

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

TEXT IMPACT CONNECTIONS

TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

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Published by Christian Education Publications,
Imperial Court, Sovereign Road, Birmingham B30 3FH

ISBN: 978-1-910261-17-0

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Designed and typeset by: eplsdesign.com
Printed and bound in Wales by Stephens & George Limited

CONTENTS

Forewords	2
Introduction	3
1. What <i>Understanding Christianity</i> is seeking to do	6
Key purpose	6
Aims	6
What this resource offers	6
2. What this resource is <i>not</i> doing	7
Choices, choices	7
What <i>not</i> to expect	7
3. Introducing the approach	8
Introduction to the <i>Understanding Christianity</i> approach	8
4. The elements of the approach	10
Components	10
Pupil activities/processes	13
5. Core concepts and the 'big story' of the Bible	14
6. Core knowledge: what do we want pupils to know?	17
Overview: core concepts and key questions	18
Conceptual 'building blocks'	20
7. Raising standards through this approach	34
Flexible models of assessment	34
High expectations	34
End-of-phase outcomes	36
8. Exploring the resource materials	38
9. Pupils' personal development	40
Academic rigour and personal development	40
Contributing to wider educational purposes	40
Developing 'virtuous readers'	41
10. The value of using texts in the classroom	42
The challenge of texts in the classroom	42
Behind the text; within the text; in front of the text	42
The virtue of reading	43
How does using texts in RE contribute to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	43
11. How do Christians use the Bible? Some metaphors	46
12. Ten ways to get into a Bible story	48
13. Grasping the 'big story' using art	51
Appendix 1: Background findings on the teaching of Christianity	52
Appendix 2: Contents of the <i>Understanding Christianity</i> Resource Pack	53
Appendix 3: Acknowledgements	54
Appendix 4: Glossary of activities	56
Appendix 5: Credits	60

FOREWORDS



It has been very encouraging to be connected with this project on understanding Christianity. It has faced a huge challenge: to conceive a resource for schools that does justice to Christianity as a world faith, draws pupils into deeper understanding of the Bible, explores how Christian belief

and practice are shaped, makes connections with other areas of belief and understanding, and encourages reflection, evaluation and application. The resulting resource has been tested in a variety of schools and found to work well, so now it is being offered to teachers of religious education in all schools.

The initial impetus for the project came when I was approached by someone, who prefers to remain anonymous, who was very dissatisfied with the religious education his daughters had received, especially on Christianity. He wanted to help improve the situation and offered funding. Further investigation showed that the inadequacy of the teaching of Christianity in schools was confirmed by a range of studies. Janina Ainsworth, then Chief Education Officer of the Church of England, enthusiastically agreed that a new substantial resource was needed, and she took responsibility for the project. We employed Hazel Henson, an experienced head teacher with a theology degree, to do the basic work. Then, with the support of many advisers and consultants, and further funding from Culham St Gabriel's Trust, Jerusalem Trust and Halley Stewart Foundation, Stephen Pett and his colleagues in RE Today Services took over and developed what is offered here.

At each stage I have been impressed by the combination in the participants of passion for the project, theological discernment, and professional experience and competence. They have managed to interconnect the text of the Bible, the beliefs and practices of Christians, and the world of the pupils – a remarkable achievement. It is demanding on teachers and pupils, yet both are also given rich materials to resource them, with pointers to much more. The promise is of a richer, deeper, wiser understanding of Christianity for both Christians and non-Christians, and an attractive mode of exploration and learning for both pupils and teachers.

David F. Ford

Regius Professor of Divinity Emeritus
Selwyn College
Cambridge



The National Society has, since its foundation in 1811, held the promotion of religious education as one of its key priorities. In recent years we have recognised that within the rich Christian heritage of Britain, a particular

responsibility of the Church of England is to ensure Christianity is well taught in our schools. In order to deliver this more effectively, however, we needed a large-scale resource which could promote theological literacy and a deep understanding of the whole Christian narrative for children and young people aged five to thirteen. We wanted this resource to be available not just for Church of England schools but for all schools across the country as part of the Church of England's offer of education for the common good.

I am delighted that those aspirations, along with the commitment, determination and partnership of others, have come together in the publication of this material. *Understanding Christianity* is a remarkable achievement and I add my thanks to all our funders and writers who have made it possible. It explores the core concepts of Christianity in a progressive way, using an enquiry approach that engages with biblical text and helps develop religious and theological literacy.

We are pleased to commend it to schools and teachers for use across the length and breadth of the country, to ensure that the children we serve are equipped to understand Christianity and think theologically as they engage with the faith that has been at the heart of the shaping of our nation.

Revd Nigel Genders

Chief Education Officer
Church of England Education Office

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a substantial resource to support teaching about Christianity in RE.

GENESIS:

Why was Understanding Christianity: Text Impact Connections initiated?

The origin of this project was prompted by the desire to see pupils leave school with a coherent understanding of Christian belief and practice, as part of a wider religious, theological and cultural literacy.

LAMENTATIONS:

What needs does Understanding Christianity address?

Whilst there is excellent RE taking place in many schools across the country, there have been a number of reports showing that there are some significant weaknesses in teaching about Christianity in England (see details in Appendix 1). For example, major Ofsted reports in 2010¹ and 2013² have reported that:

- pupils' understanding of Christianity, while deeper in some respects compared with their understanding of other faiths, is often unsystematic and confused
- schools pay insufficient attention to the progressive and systematic investigation of the core beliefs of Christianity
- the study of Jesus focuses on an unsystematic collection of information about his life, with limited reference to his theological significance within the faith
- use is made of Jesus' parables or miracles, for example, to explore personal feelings and not to make any reference to their religious significance, losing the opportunity to extend pupils' understanding of Christian beliefs.

In 2014, the Church of England commissioned its own review of RE in Church of England schools.³ It echoed the findings of Ofsted and called for:

- a more intellectually coherent and challenging curriculum for teaching Christianity
- a programme to raise the level of pupils' religious literacy.

One solution offered was through focusing on

'...developing pupils' ability to think theologically and engage in theological enquiry. The ability to think theologically means that pupils go beyond mere collecting of information about religion and belief. It involves pupils exploring the key ideas and crucial inner meanings within the religious material they are studying' (p.28).

REVELATION:

How does Understanding Christianity address these problems?

This resource responds to the challenge of raising standards of achievement in teaching and learning about Christianity in several ways:

1. It starts by reducing the content covered, focusing on a small number of core concepts in order to enable a deeper understanding by pupils.
2. It ensures coherence by selecting core concepts which reflect a view of biblical Christianity as following a salvation narrative.
3. It uses a 'spiral' curriculum, where pupils revisit these core concepts in different contexts as they move through the school. These varied encounters deepen pupils' understanding of the meaning of these concepts within the overall 'big story' of the Bible.
4. It explores ways in which belief in the core concepts has an impact on the diverse Christian community and on the individual lives of Christians.
5. It weaves in opportunities for pupils to reflect upon these ideas in relation to their understanding of religion and belief, including their own responses (see detail on pp.10-11).

1. OFSTED (2010) *Transforming Religious Education*

2. OFSTED (2013) *Religious Education: Realising the Potential*

3. National Society (2014) *Making a Difference? A Review of Religious Education in Church of England Schools*

These features contribute to the 'religious literacy' of pupils, which we interpret as including the ability of pupils to understand the nature and impact of religions and beliefs in the contemporary world, and to articulate informed responses about religion and belief.

The particular contribution of *Understanding Christianity* to 'religious literacy' is in helping pupils develop 'theological literacy'. We interpret this as enabling pupils to grasp the meaning and significance of core theological concepts within Christian belief and practice, as part of a coherent understanding of living Christianity. This understanding contributes to pupils' abilities to reflect upon and evaluate different ways of understanding the world, including their own ideas.

The call to develop the skills of 'theological enquiry' has been interpreted as enabling pupils to engage in investigating significant questions about, for example, God, faith, authority and how to live. As pupils explore these questions, they are encouraged to ask appropriate questions of their own and develop the skills of enquiring into religion and belief.

'Enquiry' does not here mean free enquiry or discovery learning, where pupils are left to find out for themselves the answers to complex theological, religious, philosophical and psychological questions. Teacher-directed learning is an important part of this approach, whereby teachers are helped to structure content in ways that are accessible and meaningful to pupils, to build their knowledge and understanding.

Part of the challenge of this approach is the requirement for subject knowledge on the part of the teacher. *Understanding Christianity* includes the essential information to support teachers and give them confidence in preparing and teaching good RE lessons.

CHRONICLES:

How has *Understanding Christianity* developed and been trialled?

The project process has included several periods of trial and consultation, including in schools, with teachers. The initial project outline, with its conceptual and salvation narrative core, was devised by Hazel Henson through widespread consultation, and supported with some initial resource writing. This outline was taken up by the RE Today team in September 2014, adapted and developed into the teaching and learning approach outlined on pp.8–13. The approach was trialled in a mix of 21 Church of England and community schools, in spring 2015; it was adapted in response to feedback, and then 16 units of material were trialled in another wide-ranging sample of 33 schools in autumn 2015. Many teachers have been involved in trialling and giving feedback.

Throughout the process, expert advice has been sought on the approach, the theological content, and the details of teaching and learning. (For more details on trial schools and experts consulted, see acknowledgements, pp.54–55.) Having said that, in the light of extensive advice, final decisions on the content, wording and theological perspective are the responsibility of the Editor, Stephen Pett.

GOSPEL?

Does *Understanding Christianity* offer the teacher of RE good news for the subject?

We believe so! The approach and resources offer a wealth of ideas and materials for a serious, coherent and systematic engagement with Christianity in RE.

We do not claim divine inspiration, however, nor do we believe that this is the last word in teaching about Christianity! The project has had to recognise its limitations. It cannot do everything that all readers would wish for in a resource. It may offer views of Christianity that are not identical to those of the reader. It may not include exactly the teaching resources that the teacher would like to use tomorrow. It may be offering a different approach to teaching RE, and Christianity specifically, than a teacher would usually employ, but we have made choices (see p.7) and sought to build on them.

AUTHORSHIP

In the writing team for this project, we have over 70 years of teaching experience between us, including RE subject leadership and membership of senior leadership teams, in a range of schools, from primary, through middle to secondary, church and community, including EYFS, a pupil referral unit and a grammar school. We have over 65 years of advisory experience with teachers and trainee teachers around the UK and overseas, and possess between us multiple PGCEs, a Masters in Theology, an MA in Religious Education, a Biblical Studies degree, two Religious Studies B.Ed degrees, two Farmington Fellowships, a Cambridge Diploma in Religious Studies and a Music degree!

In the interests of transparency, you might like to know that among the writers are several Anglicans of different varieties, one of whom is a Reader in the Church of England, a member of a Baptist church, an atheist (with a theology degree) and a Jewish person. We are broadly sympathetic to the ideals of religion, whilst being critically engaged with questions of faith and belief in religious and non-religious worldviews. We are open to the idea that religions express truth, but also aware of many faults of religion, including Christianity. We share a commitment to high-quality RE, although we do not always all agree on exactly what that looks like nor how to achieve it, just as we have differences on questions of belief. For the few readers steeped in the traditions of biblical source and redaction criticism, you might spend many (happy?) hours trying to attribute strands of writing and thinking to individual writers and identifying the activities of the Editor. Or you could take it as it is, and explore ways of putting its approach into practice in your classroom!

Writers:

Lat Blaylock, Kate Christopher,
Julia Diamond-Conway, Helen Matter (EYFS),
Fiona Moss, Stephen Pett.

INTENDED READERS

This project was set up by the Church of England, with the intention of improving teaching about Christianity. The sponsors, funders and writers were keen that this project should support RE within church schools, community schools, academies and free schools. In order to achieve this, the resources are written to be used in all types of schools; they explore Christianity widely, including but not restricted to Anglican Christianity, and they offer 'core learning' materials for all schools, with 'digging deeper' materials for church schools or those choosing to spend more time on Christianity in their RE.

Stephen Pett
Editor



1. WHAT UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY IS SEEKING TO DO

KEY PURPOSE

The key purpose of these materials is to support pupils in developing their understanding of Christianity, as a contribution to their understanding of the world and their own experience within it.

It does this by integrating pupils' developing understanding of significant theological concepts within Christianity with their own self-understanding and understanding of the world, as part of their wider religious literacy.

AIMS

- To enable pupils to know about and understand Christianity as a living world faith, by exploring core theological concepts.
- To enable pupils to develop knowledge and skills in making sense of biblical texts and understanding their impact in the lives of Christians.
- To develop pupils' abilities to connect, critically reflect upon, evaluate and apply their learning to their own growing understanding of religion and belief (particularly Christianity), of themselves, the world and human experience.⁴

WHAT THIS RESOURCE OFFERS

The *Understanding Christianity* materials are intended to support teachers in Church of England schools, community schools, other denominational schools, academies and free schools in teaching about Christianity in RE. It offers a coherent and comprehensive (but not exhaustive) resource, including:

- a **theological and conceptual basis**, taking seriously Christian accounts of the 'big story' of salvation and the relationship of the reader/pupil to these texts
- a clear outline of **core knowledge 'building blocks'** in relation to Christianity, to enable teachers to see what pupils should know, understand and be able to do
- support for teachers who have little or no theological training, through straightforward **essential background information** for the teacher about Christian concepts, theology and practice
- a **teaching and learning approach** to enable pupils to move from an understanding of the biblical text and how to handle it, to an understanding of what this means for Christians within the Church and in Christian living, with opportunities for pupils to examine and evaluate connections between these ideas and the wider world, including their own ways of thinking and living
- flexible opportunities for **assessment**, aiming towards end-of-phase/key stage outcomes that incorporate knowledge and the skills with which to handle, integrate and apply this knowledge, but allowing pupils to make progress from surface learning to deeper learning at all ages.

⁴ These aims are consonant with the aims of A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England (RE Council, October 2013, pp. 11-12).

2. WHAT THIS RESOURCE IS *NOT* DOING

CHOICES, CHOICES

We have had to make some choices in the development of this project. Other writers might have made different choices. For example, our decision to focus the core concepts around the idea of a biblical 'big story' imposes a constraining and disputed construct upon the materials. There are many ways to approach Christianity, and starting with the Bible is only one of those. Once approached, there are many ways of understanding Christianity, as there are many ways of reading, interpreting and understanding the Bible. However, we have made these choices believing that the selected core concepts are at the heart of mainstream contemporary Christianity, even though emphases and interpretations vary. The intention is to develop resources to support an integrated and coherent understanding, laying the foundations for more subtle and diverse understanding as pupils move into GCSE and beyond. Units are based around an enquiry, exploring varied responses so that Christian diversity is included in the learning.

