planning of programmes.

Useful addresses for Religious Education information, book lists and resource catalogues:

**BFSS National Religious Education Centre**

West London Institute of Higher Education  
Lancaster House, Borough Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 5DU,  
U.K.

**The Buddhist Society**, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PH,  
U.K.

**Christian Education Movement**

Royal Buildings, Victoria Street, Derby DE1 1GW, U.K.

**Hindu Centre**, 39 Grafton Terrace, London NW5, U.K.

**Islamic Cultural Centre**, 146 Park Road, London NW8 7RG, U.K.

**Jewish Education Bureau**, 8 Westcombe Avenue, Leeds LS8  
2BS, U.K.

**National Society Religious Education Centre**

23 Kensington Square, London W8 5HN, U.K.

**Rudolph Steiner Library and Bookshop**

Steiner House, 35 Park Road, London NW1 6XT, U.K.

**Sikh Cultural Society**, 88 Mollison Way, Edgeware, Middlesex  
HA8 5QW, U.K.

**Special Religious Education Network**

7 Elyham, Purley on Thames, Berkshire RG8 8EN, U.K.

Religious artefacts can be obtained from:

**Articles of Faith**

Ms. C. M. Winstanley-Howard  
c/o Sacred Trinity Centre  
Chapel Street  
Salford M3 7AJ, U.K.

Resources for implementing the **U.K. Education Reform Act, 1988**, with regard to Religious Education, including large books on themes such as special decorations, the world about us, etc. are included in the Westhills Pack and are available from:

**Mary Glasgow Publications Limited**

Freepost

Brookhampton Lane

Kineton

Warwick CV35 0BR, U.K.

Visit <https://maryglasgowplus.com/teachers/>

## Chapter 7. Bibliography

The following sources should prove useful to any teacher when preparing materials for Religious Education curriculum elements.

**Respect** - a journal for teachers of pupils with special education needs.

Further information from: **Special Religious Education Network**  
7 Elyham, Purley on Thames  
Berkshire RG8 8EN, U.K.  
See <http://entrust.education/Event/39155>

Also available from the Special Religious Education Network are a variety of booklets which could be useful. Suggested titles include:

- **Special Educational Needs - Blind - Deaf**
- **Suggested Resources for Festivals in Special Needs**
- **Plants to Touch and Smell**
- **Chinese New Year**
- **Eid-il Fitr' and Ramadan**
- **Harvest Around the World**
  
- **Signposts and Milestones - Guidelines for Religious Education and Children with Special Educational Needs**, by Erica Brown
  
- **Opening Children's Eyes to Worship - A Guide to Planning and Recording Assemblies**, by Erica Brown
  
- **Special People in Special Places**, by Erica Brown

### Other Useful References.

Brown, Alan S., 1987, **Religious Education and the Pupil with Learning Difficulties**, Cambridge Educational Cambridge University Press.

**Bright Ideas - Assemblies**, obtainable from Scholastic Publications, Marlborough House, Hollywalk, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 4LS, U.K.

Cato, Peta and Washford-Murphy, Rosie, 1990, **Brainwaves - Religious Education First Topics**, published by Folens Press.

**Collective Worship - A Teachers Resource Book of Successful Assemblies in Primary and Secondary Schools**, 1991, by The 4 Shires Project, from Religious Education Inspector, 4 Shires Project, Kingston Centre, Harrowby Street, Stafford ST16 3TU, U.K.

Goss, Phillip, "Religious Education for the Individual Child", article in PMLD LINK magazine, issue 14, Autumn 1992.

Hay, David and Hammond, John, et al, ***New Methods in Religious Education Teaching - an Experimental Approach***, published by Oliver and Boyd.

Huddleston, R.E., editor, 1988, ***Practical Approaches - Religious Education for Children with Special Educational Needs***, published by Devon Education Department, County Hall, Exeter, Devon, U.K. - a very helpful, clear and concise approach, well set out and from practitioners in the field.

***Learning Now: The Cambridgeshire Experience in Religious Education and Beginnings***, 1989, published by Cambridgeshire County Education Service, obtainable from The Resource Centre, Back Hill, Ely, Cambridge CB7 4DA, U.K.

Mashedier, Mildred, 1989, ***Lets Cooperate***, from Peace Education Project, 6 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DX, U.K. - activities and ideas for peaceful conflict solving.

***Religious Education and Special Schools, Collective Worship, Assemblies, Attainment and Assessment in Religious Education*** all obtainable from TMRS, Russell House, 14 Dunstable Street, Ampthill, Bedfordshire MK45 2JT, U.K.

***Shropshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education***, published by Shropshire County Council, Education Department, The Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6ND, U.K.

