

Introduction

The purpose of this pack is to provide teachers of RE with easy access to information to support them in their development of ICT in subject teaching. It is primarily a pack about policy and, as such, provides only a limited number of suggestions as to how ICT might be used to support teaching and learning. This pack has been written to help colleagues decide what is possible in their context, what is achievable with their students and to show some of the problems that RE teachers have already experienced when trying to implement ICT use in their classrooms.

The need for this pack arises from the growing pressure on RE teachers to deliver their subject using ICT, and has been written to coincide with the expansion of NOF training. As your own personal ICT skills increase, it is important to be able to plan for their maximisation. An essential part of this pack is therefore *Section 3 Key Government initiatives* which charts the development of central government thinking in this area and presents the 'current state of play'. Throughout the pack there are photocopiable forms and handouts which will enable you to audit existing practice, plan for future development and prepare for the integration of ICT methodology into existing schemes of work. As a general rule, this pack only advocates using ICT when it will enhance what already happens in your department or school. You are invited to engage with it as a professional development activity and not just change for the sake of change.

It is also the case that many RE teachers are recreating their schemes of work in response to their LEA's quinquennial review of the Local Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. Others are responding to the recent publication of the *QCA Non-Statutory Schemes of Work* (QCA, 2000). Catholic schools are responding to changes in their schemes of work brought about by the publication of the *Curriculum Directory and Icons* (Collins, 1999). Those teaching at Key Stage 5 are assessing their current provision to bring it in line with the new specifications for AS/A2 examinations. As a result, the whole RE community is undertaking review and evaluation activities. It is, therefore, timely to incorporate ICT into schemes of work.

Most RE departments receive relatively little in terms of funding for ICT development. However, what is suggested in this pack is what can be done, what has been done and what should be done in the future. There are compelling and overwhelming arguments for using ICT in RE which are nothing to do with government initiatives, LEA directives or OFSTED inspections (see *Section 6*).

In an era of continuous change, it is important to minimise the impact of new initiatives by having systems in place which are flexible, adaptive and able to reflect the complexity of educational thinking. Digitising all that is done provides the necessary fluidity to meet the challenges.

Non-impact printers will use either an ink-jet or a laser to mark the page. Both systems have their advantages and disadvantages, so the best purchase will depend upon its intended use and the likely running costs.

Schools should consider purchasing a good quality laser printer for general administrative use and for printing department-based material, worksheets, course material, etc. Although their unit cost is comparatively high initially, their running costs for high capacity printouts are low. For classroom use, good 'photo quality' ink-jet printers are now becoming available at realistic prices (between £200 and £400), although it is always advisable to check the ongoing costs of replacement ink cartridges. These printers will give good service provided they are treated kindly. It might also be worth considering the viability of using an A4/A3 format printer as these are much more flexible, especially if you want to produce A4 size booklets formed from folded A3 sheets.

ICT activities for RE

This section considers how ICT can be used in RE via the different applications. Each suggestion has been tried and tested in real classroom contexts and has been shown to be of benefit to the students and to the RE teacher:

- **Word processing** – Creating, recreating or editing simple documents either for the presentation of information or to assist with the process of student learning.
- **Desktop publishing** – Enhancing text-only materials by: redesigning their layout; inserting images; reshaping the documents; adding styles, colour and simple navigation features.
- **Spreadsheets** – Collecting, manipulating and representing numerical data. Using computing power to perform repetitive numeracy tasks. This is a key tool for monitoring the progress of students. Students can access their own marks and track patterns in their performance from unit to unit.
- **Databases** – Creating and/or using active data housed in a database to perform queries, analyse patterns, examine trends, make connections or explore relationships. For example, in RE a simple database can be set up showing local places of worship, numbers of students in the school who attend, ratios of belief to non-belief, etc.
- **Graphical work** – Using a digital camera, digital video camera or scanner to collect, manipulate and represent images of religious people, artefacts, activities, etc.
- **Animating** – Creating moving images without a video camera by applying the built-in tools in many programs, eg Microsoft® PowerPoint. The aim of this is to make materials and their presentation more attractive.
- **Browsing/searching** – Gaining access to the vast reservoir of digital material for, from and about religion(s) both online and offline, in Internet, CD-ROM or disk format.
- **Web authoring** – Creating, updating and publishing work for and from students on the Internet, or on a school intranet.