WHAT *NOT* TO EXPECT

This project is not offering a complete RE curriculum. It offers an approach to teaching about Christianity, as part of the wider RE curriculum. The model of *making sense, understanding the impact* and *making connections* might offer a way of approaching other religions and beliefs, but it is not intended to be applied beyond the study of Christianity, because its roots are within Christianity's self-understanding, diverse as that is, rather than with a broader understanding of religion as a whole.

It is not offering lesson plans. Teachers need to respond to how well their pupils make progress as they plan their teaching and learning. If all pupils grasp the outcomes/building blocks well, they can move on – if not, they may need to select or devise another activity to help pupils become secure in their understanding.

It is not particularly easy! The model is designed to enable sustained development in understanding over the years pupils are in school, with later learning built upon prior learning. Obviously, teachers coming to it for the first time will find that many pupils do not have the prior learning. This issue will diminish as the approach works its way through the school, but teachers should take this into account in the initial phases of implementing the approach.

It is not an undergraduate degree course in theology. Specialist RE teachers with theology degrees may wish to extend the range of theological perspectives, but our intention was to provide a broadly mainstream understanding of Christian belief and practice, with some awareness of the diversity of views within this. Once pupils grasp this foundation, it is simpler to explore the wider diversity in whatever direction teachers might choose.

It is not a study of the history of Christianity. Schools can supplement it with connections to the Middle Ages, the Reformation, post-Enlightenment scepticism, the Oxford Movement and Vatican II if they wish!

It is not an existential search. We could have started with universal existential questions, or contemporary controversial issues, and explored Christian responses to them. We have not done so, preferring to lay down theological foundations, so that pupils have some understanding from which to address the existential questions and controversial issues.

It is not offering a philosophical or sociological approach to RE: it addresses some philosophical, sociological and psychological questions, but its focus is on an exploration of Christian theology, reflecting on its impact in the lives of Christians and how it might illuminate pupils' understanding of themselves, others and the world.

3. INTRODUCING THE APPROACH

The approach developed for *Understanding Christianity* is based on the use of core concepts of Christian belief, as expressed in the Bible and lived out in the lives of Christians today. The core concepts reflect a view that the Bible tells a 'big story' of salvation. The approach in RE is to revisit the core concepts throughout the different key stages, deepening pupils' understanding and making the links to the overall 'big story' or 'salvation narrative'.

This is not the only way to describe Christian thought and practice, and of course there is real diversity within Christianity itself, but it sets a good foundation for understanding the heart of the Christian faith.

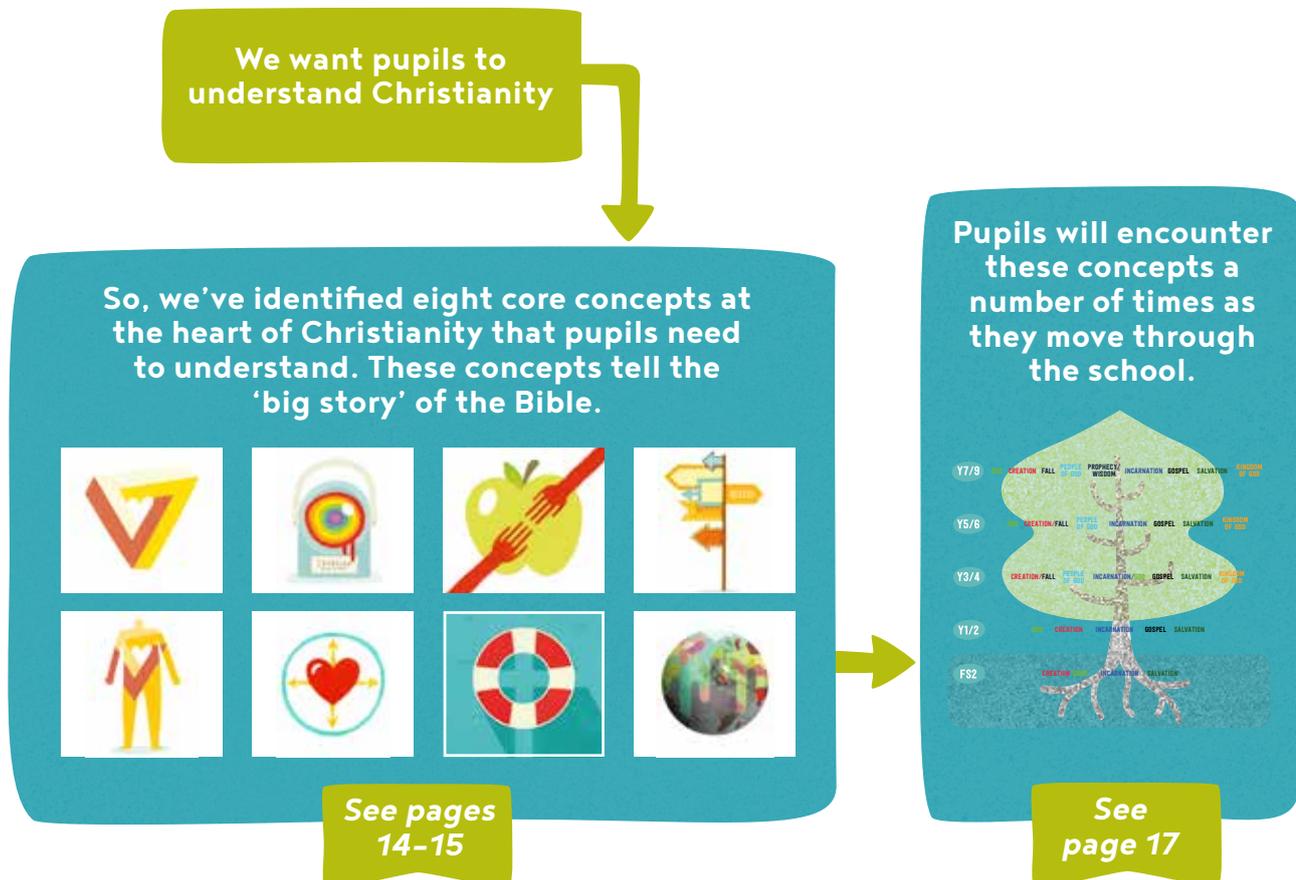
The teaching and learning approach enables pupils to engage with a variety of Bible texts in order to explore how Christians understand the core concepts.

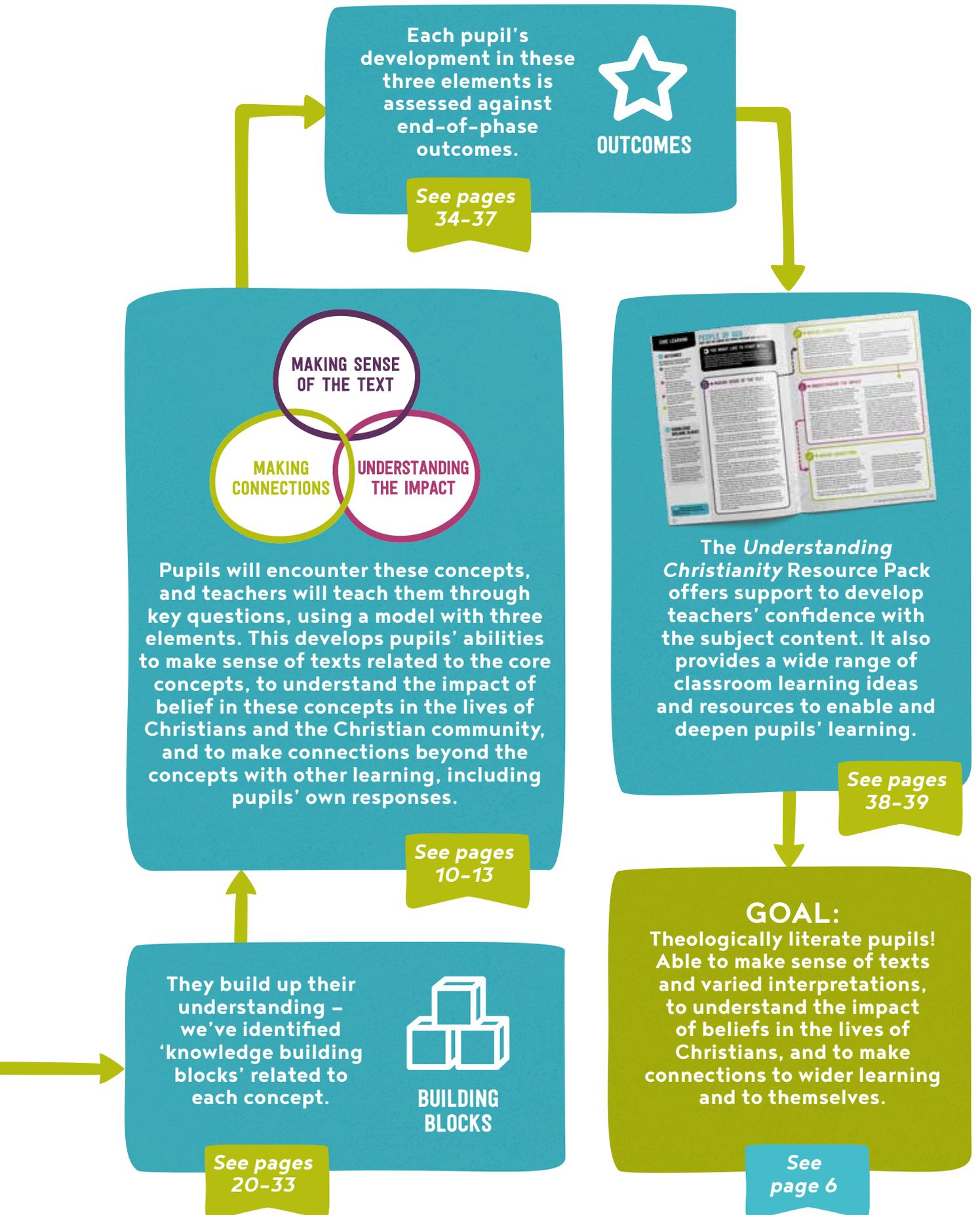
It explores ways in which Christians might live in the light of these texts, within the Christian community and in their individual lives. It allows pupils to reflect on some of the questions and puzzles that arise from the Bible, and to consider any implications or connections with their own lives and ways of understanding the world.

These materials incorporate activities that explore Christian responses to the biblical text, as well as the pupils' own responses, whether they are Christian, atheist, agnostic, or from a faith tradition other than Christianity.

A summary of the components of the approach is found below, with each part explained in more detail on subsequent pages.

INTRODUCTION TO THE *UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY* APPROACH





Each pupil's development in these three elements is assessed against end-of-phase outcomes.



OUTCOMES

See pages 34-37

MAKING SENSE OF THE TEXT

MAKING CONNECTIONS

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT

Pupils will encounter these concepts, and teachers will teach them through key questions, using a model with three elements. This develops pupils' abilities to make sense of texts related to the core concepts, to understand the impact of belief in these concepts in the lives of Christians and the Christian community, and to make connections beyond the concepts with other learning, including pupils' own responses.

See pages 10-13

The *Understanding Christianity* Resource Pack offers support to develop teachers' confidence with the subject content. It also provides a wide range of classroom learning ideas and resources to enable and deepen pupils' learning.

See pages 38-39

They build up their understanding – we've identified 'knowledge building blocks' related to each concept.



BUILDING BLOCKS

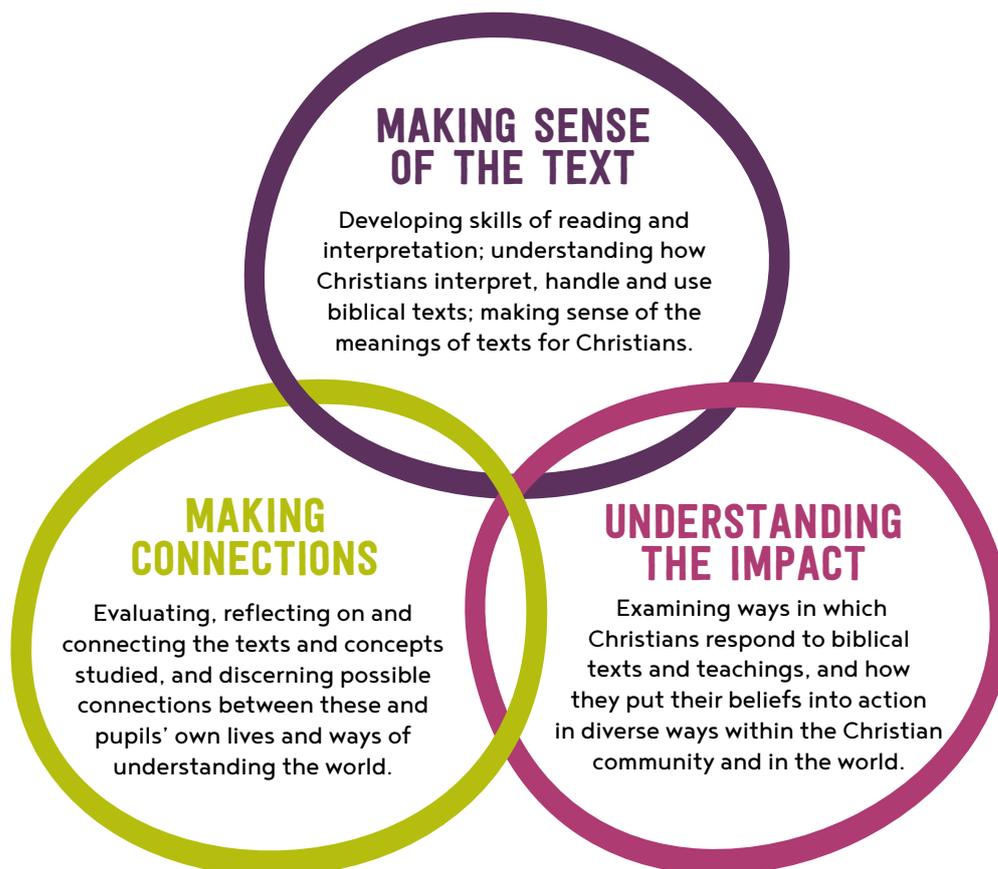
See pages 20-33

GOAL:
Theologically literate pupils!
Able to make sense of texts and varied interpretations, to understand the impact of beliefs in the lives of Christians, and to make connections to wider learning and to themselves.