- Offers units on ways of working in Religious Education Stage 1 and 2, e.g. special journeys, special colours, special world, exploring Christmas, exploring journeys, exploring light and darkness.

See also the extensive list of references in **Appendix B - Sound and Vision Resources**.

## **Appendix A - One Family's View of Religious Education and Their Very Special Child.**

"Our very special son has grown up in a Christian environment where religion or spiritual experience is central to our lives and determines the way we see things and deal with 'everyday' - or perhaps not so 'everyday' - things. Our son Daniel was at home with us for fourteen years until he was placed into the dedicated care of co-workers at the Camphill-Rudolf Steiner School in Aberdeen. The fourteen years he spent at home demanded a great deal in terms of time, energy, patience, and humour, as indeed do the fourteen weeks a year when he is home on holiday from school.

Daniel has very special needs - displaying very challenging behaviour - and possesses no articulate speech. His ability to use the Makaton sign system to express his immediate needs has opened the lines of communication, but his inability to express concepts means that the traditional 'religious' ideas and expressions are not appropriate to him.

The personal faith that we have as individuals in our family has been paramount in helping us to understand and cope with our life together. Having one member of a family demanding so much of our personal and emotional resources means that we perhaps have to be more aware of each others needs than we might otherwise be. We have learned a great deal from our situation - learned the importance of the individual irrespective of differences in ability, learned to take a day at a time and learned the importance of replenishing spiritual, mental and physical resources daily. Perhaps the greatest lesson we have learned is to appreciate that we are all of special value and that what matters is that we develop our full potential, whatever that may be.

It is this development of our own potential and our individual fulfilment that we try to emphasise as a family. Our religious experience helps us to achieve this and helps us to help Daniel fulfil his purpose in life. The living out of our spiritual experience brings about stability and co-operation in our relationships with each other and with others outside our immediate family unit. This helps to maintain a consistent environment essential to our well-being, as well as helping us to cope with the more extreme circumstances brought about by Daniel's challenging behaviour.

Our involvement in our Church provides us with many things which enable us to help Daniel with his own spiritual life and development. It provides a network of friends who take great interest in Daniel and who offer much support. This gives the opportunity to help him to form relationships with people and to encourage his own personal development by guiding him in appropriate behaviour, such as shaking hands rather than grasping clothes. The formal aspect of worship encourages him to sit quietly when appropriate - though this is not his preferred occupation - 'break dancing' in the hymns is much more in line with his thinking! He has a great love of music and has been given the opportunity with our Church (The Salvation Army), and at home, to experience a wide variety of types of music which either stimulate or calm him, but which certainly speaks to his inner self and creates a response from within.

The routine of going to Church together as a family helps to give Daniel a sense of belonging and helps him to make some sense of time for which, as a concept, he has little appreciation. He understands that Sunday is 'Church' day and he can anticipate the routine of that day, which gives him the structure and security he so needs.

The choice of the Camphill Movement as a residential placement for Daniel seemed obvious to us. It was, and indeed is, committed to the support of the individual, irrespective of ability, whose needs of body, soul and spirit are recognised and where the whole community live, work and learn together in a Christian environment characterised by faith, hope and love.

The celebration of the seasonal festivals such as Christmas, Easter, Whitsun, St. Johns and Michaelmas, provides a natural rhythm to the year and helps to establish a strong natural rhythm in the life of the individual. This is of great importance to Daniel, who has little relationship to time. The twenty-four hour curriculum which operates at Camphill ensures consistency and continuity and provides the security needed for the development of the 'whole' person.

The living together of groups with wide ranging abilities calls for special co-operation and an attitude of mutual help. In this context, the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, so far as it affects work with very special people, has to be understood and applied - that is 'that all people, whatever their mental or physical condition, are more than a set of emotions, more than words or achievements, they each carry an infinite and eternal spiritual being.'

The application of this philosophy means that individuals adopt a real brotherly affection for each other - seeing in each other both the helper and the helped. The expressions of our religious beliefs as a family are consolidated and reinforced at school with such things as grace before meals, bedtime prayers and acknowledgement of the Sabbath as a special day. Most importantly is the attempt by Camphill co-workers to try to live and work together for a spiritual purpose - that of acknowledging and addressing the spiritual being living in each special child.

Religion, or the awareness of a deeper dimension to life, is everyone's right and even the most 'very special child' is capable of experiencing a 'wholeness' of personality if given the right opportunity and guidance.

