

Spirituality and Sport

The Royal Manor Arts College, Portland, Dorset: Angus Dawson

Purpose

- To develop students' understanding of the way that many of the things that are important to religious or spiritual people are also important to or part of the lives of people who may not have a specific religious commitment.
- To develop higher order thinking skills in students as they make connections and analyse the links between RE and PE.

Main emphasis

The main thrust of this piece of cross curricular work is to draw links between the six RE concepts in the national framework and the world of sport, specifically football. It was felt that a multicultural approach in exemplifying each of the six concepts would provide variety and also meet the socio cultural needs of the students in the school.

It is envisaged that a 10-12 lesson scheme of work would allow students to cover at least two of the six concepts using a different religious example for each and allow them to link that knowledge and understanding to a similar example from the world of football. For instance the concept of 'expressing meaning' could be tackled by looking at the way Christians express adoration or thanks to God through singing hymns and this could be linked to the way football supporters express their feelings through the chants they sing in football stadiums.

By making these connections students will learn about the wider impact and connection that religion has with sport and life in general. It is also anticipated that by drawing parallels between religious concepts and football there will be plenty of assessment opportunities for students to be able to access the higher levels of attainment.

School profile

Total number of learners	750
Age range	11-16
Specialist status	Performing Arts College
Level 5 and above in key stage 3 tests (2007)	English=68% Maths=62% Science =65%
Five A*-C at GCSE (2006)	42%
Special educational needs	31% on register. 13.6% with Statement or Action Plus, 17.5% School Action.

The Royal Manor Arts College is a comprehensive school set in the heart of the Isle of Portland community, on the south Dorset coast. Although there are pockets of wealth on the Isle and the 2012 Olympic sailing events are to be staged in the area, Portland as a community includes some areas ranked in the lowest 400 wards in the country for deprivation. There is a high teenage pregnancy rate, a relatively low pay working environment, and a lack of adult role models encouraging positive attitudes to learning.

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The local community is almost exclusively monocultural with 98% of its inhabitants being white British in 2007. At the school over 31% of students are on the SEN register (Jan '07). 6% of students are on the Gifted and Talented Register. In 2004 Ofsted described the school as a 'good' school. The RE department was graded "outstanding" by Ofsted in a subject review in 2007.

Question 1: What were you trying to achieve?

What were your learners like at the start?

When students arrive at RMAC, their level of attainment in RE and their attitude to the usefulness of RE is very varied. Nevertheless, at Key Stage 4 the Philosophy and Ethics GCSE is a very popular and successful option (2/3 of both the current year 10 and 11 cohorts have opted to do full course Philosophy and Ethics and for the past 4 years results have bettered Fisher Foundation Trust predictions and national averages).

The department now wants to develop the work it does in Key Stage 3 so that it can tackle the perceived sense amongst KS3 students that religious or spiritual matters have no place or usefulness in their lives and also create a new, engaging scheme of work that provides students with the opportunity to use the higher order thinking skills from the national framework level descriptors as replicated in our new agreed syllabus. The RE department felt that some compelling learning experiences could be designed that would challenge students' attitudes about the relevance of religion by linking their work to a universally popular sport like football. At the same time this would create a chance for cross curricular learning to take place and thereby give students a sense of the interconnectedness of their learning both at school and in the world beyond.

What differences did you want to see in your learners?

In terms of *knowledge and understanding* we want students to be able to know about and be able to explain the importance of one religion/belief system in relation to TWO of the six concepts from the national framework, as reflected in our agreed syllabus. In addition to this we want them to be able to understand the link or parallel between that religious example and an aspect of the game of football. The football example could be the lead-in to stimulate students' interest. For instance, students might learn about the life of a well-known footballer such as George Best or Paul Gascoigne and compare aspects of their life with that of a celebrated religious leader or thinker such as Martin Luther King, Gandhi or Aung San Sui

Kyi. The focus of students' work would be on the concepts of 'practices and ways of life' (broadly AT1), and on 'values and commitments' (broadly AT2).

Students will have opportunities to show the depth of their knowledge and understanding by completing assessments designed specifically around the agreed syllabus level descriptors (which are the same as those in the Non-Statutory National Framework for RE), with the aim of tackling the higher order levels like critical and analytic thinking or showing an understanding of why there is diversity.

In terms of *attitudes and behaviour*, we particularly want students to become aware of the way that religious or spiritual concerns surround their lives, even if they as individuals are not religious, and that learning about and from religion will give them an insight into the value of these concerns.

Question 2: How did you organise learning to achieve your aims?

