Age-Related Standards (3-19)
in
Religious Education

An interim document approved for use in Catholic Schools by
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Introduction and context

In the summer term of 2016, the CES and NBRIA sent out a questionnaire to all schools seeking their views on the document *Levels of Attainment in Religious Education* and on the future of assessment of Religious Education in Catholic schools. The executive summary of this report is attached as an appendix to this document.

Because of that survey, it became clear that schools needed a new assessment tool that reflected the changes in the broader education landscape in both the Primary and the Secondary phases. In Primary schools, a new National Curriculum is in place that requires schools to assess using age-related expectations, rather than Levels of Attainment. In Secondary schools, the new GCSE has raised the bar for the terminal examination at the end of KS4. As a result, the assessment at KS3 needs to better prepare pupils for the more demanding GCSE course.

The new document *Age-Related Standards (3-19) in Religious Education* is a response to these needs. It was piloted in the Autumn and Spring terms of the Academic year 2017-2018 by a selection of schools from across England. The report following the feedback from this pilot is available separately, but it makes clear that while *Standards* represents a welcome step forward for schools, there is still work to be done in order for it to fully equip schools in their task of assisting pupils to make progress in Religious Education at all phases and stages of education. Schools would like:

- end of year expectations, rather than end of phase ones;
- annotated examples of pupil and student that exemplify each Age-Related Standard;
- an indication of how *Standards* is to be used to measure progress for data tracking purposes and to give feedback to pupils: something like the performance scales Primary schools use in reporting progress against age-related expectations in the other core curriculum subjects;
- in secondary schools, an indication of how the *Standards* relate to the GCSE grades at the end of KS4

To respond to these needs, the working party will continue to meet to progress this work throughout the Academic Year 2018-2019. In addition, the Bishops of the Department of Catholic Education and Formation have commissioned a third edition of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* that will bring the full revision of both the curriculum and standards to its completion. The expected publication for this final document, containing both age-related content and skills, is expected to be published in September 2020.

In the interim period, dioceses may continue to use the historical *Levels of Attainment in Religious Education*. However, the Department has also given permission for dioceses and schools to use the new interim *Age-Related Standards (3-19) in Religious Education* contained in this document.

How to use *Age-Related Standards (3-19) in Religious Education*

Standards is an evolution of the *Levels of Attainment in Religious Education*. The results from the survey made it clear that schools wanted an assessment tool that allowed for greater parity with other subjects in the curriculum, but which also did not lose the driver words and attainment targets they had been using thus far and with which they were very familiar. However, it is very important to stress that this interim document does not function in the same way as the previous *Levels* document did. *Levels* was used to effectively "grade" students in all year groups, using the language of levels to report on progress and to assist pupils in making the next steps in their learning. In theory, all Levels were potentially accessible to all pupils in all year groups. Following the direction of travel of the other core-curriculum subjects, the *Standards* are descriptions of what pupils at different ages are expected to be able to achieve by the end of that age-related phase. They are prescriptive, not diagnostic. By themselves, they are not ways of measuring

achievement, but rather a description of what is expected of almost all pupils by the time they reach the end of a particular age phase. The age phases are:

- 3-5
- 5-7
- 7-11
- 11-14
- 14-16
- 16-19

For *Standards* to become a diagnostic, as well as a descriptive tool, there is the need for a further breakdown of the *Standards* into year-specific expectations that include content as well as skills. There is also a need for some guidance on how to use a performance scale alongside a descriptive grid of this kind. For example, some indication will need to be given of what it will mean for a pupil or student to be working towards, at and above age-related expectations. Both the year specific expectations and the performance scale will be a feature of the revised *RECD* but are not yet ready for inclusion in this interim document.

In this interim period, dioceses and schools and schools who wish to will continue to work with the *Standards* and explore ways in which they can be used as a progress measuring and data tracking tool. This further exploration of possibilities in real school settings will only make the tool in its final form better able to respond to both the needs of the Church and the needs of teachers.

