

Background Reading

The following overview is a reflection on the value of diversity and inclusion. It explores the various world themes related to those values that can be used when teaching and developing a culture for learning. Diversity and inclusion are values that are commonly shared in any educational setting. However, here, we have developed how it is usually approached in the primary setting to provide teachers with further background knowledge to resource their work.

Diversity as a Value

It is assumed that Young peoples are aware that human beings are all different. As well as the physical differences we see, cultural, religious, home and personal preferences make every one of us unique. There will be many aspects similar to others but also many that may differ. The school values and vision of any educational establishment should promote all Young peoples to thrive and flourish, with their individuality celebrated and unity amongst the school community.

Diversity in us

Beyond our physical differences, when diversity is looked at through ethnicity, it can refer to a shared culture, history, language, society, nation or even religion. No two people sharing the same ethnic origins will share the same religion or culture. This is why knowing the diversity of ethnicity found in a school is essential to develop inclusive practices and understand where Young peoples come from. The same applies when ensuring our teaching is inclusive of faiths and religious affiliations.



The Religious Education (RE) curriculum promotes inclusion and important notions of humanism, enriching the human development of young people. If a social action project or activity has links with Religious Education, then it is helpful to consider that some teachers may find the subject difficult to teach because of their own experience of religion and of life. Equally, those with strong personal religious convictions need to ensure an educational approach to RE whereby inclusivity and acceptance (not agreement) of all practices allows students to explore their own perceptions and beliefs. The same applies to teachers who are atheists or agnostics.

Equally, some young people may have negative attitudes when asked to work on a project linked to RE to promote diversity and inclusion. This may be because working on a project like this picks them up from a secular society in which religion can be marginalised. Parents can also sometimes question the aims that a school is pursuing, which exacerbates the negative attitudes some Young peoples may show.

To ensure good practice if carrying out a social action project linked to RE, teachers should refer to the National Framework for Religious Education and seek advice from the RE subject lead to identifying how the project is done in consideration of the overall needs of the school. The subject lead should have an understanding of how the project links with the subject and its contribution to school priorities and the overall education and achievement of all Young people. Approaching RE in a social action project can also support, guide and motivate teachers in developing their subject knowledge following the agreed RE syllabus.

Many locally agreed syllabi for RE provide guidelines on how to organise the teaching through a mixture of different approaches, including a thematic approach, a systematic approach and an issues-based approach. An issues-based approach combines elements of both the thematic and systematic approaches. It is based on fundamental questions of human existence and is, therefore, relevant to the individual in his/her personal existence.

Therefore, if using RE in the social action project, then articulating the work around an overarching question can create a way to proceed. Equally, this question can be a question that children might want to explore, something that they might not have thought about but that can enrich their education. Below we give examples of ideas that can be developed around the question:

'How does geometry found in sacred places connect us all?'



Arches in the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Chartres in France.



Arches on the ceiling of the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey.



The four symmetrical quarters of an Iznik tile.



The four quarters of a Rosace.

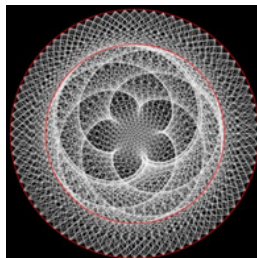


The concentric circles of a Buddhist Mandala.



The circular shape of a Hindu Mandala.

Exploring elements that connect great faiths through architecture can be fascinating for Young people and can lead to many projects linking with Art, DT, History or Maths.



The shape formed by Earth and Venus orbiting around the Sun.

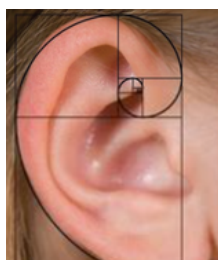


A five-petalled flower.

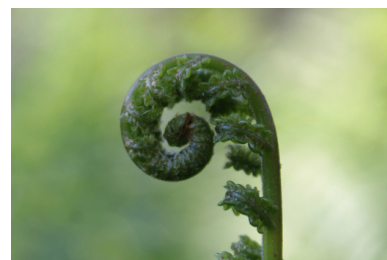
Connecting such works to nature can also deepen young people's understanding of these similarities and offer a different lens.

Diversity outside us: Earth and the natural world

When we observe the natural world, its functioning relies on the strengths of its Diversity, the diversity of species of plants and animals and how they work together. This diversity in nature ensures it is resilient. It does not rely on one particular species but on the whole system.

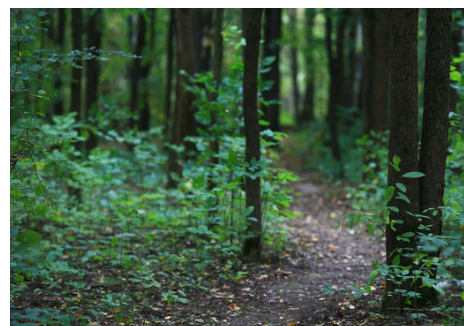


A Fibonacci Spiral in a human ear.



A Fibonacci Spiral in a fern.

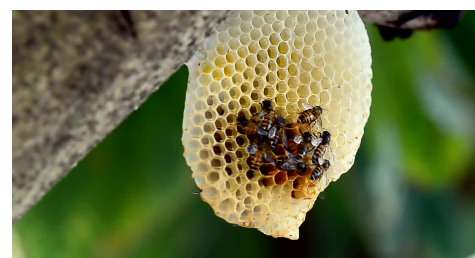
Working on diversity in nature can be the focus of a social action project promoting diversity, environmental awareness, and conservation. Observing nature's diversity can help pupils realise that the world has the most incredible natural variety, which can be observed in ourselves. This diversity strengthens its operating system (e.g., a rainforest ecosystem). When linked with the environment, it teaches young people to appreciate and preserve it and that the diversity of our natural systems is crucial to our survival. Below are some examples that can be studied to explore diversity and argue for its preservation.



The different species of trees in a local woodland.



The biodiversity of the rainforest.



The role of bees in a bee colony.

Diversity in Food and Plants

With younger children, looking at diversity in nature can inspire some work linked with Science and the study of plants, including flowers and vegetables. Young people can explore **'What diversity is found in vegetables?'**. There can be many opportunities to value diversity in people and life.

History and Diversity

There are numerous opportunities to incorporate work on diversity into the History curriculum. If studying Black History, for example, then an exploration of a timeline of Black history before the colonial era can open lots of investigations and offer a new perspective to students' understanding of the Western World.

Upper Key Stage 2 young people can study how diversity built Britain through key figures that made Britain's history. History is a wide subject, so young people should not be limited to exploring topics commonly approached at the primary school level. For example, if studying a particular country in Geography (such as Spain). Young people can look at the work of Spanish artists that have greatly influenced world art, or equally, if studying the dinosaurs.

In Key Stage 1, young people can look at the variety of species of dinosaurs during the Triassic period and study their characteristics.

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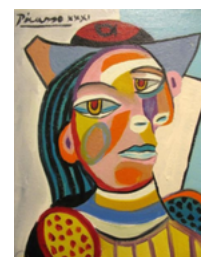
Different colours of carrots



Wonky vegetables



The Royal Mint coin celebrating diversity in Britain designed by Dominique Evans.



The art of Pablo Picasso.

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