

**Big question:** What is so special about Easter?

**Year group: Reception**

**Sensitivities:**

This unit will cover the facts related to Jesus’ death and resurrection. Some pupils may find this upsetting as they may have experienced the death of a loved one.

Also be aware that some pupils may be worried about dying themselves.

Although the story and message of Easter is integral to the Christian faith, be aware of pupils of other faiths in the class.

**Points for discussion throughout the Unit**

* how do people celebrate and remember things that are important to them?
* Do all Christians celebrate Easter in the same way?
* How do people show love to each other?
* The importance of having friends.
* The importance of saying sorry for the things we have done wrong, and repairing relationships – with each other, and with God.

**Religious vocabulary:**

* **Christian:** Someone who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ.
* **Palm Sunday:** The day Christians remember the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.
* **Hosanna:** Hebrew word that means to ‘save/rescue.’
* **Disciple:** A follower of Jesus
* **Last Supper:** The last meal Jesus ate with his disciples.
* **Garden of Gethsemane:** The garden Jesus went to pray before he was arrested.
* **Cross:** The instrument on which Jesus died. A symbol of forgiveness and sacrifice.
* **Tomb:** The place where Jesus was laid.
* **Easter Sunday**: The day Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
* **Celebrate**: To do something special to mark an important event.

**At the end of this unit, pupils will have explored:**

The events of Holy Week, as celebrated by Christians

The Christian belief that Jesus died on a cross to show God’s love to the world, and that because of Jesus, everyone can be forgiven for their ‘sins’

The Christian belief that Jesus rose from the dead

The importance of bread and wine for Christians

How Christians remember what happened at Easter and how they celebrate the festival of Easter

**Weekly questions:**

**Week 1:** What was the donkey’s special job?

**Week 2:** What was special about Jesus’ meal with his friends?
**Week 3:** Why did Jesus go to a special garden?
**Week 4:** Why is the cross special?

**Week 5:** What is special about the stone?

**Week 6:** What is so special about Easter?

**Core concept:**

Salvation

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| **Background knowledge for teachers:****Core concept:** Salvation**The meaning of Salvation:** It is through the death and resurrection of Jesus that the relationship between God and humanity is restored. In the death of Christ, forgiveness is offered for the sins of all people.**Palm Sunday:** Holy week begins with Palm Sunday. On this day the focus is on the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Jesus sends two of his disciples ahead to the village of Bethphage to look for an unbroken colt. They brought the colt to Jesus and placed their cloaks on his back. As Jesus sat on the young donkey, he slowly made his humble entrance into Jerusalem. People welcomed Jesus in the traditional way of honouring a worthy person, by throwing down their cloaks and waving palm branches.**The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!Hosannain the highest heaven!" (Matthew 21:9, NIV)** The shouts of "Hosanna" meant "save now," and the palm branches symbolised goodness and victory. **Maundy Thursday: The Last Supper**Whilst Maundy Thursday was the night on which the Lord’s Supper was first celebrated, there is a deeper meaning. The actual Latin word from which "maundy" is derived means "command." The central theme of that first Lord’s Supper was one of humble service. Jesus washed the feet of the disciples and commanded that the disciples do the same for each other. Jesus taught that he came not to be served but to serve, to share the hospitality of God and the intimacy of breaking bread together.**Good Friday:**Good Friday is the Friday before Easter Day. Good Friday was the day when Jesus stood trial before the Priests and later a Roman Governor called Pilate. Although Pilate could not find any wrong in Jesus, he was still sentenced to death by crucifixion. Later that day after having been beaten and mocked, Jesus was crucified. He died in the afternoon. His body was taken from the cross and put into a guarded tomb.**Easter Sunday:**Easter is the most significant Christian festival, remembering and celebrating the salvation offered through Jesus.On Easter Sunday, the women on visiting Jesus’ tomb, found the stone had been moved, and his body gone. The Gospels recall the resurrection accounts slightly differently, presenting different details and perspectives but all presented as eye-witness reports. Jesus appears to the women and his disciples on a number of different occasions. He first appears in the garden. He appears on the road to Emmaus. He appears among them while they were still talking about the events of the day. He appears again to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias during the miraculous catch of fish. On Easter Sunday, hope comes. The disciples cannot believe it at first and are not able to believe until they encounter the living Christ. |