Evolution of Attainment Targets

The two old Attainment Targets have not been lost – there are still "learning about" and "learning from" descriptors in the new tool. However, a new discrete skills strand has been added: Analysis and Evaluation. This has been added partly because, in secondary schools, the ability to analyse and evaluate is an essential skill at both GCSE and A Level. Also, it is arguably a skill that can be developed from the beginning of Religious Education learning and so constitutes a part of this interim *Standards* document for Primary schools too.

Attainment Target 2: Engagement and Response

The green row in the *Standards* is not, in one sense, a separate set of skills but is a description of the kinds of engagement and response from learners that teachers should plan for in lessons. These rows are focused on pupil's and student's own identity, sense of purpose and moral outlook. They indicate that in Religious Education, it is expected that the learning will make a direct contribution to the moral and spiritual formation of pupils, that they might become more reflective in their lives and more understanding in their response to encountering difference. Given that how and whether pupils respond on a personal level is dependent on the freedom of each individual conscience, it is not intended to imply that this personal progress is something that should be assessed in the same way that the other two ATs will be, but progress in it is still observable and can be evidenced.

The emergence of "skill areas"

You will see that the driver words have been maintained in the end of phase descriptions: "make links", "show understanding" etc. However, these have been removed from content specific strands and have become discrete "skill areas" as can be seen in the first column of the new document. This has made it easier to understand what progression looks like from one phase to the next in each of these discrete skill areas.

Progression between phases

The standards descriptors for 14-16 were taken from Ofqual's new descriptors of performance at GCSE. These track back into the 11-14 phase descriptors and teachers will hopefully be able to see the progressive

nature of the descriptors very clearly. For instance, the new AT1 maps precisely onto the new GCSE Assessment Objective 1 and the new AT2 maps precisely onto the new GCSE Assessment Objective 2. Therefore, if the new standards document is used in the 11-14 phase it should now serve as a solid preparation for students progressing to GCSE.

Similarly, the 11-14 descriptors follow directly on from the 7-11 descriptors and now form a coherent link between Primary and Secondary Religious Education.

The standards descriptors for 16-19 were taken from a combined version of each of the descriptors given by the exam boards for performance at A Level in Religious Studies. These are a straightforward development of the GCSE skills and the progressive nature of these should be clearly seen. How these descriptors relate to expectations for General RE in the Sixth Form is another piece of work that is yet to be completed but which will also feature in the revised *RECD*.

The meaning of "empty boxes"

Please note, not all the 11-14 skills track back fully into the Primary phases. Therefore, in some portions of the Primary S*tandards* descriptor grid, there are empty boxes. This indicates that this skill area is not expected in this phase of a pupil's development. It does not indicate that some pupils are not capable of achieving that skill at their age, but, because the grid is descriptive rather than diagnostic, it merely shows that it is not an expectation for most.

Skills Guide and Glossary

In addition to the *Standards* grid itself, there is a Skills Guide and a Glossary. The Skills Guide gives some explanation of what is meant by each of the 'skill' verbs and verb phrases to assist teachers in knowing what to plan for in learning. The Glossary gives provides definitions for key vocabulary contained within the descriptor grid itself.

Permission

Age-Related Standards (3-19) in Religious Education was approved for use in Catholic schools by the Bishops of the Department for Catholic Education and Formation on 26 June 2018.

