

SHARPENING THINKING SKILLS

Games and activities to encourage thinking

(* especially relevant to Chapter 8)

Thinking skills can be used to develop a range of skills in Religious Education these include:

- Decision making
- Research and classifying
- Questioning Skills
- Analytical
- Explanatory

Below are some generic classroom activities that can aid thinking skills and can be tied to any part of the curriculum.

1. Odd one out

The teacher has groups of 3,4 or 5 objects. These might be artefacts, images, words, ideas, or concepts. These could be actual things, representations on playing cards (for group work) or images on a big screen (for whole class work). One member of the group, or the whole class, has to state which of the objects is the 'odd one out' and justify why. This can be challenged by another member of the class.

The groups should be set up so that there can be a number of 'odd ones out' in the group for different reasons.

2. Making connections

The teacher makes a pack of cards. These might contain artefacts, images, words, ideas, or concepts. The cards are dealt out in the group with the spares forming a pile. The first student in the group plays a card the next must play a card that has a connection with this card (e.g. the first plays church, the second could play priest, temple, believer as all of these have a connection to a church). The next plays a card touching one of the cards on the table. Cards are only allowed if all the players agree that the connection given is valid.

3. Walking the line

Draw a line down the centre of the classroom. Starting with a question ask the pupils to stand on the line depending on their personal belief. Ask individuals on the line to justify their positions and then give them 2 minutes to talk to the person one side of them to get them to move. After 2 mins see if anyone moves, if they do ask then why. This can also be used as a starter and plenary to see if ideas/opinions change over the course of a lesson – they will need to explain why things were different at the end of the lesson.

Variation: Assign individuals a "character" then ask them to position themselves on the line in response to questions – get others in the class to critique their position on the line with respect to their character.

4. Who am I?

This can be a fun idea that can be applied to any number of situations in the RE classroom (e.g. religious people, situations, places, concepts, ideas). Each student is given a label which is placed on their backs and they have to ask questions of others in the group until they can either (i) find out their word / phrase or (ii) they can find a partner or group that they belong to (e.g. a religion, a building, a concept set etc..)

5. Contradictory Statements

Pairs of contradictory statements are given to pupils. They are given 5 mins to convince the other person of their position. Afterwards look at the arguments that were used to convince the person. This could be done in pairs or as a class brainstorm.

Statements might include:

I believe in God – I don't believe in God;

Death is the end – there is life after death;

There is a place called Hell – there is no place called Hell;

Life has purpose – Life has no purpose.

6. What is truth

Decide on things that can be called true or on statements for which the answer can be “that’s true”. Either work on these in groups or as a whole class activity. You need to decide on the evidence that is needed for any statement.

Statement might include: This is a table, God is real, You are my friend.

7. Classifications

Give pupils a set of about 20 statements, pictures, images or artefacts. Now ask them to place these in groups with a common idea / word or concept linking the group. Explore the connections that they have made.

8. Reading images

Using a good quality image of a religious event, building or an image of a painting give the pupils 10 minutes to write down all they can about this image, this should include ideas and concepts as well as reporting on the visual elements – links that they can make. As far as possible any conclusions need to be backed up with ideas / evidence.