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| **Lesson 1:** What was the donkey’s special job? |
| **Intentions:** To give pupils opportunities: | * To learn about the story of Palm Sunday.
* To learn that Christians believe Jesus is a special king.
* To think about how we treat people who are special.

 **Key religious vocabulary:** Palm Sunday, Hosanna. |
| **Implementation:** Outlining how to introduce the religious content in the classroom and create learning opportunities from it. | **Main teaching input:**Show the children a picture of a donkey.* Do you know what this is?
* Have you ever seen one?
* Where might you find a donkey? (on a farm, at the seaside)
* What jobs do they do now?

Find images of donkeys performing different roles. Usually, these jobs are very ordinary and involve ordinary people. But the donkey in our story today had a very important job indeed – he actually carried a ‘king’! *There are some great pictures online of a donkey pulling Queen Victoria in a carriage, which you could use for comparisons.*Use a children’s Bible or video clip to tell the story of Palm Sunday. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-39h0xYqdE> **Key Questions:** * What was the donkey’s job?
* Why did Jesus want to ride on a donkey?
* How do you think the donkey might have felt about having a special ‘king’ on his back?

 **Suggested Whole Class Activity**:Make palm leaf shapes and ask the children to write/record on them the things they would say to Jesus if they had been present when he entered Jerusalem. These leaves can be used on your class RE display.**Plenary:** Why were people so excited to see Jesus? What made Jesus special? Do kings usually ride on donkeys? Talk about how Jesus was a special kind of king – Christians believe he is King of the whole world and came to earth to show God’s love and save people. |
| **Continuous Provision:** | **Areas of Learning:** **Understanding of the World:** * Find out about donkeys. What is it like to ride on a donkey?

**Expressive Arts and Design:** * Make palm leaves and re-enact the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem. What did people say? (‘Hosanna’ which means ‘save us’)
* Create a donkey for the children to sit on out of blocks and fabric. Where would you go on your donkey? What would it have felt like for Jesus to ride on a donkey? Why did he choose a donkey not another animal?
* Lay down a large roll of paper and create a pathway for Jesus to follow – ensure children have access to mark making materials and encourage them to draw/ paint palm leaves and robes on it.

**Physical:*** Play a parachute game – put a small ball on top of the parachute and gently move it around the circle. When the teacher shouts ‘Hosana’ children move their arms up and down, from floor to sky re-enacting the people on Palm Sunday – can they keep the ball on the parachute?

**Literacy:** * Create a simple fact file about donkeys.
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| **Resources:** | * Pictures of donkeys Parachute
* Paint/paper to create palm leaves Mark making materials
* Large roll of paper
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| **Sensitivities:** | If acting out the story, be aware of asking children of different faiths to ‘play’ Jesus, or act as animals, as this may be considered offensive. |
| **Impact:**What do you notice as a teacher?What do pupils say? | In this box, note down anything that you heard a pupil say that would provide evidence towards their progress in RE and spiritual development.Note down anything significant an additional adult has noticed.Note down anything significant that happened in the lesson that will have an impact on the next lesson. |

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| **Lesson 2:** What was special about Jesus’ meal with his friends? |
| **Intentions:** To give pupils opportunities: | * To learn about the story of the Last Supper.
* To start to explore why Christians have bread and wine today.
* To think about special meals in our own lives, and special people we share food and drink with.