Standards for Ages 3-5

By the end of age phase, pupils will be able to:

	Skill areas	3-5
AT1: Knowledge and Understanding ('learning about')	Developing Knowledge and Understanding	• Listen to and talk about religious stories and respond to what they hear with relevant comments. • Sing songs, make music and dance to express religious stories. • Use a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function to express religious stories. • Represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings about religious stories through design and technology, art, music, dance and role play. • Develop their own narratives and explanations of religious stories by connecting ideas or events to the scripture source used. • Read and understand simple sentences from scripture or from their own religious stories • Share religious stories they have heard and read with others. • Listen, talk about and role play similarities and differences in relation to places they have read or heard about family, church communities and religious stories. • Write simple sentences about religious stories using phrases or words which can be read by themselves and others. • Listen, talk about and role play how people act in a particular way because of their beliefs. • Listen and talk about key figures in the history of the People of God. • Listen, talk about and role play similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, church communities and church traditions. • Listen, talk about and role play how people behave in the local, national and universal church community. • Listen and talk about religious signs and symbols used in worship, including the celebration of the Sacraments. Use religious signs and symbols in role play.
	Making Links and Connections	
	Historical Development	
	Religious and Specialist Vocabulary	• Decode key religious words appropriate to their age and stage of development. • Use key religious words appropriate to their age and stage of development.
AT2: Engagement and Response ('learning from')	Meaning and Purpose	• Answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to religious stories or events.
	Beliefs and Values	• Show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings. • Talk about how they and others show feelings. • Confidently speak in a familiar group and talk about their ideas. • Express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. • Give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately. • Talk about their own and others' behaviour and its consequences. • Talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members. • Know that other children don't always enjoy and share the same feelings and are sensitive to this.
AT3: Analysis and Evaluation	Use of Sources as Evidence	
	Construct Arguments	
	Make Judgements	
	Recognise Diversity	
	Analyse and Deconstruct	

Standards for Primary Religious Education

By the end of age phase, pupils will be able to:

	Skill areas	5-7	7-9	9-11
AT1: Knowledge and Understanding ('learning about')	Developing Knowledge and Understanding	• Recognise religious stories • Retell, in any form, a narrative that corresponds to the scripture source used • Recognise religious beliefs • Describe some religious beliefs • Recognise that people act in a particular way because of their beliefs • Describe some of the actions and choices of believers that arise because of their belief • Recognise key figures in the history of the People of God • Describe the life and work of some key figures in the history of the People of God • Recognise key people in the local, national and universal Church • Describe different roles of some people in the local, national and universal Church • Recognise religious signs and symbols used in worship, including the celebration of the Sacraments. • Describe some religious symbols and the steps involved in religious actions and worship, including the celebration of the Sacraments.	• Retell a narrative that is accurate in its sequence and details and that corresponds to the scripture source used. • Describe, with increasing detail and accuracy: - a range of religious beliefs - those actions of believers which arise as a consequence of their beliefs - the life and work of key figures in the history of the People of God - different roles of people in the local, national and universal Church - religious symbols and the steps involved in religious actions and worship, including the celebration of the Sacraments	• Show knowledge and understanding of a range of scripture passages that corresponds to the scripture source used. • Show knowledge and understanding of: - a range of religious beliefs - those actions of believers which arise as a consequence of their beliefs - the life and work of key figures in the history of the People of God - what it means to belong to a church community - religious symbols and the steps involved in religious actions and worship, including the celebration of the Sacraments
	Making Links and Connections		• Make links between: - beliefs and sources, giving reasons for beliefs - beliefs and worship, giving reasons for actions and symbols - beliefs and life, giving reasons for actions and choices	• Show understanding of, by making links between: - beliefs and sources - beliefs and worship - beliefs and life
	Historical Development			
	Religious and Specialist Vocabulary	• Use religious words and phrases	• Use a range of religious vocabulary	• Use religious vocabulary widely, accurately and appropriately
AT2: Engagement and Response ('learning from')	Meaning and Purpose	• Say what they wonder about • Ask wondering questions about all of the areas of study and recognize that some questions are difficult to answer	• Ask and respond to questions about their own and others' experiences and feelings about each of the areas of study, in relation to questions of meaning and purpose	• Compare their own and other people's responses to questions about each of the areas of study, in relation to questions of meaning and purpose
	Beliefs and Values	• Talk about their own feelings, experiences and the things that matter to them • Ask and respond to questions about their own and others' feelings, experiences and things that matter to them	• Make links to show how feelings and beliefs affect their behaviour and that of others	• Show understanding of how own and other's decisions are informed by beliefs and moral values
AT3: Analysis and Evaluation	Use of Sources as Evidence		• Use a given source to support a point of view	• Use sources to support a point of view
	Construct Arguments		• Express a point of view	• Express a point of view and give reasons for it
	Make Judgements		• Express a preference	• Arrive at judgements
	Recognise Diversity			• Recognise difference, comparing and contrasting different points of view.
	Analyse and Deconstruct			