4 Developing departmental policy

Developing departmental policy is new territory for RE teachers and, as such, there is not a great deal of expertise on which to draw for examples of consistent and coherent best practice. That which exists is generally ad hoc and partial. What is offered here are:

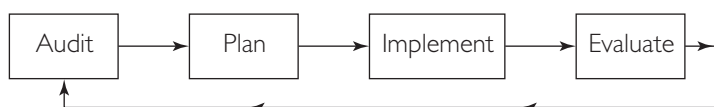
- suggestions about how you might begin to formulate a policy for ICT in RE
- activities to help you assess your progress so far
- some frequently asked questions answered.

See also *Running an RE Department* (Pearson Publishing, 1999) for more suggestions.

In *Section 3*, evidence was presented of the inexorable progress towards the integration of ICT into all aspects of our work as teachers. Planned change which teachers can control is always better than that which is enforced or imposed externally. You will be more impressed by the results of changes you make to existing practice if you have planned, implemented and evaluated them yourself. Set targets for the change process and add time parameters to the work. Ask someone to work alongside you as a ‘critical friend’. You can get support and advice from senior colleagues, external consultants or colleagues from other schools.

The creation of a policy should ensure that you do not omit some crucial aspect of the planning procedure that could result in you having to undo a lot of well-intentioned work. Working on a policy in collaboration with someone else – especially someone who has done it before – may mean that you can take existing work and adapt it to your own needs. Presenting a policy to the senior management team in a coherent and articulate fashion is the most likely route to the department receiving the kind of funding that will enable the developments you are seeking.

However, there is no doubt that writing a policy is going to involve you in more work. In the long-term, however, the work should result in a reduced workload because the students will become self-sufficient and come to rely on you less. Proceeding carefully will effect a more thorough and radical change more quickly.



Before you start, make a survey of the RE and ICT scene. This is one pack among many and you will find that most of the educational publishers in the UK have got at least one title that is relevant to RE. What you are looking for are materials that will complement your existing schemes of work. It is not necessary to reinvent the wheel and write brand new ones unless there is another reason for change as outlined in the

Internet can access information from all over the world. However, this vast amount of information, and the fact that there are no restrictions on who may post information on the Web, means that staff and students need to learn how to skim and scan texts, select according to relevance and reliability and be able to detect bias.

Motivation

Students respond very positively to the self-directed learning opportunities afforded by emerging technology. Their education is enriched by working at their own pace. Active engagement with their work provides the concentration required for effective exercises that would otherwise be quickly abandoned because of their lack of appeal in printed text form. For example, the word processing of writing tasks is now commonplace but should be regarded as more than just prettyfying the text. With the right approach, the whole process of writing, from drafting, to editing and the preparation and printing of the finished piece can be performed to a much higher and more satisfying level using the facilities offered by the word processor.

Communication

Information stored on one computer can be viewed or downloaded on another, whether it is in the same room or on the other side of the world. Global communication has become faster and more efficient than ever before. Messages can be sent to one person, or to hundreds of thousands, at the click of a button. It only takes seconds to transfer information, the cost is minimal, and the transferred information is immediately useable. This information can be adapted, modified and processed to suit another audience or another purpose. For example, the opportunities offered by this facility go far beyond the 'electronic pen-friend' and might include collaborative work with other schools on particular Religious topics, projects, role-play scenarios, exchanging information with schools in other countries by comparing expectations, social attitudes, ways of life, tastes and belief system preferences, etc. This is a facility that has yet to be fully appreciated and exploited by most schools.

Presentation of work

ICT provides a variety of tools for presenting students' work. Texts can be worked on in draft form before proceeding to the final version.

The computer also allows the writer to have complete typographical and design control over a finished piece of text. The visual impact of text can be very powerful provided that the right questions are asked about its presentation. Choosing the right font, incorporating appropriate graphics, considering the layout of the text on the page or screen, colours, size spacing, etc, can lead to some very interesting and exciting work.

Internet browsing lesson plan

Title:		
Date:	Time:	Class:
Topic to be covered:		
Link to PoS	Units	Link to QCA SOWs
Web sites selected	Web address	Notes
Health, safety and ethical considerations?		
Room booked?		
Ratio of students to computers?		
Planned task	Give details here of what you intend the students to do.	
Student prompt	<p>How is the task to be communicated?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper (worksheet) • Board-based (white or chalk board) • Projection (using a data projector) • Digitally ('soft' version on the computer) 	
Expected learning outcomes	Write down here what you expect the students to learn by this activity	
Expected physical outcomes	Write down here the products of this lesson, eg printouts, data files created, etc.	
Evaluation	<p>Was the activity successful?</p> <p>Were the students engaged and on task?</p> <p>Were the outcomes what you had planned for or expected?</p> <p>Would you use this activity again?</p> <p>Do you need to differentiate the work further?</p> <p>Are more Web sites needed?</p>	