**Key religious vocabulary:** Last Supper, disciple. |
| **Implementation:** Outlining how to introduce the religious content in the classroom and create learning opportunities from it. | **Main teaching input:**Display images of people sharing a meal together. Who do you share your special meals with (eg for a birthday or religious festival)? What do you like to eat and drink at your special meals?Explain that Jesus knew that he was going away, so he wanted to have a special meal before he went. Jesus chose his closest friends – his disciples – to eat with. They ate a special Jewish meal called a ‘Passover’ meal, which included bread and wine. Show the children some bread (eg pitta bread, ideally bread without yeast) and a cup of wine (grape juice or ribena is a good substitute).Read, retell or show the children the story of the Last Supper. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SigoALSS1R8> **Key Questions:** * If you were going away somewhere, who would you choose to have a meal with? Why?
* What do you think Jesus and his disciples talked about?
* Have you ever seen people eat and drink bread and wine in church? Today Christians do this to remember Jesus.

**Suggested Whole Class Activity**:Make unleavened bread (without yeast) and share.**Plenary:** Share the bread with the class.Ask: * Why do you think Jesus wanted to eat a special meal with his friends before he went away?
* Why do you think Christians still copy Jesus’ special meal today?
* What do you do when you want to remember someone special?

As a class, plan a special meal you could all have before the Easter holidays. What would make it ‘special’? Who could be invited? |
| **Continuous Provision:** | **Areas of Learning:** **Understanding of the World:** * Find out about special meals in other faiths (e.g. Seder).

**Expressive Arts and Design:** * Use the role play or mud kitchen to create a meal.
* Collage a meal onto a paper plate.

**Mathematics:*** Lay the table for the Last Supper – how many plates, cups etc. will you need?

**Literacy:** * Write/sequence the instructions for making bread.
* Make a menu for your own special meal.
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| **Resources:** | * Pitta bread and red grape juice.
* Flour and equipment to make unleavened bread.
* Collage materials.
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| **Sensitivities:** | Be aware of food allergies when making and handling bread and juice.Be aware of any children who may have recently lost or had family members move away. |
| **Impact:**What do you notice as a teacher?What do pupils say? | In this box, note down anything that you heard a pupil say that would provide evidence towards their progress in RE and spiritual development.Note down anything significant an additional adult has noticed.Note down anything significant that happened in the lesson that will have an impact on the next lesson. |

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| **Lesson 3:** Why did Jesus go to a special garden? |
| **Intentions:** To give pupils opportunities: | * To learn the story of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane
* To explore where, when and why Christians pray.
* To think about where people go and what they do when they are worried.

**Key religious vocabulary:** Disciple, Garden of Gethsemane, prayer.  |
| **Implementation:** Outlining how to introduce the religious content in the classroom and create learning opportunities from it. | **Main teaching input:**Show images of gardens. Ask the children what this makes them think of. What do they like to do in a garden? Explore, rest, play, have a BBQ, plant seeds etc. After Jesus had his special meal, he went into a garden nearby called the ‘Garden of Gethsemane’. He was feeling worried about what was going to happen to him, and he wanted to go somewhere to pray. Tell the story of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1iubwfFT2Q> **Key Questions:**What is praying? Why do you think Jesus wanted to talk to God? Do you ever talk to God? Where do you go if you pray? Do you ever feel worried? Where do you go? What makes you feel better when you are worried?Jesus took three of his favourite friends with him. Who do you like to have with you when you are worried?**Main Activity:**Make a collage of a garden and talk about what you like to do in a garden. Discuss how gardens make you feel. How do you think Jesus felt in the garden that night? Place an image of Jesus inside the garden to think about how Jesus felt.**Plenary:**Talk to the children about what helps you when you are worried about something? Remind them that they should always say if something is upsetting or bothering them.  |
| **Continuous Provision:** | **Areas of Learning:** **Understanding of the World:** * Plant quick-growing seeds (e.g. cress) in cups to create individual gardens, which can be added to over the next few weeks with a cross, tomb etc
* Make a garden area in your class or outdoor area. Include real plants, planted seeds, craft flowers and leaves, rocks and twigs etc. Encourage children to be still and reflect on how Jesus might have been feeling.