See page 6

4. THE ELEMENTS OF THE APPROACH

Understanding Christianity's approach to teaching about Christianity builds up pupils' encounters with biblical concepts through texts, placing the texts and concepts within the wider Bible story. Each unit addresses a concept, through some key questions, exploring core Bible texts, their impact for Christians, and possible implications for pupils. Each unit incorporates the three elements below:



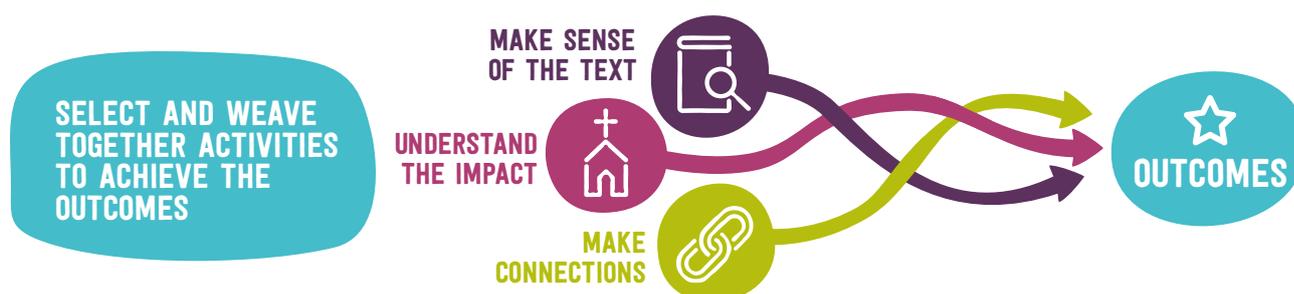
The units of work usually begin with a 'way in', then flow from 'Making sense of the text', on to 'Understanding the impact' of the text and the concept on the Church community and Christian living, then explore 'Making connections'. This means that the move from text outwards through the world of the Christian and to the world of the pupil runs through each unit.

There is flexibility and freedom within this structure, however, hence the overlapping circles in the above diagram, and teachers are free to weave together activities from different elements to enable pupils to achieve the outcomes.

This model shows that the *Understanding Christianity* approach is not just getting pupils to learn what

Christians think. Instead, it is about developing some skills to help them 'think theologically' alongside learning lots of knowledge about the Bible, Christian belief and practice. It also shows that these three elements do not represent rigid, distinct steps, but that pupils can 'make connections' whilst 'making sense of the text', or 'understanding the impact', as shown in the diagram below.

It also places the pupil's engagement with Christian texts, beliefs and practices clearly within the approach, taking seriously the role of the pupil as reader, bringing their own world to the text whilst giving them the opportunity to allow the text to enlarge their understanding of the world.



This diagram sums up the process of teaching and learning using the units of work. The three elements can be woven together, and teachers should select the activities that are needed to enable pupils to achieve the outcomes. Not all classes will need all the activities: some may need additional or alternative activities.

COMPONENTS

Each of the elements contain a range of components. Not all of these will be used in all units, but will be used flexibly, to allow for a variety of teaching and learning experiences for pupils.

Making sense of the text

Exploring the context:

Where does this fit in the 'big story'?

Exploring interpretations:

Pupils' views and a variety of Christian readings

Exploring purposes:

How do Christians use this text?

Exploring significance:

Why does this matter?

Unveiling the concepts:

How does this contribute to understanding key Christian ideas?

Considering issues ...

behind, within and in front of the texts

Understanding the impact

How, then, do Christians live..?

... in the Christian community?

Examining ways in which Church living grows out of biblical teaching

... in their everyday living?

Examining ways in which Christians apply the Bible day-to-day

What impact do Christianity and Christians have in the world?

Examining ways in which Christian belief and practice make a difference in the world

How has this had an impact on how people see the world?

Examining the influence of Christian thought on 21st-century thinking and living

Making connections

Connecting texts, concepts and Christian living:

Developing understanding of the bigger picture

Connecting ideas studied and pupils' own ideas:

Using ideas studied to reflect on matters of personal concern

Personal and impersonal evaluation:

Allowing pupils to challenge ideas studied, and the ideas studied to challenge pupils' thinking

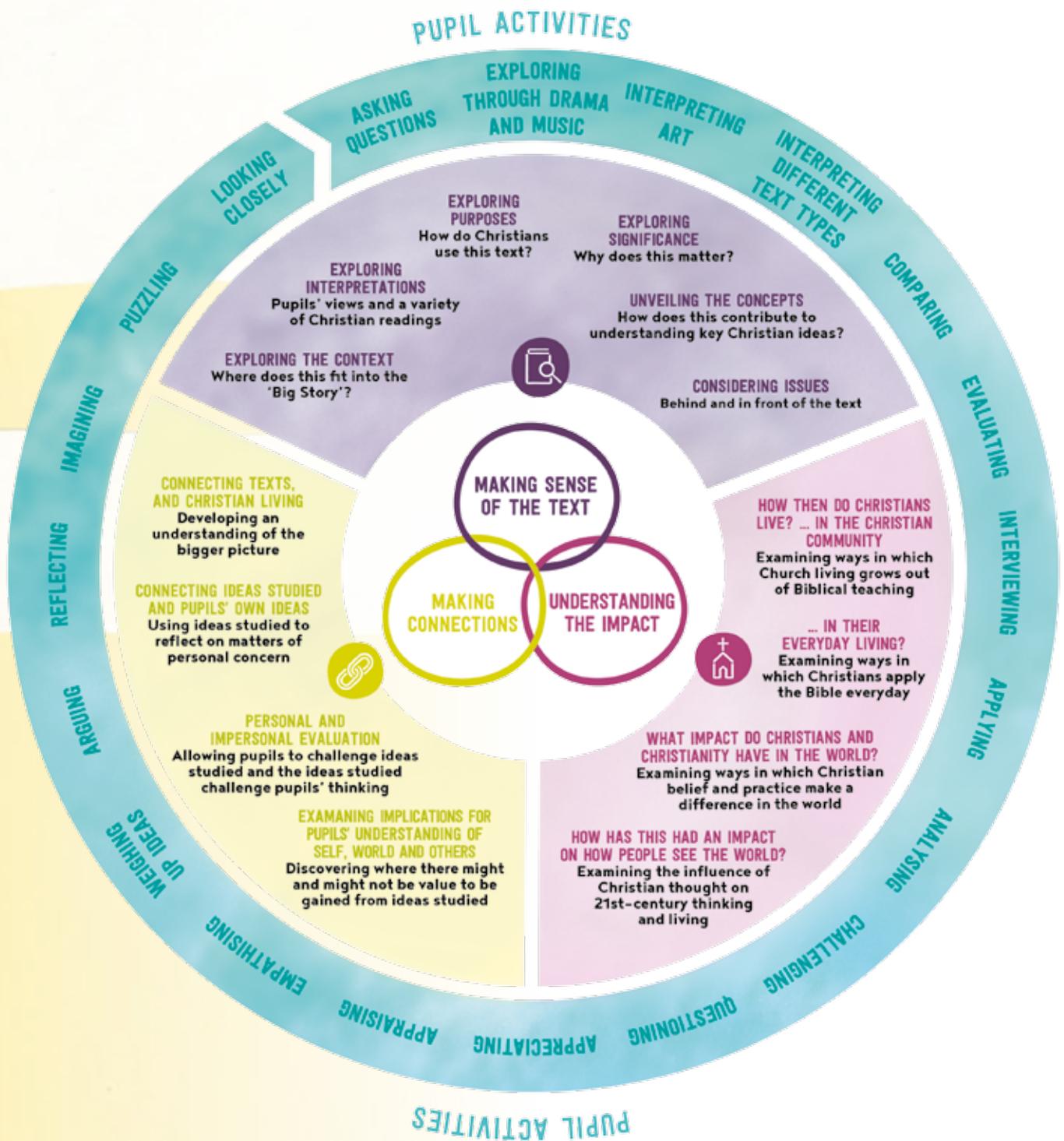
Examining implications for pupils' understanding of self, world and others:

Discerning where there might or might not be value to be gained from ideas studied



PUPIL ACTIVITIES/PROCESSES

The teaching materials use a variety of strategies and activities within each element, in order to engage pupils and develop their skills in RE and learning.



5. CORE CONCEPTS AND THE 'BIG STORY' OF THE BIBLE

The following core concepts are explored in the *Understanding Christianity* approach, as part of the 'big story' of salvation:



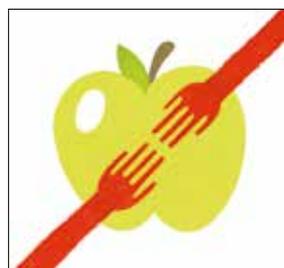
1. GOD

Fundamental to Christian belief is the existence of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



2. CREATION

The universe and human life are God's good creation. Humans are made in the image of God.



3. FALL

Humans have a tendency to go their own way rather than keep their place in relation to their Creator. This attitude is called sin, and Genesis 3 gives an account of this rebellion, popularly called 'the Fall'. This describes a catastrophic separation between God and humans, between humans and each other, and between humans and the environment. This idea that humans are 'fallen' and in need of rescue (or salvation) sets out the root cause of many problems for humanity.



4. PEOPLE OF GOD

The Old Testament tells the story of God's plan to reverse the impact of the Fall, to save humanity. It involves choosing a people who will model a restored relationship with God, who will attract all other people back to God. The Bible narrative includes the ups and downs of this plan, including the message of the prophets,⁵ who tried to persuade people to stick with God. The plan appears to end in failure with the people of God exiled, and then returning, awaiting a 'messiah' – a rescuer.

⁵ Prophecy is a key concept that will be explored in the project resources, along with the concept of 'wisdom' – which encompasses writing and teaching about how Christians should live and behave in relationship with God.

This account and these concepts represent one way to make sense of Christian belief and practice. The brief version presented here is necessarily simplified, and there are other ways of understanding Christian teaching. Many Christians might prefer not to down-grade Jesus to being a mere 'solution' to the problem of sin, and argue that Jesus' incarnation represents the boundless love of the Creator seeking the best for human beings, regardless of the cost. The resources indicate some areas of disagreement and diversity.

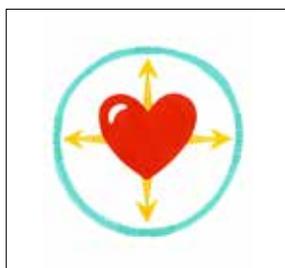
Through these concepts, pupils encounter a range of biblical texts, placed within a wider theological context. They consider the nature of God and what it means for Christians to be in relationship with the Creator. They explore Christian understanding of the relationship between God and his people in the Old Testament, and make sense of messianic expectations and Christian belief in their fulfilment in Jesus.

Pupils explore the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus, within this wider historical and theological context. They consider the present and future aspects of the Kingdom of God. Pupils examine the impact of these beliefs and their outworking in the lives of Christians, through (for example) celebrations, festivals, rituals, creative and spiritual expression, actions and activism, expressions of love and compassion, calls for justice and ethical responses.



5. INCARNATION

The New Testament presents Jesus as the answer: the Messiah and Saviour, who will repair the effects of sin and the Fall and offer a way for humans to be at one with God again. Incarnation means that Jesus is God in the flesh, and that, in Jesus, God came to live among humans.



6. GOSPEL

Jesus' incarnation is 'good news' for all people. ('Gospel' means 'good news'.) His life, teaching and ministry embody what it is like to be one of the people of God, what it means to live in relationship with God. Jesus' example and teaching emphasise loving one's neighbour – particularly the weak and vulnerable – as part of loving God.



7. SALVATION

Jesus' death and resurrection effect the rescue or salvation of humans. He opens the way back to God. Through Jesus, sin is dealt with, forgiveness offered, and the relationship between God and humans is restored.



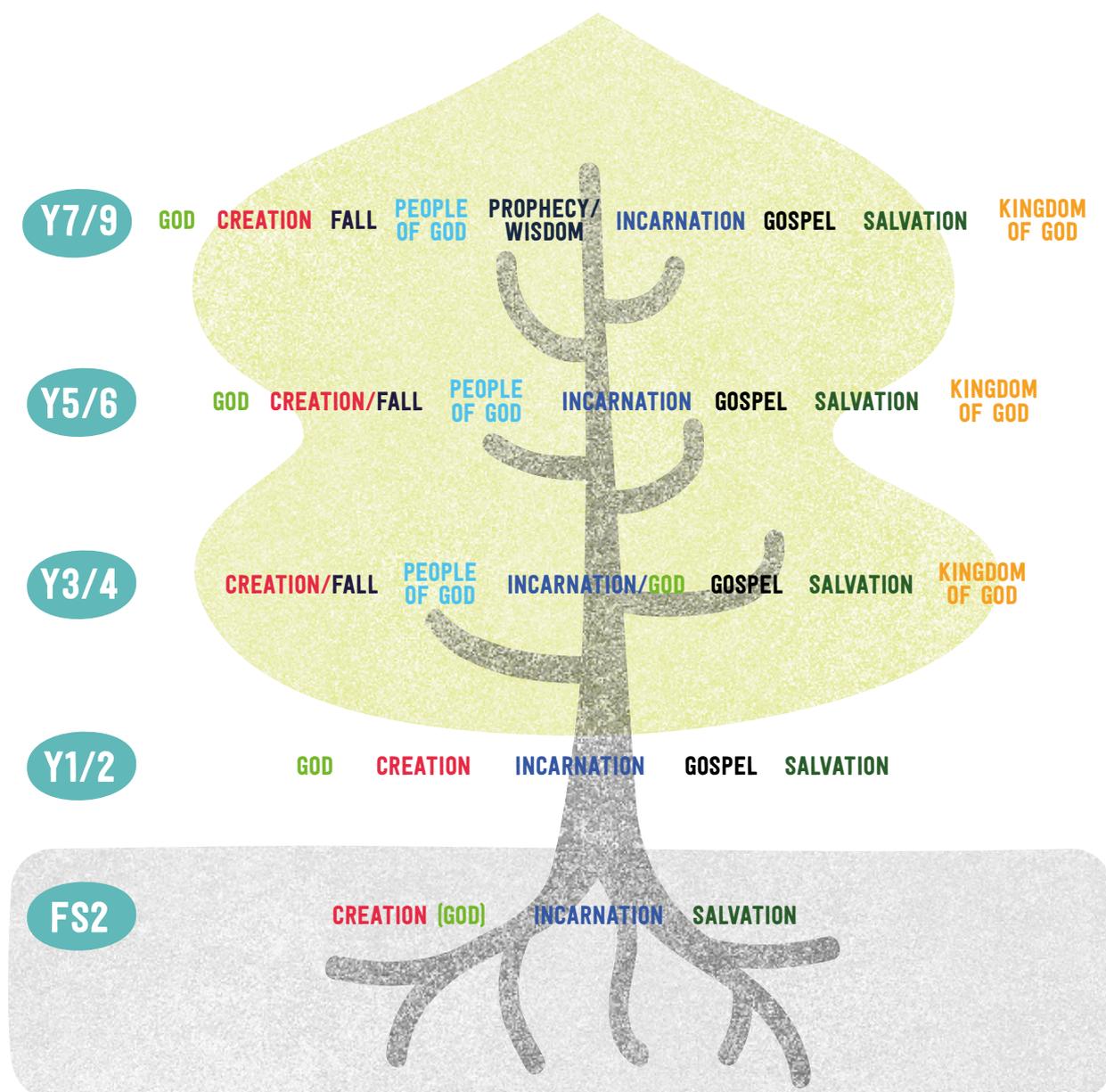
8. KINGDOM OF GOD

This does not mean that no one sins any more! The Bible talks in terms of God's 'Kingdom' having begun in human hearts through Jesus. The idea of the 'Kingdom of God' reflects God's ideal for human life in the world – a vision of life lived in the way God intended for human beings. Christians look forward to a time when God's rule is fulfilled at some future point, in a restored, transformed heaven and earth. Meanwhile, they seek to live this attractive life as in God's Kingdom, following Jesus' example, inspired and empowered by God's Spirit.



