

Schools

March 2010

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The 21st century teacher: religious education

Using technology to enhance religious
education teaching

This publication offers insight into how technology can be used by teachers of RE, highlighting opportunities to extend subject pedagogy and ICT skills. Other publications in the series offer the opportunity to see how technology is used in other subjects and the cross-fertilisation of ideas and practice.



Using technology to enhance religious education

As technology becomes a greater part of everyday life, it is only natural that it becomes a central and essential part of 21st century learning. Learners are already engaging extensively with technology and expect it to be used in school.

How do teachers benefit from the integration of technology into all aspects of their role and enhance the learning experience of young people?

21st century teachers of religious education (RE) use technology for numerous activities in a similar way to the teaching of other subjects. They embed technology throughout the learning experience for their learners, ensuring the use of technology supports the learning and teaching of the subject.

Like all teachers they will employ technology to:

1. Enhance teaching and learning by:

- using a range of technologies to cater for different learning styles
- using technology to enable learners to collaborate with peers and with partner schools and their students.

2. Improve administration and planning:

- for learning and teaching, reusing and adapting documents
- by using technology to access and share information and enhance your personal knowledge of RE and understanding of professional issues around the subject.

3. Improve assessment and reporting by:

- recording learner achievement and attainment electronically, tracking pupil progress and using the information in assessment for learning
- communicating with parents electronically through email and the school learning platform.

The above are just a few examples and not meant to be a comprehensive list. The following pages give some practical advice how teachers of RE (primary and secondary) use technology.



Learning and teaching

The 21st century teacher of religious education has a vision for technology as a motivator and enabler for developing learning skills in RE. They see technology as one tool among many, but increasingly at the hub of 21st century learning.

Enhancing subject knowledge

They use ICT to access information to develop their subject knowledge from areas such as **BBC religion**, **REonline** and **TeachRE**, to sites developed by practitioners such as **rsrevision.com**. They use technology to provide access to original source materials that may not otherwise be available to learners and themselves, for example, images of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Torah manuscripts, recitation of the Qu'ran etc. They make extensive use of quality video materials to develop thinking in RE. They do this using pre-recorded and online sources of video, such as the **RE teachers group** on **YouTube** and **BBC Learning Zone**.

They also encourage young people to use podcasts at sites such as **gcsepod** which lets students select a subject area and learn about it in detail with audio, graphics and text. They also encourage students to use online revision materials at sites such as the **GCSE RE** site.

Encouraging students to access websites developed by the faith communities they are studying is part of the realm of the 21st century teacher. These sites include **Hindunet** and **REjesus**. They also include resources about young people's beliefs, such as the **People of Faith** site and the **National RE Festival Database**. The RE Festival Database allows students to contribute their own ideas and views on questions, such as 'What is the meaning of life?'

Developing critical thinking

Students in the 21st century classroom are producers of materials. They use multimedia packages such as whiteboard software and Photo Story 3 or PowerPoint, for instance, to produce narratives from sacred texts or to create their own interpretations of religious concepts, such as sacrifice.

In the classroom, they are active users of technologies such as interactive whiteboards and visualisers. Students are also taught to be critical evaluators of the materials and resources that they use.

CASE STUDY



Using ICT to develop critical thinking with secondary RE students

Students offer reflections on virtual tours.

Working in pairs, students considered how elements of a good website could be used to demonstrate effectively the purpose of a place of worship. The key question was, 'How can the internet help you experience aspects of a place of worship?' As part of the project, students from Year 8 evaluated two web-based virtual tours of Hindu temples.

continued overleaf



CASE STUDY



The students then used the interactive whiteboard to record their suggestions about developing the websites, this gave them the opportunity to discuss and refine their ideas. In this activity, students identified, and used with understanding, the language Hindus use in connection with worship, analysed and evaluated how virtual tours can enable people to experience aspects of a place of worship, suggested ways in which these tours can be developed.

[Read more, visit 'Using the internet in secondary RE education'.](#)

The 21st century teacher uses video and audio with their learners to develop presentational materials that express a wide variety of learning outcomes. For example, they record visits to places of worship and interviews with members of faith communities and create a presentation that includes students' reflections. The [Me Myself and I](#) website offers suggestions and case studies on how to do this.

CASE STUDY



[Using digital video to stimulate reflection in the primary RE classroom](#)

Pupils create presentations about Hindu worship.

Pupils watched a digital video recording made by the father of a classmate about Hindu worship at home. The class prepared questions stimulated by this video and emailed these to the pupil's father. They used the replies to write up responses to the questions that they had posed earlier.

Using digital video, pupils recorded a visit to contrast worship at the Mandir with worship at home. Prior to the visit, the pupils reflected on the sights, sounds, tastes and smells they were likely to experience and organised three groups to record the temple experience. The teacher edited the video and pupils' responses into a presentation, which they then used to reflect on what they had learned about why and how Hindus worship at home and at the mandir.