**Expressive Arts and Design:** * Make handprints using paint – when dry write things that you would like help with on each finger.
* Create a ‘worry jar’ by decorating an empty jar with coloured markers/stickers. Encourage children to draw/write their worries and place them in the jar.

**Literacy:*** Draw a picture of person that helps you and label it, describing who they are and how they help.
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| **Resources:** | * Collage materials and pictures of Jesus.
* Seeds/real plants.
* Empty jars.
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| **Sensitivities:** | Be aware of any incidents which could indicate a child is sad because of ill-treatment or bullying, or because of grief in the family. If children disclose anything of a child protection nature, this must be reported to the school’s Designated Safeguarding Lead. |
| **Impact:**What do you notice as a teacher?What do pupils say? | In this box, note down anything that you heard a pupil say that would provide evidence towards their progress in RE.Note down anything significant an additional adult has noticed.Note down anything significant that happened in the lesson that will have an impact on the next lesson. |

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| **Lesson 4:** Why is the cross special? |
| **Intentions:** To give pupils opportunities: | * To learn the story of when Jesus died.
* To learn that Christians believe Jesus died to show people how much God loves them and to rescue them.
* To think about the ways people show their love to each other.

**Key religious vocabulary:** Cross.   |
| **Implementation:** Outlining how to introduce the religious content in the classroom and create learning opportunities from it. | **Main teaching input:**Look at a wooden cross. Ask the children what it is. What do they know about crosses? (e.g. is there one on their school logo/ building/ church etc).Explain that the next part of the story will help us understand why crosses are so important to Christians. Some children may already know the story, but it is important to tell the story together to address any misconceptions!Retell the story of Jesus dying on a cross, explaining that there were some people who didn’t like Jesus and thought he was making trouble, so wanted him to die. In those days, people were put on a wooden cross to die when they had done things wrong. Jesus hadn’t done anything wrong, but Christians believe he died for all the people who had done things wrong, including us. It was God’s special way of showing that he loved everyone – giving up the thing he loved most. Although this is a sad part of the story, it shows us something wonderful. God’s love!<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snJaZsNwiEA> (stop at 4.03).**Key Questions:** * What is special to you?
* Would you give it to someone that you loved? (e.g. a favourite toy – the story Dogger is a good example of giving up something you really love for someone you love)

**Suggested Whole Class Activity**:Make a large paper cross in the classroom. Cover the cross with words and pictures that show things that destroy that which is good. Eg people being unkind to each other, leaving others out, saying unkind words, destroying the environment. Give children the opportunity to talk about things that they think are not right or make people feel very sad. Add these things to the cross. Talk about how many Christians believe that Jesus died on the cross so that everyone could be forgiven for things they have done wrong. Children are given a piece of paper and are asked to think about how they could put what is wrong right. Eg giving someone a hug, being friends, using kind words, recycling, sharing toys. They draw their response onto the paper and then place all the drawings on top of the things that are currently on the cross. Have a big red heart to represent love. Place the heart over the whole cross. Explain that many Christians believe that it is because God loved the world so much that Jesus died to take all that is not good away so that people could be forgiven.**Plenary:**Recap on the meaning of the cross. Talk about how the cross is a sad thing because it reminds us that Jesus died, but it also reminds us of God’s love. Talk about ways that you might show love to someone you care about. Explain that many Christians believe that God helps us to love other people and they pray to God to ask him to help them to be more loving. |
| **Continuous Provision:** | **Areas of Learning:** **Understanding of the World:** * If the children planted gardens in the last lesson, check how the seed are growing. Make simple lolly stick crosses and add them in.

**Expressive Arts and Design:** * Make crosses out of playdough or salt dough and decorate them with beads or small stones. Talk about why the cross is so special.
* Make a silhouette of the crosses against the sky, using black paper and a paper plate. Create a sunset using paint or crayons, then stick the crosses in front. Talk about how it was a sad moment when Jesus died, but that 3 days later it was all going to get better!

