



## NATRE's Spirited Arts Competition and Astley High!

Students in Year 9 at Astley Community High School, Seaton Delaval, enjoyed participating in the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) annual Spirited Arts competition. The theme which the students worked on over several lessons was "Could Britain be a rainbow nation?" Students engaged in several taught lessons which explored how and when the UK became multicultural, multifaith and multiethnic. They explored diversity within the UK, including the presence of the LGBT communities. Students had the opportunity to develop their understanding of what the fundamental British values are and how they are applied to the diverse mix which makes up our country. Students examined the benefits of living in a diverse country and applied this to the idea that, yes, our country could be a rainbow nation, as famously said by Archbishop Desmond Tutu when he referred to the new, democratic South Africa. However, students also realised that a lack of tolerance and understanding of other people's beliefs and values meant that this made it difficult for our country to be a rainbow nation.

Only ten entries could be made by the school and the decision about which ten we would send was incredibly difficult. The Head of Year, the RE teacher and Mr. Barnes, Executive Head, made the final decision. The ten students whose work was finally chosen were: Alfie Cozens, Beth Pygall, Ellie Dickinson Tweedy, Jack Luke, Jessica Reid, Katie Golightly, Lucy Brooks, Molly Hall, Rachel Muir and Rebecca Lazenby.

The students created a piece of artwork or a poem which addressed the question, "Could Britain be a rainbow nation?" and also produced an essay to explain what their piece of work was about and how it represented the question. They did fabulously and we wish them luck in the judging of the finals.

**Fran Gannon,**  
Astley Community High School



# The North-East Sikh Service is thriving and welcomes even more requests for assistance from schools, etc. in Northumberland!

It is with joy and feelings of gratitude that a member of the North-East Sikh Service (NESS) has been allowed to represent the Sikh community on the Northumberland SACRE to offer support and information. You may have heard of us already via the Letter of Introduction we sent out earlier in the year to every school in Northumberland for which we could find an address. We have already had good responses from that letter and have had visits to or from (or been booked by) the following schools in the County:



Howard House Residential School, Darras Hall First School, Thropton First School, Dr Thomlinson Cof E Middle School and Mowden Hall School.

Write-ups of most visits undertaken, with photos, are available on our Facebook page. Please search for the NESS to connect with what's going on!

Our aim, briefly, is to get at least one knowledgeable and experienced Sikh to engage with any person, any group or any organisation that would like to encounter a Sikhi presence or voice. We go only where we are invited - and this is without any charge to those inviting us.

As with the Waheguru Project which ran for about six years, and which the NESS is but a rebranding of, the NESS offers to host visits to the Gurdwara on Cottenham Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and operates with the explicit permission of the Gurdwara's Executive Committee and, by implication, the local Sikh community.

As well as working with/in maintained First, Primary, Middle, Special, Secondary and High schools, the NESS works with Colleges, Academies, Free Schools and Fee-paying Schools. A NASACRE-trained NESS worker is a member on the SACREs in Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland and Stockton, and was proud to recently represent Newcastle SACRE at the 2016 NASACRE AGM and Conference in London. On-going work with the North-East Religious Resources Centre (the Centre headed up by Karenza Passmore) is proving of great benefit to both organisations.

The NESS works not only in the education sector, but also with groups in the Health and Community sectors. Advice and assistance has recently been provided to hospital, hospice and prison chaplains, Age UK and groups committed to raising awareness about disability and long-term illness. We already have links with cub, scout and Air Force Cadet groups, befriending groups and the Women's Institute (WI) across the North East. In Northumberland we have been booked by the WI in Bardon Mill and Ulgham.

In the education sector we will continue our bread-and-butter work with schools. To enrich pupils' and students' experiences of encounters with us, we can arrange for our Ragi (musicians) to perform. Our Ragi are trained and experienced in Classical Indian Rag, something which might be of benefit to talented music students who wish to add to their pre-existing skills, or who wish to experience a manifestation of World Music they have not encountered before. With the support of the Religious Resources Centre and others, we will continue to reassess, reword, update and develop - when asked - teaching and learning resources about Sikhism which will support schools, RE departments and teachers as they attain their required goals and objectives.