Standards for Secondary Religious Education

By the end of age phase, students will be able to:

		11-14	14-16	16-19
AT1: Knowledge and Understanding ('learning about')	Developing Knowledge and Understanding	• Explain the meaning and purpose of a range of scripture passages. • Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of: - doctrine, belief and theological concepts - questions of meaning and purpose, philosophy and ethics and the significance of the answers for personal choices and commitments - the nature, structure and authority of communities of belief, both locally and universally - the structure and meaning of different forms of worship for believers, including the celebration of the Sacraments • Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of common and divergent views and practices within and between religions	• Interpret the meaning and significance of a range of sacred texts and sources of wisdom, with an appreciation of literary type and textual context and the different interpretations employed by different communities • Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and understanding of: - doctrine, belief and theological concepts - questions of meaning and purpose, philosophy and ethics and the significance of the answers for personal choices and commitments - the nature, structure and authority of communities of belief, both locally and universally - the structure and meaning of different forms of worship for believers, including the celebration of the Sacraments • Demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of common and divergent views and practices within and between religions	• Critically reflect and skillfully interpret the meaning and significance of a wide variety of sacred texts and sources of wisdom, using the skills of scriptural scholarship and reason • Comprehensively demonstrate a developed knowledge, showing a depth of understanding that recognises complexity and nuance, of: - doctrine, belief and theological concepts - questions of meaning and purpose, philosophy and ethics and the significance of the answers for personal choices and commitments - the nature, structure and authority of communities of belief, both locally and universally - the structure, meaning and significance of different forms of worship for believers • Comprehensively demonstrate a developed knowledge, showing a depth of understanding that recognises complexity and nuance, of divergent views and practices within and between religions and beliefs
	Making Links and Connections	• Make relevant connections between different areas of study (doctrine, sources, structures, worship and life), showing how one area influences others	• Make detailed and relevant connections between different areas of study (doctrine, sources, structures, worship and life), correctly explaining the causal connections between them	• Make coherent and insightful connections between different areas of study (doctrine, sources, structures, worship and life), fully explaining the multiple and sophisticated causal connections between them
	Historical Development	• Recognise, and demonstrate some understanding, that some beliefs, practices and interpretations of sources have developed over time	• Demonstrate an understanding of the historical and/or cultural development of concepts in each of the areas of study, recognising the significance of historical context and shifts in other areas of understanding	• Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the historical and/or cultural development of understanding in each of the areas of study, recognising the importance of historical and cultural context, drawing on the work of relevant theologians, philosophers and scholars in other relevant disciplines
	Religious and Specialist Vocabulary	• Use a range of contextually accurate and appropriate religious and specialist vocabulary	• Use a wide range of appropriate specialist theological, philosophical and ethical vocabulary	• Precisely use a wide range of appropriate specialist theological, philosophical and ethical vocabulary, extensively, effectively and with a high degree of confidence
AT2: Engagement and Response ('learning from')	Meaning and Purpose	• Compare their own and others' responses to questions of meaning and purpose, leading to reasonable explanations of their own and others' views, in the light of religious teaching	• Evaluate their own response to questions of meaning and purpose, in light of religious and nonreligious views and beliefs, leading to a well-informed account of their own and others' views	• Critically evaluate their own response to questions of meaning and purpose, in light of religious and nonreligious views and beliefs, leading to an independent, fully informed and well-argued account of their own and others' views
	Beliefs and Values	• Compare their own and others' responses to questions of belief and values, leading to reasonable explanations of their own and others' views, in the light of religious teaching	• Evaluate their own response to questions of belief and values, in light of religious and nonreligious views and beliefs, leading to a well-informed account of their own and others' views	• Critically evaluate their own response to questions of belief and values, in light of religious and nonreligious views and beliefs, leading to an independent, fully informed and well-argued account of their own and others' views
AT3: Analysis and Evaluation	Use of Sources as Evidence	• Use sources of wisdom and authority appropriately to explain aspects of each area of study and as evidence for particular points of view	• Use a range of sources of wisdom and authority appropriately to provide explanations of aspects of each area of study, using these sources with increasing sophistication and as evidence to support particular points of view	• Skillfully select and deploy relevant knowledge from a wide range of sources, demonstrating extensive depth and breadth in the selection, in the defence of a polemical position
	Construct Arguments	• Present an argument for a particular point of view, showing an awareness of different views	• Construct a sustained argument, based on critical analysis of different views	• Perceptively discuss different views, leading to developed arguments that are coherent, relevant and logically structured
	Make Judgements	• Arrive at judgements that are supported by evidence	• Form reasoned judgements that are supported by evidence, weighing the strengths and weaknesses of different positions and arriving at convincing conclusions that competently draw together arguments and ideas	• Form coherent and reasoned judgements that are fully supported by a comprehensive appraisal of evidence, arriving at compelling conclusions that fully and logically draw together the ideas and arguments analysed
	Recognise Diversity	• Demonstrate an understanding of the significance and influence of common and divergent views and practices within and between religions	• Demonstrate detailed understanding of the significance and influence of common and divergent views and practices within and between religions	• Comprehensively demonstrate a depth of understanding of the significance and influence of commonality and diversity within and between religions, and the origins of these, both historical and textual
	Analyse and Deconstruct	• Accurately outline the nature of different debates within Theology, Philosophy and Ethics	• Deconstruct information, leading to competent analyses of concepts, questions and controversies within the disciplines of Theology, Philosophy or Ethics	• Critically deconstruct information, leading to insightful analyses of complex concepts, questions and controversies within the disciplines of Theology, Philosophy or Ethics