**Mathematics:*** Print out the outline of the cross – give the children coloured shapes (triangles, squares, rectangles) and see if they can fit them together inside the frame – do some shapes work better than others?

**Literacy:*** Write the things that you are sorry for in trays of dry sand – when you have said sorry, shake the tray so that the words disappear.
* On hearts, write or draw things that you would do for someone you love.
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| **Resources:** | * Wooden cross Dry sand
* Large paper cross. Paper hearts
* Lolly sticks, play dough, beads, paper plates. Cross outline and coloured shapes
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| **Sensitivities:** | Be aware of any children who are sensitive to talking about death or have lost someone recently. |
| **Impact:**What do you notice as a teacher?What do pupils say? | In this box, note down anything that you heard a pupil say that would provide evidence towards their progress in RE.Note down anything significant an additional adult has noticed.Note down anything significant that happened in the lesson that will have an impact on the next lesson. |

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| **Lesson 5:** What is special about the stone? |
| **Intentions:** To give pupils opportunities: | * To learn about Jesus’ resurrection.
* To begin to understand that Christians believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and that he is still alive today.
* To explore feelings of loss, surprise, hope and joy.

**Key religious vocabulary:** Disciple, tomb, risen. |
| **Implementation:** Outlining how to introduce the religious content in the classroom and create learning opportunities from it. | **Main teaching input:**Show the children a large stone. Explain that it is a very important part of the Easter story. Does anyone know why?Start retelling the story from when Jesus has died. Talk about how his body was put into a tomb, which is like a big cave, and that a giant stone was used to block the tomb so no one could get in or out. It’s a bit like the lid on a jam jar, or the door of a safe!Carry on telling the story, explaining how Jesus’ friends went to visit the tomb, but the stone had moved and the tomb was empty. They didn’t know where Jesus was, until they saw him and realised he had come back to life again! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snJaZsNwiEA> (the same clip as last week but continue playing until the end.**Key Questions:** * Who could have moved the stone?
* Did the disciples realise who Jesus was straight away? Why not?
* How did they know that it was Jesus?

**Suggested Whole Class Activity**:Give children stones to paint with an image of new life, or the words ‘He is risen’. Talk about why the stone was so special in this story (because it showed that the tomb was empty and Jesus wasn’t there anymore because he was alive).**Plenary:**Look at an image of the risen Jesus with his disciples. Brainstorm words which describe the feelings of the disciples. * How would they have felt when they saw Jesus again?
* What might they have thought? (At first, Mary thought Jesus was the gardener and other disciples wondered if he was a ghost!)
* How would you have felt?
* Have you ever found something you lost? How did that make you feel?

Christians feel joyful and excited at Easter time because they remember that Jesus’ tomb was empty and he had come back to life! |
| **Continuous Provision:** | **Areas of Learning:** **Communication & Language*** Look at paintings of the risen Jesus. Ensure the paintings you choose are diverse and give a global representation. Use them as a stimulus for talk.

**Understanding of the World:** * Make resurrection rolls by wrapping a marshmallow in pastry. When baked, the rolls will be hollow because the marshmallow will have melted, and like the tomb, the roll will be empty!
* Make a resurrection garden, showing the empty tomb, the stone rolled away and add figures to show: Jesus, Mary Magdalene, the disciples, soldiers and an angel. Use it to retell the story and think about how surprised Jesus’ friends were to see him.

**Expressive Arts and Design:** * Make an Easter sunrise picture, using half a coffee filter and yellow/ red food colouring. Talk about how Jesus’ friends rushed to the tomb first thing in the morning to see Jesus.
* Create an ‘empty tomb’ role play area and use it to retell the story.

**Mathematics*** Gather a selection of different sized stones – use a balance scale and challenge children to find objects that are the same weight as each stone.

