

Faith

Task 1 Religion in your country

- What is the main religion practised by people in your country?
- What other religious groups exist?
- Do many people attend church services or other types of service?
- Is there a difference between generations?
- Are older people more or less religious?

Task 2 Your beliefs

Which of the below would you describe yourself as?

- a religious person
- a fairly religious
- not interested in religion at all
- other ...
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- Do you receive any religious education at school or outside school?
- What types of religious activity are you involved in?
- Do you study any religious texts?
- Do you know anything about world religions?
- Do you in a choir?

Do you believe in any of the following ideas?

- Life after death
- Reincarnation
- Spirits or ghosts
- God or some greater power
- Do you have the same religious beliefs as your family and your ancestors?
- Is there something that you really believe in?
- Do you have any political beliefs?
- Who influenced the development of your beliefs?

Task 3 Religions in the UK today

Here is a list of some of the main religions practised by people in the UK.

- How much do you know about each one?
 - Have you heard of them before?
 - Do people in your country practise any of these religions? Or any others?
- Christianity
- Buddhism
 - Islam
 - Hinduism
 - Judaism

Task 4 Read and find out

- What is the main religious faith in the UK?
- Do many people practise their faith?
- Which religious groups have their own schools?
- Have people in the UK got a strong religious identity
- Why is there a new employment law for religious rights?

Faith

At Christmastime in the UK examples of celebrations are in the media, in most state schools and on every street corner. A foreign visitor might then come to the conclusion that people in the UK are very religious. Well, that depends on what you mean by religious. If you mean church going then this is not the case.

Religious identity

The most recent census of the UK population in 2001 asked people to indicate their religion and 95% of people completed this information on the census form. The results showed that the dominant faith in the UK is Christianity with 72% of people saying they were Christians. But, only 6% attend church services regularly. Religious identity is not about practising religion. They celebrate Christmas or Easter in a commercial way, buy presents, take time off work or school but do not always celebrate with prayers and religious services. The UK is mainly a secular society.

Religious education

Another fact which might confuse a visitor are the number of faith schools. Schools which are set up by religious groups are often very popular with parents and have a good reputation. There are many other religions in the UK. In some areas classes might have pupils who practise 5 or 6 different religions. Some of these religious groups set up their own state schools for their communities. 35% of Primary schools in England are faith schools of the Church of England, Catholic church, Jewish schools, Muslim schools or Sikh schools. There are 90 Islamic schools and many Muslims also attend local state schools. Some faith schools are over 50 years old. But some parents want to send their children to the special faith schools because they are good schools with good exam results, not because they are keen for their children to have a religious education.

Respect for everyone's faith and beliefs

Christians in the UK continue to have their important days, Sundays, Easter or Christmas. However, there are many non-Christians who do not observe a day of rest on Sunday and they too have their own religious celebrations. This week a very important new employment law comes into effect. This law recognises the equality of people's religion or belief. Perhaps a worker needs to take time off work for a special festival or needs to pray at work during the day. This law asks employers to respect these religious beliefs. If possible, employers must try to give all employees the chance to observe their religious festivals. The UK has got to be flexible and schools need to teach tolerance of other faiths. It is a multi racial society.

Follow up questions

Find in the text

- One thing in common between your country and the UK
- One thing which you did not know

Task 5 Religion is not cool

Statistics in the UK show that fewer and fewer young people bother to attend religious services regularly. Two thirds of 18-24 year olds say they have no religious affiliations. Even pupils in faith schools, like Catholic schools, said that they did not attend church regularly in the same way as their parents. The reasons given are that it is just not cool to be a Christian or to follow your parents' beliefs.

- What do young people in your country think?
- Is it necessary to reject your parents' beliefs to become an adult?
- Did previous generations have more need for religion than your generation?
- Is there any room for religion in teenagers lives?
- How could churches make their services more attractive to young people?

Task 6 Faith schools

There is much debate in the UK about faith schools. Faith schools receive some tax payers money from the government to help run the school. Pupils do not pay to attend the state aided faith schools. There are also private faith schools too. Some people support them and think they give people the right to be educated in their beliefs. Some people are very much against the idea of faith schools because they think that this isolates groups from each other and can cause intolerance. The anti faith school campaign wants everyone to be educated together in the same school and to learn about each other's beliefs and customs. Religious groups say that faith schools are necessary if they want to educate their young people completely.

- Are there any faith schools in your country? Do you attend one?
- What might the advantages of a faith school be?
- How might a faith school make sure that new pupils really do practise their faith?
- What are the advantages of educating everyone together in a multi faith environment?
- Do you think schools should teach religion? Whose job is it?
- What is the policy on religious education in your school?
- Are you satisfied with the religious education you get?

Task 7 Rules for living and working together

State schools encourage tolerance and harmony in their schools but it is sometimes difficult to get pupils to respect each others customs. In UK schools there are different religious beliefs, ways of dress, taste in food and attitudes towards family and relationships.

Imagine you are making a list of school rules or guidelines for behaviour to give to all pupils in a multi cultural school. Think of at least 3 main points and decide what the school might do if there is conflict between pupils on matters of race or religion.