Skills Guide

All skills should be applied an in age appropriate way:

	Primary	Secondary
Recognise	Identify, name or label something or someone previously seen, heard or encountered.	To appreciate the significance of something.
Retell	Tell a religious story again in any form.	
Describe	Give an accurate account in any form of the role of a person, a religious rite or symbol.	
Make links/connections	Show the relationship between a variety of sources as evidence to inform knowledge and understanding.	The ability to show the relationship between the different areas of study and the ways they influence each other.
Understand	Correctly perceive the meaning of beliefs, practices and sources actions and the links between them.	Interpret the significance and implications of beliefs, practices, sources and the causal connections between them.
Explain	**Make something clear and easy to understand** by giving a detailed account focusing specifically on causes and reasons. To show the meaning of a text or area of study in context.	
Construct arguments	Present a logical chain of reasoning, supported by appropriate knowledge, understanding and evidence in support of a particular position or point of view.	
Make reasoned judgements	To synthesise, evaluate and weigh the relative strength and weaknesses of arguments and evidence to arrive at a logical and justified conclusion.	
Recognise diversity	In this context, diversity refers to the differences of belief and practice that exist between denominations of Christianity and between Christianity and other religions.	
Analyse	Examine methodically and in detail, typically to explain and interpret.	
Interpret	To elucidate the meaning of a text by understanding different ways it can be understood. This could be with reference to, for example, the influence on believers, its historical context, its authorship, its intended audience or the ways in which different communities have used the text.	
Evaluate	To consider the relative merit of different points of view and arrive at a judgement supported by reasons and evidence.	