6. CORE KNOWLEDGE: WHAT DO WE WANT PUPILS TO KNOW?

The core concepts fit into a spiral curriculum, whereby concepts are revisited and explored in more depth as pupils move through the school. These are explored through key questions, however, and so are not applied exclusively – links and connections will be made between concepts during units.



This diagram shows how the concepts are revisited, with further learning growing from the roots of the foundational knowledge in Early Years, KS1 and above

OVERVIEW: CORE CONCEPTS AND KEY QUESTIONS

The key question overview shows how the core concepts are revisited as pupils move through school. Questions are explored in relation to the Bible, the Christian community and wider Christian living. Units of work comprise a 'core learning' section, approximately 6–8 hours of teaching and learning, and an optional 'digging deeper' section, with ideas and resources for another 4–6 hours (see pp.38–39 for more on the structure of units).

CONCEPT	FS2	Y1/2	Y3/4
GOD		1.1 What do Christians believe God is like?	(See 2a.3 Trinity/ Incarnation)
CREATION	F1 Why is the word 'God' so important to Christians?	1.2 Who made the world?	2a.1 What do Christians learn from the Creation story?
FALL			
PEOPLE OF GOD			2a.2 What is it like to follow God?
PROPHECY			
WISDOM			
INCARNATION	F2 Why do Christians perform nativity plays at Christmas?	1.3 Why does Christmas matter to Christians?	2a.3 What is the Trinity?
GOSPEL		1.4 What is the good news that Jesus brings?	2a.4 What kind of world did Jesus want?
SALVATION	F3 Why do Christians put a cross in an Easter garden?	1.5 Why does Easter matter to Christians?	2a.5 Why do Christians call the day Jesus died 'Good Friday'?
KINGDOM OF GOD			2a.6 When Jesus left, what was the impact of Pentecost?

Y5/6	Y7/8/9
2b.1 What does it mean if God is holy and loving?	3.1 If God is Trinity, what does that mean for Christians?
2b.2 Creation and science: conflicting or complementary?	3.2 Should Christians be greener than everyone else?
	3.3 Why are people good and bad?
2b.3 How can following God bring freedom and justice?	3.4 Does the world need prophets today?
	3.5 What do we do when life gets hard?
2b.4 Was Jesus the Messiah?	3.6 Why do Christians believe Jesus is God on Earth?
2b.5 What would Jesus do?	3.7 What is so radical about Jesus?
2b.6 What did Jesus do to save human beings? [Y5] 2b.7 What difference does the resurrection make for Christians? [Y6]	3.8 [<i>Salvation unit online</i>]
2b.8 What kind of king is Jesus?	3.9 [<i>Kingdom of God unit online</i>]



CONCEPTUAL 'BUILDING BLOCKS'

The following pages indicate the 'building blocks' of core knowledge for teaching about Christianity. The units of work give a key question and apply the teaching and learning approach to these 'building blocks'. Of course, this does not represent all of Christian belief, life, practice or tradition, and is necessarily selective. It is not limiting – it would be great if pupils learned more than this – but it does show the kind of theological understanding and its application to Christian living that the resources expect pupils to begin to grasp as they make progress through the school.

GOD

EYFS	End KS1 (7)	End lower KS2 (9)
SEE CREATION	<p>Pupils will know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christians believe in God, and that they find out about God in the Bible. Christians believe God is loving, kind, fair and also Lord and King; and there are some stories that show this. Christians worship God and try to live in ways that please him. 	<p>Pupils will know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christians believe God is Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see Incarnation). Jesus the Son is seen by Christians as revealing what God the Father is like. They believe he promises to stay with them and Bible stories show how God keeps his promises. Christians find that understanding God is challenging; people spend their whole lives learning more and more about God. Christians really want to try to understand God better and so try to describe God using symbols, similes and metaphors, in song, story, poems and art.

End KS2 (11)**Pupils will know that:**

- Christians believe God is omnipotent, omniscient and eternal, and that this means God is worth worshipping.
- Christians believe God is both holy and loving, and Christians have to balance ideas of God being angered by sin and injustice (see Fall) but also being loving, forgiving, and full of grace.
- Christians believe God loves people so much that Jesus was born, lived, was crucified and rose again to show God's love.
- Christians do not all agree about what God is like, but try to follow his path, as they see it in the Bible or through Church teaching.
- Christians believe getting to know God is like getting to know a person rather than learning information.

End KS3 (14)**Students will know that:**

- Christians believe in God as Trinity, and that the different roles of the three persons in one God can be seen as exemplifying the relational nature of God and the importance of self-giving love in Christian practice.
- Ideas of God have varied (and still do) within the Christian Church, and that different emphases lead to different ways of living (for example, some Christians explain how and why God allows suffering; others cannot, but still trust God).
- Christians can use the Bible to describe God in different ways.
- It is not simple to talk about God, and language about God might use analogy, symbol, or metaphor and still not get close to what God is 'really' like. Christians believe that trying to express the inexpressible mystery of God is still worthwhile. Not all Christians agonise over such theological problems – some might say it is more important to get on with loving God and their neighbour.



CREATION AND FALL

EYFS	End KS1 (7)	End lower KS2 (9)
<p>Children will know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The word God is a name. • Christians believe God is Creator of the universe. • Christians believe God made our wonderful world and so we should look after it. 	<p>Pupils will know that Christians believe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God created the universe. • The Earth and everything in it are important to God. • God has a unique relationship with human beings as their Creator and Sustainer. • Humans should care for the world because it belongs to God. 	<p>Pupils will know that Christians believe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God the Creator cares for the creation, including human beings. • As human beings are part of God’s good creation, they do best when they listen to God. • The Bible tells a story (in Genesis 3) about how humans spoiled their friendship with God (sometimes called ‘the Fall’). • This means that humans cannot get close to God without God’s help. • The Bible shows that God <i>wants</i> to help people to be close to him – he keeps his relationship with them, gives them guidelines on good ways to live (such as the Ten Commandments), and offers forgiveness even when they keep on falling short. • Christians show that they want to be close to God too, through obedience and worship, which includes saying sorry for falling short.

End KS2 (11)

Pupils will know that:

- There is much debate and some controversy around the relationship between the accounts of creation in Genesis and contemporary scientific accounts.
- These debates and controversies relate to the purpose and interpretation of the texts. For example, does reading Genesis as a poetic account conflict with scientific accounts?
- There are many scientists throughout history and now who are Christians.
- The discoveries of science make Christians wonder even more about the power and majesty of the Creator.

End KS3 (14)

Students will know that Christians believe:

- Creation reveals something about the nature of God (for example, powerful, involved in human life, source of all life on earth), and reminds humans of their place as dependent upon the Creator.
- Humans have a responsibility to Creation, as stewards.
- Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 present different pictures of God.
- There are various ways of resolving the perceived conflict between science and religion, such as by interpreting Genesis in different ways.
- Being made 'in the image of God' can be interpreted widely, but implies a significance for human beings, and an intimate connection between them and the Creator.
- The story of 'the Fall' (Genesis 3) is interpreted differently by Christians (for example, Augustine and Irenaeus).
- The idea that sin spoils creation is fundamental to Christian belief, but it is tied with the idea that God brings salvation through Jesus – sin does not have the last word. Evil and suffering need not destroy faith in God.
- The idea that human beings are flawed and in need of God's salvation has influenced Christian thought over centuries. Reactions against it include ideas of Freud, Marx and positive psychology.
- Christians celebrate being created by God, and also respond to sin through confession, believing that God forgives, by his grace, through Jesus.



PEOPLE OF GOD



EYFS

End KS1 (7)

End lower KS2 (9)

Pupils will know that:

- The Old Testament tells the story of a particular group of people, the children of Israel – known as the People of God – and their relationship with God.
- The People of God try to live in the way God wants, following his commands and worshipping him.
- They believe he promises to stay with them and Bible stories show how God keeps his promises.
- The Old Testament narrative explains that the People of God are meant to show the benefits of having a relationship with God and to attract all other nations to worshipping God.
- Christians believe that, through Jesus, all people can become the People of God.



End KS2 (11)

Pupils will know that:

- The Old Testament pieces together the story of the people of God. As their circumstances change (for example, from being nomads (Abraham, Jacob) to being city dwellers (David)), they have to learn new ways of following God.
- The story of Moses and the Exodus shows how God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt; Christians see this story as looking forward to how Jesus' death and resurrection also rescue people from slavery to sin.
- Christians apply this idea to living today by trying to serve God and to bring freedom to others: for example, loving others, caring for them, bringing health, food, justice, and telling the story of Jesus.
- Christians see the Christian Church as part of the ongoing story of the People of God, and try to live in a way that attracts others to God: for example, as salt and light in the world.

End KS3 (14)

Students will know that Christians believe:

- The People of God did not always live according to the Law. Prophets spoke out through words and symbolic actions, declaring 'the word of the Lord'.
- Prophets called people back to God's Law – they reminded the People of God that their relationship with God was a covenant, or agreement; if they keep breaking the terms of the agreement, there would be difficulties.
- The People of God often ignored the voice of the prophet, but sometimes would repent and come back to God. Then the cycle would start all over again.
- The idea that sin spoils creation is fundamental to Christian belief, but it is tied with the idea that God brings salvation through Jesus – sin does not have the last word. Evil and suffering need not destroy faith in God.
- Christians today often focus on the call for social justice as an indicator of how far they are living as the People of God.
- The Bible has a rich 'wisdom' strand which gives a way of seeing the world, and guidance on responding to the challenges of life.



INCARNATION

EYFS	End KS1 (7)	End lower KS2 (9)
<p>Children will know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christians believe God came to Earth in human form as Jesus. • Christians believe Jesus came to show that all people are precious and special to God. 	<p>Pupils will know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christians believe that Jesus is God and that he was born as a baby in Bethlehem. • The Bible points out that his birth showed that he was extraordinary (for example, he is worshipped as a king, in Matthew) and that he came to bring good news (for example, to the poor, in Luke). • Christians celebrate Jesus' birth, and Advent for Christians is a time for getting ready for Jesus' coming. 	<p>Pupils will know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christians believe Jesus is one of the three persons of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. • Christians believe the Father creates; he sends the Son who saves his people; the Son sends the Holy Spirit to his followers. • Christians worship God as Trinity. It is a huge idea to grasp, and Christians have created art to help to express this belief. • Christians believe the Holy Spirit is God's power at work in the world and in their lives today, enabling them to follow Jesus.

End KS2 (11)

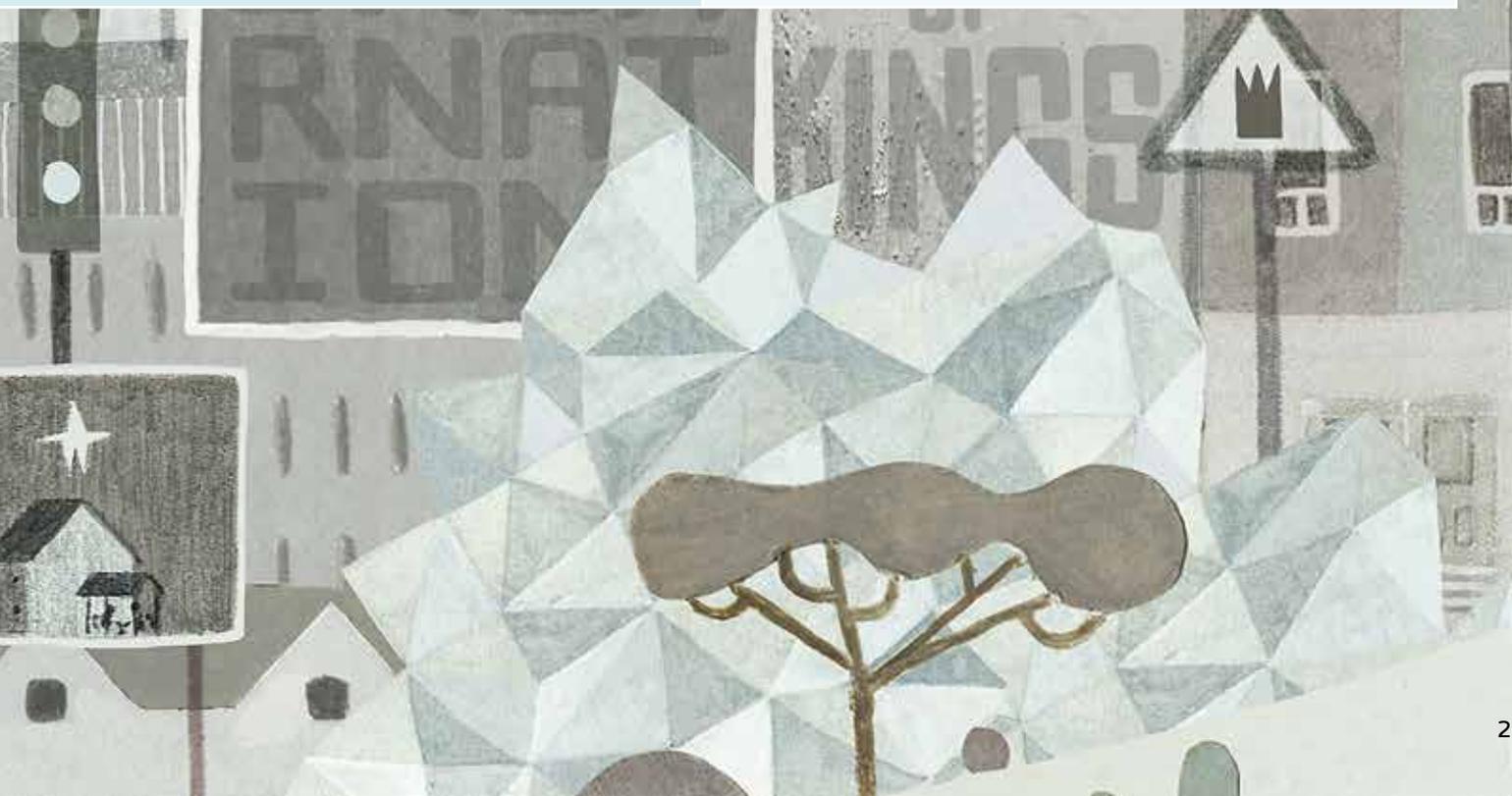
Pupils will know that:

- Jesus was Jewish.
- Christians believe Jesus is God in the flesh.
- They believe that his birth, life, death and resurrection were part of a longer plan by God to restore the relationship between humans and God.
- The Old Testament talks about a 'rescuer' or 'anointed one' – a messiah. Some texts talk about what this 'messiah' would be like.
- Christians believe that Jesus fulfilled these expectations, and that he is the Messiah. (Jewish people do not think Jesus is the Messiah.)
- Christians see Jesus as their Saviour (see Salvation).