**Physical*** Play ‘Inside the tomb’ parachute game – children hold the edge of the parachute and walk around in a circle. When the teacher shouts “Inside the tomb” everyone lift the parachute and try to run underneath and cover themselves as quickly as possible.
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| **Resources:** | * Stones to paint on (one for each child. Different sized stones & balance scale
* Marshmallows and pastry. Parachute
* Coffee filters and food colouring.
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| **Sensitivities:** | Be aware of children who may have lost a relative and wonder why they haven’t come back to life like Jesus.Other faiths and world views will dispute that Jesus did rise from the dead, which is what makes Christianity distinctive. Be aware of this when teaching the story to children from other faith backgrounds. |
| **Impact:**What do you notice as a teacher?What do pupils say? | In this box, note down anything that you heard a pupil say that would provide evidence towards their progress in RE.Note down anything significant an additional adult has noticed.Note down anything significant that happened in the lesson that will have an impact on the next lesson. |

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| **Lesson 6:** What is so special about Easter? |
| **Intentions:** To give pupils opportunities: | * To retell the Easter story.
* To know some of the ways that Christians celebrate Easter.
* To think about ways we celebrate special events and festivals in our own lives.

**Key religious vocabulary:** Celebrate  |
| **Implementation:** Outlining how to introduce the religious content in the classroom and create learning opportunities from it. | **Main teaching input:**Lay out a strip of hessian or other light material. On it, place pictures or objects to represent:* The donkey riding into Jerusalem,
* The Last Supper,
* Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane,
* A cross
* The empty tomb.

Can the children remember what happened in each part of the story? Retell the story together.Ask the children what they think of when they think of Easter. Look at images of Easter eggs, the Easter bunny, hot cross buns, Easter egg hunts etc.Talk about how eggs are empty like the tomb, which reminds Christians of Jesus being alive.Hot cross buns have a cross on them, like Jesus’ cross. Bunnies and chicks are born in the springtime, so they start their new lives at Easter time like Jesus did.Watch a video about how Christians celebrate Easter e.g. CBeebies ‘Celebrating Easter’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StlJgYF-Ki8> **Suggested Whole Class Activity:**Make a concertina book, with images from the story of Holy Week. Retell the story verbally, or in writing.**Plenary:**Share the books and talk about how different aspects of Easter celebrations remind us of the Easter story. **Key Questions:** * What festivals do you celebrate in your family?
* What special things do you do to celebrate?
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| **Continuous Provision:** | **Areas of Learning:** **Understanding of the World:** * Grow cress inside egg shells (with some cotton wool inside) and talk about how new life comes at Easter.

**Expressive Arts and Design:** * Make Easter bonnets, using images and symbols from the Easter story (eg palm leaf, donkey, cross, garden, tomb stone, angel etc). Organise an Easter parade for the children to show their bonnets, and incorporate into this a simple retelling of the Easter story.
* Create Easter egg-shaped potato prints – when they are dry decorate them so each one is unique.

**Literacy:*** Make Easter cards, with an Easter image on, to send to a friend or family member.
* Set up an Easter egg hunt in the garden. Put different Easter symbols/ pictures on the eggs and then use these (when retrieved) to tell the Easter story!
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| **Resources:** | * Hessian and pictures of Holy Week Potatoes/paint
* Cress seeds/empty egg shells. Folded card
* Craft supplies. Plastic eggs
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| **Sensitivities:** | Be aware of children with allergies or other food issues when making Easter food. Be aware that people of other faiths and none don’t believe that Jesus rose from the dead, so be careful when decorating items with verses such as ‘He is Risen’.  |
| **Impact:**What do you notice as a teacher?What do pupils say? | In this box, note down anything that you heard a pupil say that would provide evidence towards their progress in RE.Note down anything significant an additional adult has noticed.Note down anything significant that happened in the lesson that will have an impact on the next lesson |