Glossary

Areas of Study	The broad content areas that are listed in the skill area row "Developing Knowledge and Understanding" for each phase.
Authority	The hierarchical structures, writing or practices that decisively determine belief and practice for a religious community.
Beliefs	Something which a person holds to be important and true
Coherent	Consistent, clearly stated and supported by appropriate evidence.
Doctrine	A belief, or set of beliefs, held and taught by a community of believers.
Historical development	How religious belief and practice have changed over time.
Insightful	Accurate and deep understanding; perceptive, imaginative and showing a measure of original thought.
Judgement	The ability to make considered decisions and arrive at a justified conclusion.
Key figures	An important or pivotal person in either Scripture (e.g. Moses, Jesus, Mary), or the life of the Church locally or universally (e.g. a Eucharistic minister, a Bishop or the Pope)
Literary type	The genre of a piece of writing. In terms of Biblical texts, things such as Gospel, history, prophecy, letters, psalms, poetry, proverbs. In terms of Church documents, things such as encyclicals, exhortations, catechisms, creeds, theological works.
Local Church	A diocese, which is a geographical area under the authority of a bishop which also includes parish communities.
Meaning	The inner, symbolic, or true interpretation, value or message of something. What a person understands is being communicated by words or actions.
Meaning and purpose	The study of those actions, rules and values which form and shape our lives. This includes comparing and critically evaluating critically both personal responses and those of others who do not share our views.
People of God	Historically it refers to the Israelites, the chosen people with whom God established His covenant. For Christians it means the Church, of which one becomes a member not by birth but by faith in Christ and through baptism.
Point of view	A particular attitude or way of considering something or someone
Religious actions	When a person does something because of a religious belief e.g. giving money to others, fasting, forgiving others
Religious beliefs	Something which a person holds to be important and true because of the religion to which they belong.

Religious stories	Stories that teach us about God and our relationship with God, especially those found in Scripture.
Religious worship	An expression of reverence or adoration either as an individual or as part of a community directed towards God.
Significance	The importance and implications of, for example, texts, beliefs, viewpoints, actions, events.
Signs and symbols	A sign or symbol is a thing or an action that indicates or refers to something else or instructs about something, e.g. Lectern, a candle, lighting a candle, crucifix, water, pouring of water, laying on of hands.
Source	Foundational texts and teaching at the root of belief and practice. For example, in the Catholic context the formal means by which God's revelation is communicated through Scripture and tradition as faithfully interpreted by the magisterium By **Scripture** is meant the books of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament that together constitute the Bible By **Tradition** is meant the living transmission of the faith of the Church, expressed through belief and practice, handed down from the Apostles to every generation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is found in the practice and life of the Church, her belief and her prayer. For example: the Liturgy, the Sacraments, Sacred art and the lives of the Saints. By **Magisterium** is meant the teaching authority of the Church, exercised by the Pope and Bishops, found in, for example the definitions and documents of Church councils, Papal encyclicals and exhortations, the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
Textual context	The understanding of text, either Scripture or Church documents within their historical and political context, including an appreciation of their authorship and audience. It also includes the place of a text within the canon of Scripture in the case of Biblical texts.
Theological concepts	Concepts that can be found in Scripture, Church documents and the writings of theologians to capture complex ideas and beliefs. For example: incarnation, grace, salvation, transubstantiation.
Universal Church	The world-wide Catholic community.
Values	Important beliefs or ideals that influence behaviour and attitudes. Those standards by which people make important choices and which we recognise as ultimate guides to life.

Appendix: Executive summary of the *Levels* questionnaire report.

Response rate

1254 schools completed questionnaire responses. This is 56.2% of Catholic schools nationally.

Of these, 999 were Primary schools[1]. This is 55.7% of Catholic Primary schools nationally.

And 246 were Secondary schools[2]. This is 56.3% of Catholic Secondary schools nationally.