End KS3 (14)

Students will know that:

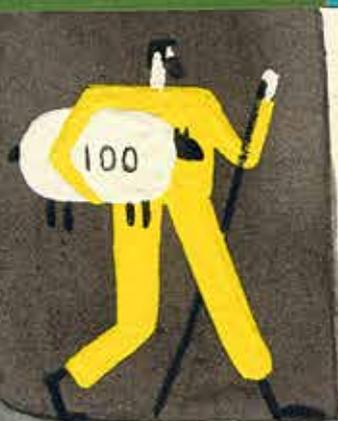
- Christians believe the incarnate Jesus embodies the nature of God and shows them what God is like.
- Christians believe Jesus' life offers a pattern for humans and models the way humans should be.
- Christians have used artwork of Jesus to show rich and diverse ways of understanding the incarnation and to reflect on the nature of God.
- Christians believe the incarnation validates the physical creation and the human body (for example, in the Orthodox tradition).
- For Christians, Jesus' life and teaching exemplify God's interest in, care for and love of the poor and vulnerable.





GOSPEL

EYFS	End KS1 (7)	End lower KS2 (9)
	<p>Pupils will know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christians believe Jesus brings good news for all people. • For Christians, this good news includes being loved by God, and being forgiven for bad things. • Christians believe Jesus is a friend to the poor and friendless. • Christians believe Jesus' teachings make people think hard about how to live and show them the right way. 	<p>Pupils will know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christians believe Jesus challenges everyone about how to live – he sets the example for loving God and your neighbour, putting others first. • Christians believe Jesus challenges people who pretend to be good (hypocrisy) and shows love and forgiveness to unlikely people. • Christians believe Jesus' life shows what it means to love God (his Father) and love your neighbour. • Christians try to be like Jesus – they want to know him better and better. • Christians try to put his teaching and example into practice in lots of ways, from church worship to social justice.



GOOD NEWS



End KS2 (11)

Pupils will know that:

- Christians believe the good news is not just about setting an example for good behaviour and challenging bad behaviour: it is that Jesus offers a way to heal the damage done by human sin.
- Christians see that Jesus' teachings and example cut across expectations – the Sermon on the Mount is an example of this, where Jesus' values favour serving the weak and vulnerable, not making people comfortable.
- Christians believe that Jesus' good news not only transforms lives now, but also points toward a restored, transformed life in the future. (See Salvation and Kingdom of God).
- Christians believe that they should bring this good news to life in the world in different ways, within their church family, in their personal lives, with family, with their neighbours, in the local, national and global community.

End KS3 (14)

Students will know that:

- Jesus' teachings challenged social structures as well as individuals, disappointing some of his contemporaries, who wanted the Romans out and the People of God to rule.
- The Bible teaches that the good news is for all people, and should bring liberation in individuals' lives and transform communities.
- Jesus' teaching challenges Christians to embody this transformation in their individual lives, church communities, and in the wider world.
- Christians believe the good news points toward a future rule of God when wisdom will prevail, and evil and suffering will end. (See also Kingdom of God.)
- Jesus' teachings have influenced Christians and others beyond the Christian tradition.





SALVATION

EYFS	End KS1 (7)	End lower KS2 (9)
<p>Children will know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christians remember Jesus' last week at Easter. • Jesus' name means 'He saves'. • Christians believe Jesus came to show God's love. • Christians try to show love to others. 	<p>Pupils will know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easter is very important in the 'big story' of the Bible. Jesus showed that he was willing to forgive all people, even for putting him on the cross. • Christians believe Jesus builds a bridge between God and humans. • Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead, giving people hope of a new life. 	<p>Pupils will know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christians see Holy Week as the culmination of Jesus' earthly life, leading to his death and resurrection. • The various events of Holy Week, such as the Last Supper, were important in showing the disciples what Jesus came to earth to do. • Christians today trust that Jesus really did rise from the dead, and so is still alive today. • Christians remember and celebrate Jesus' last week, death and resurrection.

End KS2 (11)

Pupils will know that:

- Christians read the 'big story' of the Bible as pointing out the need for God to save people. This salvation includes the ongoing restoration of humans' relationship with God.
- The Gospels give accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection.
- The New Testament says that Jesus' death was somehow 'for us'.
- Christians interpret this in a variety of ways: for example, as a sacrifice for sin; as a victory over sin, death and the devil; paying the punishment as a substitute for everyone's sins; rescuing the lost and leading them to God; leading from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom.
- Christians remember Jesus' sacrifice through the service of Holy Communion (also called the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist or the Mass).
- Belief in Jesus' resurrection confirms to Christians that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, but also that death is not the end.
- This belief gives Christians hope for life with God, starting now and continuing in a new life (heaven).
- Christians believe that Jesus calls them to sacrifice their own needs to the needs of others, and some are prepared to die for others and for their faith.

End KS3 (14)

Students will know that:

- For Christians, salvation is a deep concept that incorporates all the others in this scheme. It includes healing of the whole person, of society and of the natural world.
- For Christians, different ways of understanding how Jesus brings salvation depends upon which aspect of Jesus' significance they emphasise: for example, his teaching, his example, his death, his resurrection and so on.
- For Christians, the Holy Spirit carries on the work of sanctification in their lives, helping them to be more like Jesus, restoring the image of God.



KINGDOM OF GOD

EYFS	End KS1 (7)	End lower KS2 (9)
		<p>Pupils will know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christians believe that Jesus inaugurated the 'Kingdom of God' – i.e. Jesus' whole life was a demonstration of his belief that God is king, not just in heaven but here and now. ('Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'.) • Christians believe Jesus is still alive, rules in their hearts and lives through the Holy Spirit, if they let him. • Christians believe that after Jesus returned to be with God the Father, he sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to help the Church to make Jesus' invisible Kingdom visible by living lives that reflect the love of God. • Christians celebrate Pentecost, as the beginning of the Church. • Staying connected to Jesus means that the fruit of the Spirit can grow in the lives of Christians.



End KS2 (11)

Pupils will know that:

- Jesus told many parables about the Kingdom of God. These suggest that God's rule has begun, through the life, teaching and example of Jesus, and subsequently through the lives of Christians who live in obedience to God.
- The parables suggest that there will be a future Kingdom, where God's reign will be complete.
- The Kingdom is compared to a feast where all are invited to join in. Not everyone chooses to do so.
- Many Christians try to extend the Kingdom of God by challenging unjust social structures in their locality and in the world.

End KS3 (14)

Students will know that:

- For Christians, the future element of the Kingdom of God suggests a renewed heaven and earth, transforming the current creation, but taking account of human achievement (as humans are made 'in the image of God'), rather than wiping it away.
- There are different Christian understandings about life after death (soul; resurrection or re-creation; timeless beatific vision or everlasting life), but God's rule is seen as fundamental.
- Different readings of apocalyptic texts (for example, Revelation) are a feature of contemporary Christian beliefs, and these have an impact on how some Christians live now.



7. RAISING STANDARDS THROUGH THIS APPROACH

FLEXIBLE MODELS OF ASSESSMENT

The *Understanding Christianity* materials and approach allow for some flexibility in assessment. This is to enable schools to apply their own assessment models rather than to impose a particular method on schools. However, the basis of the materials relies upon pupils gaining the core conceptual knowledge (see previous pages), in relation to the three elements of the approach (Making sense of the text, Understanding the impact and Making connections).

This approach sees these three elements as including the essential skills for the study of Christianity, which contribute to pupils' theological literacy. Pupils develop these essential skills as they engage with the core concepts, deepening their learning as they make progress through the core knowledge building blocks.

The materials are written to enable pupils to achieve both the core conceptual knowledge and the skills for handling the ideas. The conceptual building blocks (pp.20–33) outline the core knowledge, and the outcomes below outline the broad expectations for the end of each phase, in relation to the three elements. Individual units have more focused outcomes, which build toward the broad end-of-phase expectations.

Teachers can assess how far pupils' understanding is emerging, secure or exceeding the relevant outcomes and/or conceptual 'building blocks'. Teachers are free to set up assessment processes that enable pupils to know how well they have grasped the building blocks *and* the outcomes, so that they can indicate what pupils need to do to make progress. Both the building blocks and the outcomes offer the opportunity for schools to create assessment systems that can be used for reporting to school leadership and parents on how well pupils are doing in achieving these expectations. In order to develop pupils' abilities in the three elements of this approach (Making sense of the text, Understanding the impact and Making connections), teachers will need to find manageable ways of assessing the outcomes; the units provide many opportunities for this.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Teachers should note that the expectations represent a considerable challenge. They do require pupils to be able to handle texts in more depth than much current RE expects. They also seek to enable pupils to gain a secure understanding of core concepts *and* develop the ability to make connections between them, leading to a coherent understanding of what is at the heart of Christian belief and practice.

It is important to note that the units are written with the intention that pupils will follow the course through, so that they are building on prior learning. When first introducing the materials, obviously older pupils will not have studied the earlier units. Schools need to take this into account when considering assessment of pupil achievement.



END-OF-PHASE OUTCOMES

Each of the three elements of the teaching and learning approach is important and pupils should make progress in all of them. Below are the end-of-phase outcomes related to each element. Each unit takes bullet points from these end-of-phase outcomes and applies them specifically to the unit questions.

Teaching and learning approach	End KS1 <i>Pupils will be able to:</i>	End lower KS2 <i>Pupils will be able to:</i>
 <p>ELEMENT 1: Making sense of the text</p> <p>Developing skills of reading and interpretation; understanding how Christians interpret, handle and use biblical texts; making sense of meanings of texts for Christians.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise that God, Creation, Incarnation and Salvation are part of a 'big story' of the Bible. Identify at least two different types of texts from the Bible; for example, a story, a parable, a gospel account of Jesus' life, and instructions about how to behave. Tell stories from the Bible and recognise a link with a concept; for example, Creation, Incarnation, Gospel and Salvation. Give clear, simple accounts of what the texts mean to Christians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Order at least five key concepts within a timeline of the Bible's 'big story'. List two distinguishing features of at least three different types of biblical text; for example, Gospel, parable, letter. Make clear links between biblical texts and the key concepts studied. Offer suggestions about what texts might mean and give examples of what the texts studied mean to some Christians.
 <p>ELEMENT 2: Understanding the impact</p> <p>Examining ways in which Christians respond to biblical texts and teachings, and how they put their beliefs into action in diverse ways within the Christian community and in the world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give at least three examples of ways in which Christians use Bible concepts, stories and texts to guide their beliefs, in their individual lives and in their church communities. Give at least three examples of how Christians put their beliefs into practice in church worship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make simple links between Bible texts and concepts studied and how Christians live in their whole lives and in their church communities. Describe how Christians show their beliefs in worship and in the way they live.
 <p>ELEMENT 3: Making connections</p> <p>Evaluating, reflecting on and connecting the texts and concepts studied, and discerning possible connections between these and pupils' own lives and ways of understanding the world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think, talk and ask questions about whether the text has something to say to them, exploring different ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise questions and suggest answers about how far the big ideas explored in the Bible and the concepts studied might make a difference to how pupils think and live. Make links between some of the stories and teachings in the Bible and life in the world today, expressing some ideas of their own clearly.

End KS2*Pupils will be able to:*

- Outline the timeline of the 'big story' of the Bible, explaining the place within it of the core concepts studied.
- Identify at least five different types of biblical texts, using technical terms accurately.
- Explain connections between biblical texts and the key concepts studied, using theological terms.
- Taking account of the context(s), suggest meanings for biblical texts studied, and compare their ideas with ways in which Christians interpret biblical texts, showing awareness of different interpretations.

End KS3*Students will be able to:*

- Give reasoned explanations of how and why the key Christian concepts studied are related; for example, how they fit into a 'salvation narrative' of the Bible.
- Explain different types of text used in the Bible to illustrate key concepts, considering what interpretations are appropriate.
- Suggest meanings of biblical concepts and texts, explaining their ideas with reasons and evidence.
- Apply different methods of interpretation to texts to show how Christians make sense of the Bible.

- Make clear connections between Bible texts and concepts studied with what Christians believe, how Christians worship and how Christians behave in their whole lives, their church communities, and in the wider world.
- Show how Christians put their beliefs into practice in different ways; for example, in different denominations.

- Give reasons and examples to explain how and why Christians respond to Bible texts and the concepts studied, and are influenced by them, as individuals, in church communities, and in the wider world.
- Show how Christians make moral and religious decisions.
- Explain why Christians apply texts differently.

- Identify ideas arising from their study of texts and concepts, and comment on how far these are helpful or inspiring, justifying their responses.
- Weigh up how biblical ideas, teachings or beliefs relate to the issues, problems and opportunities of their own lives and the world today, developing insights of their own.

- Give coherent accounts of the implications of biblical ideas and beliefs in the modern world (including local and global examples), and evaluate personally and impersonally how far these ideas help to make sense of the world.
- Respond to the challenges of biblical ideas and teachings in the world today and in their own lives, offering reasons and justifications for their responses.

8. EXPLORING THE RESOURCE MATERIALS

Understanding Christianity offers ideas and resources to support teaching and learning. Each unit takes a core concept (sometimes paired, where appropriate), and gives a key question through which to explore the concept. The unit identifies the knowledge 'building blocks' and focused outcomes that are expected of pupils by the end of teaching. The units include:

1. Core learning

Each unit offers 6–8 hours of 'core learning' ideas, to support teachers in enabling pupils to achieve the outcomes. It is expected that all schools using the materials will teach this part of each unit. Teachers are offered a number of activities designed to allow pupils to engage with the content and to achieve the outcomes. The intention is that teachers make decisions about which activities to use, according to the prior learning, ability and progress of their pupils.

2. Outcomes

Each unit has outcomes related to the three elements of the approach (Making sense, Understanding impact and Making connections), relating specifically to the content of the unit, and building toward enabling pupils to achieve the end-of-phase outcomes (as shown on pp.36–37).

3. Conceptual building blocks

Each unit sets out the appropriate core knowledge 'building blocks' pupils are expected to grasp.

