

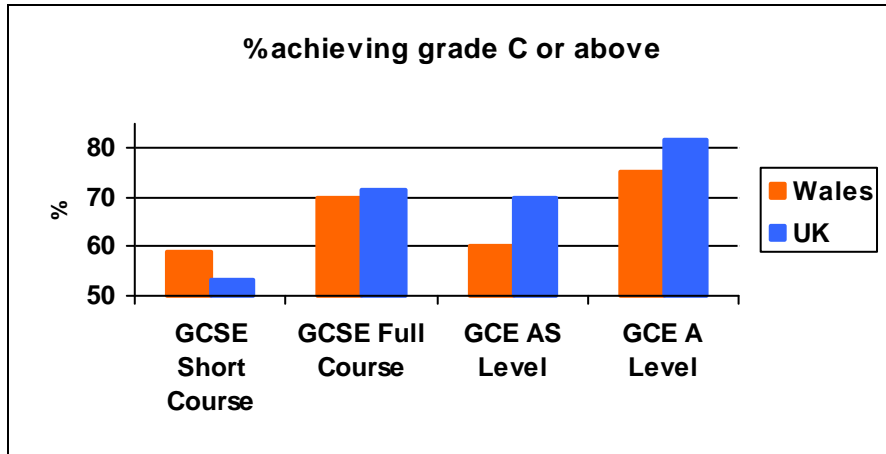
Report to AREIAC Conference

Religious Education and Religious Studies in Wales

July 2008

1. Key features of examination results for 2007

As shown in the table below, pupils in Wales perform above the average for the UK as a whole in the short course GCSE, around average for the full course GCSE and below average for GCE AS and A levels.



A similar proportion of pupils are entered for a short course GCSE in Wales compared to the UK as a whole but a much smaller proportion of pupils in Wales chooses the full course GCSE.

Overall, religious studies is much more popular with girls, particularly in sixth forms, and girls significantly outperform boys in all courses in Wales.

2. Findings from inspections

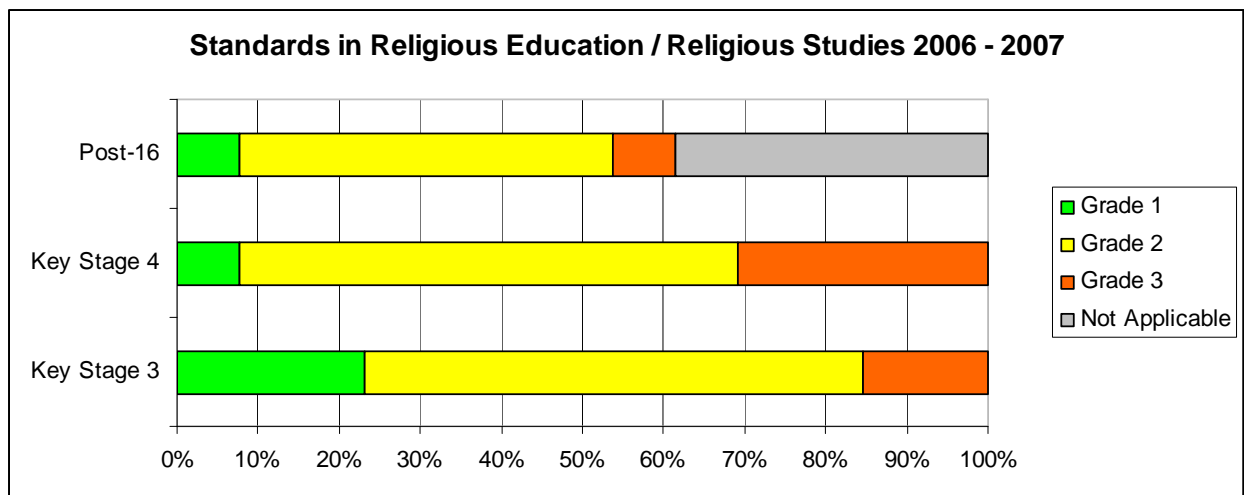
Primary schools

The standards in religious education lessons in primary schools inspected in 2006 – 2007¹ were judged to be very close to the average for all subjects. A slightly higher proportion of lessons were awarded grade 1 or 2 in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1.

Secondary schools

The following table summarises the grades awarded overall for standards in religious education and religious studies by key stage in schools where the subjects were inspected during 2006 – 2007:

¹ A detailed analysis of standards in 2007 – 2008 is not available yet.



Although the sample is small, standards were slightly higher than in 2005 – 2006.

Standards in religious education lessons in Key Stage 3 that were inspected in 2005 – 2006 were judged to be well above the average for all subjects. Standards in lessons in Key Stage 4 were judged to be close to the average for all subjects.

The most common good features in lessons in secondary schools, in order of frequency, were:

- pupils' good general knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the religions they have studied;
- pupils' good understanding of how religions deal with moral and social questions;
- pupils' good understanding and use of religious terms;
- the good progress of pupils with additional learning needs; and
- pupils' ability to express their personal opinions well.

The most common important shortcoming in lessons in secondary schools relates to pupils' contributions to group or class discussions and, in particular, their inability to articulate or unwillingness to express their personal views. Other important shortcomings included:

- pupils' lack of depth of understanding about the religions they have studied;
- pupils' inability to compare religions; and
- pupils' limited understanding of how belief affects behaviour;

Pupils' standards were adversely affected in schools that do not give enough time to teaching the subject; this was most likely to be the case in key stage 4.

Of the secondary schools inspected in 2007 – 2008, 12% failed to meet the statutory requirement to provide religious education, particularly in Key Stage 4.

Overall, the proportion of schools where the quality of teaching and assessment in religious education and religious studies is judged to be grade 1 or 2 is slightly better than the average for all subjects.

However, the use of non-specialist teachers was judged to have a detrimental impact on standards in religious education and religious studies in 23% secondary schools where the subject was inspected in 2007 – 2008.

Leadership and management in religious education and religious studies is judged to be grade 1 in a much higher proportion of schools than the average for all subjects.

3. Collective worship

Of the secondary schools inspected in 2007 – 2008, 21% failed to meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

In order to improve the quality and consistency of judgements made by inspectors, Estyn published supplementary guidance on inspecting collective worship in non-denominational schools in May 2008. This is available on Estyn's website:

www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/supplementary_guidance_on_inspecting_collective_worship.pdf

In all inspections in non-denominational schools in Wales, inspectors must report on whether or not collective worship fulfils statutory requirements.

The following excerpt from the guidance highlights one notable difference between collective worship in England and Wales.

The Education and Inspections Bill 2006 gives pupils in sixth-forms the right to excuse themselves from collective worship. However, although this legislation commenced in September 2007 in England, it has not yet commenced in Wales. Therefore, until the National Assembly for Wales commences this legislation, all sixth-form pupils in Wales should participate in collective worship unless they are withdrawn by their parents.

The Welsh Assembly Government funds a bilingual website to promote high quality collective worship: www.collectiveworship.com. Users can download interactive resources and submit their own work for others to use.

4. Revised Curriculum for Wales 2008

A revised curriculum for Wales will be implemented from 1 September 2008. A national exemplar framework for religious education (the RE framework) for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales has been provided to support the revised curriculum.

The RE framework, in line with the entire revised curriculum, has a greater emphasis on skills and a lesser focus on content.

The RE framework is non-statutory; schools must still provide RE based on the locally agreed syllabus. SACREs can adopt or adapt the RE framework when they next review their locally agreed syllabus, and many have already done so.

The inspection process in Wales will not change with the introduction of the revised curriculum. It will change in 2010 at the end of the current six-year cycle.