Agree/Disagree responses

In the simple agree/disagree questions, most Primary and Secondary schools agreed that levels were a broadly positive development which have improved the quality of learning in RE and the ability of schools to provide feedback to pupils, parents and leaders about progress in RE.

Within this broadly positive picture, it is worth noting that in all but one of the questions, Primary Schools are more positive than Secondary schools.

The agree/disagree questions did mean it was difficult to express ambivalence (there was not an option to neither agree nor disagree) and were not enough by themselves to gauge exactly what agreement with the statements implied. Furthermore, these questions did not give schools the opportunity to express the ways in which they would like to see developments in the way in which RE is assessed.

A significant minority – somewhere between a quarter and a third on each question – expressed the view that levels were not improving the quality of RE and were not facilitating feedback to pupils, parents and governors. Within this group the reasons for disagreement are not possible to discern from the simple agree/disagree questions alone.

Narrative responses

The opportunity to give narrative responses was well taken up by schools and gave some insights into the ways in which the levels were either not serving the needs of schools, or ways in which schools would like to see them further developed. It is also worth noting, that even amongst those schools that had agreed with the positive impact of levels, that development would be welcomed in many cases.

The kinds of comments that were made repeatedly were:

- The use of driver words and level descriptors was more important than the summative, numerical levels which many stated were not widely understood and were not helpful in helping pupils take the next steps in learning.
- However, even these descriptors were viewed by many as lacking clarity with others pointing out that their “breadth” made it difficult to use them as a progress measuring tool. There were many requests to further refine the level descriptors to make them more useful in both giving feedback to students about next steps in learning and in facilitating a school’s ability to measure progress.
- Many schools reported that reporting in levels was not widely understood by parents or even school governors.

[1] Which is an over-arching term in this context and includes First, Infant and Junior schools as well as Primary schools.

[2] Which is an over-arching term in this context and includes Middle, High and Through schools, Sixth Form Colleges, as well as Secondary schools.

- Assessing using levels is increasingly out of step with the way in which assessment now functions in the rest of the curriculum.
- Many schools, both Primary and Secondary, report a move away from levels to reporting using either age related expectations or GCSE criteria.
- It was clear that those schools which were most positive about levels came from dioceses which had provided a great deal of CPD advice and support in the use of levels. However, equally clear was that each of these dioceses had developed supplementary tools to support schools, which were at variance with each other.
- Thus, many schools also reported an unhappiness with the lack of national consistency in the application and use of Levels.
- Alongside this, it was clear that there was also a lack of consistency in the use of levels between the Primary and Secondary phases and that the achievement of pupils rarely made it across the phase divide. Primary schools reported that Secondary schools did not value what they had achieved and that pupils regressed at KS3, while Secondary schools reported that they could not trust "inflated" Primary levels as a benchmark at the beginning of year 7.

Finally, emerging from this also is an overarching question about the purpose of assessment. Some of the most thoughtful comments pointed out that we now have an opportunity to learn from the best understandings of assessment in the secular curriculum. This understanding is empirically grounded and argues strongly that the primary purpose of assessment is to improve learning through informing teaching and that recording and reporting is a necessary, but very much secondary purpose. In whatever steps we take next, we need to focus on the use of levels as a tool for improving learning before we consider the ways in which they can be used to facilitate recording and reporting.

It is finally worth noting that the narrative responses revealed a continued confusion about the purpose of RE in Catholic schools.

Recommendations:

1. The Levels working party should explore alternative models of assessment, learning from the best of the research that underpinned the move away from Levels in the rest of the curriculum
2. The new models should capitalise on the use of the driver words and skills employed by current Levels of Attainment, which is universally regarded as its best feature.
3. Greater consistency should be achieved between the assessment of RE and the assessment of other NC subjects

The Church should reflect upon the purpose of RE and the best ways to secure these purposes through curriculum and assessment design.