4. Digging deeper

These sections offer 4–6 hours of additional teaching and learning ideas to deepen pupils' encounter with the core concepts. It is anticipated that Church of England VA schools who are teaching Christianity for up to 66 per cent of their RE curriculum time will take the opportunity of using these materials. Likewise, schools where pupils make good, swift progress in the 'Core learning' section can move further into these 'Digging deeper' sections.

5. You might like to start with...

Beginning each unit with a biblical text may become a little predictable, so each unit offers a suggested 'way in', making a bridge between the pupils' experiences, or wider existential or ethical questions, and the concepts explored in the texts.

6. Essential information

These pages provide the essential background material for understanding the core concepts and Christian interpretations of the biblical texts explored. A wide range of links are given to related and relevant resources.

7. Going further

Some simple suggestions are made for schools who want to explore a particular concept or issue further.

8. You might link with...

Some units offer a suggestion for connecting with faiths and beliefs other than Christianity, recognising the place of the study of Christianity within the wider RE curriculum, where systematic and thematic approaches often go side by side.

9. Resources

This section offers suggested resources and links for use with the units.

Resource sheets

Additional photocopiable resources are available on the disk, in the pack and online.

9. PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

ACADEMIC RIGOUR AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

At the heart of this resource is the intention to increase the academic rigour of the teaching of Christianity, so that pupils gain an informed understanding, contributing to their religious literacy. However, this understanding is not limited to collecting information. Any real understanding of people's beliefs, practices and ways of living will affect the personal development of the pupil. Academic rigour and religious literacy are not just cognitive, they also have an impact on the pupil's understanding of themselves and the world. Note the key purpose of *Understanding Christianity* (see p.6):

The key purpose of these materials is to support pupils in developing their understanding of Christianity, as a contribution to their understanding of the world and their own experience within it.

The intention is that the exploration of Christian concepts, texts and practices develops pupils' understanding. The elements of the approach (Making sense, Understanding impact and Making connections) involve pupils understanding how Christians interpret and apply texts and beliefs. This also develops pupils' own abilities to interpret, apply and consider implications for themselves – skills which apply beyond the study of Christianity. This 'theological literacy' also contributes to a wider religious literacy as part of RE.

CONTRIBUTING TO WIDER EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

The *Understanding Christianity* materials and approach contribute to wider school priorities:

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSCD): See pp.43–44 for detail on this.

Promoting British Values and handling diversity: the current requirement to promote fundamental British Values as part of SMSCD includes a desire to counter forms of extremism. These resources do not directly address the specific 'British Values' of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, tolerance and mutual

respect for those of differing faiths and beliefs, but they contribute to this wider aim in the following ways:

- At the root of extremism there is often very poor handling of texts. *Understanding Christianity* combats this by developing pupils' skills in interpretation and in considering the ways in which people use texts within and beyond religious communities.
- At the heart of this British Values agenda is the concern that pupils learn to live well in a diverse society. *Understanding Christianity* contributes by helping pupils to understand how biblical texts are interpreted differently by different people, and that it is fundamental to academic rigour that we have some humility in how we hold on to our own interpretations.
- *Understanding Christianity* and its approach allows pupils to recognise the diversity within the Christian community and to see how Christians and others handle disagreements (sometimes better than other times). As part of the wider RE curriculum, it gives opportunity for pupils to reflect on the many agreements between people with religious and non-religious worldviews about the importance of seeking truth, pursuing goodness and loving others.
- There are times in *Understanding Christianity* when pupils have opportunities to learn how to deal with controversial issues, such as questions of the relationship between science and religion (Unit 2b.2 Creation and science: conflicting or complementary? Unit 3.2 Should Christians be greener than everyone else?).

Of course, teachers and schools already strongly promote fairness, respect, tolerance and individual autonomy, although they might not use the particular terminology of the British Values agenda. These wider values need to underpin interactions in the classroom to allow discussion, debate and critical exploration to take place. Within *Understanding Christianity* these values are encouraged as part of good learning.

Values: For many years, RE has had strong links with values education, not least within schools of a religious character such as Church of England schools, where Christian values underpin school ethos and character. Many schools focus on specific values within

and beyond the curriculum, and schools can make connections with values such as compassion, wisdom, forgiveness and justice as pupils encounter them through the texts and activities in the *Understanding Christianity* resources.⁶

Character education and virtues: There is a current interest in the contribution of education to the development of character and virtues.⁷ Traditionally, RE is concerned with encouraging pupils to develop the attitudes and virtues of self-awareness, respect for all, open-mindedness, appreciation and wonder.⁸ The *Understanding Christianity* resources and approach allow for the development of character and virtues as pupils encounter them in the texts, beliefs and practices studied. (For example, gratitude, kindness, justice, compassion.)

The focus of *Understanding Christianity* is not directly on the development of *moral* virtues, but it does offer a significant contribution to *intellectual* virtues in regard to interpreting and handling texts – or becoming ‘virtuous readers’.

DEVELOPING ‘VIRTUOUS READERS’⁹

Building on the view that character development is not limited to moral virtues, there is a particular focus in these resources on developing in pupils the virtues of being good readers: paying careful attention to texts, coming to them with open minds, intellectual curiosity and humility, seeking to find what the text is saying, being aware of different readings, as well as becoming aware of one’s own context and perspective.

Interpretation is a complex matter, of course, but a crucial one. These resources offer pupils a chance to encounter texts for themselves, to consider questions of interpretation (for example: What kind of text is this? What did the writer or editor intend? Why was this text included in the Bible? What can we learn about the community for whom the text was written? What might its meaning be for people in the twenty-first century? What *effect* might it have on readers?). They explore ways in which Christians interpret texts – and begin to make sense of why these interpretations vary. They also explore why, for Christians, these texts have an additional layer of personal demand – what should Christians actually *do* as a result of what this text says?

Clearly, the classroom is not the same as a Christian church; even within schools with a Christian religious designation, there are many pupils with no religious faith background or commitment, as well as pupils of different faiths. Within church schools, teachers might look to draw out personal application in ways that would not be appropriate in a community school. It is legitimate in all schools, however, to ask pupils to reflect upon their own personal responses to the texts, to weigh up whether the Christian ideas studied have value in helping them to make sense of the world, and whether the moral demands are universally or personally valuable. The extent to which they agree or disagree about their value is, of course, open.

⁶ One key resource for Church schools is www.christianvalues4schools.co.uk, which offers theological background and ideas for applying key Christian values within schools.

⁷ For example, note the work of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues www.jubileecentre.ac.uk and the Church of England discussion paper on Character Education, ‘The Fruits of the Spirit’ (The Church of England Education Office, October 2015).

⁸ *Religious Education: The Non-statutory National Framework*, QCA 2004, p. 13.

⁹ The idea of ‘virtuous readers’ comes from Richard S Briggs (2010), *The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue*, *Studies in Theological Interpretation*, Baker Academic. Briggs derives this from the work of Kevin J Vanhoozer; for example, *Is there a meaning in this text? The Bible, The Reader and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Zondervan 1998).

10. THE VALUE OF USING TEXTS IN THE CLASSROOM

THE CHALLENGE OF TEXTS IN THE CLASSROOM

Research shows that, whilst primary pupils are willing to engage with exploring texts, secondary pupils prefer bullet-point summaries.¹⁰ When the text is the Bible, there can be an added reluctance to engage. This is a challenge that we are facing head-on! Within the units we have tried to include a wide range of strategies for introducing and handling texts in the classroom (see pp.48–49). We want to encourage the use of some of these ancient texts, in order to develop pupils' own abilities in interpreting text, alongside a growing understanding of some of the diverse ways in which Christians make sense of them.

BEHIND THE TEXT; WITHIN THE TEXT; IN FRONT OF THE TEXT

Understanding Christianity seeks to draw a distinction between matters that are 'behind the text', 'within the text' and 'in front of the text'.¹¹

Behind the text: These are matters around authorship, sources, context, the community for whom the text was written and the reliability of the text. These are sometimes the focus within the *Understanding Christianity* materials, such as in discussion of the genre and purpose of Genesis 1–3 in Units 2b.2 (*Creation and science: conflicting or complementary?*) and 3.3 (*Why are humans good and bad?*).

Within the text: These are matters around understanding the words themselves in context – what do these texts mean?

In front of the text: This concerns the relationship between the text and the reader, whether teacher, pupil, Christian, Hindu or atheist, and how our modern (or post-modern) context affects how we interpret the text.

One issue that raises concerns in the classroom is whether teaching about the Bible becomes a way of preaching, or whether pupil scepticism precludes a willingness to see any relevance of an ancient religious text to a secular twenty-first-century society. The materials deal with this by:

- exploring some questions of reliability and authorship, including sceptical views (*behind the text* questions)
- focusing on the text as it is, in the same way as a Shakespeare play might be addressed, and seeking to work out nuances of meaning and interpretation, including various Christian interpretations, as well as the individual (personal, emotional) responses of pupils (*within the text* questions)
- recognising that all of us bring our own context to our reading of any text, and so setting up a climate in which pupils are free to explore whether the text offer them ways of seeing the world – new meanings which the text 'unfolds, discovers, reveals'¹² (*in front of the text* questions).

This balance allows for working critically with some knotty intellectual problems, leaving room for emotional and affective responses; it helps pupils to develop skills of interpretation whilst allowing them to think for themselves.

The *Understanding Christianity* model, with its basis on the three elements of **Making sense of the text**, **Understanding impact** and **Making connections**, places the pupil's engagement with Christian texts, beliefs and practices at the heart of the approach. It takes seriously the role of the pupil as reader, bringing their own world to the text whilst giving them the opportunity to allow the text to enlarge their understanding of the world.

¹⁰ Julia Ipgrave (2013), 'From Storybooks to Bullet Points: Books and the Bible in Primary and Secondary RE', *British Journal of RE*, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 264–281.

¹¹ Julia Ipgrave's fascinating paper mentioned above makes the distinction between 'behind' and 'in front of' text, drawing on the work of Paul Ricoeur. Paula Gooder's excellent book on interpreting the New Testament, *Searching for Meaning* (SPCK 2008), includes these categories, but also adds 'within the text'.

¹² Ricoeur in Ipgrave (see fn 10), p. 275.

THE VIRTUE OF READING

The approach in these materials takes seriously the impact of reading on the character of readers. It encourages reading and re-reading of texts.¹³ This helps pupils to recognise the impact texts can have on believers' lives: a preliminary reading of a text may result in a particular response, but a re-reading might change that. Reading to the end of a text (such as John's Gospel, but it applies to *You're a Bad Man*, *Mr Gum*, *Goodnight Mr Tom*, or *Pride and Prejudice*, too) changes a reader's perspective when going back through for a second time, or a third.

The impact of this kind of reading and re-reading can be seen in the way religious believers linger in their sacred texts. Many Christians read sections of the Bible every day, some regularly reading through the Bible in a year. They might use songs and hymns as a way of keeping these words in mind. They re-live the Bible in acts of baptism or Holy Communion. They listen to readings and to sermons on these texts in regular worship services. Muslims learn the Qur'an in Arabic, with many Muslims working to become a *hafiz* or *hafiza*, one of the 'guardians' who have memorised the whole of the Qur'an. Having a text 'by heart' is seen as being something of real value in influencing a person's life and living. It becomes a continuous conversation, where the reader finds new things in the text and in themselves. In this sense, there is a relationship between the sacred text, the individual and the community, that is both highly personal and deeply communal.

The purpose of reading to cultivate the development of 'virtuous readers' (as well as the desire for character and values) is at odds with the current use of sacred text in much secondary-age RE, which is more likely to be 'reading to get an A*/Grade 9'. It is also at odds with the brief texts used on social media. The resources in this project seek to redress those utilitarian and fragmentary perspectives and to encourage a deeper, slower exploration and engagement.

HOW DOES USING TEXTS IN RE CONTRIBUTE TO SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT?

Promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) of pupils is a whole-school responsibility. As with all good RE, *Understanding Christianity* contributes to SMSC through both the subject matter of the curriculum and the attitudes developed in the classroom. Pupils must work together to listen and learn from each other in many of the activities suggested. Teachers must create an open and positive space in which to explore this project. Pupils from all faith and belief backgrounds will gain an imaginative sympathy with Christians as they understand Christian beliefs and practices. This supports pupils' religious literacy as well as their confidence in handling diversity.

The emphasis on handling texts in the *Understanding Christianity* model offers a distinctive contribution to SMSC, however.

Spiritual development: pupils will have the opportunity to recognise, appreciate and appraise the impact the biblical text can have on the lives of individuals, within and outside the Christian community. As they explore the challenge the text has for believers, they will have opportunities to consider their own views and reflect on how the Bible presents a way of understanding the world and human nature. Of course, the texts themselves deal with ideas of God, creation, worship, wonder, human desires, intentions and questions; exploring these ideas offers opportunities for reflection, wonder, puzzlement, confusion, and consideration of the dark and light side of being human – all of which can contribute to pupils' spiritual development.