[Read more, visit 'Hindu worship at home and in the temple'.](#)



Supporting learning

Web 2.0 tools such as blogs and wikis are becoming increasingly popular among teachers who are making the most of technology for learning. For instance, the **Believe it or not** blog is designed by RE practitioners at Nodehill Middle School. It aims to help raise students' performance in RE. In a recent example, Year 8 explored the way religious stories are portrayed in the media by studying newspaper articles. They then completed a survey which collated the information, about the different religions, what the article was about and whether it was portrayed in a positive or negative way in the media. The results led to a discussion on the responsibility of the media in portraying religion, and news in general.

The 21st century teacher uses tools for learning, such as mindmapping software (for instance, thinking with pictures). They also use online versions such as **bubbl.us**, which can be used collaboratively in the classroom. This facilitates brainstorming by using colourful mindmaps to structure thinking and for assessment. Teachers are also using other sites such as **Wordle** to create materials for learning and assessment. For instance, learners put all the words they can think of connected to the topic into Wordle, then at the end of the topic, they repeat the same exercise and compare the word clouds. This is a useful form of self-assessment.

Students are able to access support materials from the school learning platform. They use these to develop higher order skills, as knowledge becomes a less important factor in lessons and the processing, analysing and evaluation of information and ideas becomes more important.



Administration and planning

21st century teachers of RE use technology to document their planning. They adapt and re-use these documents, saving time. They are able to use advanced web tools to produce interactive materials for the classroom.

Teachers use professional development resources, such as those provided by the **National Association of Teachers of Religious Education** (NATRE) and **Better RE**. They use online repositories of materials such as the **Teacher Resource Exchange** and **TES Connect forum** to adapt and adopt materials from other teachers for their own lessons. They use forums to communicate with colleagues and to discuss issues of concern such as the **TESConnect** forum. They also use commercial websites, such as **YouTube** to share materials and good practice.

Websites from key organisations help teachers keep up to date with developments in the RE world. Teachers also use support materials to aid curriculum development from sites such as **NATRE**. They access the authentic voices of religious communities from sites such as **Sikh.net** and **Ask a Rabbi**. They also discover the voices of young people (about their beliefs) from areas such as **People of Faith** and **NATRE**.

Assessment and reporting

A 21st century teacher is a confident user of electronic communication mechanisms, such as e-mail, SMS, and the school learning platform. They use these technologies to communicate with parents, colleagues and the wider community. For instance, teachers contribute to the school learning platform, which informs parents and learners about the work that takes place in the classroom. This might also include providing links to useful resources that learners might use at home.

Teachers also use automated reporting systems to keep track of students' achievement and attainment. They use support materials, such as the **Better RE** site to aid in standardising assessment. They also share this information with parents.

Recording facilities enabled by ICT (such as images, text, video and audio) can help teachers carry out ongoing assessment. For example, records of group discussions and online forums can contribute to formative and summative assessments as well as for assessing pupils' progress.



Are you a 21st century teacher of RE?

ABOUT YOU

Consider what you do towards developing your range of professional teaching skills with technology.

Do you use technology to access information to enhance your personal knowledge of religious and belief communities and understanding of professional issues around the subject including the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning in RE?

Regularly
Sometimes
Not at all

Do you use technology to access information and concepts using the authentic voices of religious and belief communities?

Do you support your learners to record and share audio and video to aid understanding of religious and belief communities and provide feedback, including peer assessment, e.g. podcasts?

Do you encourage learners to be critical readers and evaluators of texts and ensure that they recognise bias and issues of accuracy?

Do you use technology to enable collaboration between learners and with partner schools and their learners?

Do you extend learning by providing RE activities and resources on the learning platform or website?

Do you audit the range of resources, software and hardware used in the teaching of RE and identify any gaps in provision?

Discover more online

For further help and ideas on how to turn your checklist into actions, try reviewing some of these resources.

NATRE (National Association of Teachers of RE)

The public part of this site provides four short films (6 minutes each) about the nature, purpose and value of RE plus downloadable discussion prompts for a variety of contexts.

Listening to children and young people talking

An online, interactive and moderated database of young people's (aged 5–19) responses to 11 questions about religion and spirituality.

CLEO: Cumbria and Lancashire Education Online

This site provides more than 50 online video-based resources to support the secondary curricula.

Better RE

Has materials to help teachers at different stages of expertise and experience improve their provision of RE.

BBC Learning Zone Broadband Class Clips

Provides rich audio-visual material for use in primary and secondary schools. The short video clips can be accessed by searching by subject and topic or by keyword.

BBC Religion and BBC Ethics

These are vast resources which cover a large number of religions and beliefs, and a range of ethical issues.

REonline

Is at the centre of a family of websites which together provide a comprehensive online resources centre for teachers of RE.

Sacred Space (LOtC)

This resource provides inspiration to help teachers in all key stages make learning outside the classroom compelling in RE.

Spirited Arts

The Gallery provides a bank of excellent stimulus materials for use independently of the competition.

Peacemakers TV

Uses film, music, photography and other media with the aim of improving understanding in the UK between Christians, Muslims and others.

Ictopus

A support service for primary education offering free good quality lesson ideas and teaching suggestions using technology in RE.

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