### **Words from Goethe<sup>10</sup>**

***'If we take people as they are, we make them worse. If we treat them as if they were what they ought to be, we help them to become what they are capable of becoming'***

***Marlene Spencer***

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<sup>10</sup> Quote from "*Community, Normality and Difference*", 1992, by Mike Hailey, published by Aberdeen University Press, chapter 9, p 107.

## Appendix B - Sensory Resources.

### Sound Sensory Resources.

With the advent of CD (compact disk) recordings, many records are becoming obsolete. It is useful to "swap" tape recordings of extra special music and sound with others to enable access for very special children. A sound library of a range of audio tapes to borrow for use in schools is very helpful. Here are a range of sounds that would provide a basic sound library. Remember that sounds should not be limited to personal tastes. A very special child should be given a wide range of sounds to enjoy - or to dislike - as they choose.

### CDs and/or Tapes.

**The Four Seasons**, by Vivaldi, played by Nigel Kennedy, on EMI Records CDC 7495572. This musical interpretation of Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter contains strong, direct musical images of the seasons.

**The Enchanted Forest, Melodies of Japan**, played by James Galway, on RCA Victor RD87893, contains contemporary sounds and rhythms blended with flute.

Orff's **Carmina Burana**, played by Mozarteum Orchestra, Salzburg and Mozarteum Choirs, on Spectrum V4008, an excellent example of medieval chants and songs.

**Christmas Greatest Hits** from Telstar LECD501, providing a whole range of seasonal songs and music.

**You Are the Ocean II** by Schawkie Roth on Oreade CD OR2835, contains peaceful and intense music for flute, harp, zither and cello, mixed with the gentle sounds of the ocean and birds.

**Missa Luba** on Philips BL 7592 is a Congolese mass sung by Les Troubadours de Roi Baudouin and provides very moving, uplifting sounds.

**Religions of the Middle East** on Argo ZFB54, provides a range of religious music including whirling Dervish dances and Hebrew readings.

An excellent range of contemplative, inner thinking relaxation tapes and CDs are available from **New World Company**, Paradise Farm, Westhall Holesworth, Suffolk IP19 8RH, U.K. (If you order four tapes, the fifth comes free!).

### Books of Music and Other Sources.

Acorn Percussion, Unit 34, Abbey Business Centre, Ingate Place, London SW8 3NS, U.K. has a lovely selection of instruments from around the world, sounds of night, rainmakers, birds and water falls, etc.

Barratt S. and Hodges, S., **Tinderbox - 66 songs for Children**, 1982 and the **Tinderbox Assembly Book**, by A & C Black

Connolly, Y. et al., **Mango Spice - 44 Caribbean Songs**, 1981, by A & C Black.

Cox, H. and Rickard, G., **Sing! Carols to Sing, Clap and Play**, 1984, Macdonald edition.

Cox, H and Rickard, G, ***Sing!***, 1984, published by MacDonald.

Gadsby, D and Harrop B., ***Harlequin - 44 songs around the year***, 1977, published by A & C Black.

Harrop, Beatrice, ***Carol, gaily Carol***, 1973 by A & C Black.

***Hymns and Songs for Assembly***, (remember to adapt and simplify, if needed) and ***Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-day, Songs for Everyone***, 1977, published by A & C Black.

***The Jolly Herring - 77 Songs: Pop and Folk***, 1989, by A & C Black.

*Look and Hear Tapes*, human, animal, school, home, etc. are obtainable from LDA, Duke Street, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 2AE, U.K.

***Music to Create Atmosphere*** - Erica Brown, ***Respect*** (a journal for teachers of pupils with special education needs) from ***Special Religious Education Network***, 7 Elyham, Purley on Thames, Berkshire RG8 8EN, U.K.

***Someones Singing Lord***, 1979, A & C Black.

Thompson, Pat, ***Rhymes around the day***, 1985 published by Puffin.

## Vision.

Brown, Erica, ***Plants to Touch, Taste and Smell***, from Special Religious Education Network (see above)

BBC Schools Publications have a range of videos, slides, film strips and tapes which could be adapted for v.c.s. A catalogue is available from BBC Schools Publications, Box 234, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 7EU, U.K.

## Posters.

Posters from the Pictorial Charts Education Trust are obtainable from CEM, Publications Department, Royal Buildings, Victoria Street, Derby DE1 1GW, U.K.

Local poster shops and art shops should provide excellent large posters of nature, etc.

## Film strips.

Sound filmstrips on religious festivals are available from Mary Glasgow Publications Limited, Freepost, Brookhampton Lane, Kineton, Warwick CV35 0BR, U.K. Visit <https://maryglasgowplus.com/teachers/>

The local Oxfam, UNICEF or Save the Children shop can offer access to a range of large posters and usually a selection of ethnic materials.