Moral development: alongside the moral and ethical issues that are dealt with in the texts studied, and their own responses to matters of right and wrong, this approach encourages pupils to develop their ability to interpret texts. Interpretation has a moral element – balancing the rights of the texts to be handled fairly, the believing community (in all its diversity) to be listened to, and the pupils to be allowed to ask searching and perhaps awkward questions. The relationship between the text and

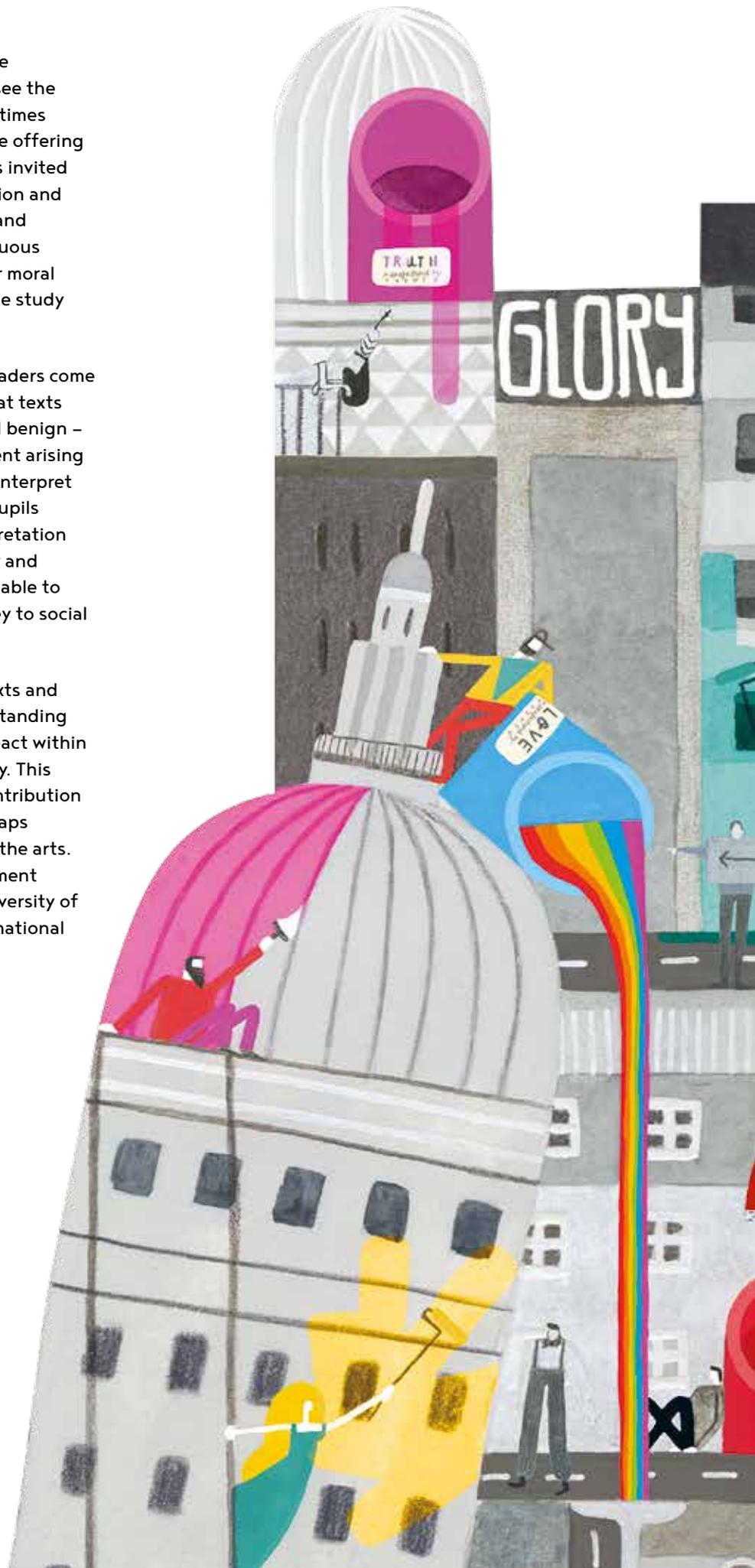
¹³ For a rich exploration of this idea, see David Ford (2014), *The Drama of Living*, Canterbury Press.

the reader has a moral element too; there are occasions when the pupil is encouraged to see the text as an object for critical evaluation, and times when the text is more of a presence,¹⁴ a voice offering a challenge or a perspective that the pupil is invited to consider. In a world where misinterpretation and misapplication of texts can lead to division and conflict, encouraging pupils to become 'virtuous readers' is a significant contribution to their moral development, and can be applied beyond the study of biblical texts.

Social development: Recognising that all readers come to texts from different perspectives, and that texts can be read for a range of purposes – not all benign – is an important element of social development arising from these materials. Learning that people interpret texts differently is also important, so that pupils recognise that this applies to biblical interpretation within and outside the Christian community and to other texts, religious or otherwise. Being able to accommodate and handle this diversity is key to social development in this resource.

Cultural development: As pupils explore texts and their cultural contexts, they develop understanding of the core Christian concepts and their impact within and beyond the diverse Christian community. This begins to enable pupils to recognise the contribution of Christianity to Western culture, and perhaps particularly the contribution of the Bible to the arts. This plays a part in a wider cultural development promoted in RE, such as appreciating the diversity of religious and non-religious beliefs in local, national and global contexts.

¹⁴ See Mark Allan Powell (2001), *Chasing the Eastern Star: Adventures in Biblical Reader-Response Criticism*, Westminster John Knox Press.





11. HOW DO CHRISTIANS USE THE BIBLE? SOME METAPHORS

Christians use the Bible in different ways, just as they read it in different ways. One person reads the Bible quietly every day, listening for God's voice, not necessarily receiving any great revelations but allowing the words to shape their daily life and interactions. One person reads it in the original languages, comparing it with contemporary texts, to try to work out the author's meaning within its cultural context in order to present academic articles for journals. Another person is looking for comfort and consolation in the face of life's struggles, seeking God's help; another is writing songs for church worship and is mining the text for poetry and doctrine to teach others. Some come to sit *underneath* the words, if you like, allowing the words to judge them, whereas others may come to stand *over* the words – to judge and evaluate their reliability, plausibility, truth, or moral authority. Even within the Christian community, people come to the Bible with criticisms and questions about its meaning, coherence, teachings and truth.

There are some metaphors that may be helpful for getting a picture of how Christians use the Bible.

The missing final act

Tom Wright,¹⁵ former Bishop of Durham, compares the drama of the Bible to a Shakespeare play, most of whose fifth act is missing. The church has the first four acts (creation, fall, Israel, Jesus) but must work out the fifth act (church) for herself, whilst remaining 'in character'. It is not enough for the actors 'merely to parrot what has already been said'; they must go beyond the page from acts one to four and improvise the conclusion – 'a proper final development, not merely repetition, of what went before'. This helps to explain why Christians use the Bible to make sense of God's past story of salvation and how to live in the present, with an eye to a future fulfilment.

¹⁵ NT Wright (1992), *The New Testament and the People of God*, SPCK (pp.140-141).

¹⁶ Kevin Vanhoozer (1998), *Is there a Meaning in this Text?*, Zondervan.

The map collection

Kevin Vanhoozer¹⁶ presents the idea that different genres in the Bible (prophecy, law, poetry, narrative, parable, letter, and so on) are like different kinds of maps. He says:

Each map highlights certain features of the world more than others and accomplishes different tasks: informing, warning, encouraging, commanding, assuring, etc. Each genre has its own 'key' and 'scale'. The 'key' explains what a text is about. ... [The] 'scale' [represents the genre, with] its own conventions for thinking and its own manner of fitting words to the world (p. 343).

This helps to explain how Christians might make sense of the different types of text in the Bible, and to reflect on which interpretations are appropriate or inappropriate. You don't go to your geological survey if you want to find your way to a conference centre; you don't use your satnav for exploring the potential of an area for fracking – similarly, you don't read a poem as if it were a literal description.

The Christian as map-reader

The previous two metaphors come from esteemed and influential theologians. This one does not – but as the editor of *Understanding Christianity*, I (Stephen Pett) am going to make a tentative, unqualified suggestion, inspired by Vanhoozer's metaphor.

Rather than suggest that different genres represent different maps, I wonder if it is helpful to think about the Christian coming to the Bible as a map-reader comes to the world: with certain intentions and for certain reasons. So the reader decides what they are coming to the text for, and treats it accordingly. They might approach the *same* text with different intentions: from devotional use in private prayer, through to detailed study of the original languages; from devising a systematic theology to preparing a sermon; from singing a psalm in church to defending the Bible against hostile critics. In this metaphor, the readers come to the same text with different purposes, and therefore look at it in different ways.



The Bible as a globe

A Christian might come to the Bible looking for the 'big picture' – the 'big story' overview. She tries to discern God's plan for humanity – not looking for details.



The Bible as an atlas

A Christian might come looking to work out a systematic theology from the Bible. He looks for the big themes, the major concepts, the connections.



The Bible as geological survey

We're probably dealing with an academic theologian now, who is coming to the Bible looking for the roots of the text. He might be looking for evidence in the text of the cultural, religious or political context, comparing it with evidence from Israel's surrounding nations, in order to identify the author's original influences and intentions, checking for historical accuracy and reliability, where appropriate.



The Bible as 'landranger' map

This Christian might be a pastor or vicar preparing a series of sermons. She needs to know the detailed terrain in order to lead people on their own journey. She wants to see how a book fits together, so that she can work out the best route through – hoping that her congregation will be able to follow it for themselves.



The Bible as satnav

A Christian is looking for directions. She looks to find out a particular answer to an issue. This might be theological: what does the Bible teach about Jesus as the Son of God? Or it might be about practical Christian living: what does the text say about loving your parents or receiving God's forgiveness? The satnav is authoritative, and trusted! If she doesn't follow the directions, she may get lost.



The Bible as personal travel guide

These readers are spending time reading and listening to the Bible, responding to it personally – perhaps feeling challenged by the words and holding them up as a measure against their own thinking and acting; perhaps encouraged to be reminded of the character of God in Jesus. They ask God to speak directly to them through the Holy Spirit. They are looking less for the *meaning* of the passages – not so worried about what the author intended – and more concerned with what God is saying to them now. They are using the Bible to guide them and shape their character and behaviour as they walk through life.



The Bible as tourist map

This reader may be passing through and looking for the 'best bits', the highlights. What are the best stories if I want just to have an idea? Or he may be looking for something like the selections of key texts or key promises that you might find in a cathedral bookshop, offering comfort or guidance in general terms: 'wisdom from the Bible'. The tourist map is probably disposable – the tourist may not be coming this way again.



The Bible as political map

This Christian is concerned about the implications of a particular reading or view of the text on a contemporary issue, such as homosexuality or marriage. She draws on her learning from the other approaches in order to consider the relationship between text, tradition and culture, for example, and comes to conclusions about how (and how far) the Bible applies within a secular, multi-faith society.



The Bible as weather forecast map

Some Christians take a general forecast: looking at the teachings in the Bible, and comparing it with the current Church practice or contemporary society's attitudes and behaviours, what will happen? They might then use this to warn against certain behaviours within and outside the Church, distribution of wealth, for example. Some Christians take a much more detailed, long-range forecast: they suggest that the text offers signs for specific events in the future of humanity, signs of the 'end times'.

12. TEN WAYS TO GET INTO A BIBLE STORY

Here are some ways of engaging pupils in biblical texts – or any texts. You will already have many of your own literacy and reading strategies that you can apply to exploring the Bible. The earlier ideas below work well with younger pupils; the later ones will work better with older pupils. Prepare well, find appropriate translations or versions as suit your audience, make your retelling lively and active, and enjoy yourself!

1. Sound effects

Identify some sound effects beforehand and get groups of pupils ready to make the sounds at the right time in the story: 'when the slave-driver cracks his whip ... when the locusts come ...' Prepare sound effects for each character, so pupils indicate when the character appears. Get them to whisper when whispering is needed or rock backwards and forward when the sea is rough for Jonah or the disciples. This kind of stuff looks silly if you're outside it, but is engaging and memorable, fun and team-like when you're part of it.

2. Sketch a story

Choose your story and divide it into scenes. Tell pupils that the story/narrative is in four/six/eight scenes. Give them some paper with the correct number of boxes, or get them to divide the paper themselves. Tell the story, pausing at the end of each brief scene – you can tell a simplified version for young children, but use full texts for older pupils. Ask pupils to draw a quick sketch to show the part of the story they have just listened to. No prizes for beautiful artwork, here, just a way for them to listen carefully and process what they hear. Ask them to retell the story to a partner, using their drawings; ask them to interpret the story – what do they think it means?

3. Story maps

Tell your chosen story to pupils and discuss the characters, their feelings and the message of the story/text. Ask pupils to draw a timeline of the story (or give them one) – a line with key words or pictures in order; you might like to use their pictures from Sketch a story. Tell them this is the story map. Ask them to mark on the story map where a character

feels happy, or sad; where a big decision had to be taken; where something good or bad had happened; the most important part of the story. This could also be used to outline the setting, plot points, problems and their resolution. They could use their story map to retell the story to another pupil, perhaps someone who has not heard the story before.

4. Props bag

Place a bag of props related to the story in the middle of the group of pupils. Ask them to decide how the story connects with the props. Some should be obvious, some more obscure. Ask them to select the four that connect best or could represent the meaning of the story.

5. Bubbling speech, bubbling thoughts

Provide an image of the characters in the story (or get pupils to do a simple outline – don't spend much time on the drawing). Draw blank speech bubbles next to the characters. Ask pupils to imagine what they might be saying and write in the bubbles. Next, add some blank thought bubbles. We don't always say what we are thinking, so ask pupils to reflect on what the characters might be thinking. Then why not add one or two more so that pupils can express what they are thinking too?

6. Filling in the gaps

Most narratives do not give every single detail of what happened – otherwise we would be here all day! They tend to make short leaps from one event to another. Give pupils in pairs or threes a couple of scenes from a narrative and ask them to describe, draw or act out what happens between the scenes. Ask them to think about what the characters might be thinking, feeling or doing. Sometimes the gaps may not be very important, but for the people in the narratives, they would have been times when they had to think about what they were doing and what was happening. You might get pupils to think about why the writer or editor kept some parts in and left out others. Comparing parallel Gospel accounts with older pupils can open up questions of the particular concerns of each writer.

7. Double-entry journal

In this activity pupils consider ideas from the text, and ideas from their mind. Ask pupils to divide a blank page into two vertically. On the left-hand side, pupils consider ideas from the text and note down their ideas. These might include: a passage, interesting language, a quotation, a key event, a critical fact, a main idea and a problem or conflict. On the right-hand side pupils consider ideas from their minds. These might include: a reaction, a theory or hypothesis, a comparison, a question they have, an explanation, a discussion of significance, a discussion of reactions to the text. This can be done as a whole class or group with a large piece of flip-chart paper.

8. *Pardes*: a Jewish approach to texts

Pardes is a strategy developed within Judaism to help people engage deeply with a story or text, discover its many layers of meaning, and draw from it some understanding to apply to their own life. *Pardes* is made up of the initial letter of four Hebrew words – **P**'shat, **R**emez, **D**'rash and **S**'ad. The acronym PRDS makes the word *Pardes* which means paradise, literally 'an orchard'. To read is to explore paradise or to pick fruits in a heavenly orchard. *Pardes* provides a prism through which stories can be investigated. Select a text and look for these four layers of meaning:

- **P'shat**: this means the simple, superficial story, the one you get if you read it through quickly without much thought.
- **Remez**: this means 'hint'. It's when you think of a story or just a word, and it leads you to think about something else. You might think of something you have thought about or done in the past, and make a connection between it and what you have just read.
- **D'rash**: this means 'interpreting'. Some of the lessons in the story might remind you of other stories or texts you have read, which in turn can teach you about your life.
- **S'ad**: this means 'secret' or 'hidden'. It is not 'secret' because it cannot be told, but because its meaning remains mysterious. Perhaps only the mature or very experienced can understand this 'secret meaning'.

9. Reciprocal reading roles

Give pupils roles as they read – one role each, or encourage each pupil to be able to do bits of each role, to be able to contribute effectively to a group discussion:

- The summariser identifies key points of the text / story.
- The questioner asks questions about the text, about meaning and effect on the reader
- The clarifier focuses on what seems unclear to the group; for example, using a dictionary or focusing on puzzling lines, trying to explain the meaning.
- The interpreter uses phrases such as 'I think this section is about... I suggest that the writer was trying to say... I think that today it means...'

