

Visiting Sites of Religious and Cultural Interest in RME

These materials explore visits to sites of religious and cultural interest to support high quality learning and teaching in Religious and Moral Education (RME). They can be used by practitioners in any RME context and are designed to facilitate learning about and from RME, as well as stimulate discussion among practitioners about visiting sites of religious and cultural interest within learning and teaching in RME.

Sites of religious and cultural interest have an important role to play in bringing beliefs, traditions and viewpoints to life for learners.

Why visit sites of religious and cultural interest?

Central to learning and teaching in RME include the following principles:

- understanding religious and cultural diversity in Scotland and across the world
- investigating religious beliefs, values, issues, traditions and practices using a range of primary and secondary sources
- understanding the beliefs, values and traditions of others

In [The 3-18 RME Curriculum Area Impact Review Report](#) it was noted that a strength of RME nationally is that:

- In the majority of schools, children and young people's learning is active and engaging. Many teachers use a range of teaching and learning approaches effectively to motivate learners.
- Increasingly, effective learning takes place outdoors or with partners in the wider community.

Sites of religious and cultural interest have an important role to play in bringing beliefs, values, traditions and viewpoints to life for learners. By exploring and investigating sites of religious and cultural interest, learners are provided with insight into a tradition, its beliefs and how these are enacted in the lives of its followers.

Visiting sites of religious and cultural interest allows learners to understand the role belief can play both in their community and in wider society as well as through time. Presenting learners with a range of sites of religious and cultural interest from diverse traditions can also provide learners with lived examples of diversity.

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Visiting sites of religious and cultural interest stimulates interdisciplinary learning as these experiences can provide a springboard, for example, to discussions and activities about technology, history and geography.

For example:

Technology

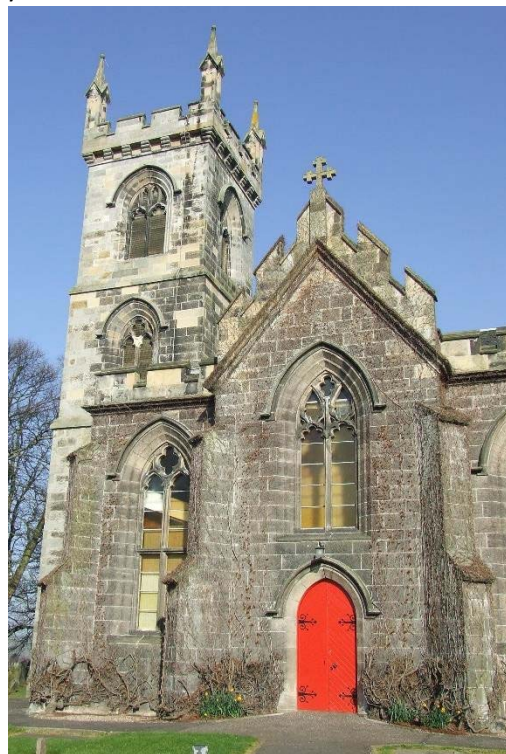
- How was this building constructed?
- What does the architecture of this building represent and symbolise?
- Can this building be dated by its style of architecture?
- What skills were required to construct this building and how did those who constructed it develop those skills?
- In what ways is this building similar to/different from contemporary buildings?

History

- When was this building constructed and why?
- Is this building the first on this site, or were there buildings there before this one?
- Who has used this building through time and what were those people's lives like?
- Has this building been modified in any way through time? Why?

Geography

- In what places is this style of building typical?
- How does this style of building differ from similar buildings in different parts of Scotland and the world?
- In what direction does this building face, and why might that be important?



Such visits allow an entry point for various experiences and outcomes at all levels in each of the three RME lines of development (Beliefs; Values and Issues; Practices and Traditions) as well as within national qualifications in RMPS.

For example:

Beliefs

- Why does this tree have strips of cloth attached to it?
- Who might have placed these here and why?
- Do you think attaching strips of cloth to a tree can be described as a religious act?
- People sometimes write things on these strips of cloth – what would you write?

Values

- Is attaching strips of cloth to a tree environmentally responsible?
- What sorts of things do people wish for? Are some things wrong to wish for?
- Is it more important to make a wish for someone else than for yourself?



Practices and Traditions

- In Scotland, such trees are sometimes called 'cloutie trees'. Find out more about cloutie trees

- What other practices do religious and other people carry out which are similar perhaps to the act of dressing the clootie tree?

In addition, visiting sites of religious and cultural interest can promote discussion about citizenship and diversity, as well as demographic and cultural change.