How did you set about making a change?

In liaison with the PE department we have decided to target Year 8 for the new sequence of lessons. In order to measure the outcomes of the new material, the RE and PE departments have collaborated to produce a formative benchmark assessment that gives both departments an idea of students' baseline knowledge and understanding in the relevant areas. Good working relationships between the two departments are essential for the project to work well, and in order to complement the work that the RE department is doing the PE department has dovetailed its work so that it delivers its module on soccer skills to both Year 8 boys and girls at the same time.

The RE department worked with the PE staff, using their expertise to identify six aspects of the game of football that complement or link to religious examples. On the left of the table below are some examples of research topics related to football. On the right, examples from different religions or secular philosophies with which students can compare their findings.

Attainment Target 1: Learning about religion

A. Beliefs, teachings and sources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the origins of modern football ▪ the laws of the game ▪ development as an international sport ▪ media pundits and commentators ▪ supporters' views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the origins of a selected belief system ▪ laws in religion and life ▪ conversion and the spread of belief ▪ saints and heretics ▪ followers' own views on belief
B. Practices and ways of life	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the lifestyles of those involved: players (professional and amateur), officials, ground-staff, coaches, chairmen, supporters, players, players' wives and girlfriends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the lives of believers, ministers and other officials in a selected belief system ▪ celebrations of key events in the history of the selected tradition ▪ discipline in religion and life – Lent,

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ celebrating goals, victories ▪ fitness regimes, practice, discipline, health and psychological consultants 	Ramadan, etc
C. Expressing meaning	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ songs, chants and other football songs ▪ arts and techniques of the game ▪ the 'language' and ritual of football ▪ symbolism found in memorabilia, programmes, stadiums ▪ the marketing of football – TV, websites etc ▪ commemoration of footballers of the past, memorials for those who died in football-related tragedies ▪ football humour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ hymns, chants and music in a selected belief system ▪ symbolism, language and ritual in a selected belief system ▪ 'marketing' religion and belief ▪ honouring those who have 'died in faith' ▪ religious humour

Attainment Target 2: Learning from religion

D. Identity, diversity and belonging	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ supporters and what they say about following their teams ▪ virtual football communities ▪ 'Derby' matches and other rivalries ▪ psychological explanations of fandom ▪ women's football 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'belonging' to a religious or belief group in relation to other groups ▪ virtual religious communities and groups ▪ psychological explanations of religious belief ▪ attitudes to women in a selected belief system
E. Questions of meaning, purpose and truth	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the importance of football in some people's lives ▪ concept of 'beauty' in football ▪ feelings associated with winning and losing ▪ chance, fate and fortune ▪ wise uses of time and money ▪ 'life after football' – reflections on and of past footballers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the 'good' life according to a selected belief system ▪ predetermination and free-will ▪ life after death according to a selected belief system

F. Values and commitments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ concepts of loyalty, fair play, honesty and 'win-at-any-cost' ▪ football and finance – payments to players, agents, sponsoring of clubs by foreign nationals, 'exploitation' of supporters, merchandising etc. ▪ the role of professional and amateur football clubs in the community ▪ star players as role models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ key values in a selected belief system ▪ attitudes to money and wealth ▪ religion and belief in the community ▪ religious role models

The RE department has begun to create teaching and learning resources for examples of each of the six key concepts. These will be differentiated so that they meet the learning needs of all, stretching the most able and being accessible to less able learners.

A range of different student learning styles will be taken into account so that lessons include a range of kinaesthetic, visual and auditory tasks.

Students will select one theme from A, B or C, plus one from D, E or F to make comparisons between religious and sporting examples and produce a report on their findings, including similarities and differences.

As far as assessing the learning is concerned a considerable amount of thought and expertise will be needed to devise questions and tasks that allow students to access the higher (above level 4) levels. Tasks where students compare or analyse similarities and differences between the religious and football examples will open up levels 5 and beyond, and the more sophisticated learners will be able to access even higher attainment by looking at diversity within the examples.

It was decided that along with these assessments a student survey would be carried out at the end of the module to assess the impact that the teaching and learning has had on the attitudes of students towards the wider relevance of religion.

3: How well have you achieved your aims?

What differences are evident? What impact have you made on your learners?

By measuring the benchmark starting point of all Year 8 students doing the RE/PE cross curricular module it will be possible to assess how much progress has been made through the teaching and learning assessments that students complete during the course of the module.

The attitudinal survey will also give specific feedback from students about their views on the broader links religion has with other elements of secular life.