10. Putting on spectacles

Everyone approaches a Bible text or story from their own perspective and for their own purpose – whether committed believer 'listening to God', or an academic looking to work out what was going on in Roman society in the early church, or a disinterested agnostic pupil doing a classroom task. So, set up groups of pupils to read from different perspectives and see how it affects their readings. For example, the rich young man comes to Jesus and is told to sell everything (Matthew 19:16–20). Ask pupils to 'put on the spectacles' of the following readers:

- You are the rich young man himself
- You are one of Jesus' close disciples
- You are a committed Christian from today
- You are a wealthy, pleasure-seeking celebrity from today
- You are an agnostic, unsure about God, but you think old religious stories can teach us something today
- You are an atheist. You don't value religious stories very much. You are quite critical of religion.



13. GRASPING THE 'BIG STORY' USING ART

The *Understanding Christianity* materials include a specially commissioned frieze from award-winning children's book author and illustrator, Emma Yarlett. The frieze shows seven of the eight core concepts as an expression of the 'big story' of the Bible. The frieze is accompanied by a booklet including a more detailed description of each panel/concept and some ideas for using the resource in the classroom. It gives a more detailed timeline of the Bible and offers some 'ways in' for pupils.

Artist Emma Yarlett has written a short description of each panel and what she was thinking when she decided to illustrate the core concepts in this way.

There is a wealth of artworks that relate to the Bible; its influence on Western culture, as well as further afield, is immense – Christianity is a global faith tradition. Such artworks offer rich opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of texts, and also to make some links between the way they interpret artworks and how they interpret texts.¹⁷ There are excellent websites that make links between Bible stories and artworks, from Renaissance through to contemporary artists. These are signposted in the Resources sections of units.

Alongside the immense riches of the artistic canon, there is great value in having our very own frieze! It links directly with the core concepts we have selected; it tells the 'big story' from beginning to end; it offers room for interpretation; and it offers a Christian artist's own response to these key narratives and texts.

The intention is that teachers will use the frieze throughout their teaching of the *Understanding Christianity* materials. As well as the activities suggested within the accompanying booklet, teachers can point out in which panel a particular text, narrative or character sits, thus making a connection to the core concepts and the wider 'big story'.

Note that *Picturing Christianity*,¹⁸ a companion publication to this one, includes many inspiring classroom strategies for using images in RE – whether art or photographic images.

¹⁷ See the interesting comparison between interpreting art and interpreting biblical texts in Esther D Reed, Rob Freathy, Susannah Cornwall and Anna Davis (2013), 'Narrative theology in Religious Education', *British Journal of Religious Education* vol. 35 no. 3, pp. 297–312.

¹⁸ Lat Blaylock (2016), *Picturing Christianity*, *RE Today*.

APPENDIX 1: BACKGROUND FINDINGS ON THE TEACHING OF CHRISTIANITY

Alongside the Ofsted and National Society reports mentioned on p.3, here are three additional and influential reports on the teaching of Christianity in RE:

In 2002, Terence Copley and Karen Walshe¹⁹ concluded that teaching about Jesus:

- failed to set Jesus in the context of Christians' beliefs about him as Saviour and Lord
- neglected current New Testament scholarship.

In 2007, Mary Hayward²⁰ found that teaching of Christianity at KS3 raised many issues, including:

- neglecting 'the dynamic of the particular, located in time, place and culture'
- tending to see Christianity as a 'repository of answers' and avoiding exploring the concrete personal resources of faith
- teaching of Christianity that is 'atomised', with limited overall coherence for pupils
- the difficulty of handling interpretation, including the difference between academic interpretations and the diverse views held by Christian believers, as well as the challenge of how to engage pupils in exploring interpretation for themselves.

Nigel Fancourt's 2012 review of research concluded that 'the goal of ensuring that pupils have a clear understanding of Christianity is rarely prioritised; it is subsumed in, or replaced by, some wider educational goal'.²¹

¹⁹ Terence Copley and Karen Walshe (2002), 'The Figure of Jesus in Religious Education', University of Exeter.

²⁰ Mary Hayward (2007), 'Christianity in Religious Education at Key Stage 3', Occasional Papers IV, Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, University of Warwick.

²¹ Nigel Fancourt (2012), 'Teaching about Christianity in Religious Education: A Review of Research', p.30. www.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Teaching-about-Christianity-in-religious-education.pdf

APPENDIX 2: CONTENTS OF THE *UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY* RESOURCE PACK

SECTION 1: Teacher's Handbook

SECTION 2: Foundation Stage

Includes:

- Introductory booklet, summarising approach, 'big story' outline, elements of core knowledge and outcomes, as suited to age group
- Three units of work.

SECTION 3: Key Stage 1

Includes:

- Introductory booklet, summarising approach, 'big story' outline, elements of core knowledge and outcomes, as suited to age group
- Five units of work
- Resources booklet.

SECTION 4: Lower Key Stage 2

Includes:

- Introductory booklet, summarising approach, 'big story' outline, elements of core knowledge and outcomes, as suited to age group
- Six units of work
- Resources booklet.

SECTION 5: Upper Key Stage 2

Includes:

- Introductory booklet, summarising approach, 'big story' outline, elements of core knowledge and outcomes, as suited to age group
- Eight units of work
- Resources booklet.

SECTION 6: Key Stage 3

Includes:

- Introductory booklet, summarising approach, 'big story' outline, elements of core knowledge and outcomes, as suited to age group
- Seven units of work
- Resources booklet.

SECTION 7: Additional materials

- Frieze artwork and supporting booklet
- CD-ROM contains all units of work and all resource sheets
- Resource sheets and selected units of work are available **online**
- Additional resources will enhance the online provision after the Resource Pack is published.

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Additional advice from:

Dr Julia Ipgrave, University of Warwick
 Miranda Robinson, Diocese of Peterborough
 Angela Smith, Bishop Luffa School and Diocese of
 Chichester
 Nicola Sylvester, National Society

Theological consultation

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The Revd Canon Professor Loveday Alexander
 The Revd Canon Dr Charlotte Methuen
 The Revd Dr Jeremy Morris
 The Revd Canon Dr Jeremy Worthen
 (Secretary of the Commission)

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Early contributions

We are grateful to the following for their early contributions:

Penny Hollander
 Hugo Whateley
 Cavan Wood

Funders

We are grateful to the following for generous support in the development, trial and publication of *Understanding Christianity*:

Culham St Gabriel's Trust
 Jerusalem Trust
 Halley Stewart Trust
 Anonymous donor

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APPENDIX 4: GLOSSARY OF ACTIVITIES

Here are some of the strategies included in the *Understanding Christianity* units. We give brief outlines only – further details are available through online searches. Alternatively, take a look at *More than 101 Great Ideas*, by Rosemary Rivett (RE Today, 2013) for many more active learning strategies.

Strategy	How to put it into practice
Chat stations	Put key texts, quotes or images, numbered, around the room – these are the stations. Put pupils in groups of two to four and give them a reporting sheet, numbered as per your stations. Send pupils around to talk about each station in turn, recording their key discussion points. Return to seats, and then discuss the stations in turn with the whole class. (E.g. Unit 2b.3.)
Conscience alley	<p>One pupil takes the role of a person or character who faces a dilemma. They walk down between two rows of five or six pupils facing each other. These are the character's conscience, and they have to give their advice to the character as they walk down the alley.</p> <p>You can give more structured support by telling one side of pupils that they are 'for' or 'against' a particular choice; or give individual pupils in the rows specific perspectives to speak from.</p> <p>The pupil taking the role of the person/character has to listen to all the advice. When they reach the end of the alley, they have to come to a conclusion, with reasons. (E.g. Unit 2b.3.)</p>
Dialogic talk	The teacher helps to move pupils' thinking forward through collaborative talk and exploration. Discussion is not just used as a tool to test pupils' knowledge, but as a way of helping pupils explain reasoning, build on answers given by peers and move forward together in understanding. High-quality interactions are encouraged between all participants (e.g. Unit 1.1). Note: this is more than a one-off strategy to select – it is part of a wider approach to teaching and learning that builds on dialogue in the classroom. One place to start is Robin Alexander's work: www.robinalexander.org.uk/dialogic-teaching/
Freeze-framing	Pupils take a moment from a story. They develop a tableau to show a still image of the scene using their bodies. Record this with a camera and put the images together, as a record of work, or for a display. (E.g. Unit 1.5.)

Godly play

Godly play is an approach devised by Jerome W Berryman, who has published a number of books about it (see www.godlyplay.uk/). This approach is sometimes built upon and termed 'spirited play'.

Pupils are welcomed into the classroom and sit in a circle. The storyteller will show a container holding a number of items relating to the story that s/he is about to tell (for example, cloth to represent the backdrop and models to represent the characters). The story is told using the items, and pupils are encouraged to think deeply as the storyteller asks 'I wonder...?' questions to extend their thinking.

After the storytelling, pupils are given the opportunity to make a response. This might be through art, music, writing, drama etc.

Reconvene in the circle, share refreshments and pupils' responses. (E.g. Unit 1.5.)

Hot-seating

One person takes on the role of a character about whom the class are learning. The other pupils devise questions to ask the character, based on his/her motivations, thoughts, behaviour etc. The person in role sits in the 'hot seat' to answer the pupils' questions in character.

If pupils are unfamiliar with this activity or are focusing on a new character, it can be useful for an adult to model being the character and answering questions before any pupil attempts this.

Once pupils are very confident with this technique, they can work on it in pairs, with one being the character and the other asking the questions. (E.g. Unit 2a.1 or Unit 2b.4.)

Human bar chart

This is a way of allowing pupils to express responses anonymously, and reflect on why pupils have responded differently.

Devise an opinions statement sheet made up of at least six (controversial) statements on the issue in question, and provide a copy for each pupil. Include numbers 1-6 underneath each statement (1 = strongly agree; 6 = strongly disagree) so that pupils can circle a number.

Before the lesson begins, write the numbers 1-6 on A4 sheets and place them in a straight line on the floor or the wall of the classroom or corridor.

Give pupils the opinions statement sheet and ask them to complete it privately, anonymously, and in pencil. Pupils circle the number which most closely reflects their opinion for each statement. Encourage pupils to express their honest opinions by reassuring them that their responses will be completely anonymous.

Each sheet is then folded in half, and half again, and exchanged five times.

As the teacher reads out the statements, pupils line up in front of the number represented on the sheet they have been given, creating a human bar chart.

Note that pupils are not necessarily standing in a place that represents their own view, so you can ask them why they think someone would respond in that way – it helps them to articulate different points of view and develop empathy.

Pupils, working in groups, e.g. all those with 1 circled on their sheets, work out arguments to support the point of view they are representing. A good debate can arise between those who are 'strongly agreeing' and those who are 'strongly disagreeing'. Can they persuade others in the class to join them, or will there be some defectors to the other side?

Very strong links can be made between this activity and maths. (E.g. Unit 2a.6.)

Jigsaw discussion

This is a co-operative learning strategy which is particularly useful when pupils are gathering lots of new knowledge.

Split a topic into different sections and assign one section to each group in the class. For example, a topic on the parables that Jesus told could have each group learning about a different parable. In this way, pupils in the group become 'class experts' in their given section.

Next, split the class up into new groups – each should contain at least one pupil from every group in the preceding activity. This means that there is at least one 'expert' on every section of the learning in every new group. The experts should share their learning with the members of the new group and will hopefully be knowledgeable enough to answer any questions. Through this method, everyone finds out about and comes to understand all sections of the topic that have been studied within the class.

The new groups can then complete further tasks linked to the topic. These tasks should depend on more than one section of the topic being understood. (E.g. Unit 2b.3.)

Labyrinth

Although a traditional labyrinth might look like a maze at first glance, it has a clear path to the centre and out again with no dead ends. Labyrinths can be chalked or taped onto playgrounds and hall floors, with pupils invited to walk along the paths, into the middle and out again.

Place various stations along the paths where pupils will stop in their journey to find out and reflect more upon a topic or story. (E.g. Unit 1.5.)

Odd one out

Present pupils with three words or images. Ask them to work out which is the odd one out. Pupils should identify the odd one out and explain the reasons for their choice.

On many occasions there is no right answer: the 'odd one out' is a matter of opinion. The key issue is to be able to express and articulate reasons for the choice. (E.g. Unit 1.3.)

Silent discussion/ debate

Put a short text or an image in the centre of a large sheet of sugar paper – do this with 6–8 texts (such as verses from a song or poem, or quotations from different texts or people) or images.

Put these sheets around the classroom on desks. Ask pupils to walk around with their pens and, in silence, write comments on the paper. In some classrooms, rather than asking pupils to move around, you can pass the sheets from group to group.

You can give this more focus by giving pupils different-coloured pens for specific comments, e.g. red pen for questions, blue pen for explaining other pupils' comments further, green pens for challenging comments.

Another variant is to give pupils different pens to write from different perspectives, such as a character in the text, a Christian today, an atheist today, a Muslim today. (E.g. Units 2b.7 and 2b.8.)

Snowball discussion Give pairs of pupils a topic to discuss and draw conclusions on. Join the pairs to make groups of four. Share each pair's ideas and then discuss whether there were other options too – can pupils agree on conclusions as a group of four?
Repeat this by joining groups of four to make sixes or eights (depending on class size) and then asking groups to give feedback to the main class. (E.g. Unit 1.1.)

Tag-story talking game Tell the pupils the first line of a story. In turn, pupils should each add an extra line. As everybody in the group is involved in developing the story, it takes great skill to ensure that the plot is coherent.
This can work well if pupils are presented with some objects at the start of the activity. They should use their imaginations to incorporate the objects into their storytelling. (E.g. Unit 2a.6.)

Thought-tapping theatre Break a story up into around six parts or scenes. Give each group one scene to depict in a freeze-frame.
Watch each scene, and then point to or tap in turn each person participating. Once tapped, pupils should state which character or object they are depicting. Repeat. This time, each pupil should say what the character (or object, if thinking imaginatively!) s/he is depicting is *saying* in the scene.
Repeat for a final time. Now each pupil should say what the character/object is *thinking* in the scene. Look for instances when people are thinking something slightly different from what they are saying.
Hold a final class performance: the first scene from the story should be freeze-framed, with all pupils involved stating what their characters are thinking. The pupils from this scene stay in their freeze-frame positions whilst the second scene is performed, then the third and so on. At the end, all pupils will be in their freeze-framed positions so that the class's finishing position shows six or so scenes depicting the entire story. This works very well for performances in assemblies. Taking photos to record this is an excellent way to record learning and provide material for display – each image can be surrounded by speech and thought bubbles showing pupils' comments and ideas. (E.g. Units 1.1 and 2a.1.)

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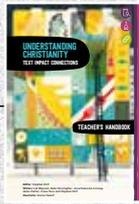
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Unit 1 Unit 2 Unit 3



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