When preparing for visits to sites of religious and cultural interest practitioners should provide time for learners to create questions and lines of enquiry and research the tradition and/or viewpoint the building or location represents.

How might visits to sites of religious and cultural interest stimulate effective learning in RME?

In effective RME children should be learning *about* and *from* religion and belief groups. Learners should be encouraged to investigate the role certain buildings, and places which are considered to be sacred or special, or of cultural significance, play in religious and other traditions past and present.

When preparing for visits to sites of religious and cultural interest practitioners should provide time for learners to create questions and lines of enquiry, and research the tradition and/or viewpoint the building or location represents. If possible practitioners should arrange for a representative of the faith /tradition/belief group to lead learners on their excursion – though practitioners should discuss the content with the representative beforehand.

Where it is difficult to arrange visits to sites of religious and cultural interest practitioners could be using electronic resources. There is a range of online resources and tools that can facilitate [virtual visits](#), or video clips illustrating how they are used within traditions.

Visiting sites of religious and cultural interest can also be used to support progression in RME, with a range of different approaches, questions and lines of enquiry being used in relation to the learners' point in the Broad General Education.

For example:

Early

- Who put these stones there and why?
- Have you ever built something you hoped would last?

First

- What different theories are there about the purpose of standing stones?
- What do you think is the most likely explanation for standing stones?

Second

- Some people claim standing stones were ways of measuring time? Why do you think prehistoric people would want to measure time?
- Others say standing stones are places for people to gather together. Why might people have gathered together?



Third

- Standing stones could have been places of sacrifice? Who or what might have been sacrificed and why?
- In what religions are there beliefs about the importance of sacrifice?

Fourth

- Sites such as these are protected sites. Do you think it is important to protect the past? Why?
- Many sites such as these, as well as religious buildings are considered 'sacred'. What do you think makes a place or a building 'sacred'?

Learners may also be provided with the opportunity to consider their response to places and spaces and reflect upon, for example, the role of stillness and quiet in their own lives, or their interaction with others at special gatherings relevant to them.

Visiting sites of religious and cultural interest can support learners in the development of their own beliefs and values, as well as challenge these beliefs and values. Learners may also be provided with the opportunity to consider their response to places and spaces and reflect upon, for example, the role of stillness and quiet in their own lives, or their interaction with others at special gatherings relevant to them.

There are many ways to find out about sites of religious and cultural interest which can be visited. Many local and national [tourist agencies](#) and community organisations may be able to suggest sites of religious and cultural interest which can be visited. Finding sites to visit is relatively straightforward if such sites are part of your community, local religious buildings can usually provide opportunities for visits. Many organisations such as [Interfaith Scotland](#) may be able to provide contact details for religious sites and buildings from world religions. Visiting such sites of religious and cultural interest may also be useful Career- long professional learning (CLPL) for practitioners. Further support for CLPL in RME can be found in Education Scotland's [Route Map through CLPL in RME/RERC](#).

What are some of the sensitive issues relating to using visiting sites of religious and cultural interest?

Some things to consider:

- Classes are generally composed of learners from a range of backgrounds. It is important to take this into account and avoid any language that suggests common viewpoints between learners and the site of religious or cultural interest.
- Learner interactions with sites of religious and cultural interest should build on prior learning. Throughout *Curriculum for Excellence*, learners should have been coming into contact with religious beliefs, practices and traditions, and special places, religious buildings and sites of religious and cultural interest since the beginning of their learning journey.
- When visiting any buildings or sites of religious and cultural interest, practitioners should ensure that learners are briefed beforehand about appropriate dress and conduct in relation to the visit, and of course, normal risk assessment procedures should be carried out prior to any visit.
- Practitioners should ensure that parents are fully briefed about what the visit involves and provide their consent for their child to participate in the visit.

Professional Dialogue Prompts

- What sites of religious and cultural interest are there in your community?
- How can you access these sites and learn about them?
- In what ways can you learn about these sites with colleagues, and how can doing this lead to meaningful professional dialogue about the use of the sites?
- What needs to be considered when taking learners to visit sites?
- How can visiting sites be used to produce resources which can be shared with others?
- What interdisciplinary opportunities are there in the use sites of religious and cultural significance?
- How can we source reliable and valid information about sites of religious and cultural interest?
- What skills can learners develop through visiting sites of religious and cultural interest?
- How can we ensure that we use visits to support the development of higher order thinking skills?
- What alternatives are there when it is not possible to visit sites of religious and cultural interest?