Since the launch of the NESS in the last week of January 2016, and by the measure of any reasonable standard, the organisation and work of the NESS has been "Good". There's always room for improvement, though.

**[P.S. by the Northumberland SACRE: "Good"? No way. "Outstanding", more like.]**



# Brinkburn

## Lifepath 2016

### 21st to 24th June

**'It's the best school outing ever! Better even than the Glendale Show!'**

Praise indeed, when you're a pupil from Northumberland, and we didn't even have any tractors or sheep.

For four days, fifty local volunteers and church children's workers hosted 500 primary school pupils for a series of creative arts workshops in a secluded Northumberland valley amongst the medieval ruins of Brinkburn Priory, exploring the life and beliefs of Aidan, a significant local Christian saint of the 7th century. There was storytelling, drama, music, problem-solving games and gardening, with craft workshops creating jewellery, clay tiles and calligraphy... and most of everything took place out-of-doors, surrounded by a forest of natural woodland with a fast-flowing stream running nearby. The pupils and teachers loved it, with some schools sending immediate feedback:

'A fab day! Activities were well paced, engaging and hands on. The children loved what they did and came back to the school singing the songs and talking about all the things they had done.'

Brinkburn Lifepath has been running for six years. Over this time, we've explored the lifepaths and work of a whole series of our local Northern Saints (Aidan, Cuthbert, Oswald, Hilda, Caedmon, etc.), giving our visitors a flavour of the Christian faith and the beliefs that motivated these people - with plenty of opportunities to ponder, reflect and ask interesting (and awkward) questions. The storytelling immersed pupils in the dilemmas the Saints confronted with an element of slapstick and pantomime, but there were also poignant moments wondering about how we can all show compassion in difficult or confusing circumstances.

Pupils were organised in small groups, each accompanied by their own staff helpers, and one of our volunteer Pilgrim Guides (dressed as Cistercian monks), who served as a personal guide for the day, steering the group around the site and ensuring that everything ran smoothly. One part of the day was the Silence Bell. At set times, a team member would ring a large bell, signalling the moment for everyone on the site to go quiet, just for a minute... and listen. Children really enjoyed this. What did they hear? Sometimes during feedback, they reported noticing the sound of leaves rustling in the trees, the river running by, or the singing of birds. One child memorably said she heard God.



***Some of the best comments from pupils and teachers came towards the end of each day:***

*'It's so well organised, the children don't have a minute to lose the plot.'*

*'That drama's the best thing I've ever seen!'*

*'I don't want to go home.'*

*'Can we come again next year?'*

*'Can I come again tomorrow?'*

This year, one teacher confided to a helper about how she'd noticed one of her more withdrawn pupils enthusiastically singing along to the songs used in the opening and closing sessions - when the pupil never normally participated in any singing at school. For a brief moment, something had been unlocked in that child's life, and that's why projects like this are so important - because they offer an unique experience that can make a significant difference to a child's own lifepath.

**Chris Hudson, Lifepath Core Team (and member of the Northumberland SACRE).**



Seaton Sluice Middle School's visit to...

# The Islamic Society Mosque at Newcastle University

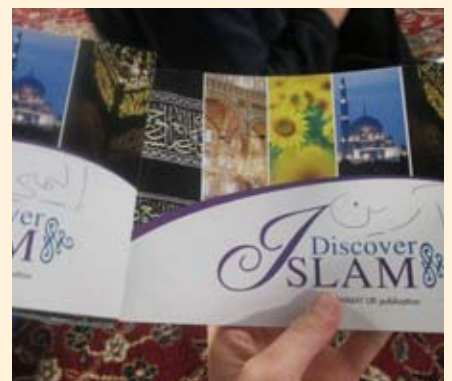
**As part of our drive to encourage children's understanding of different faiths and cultures, a group of our Year 7 children visited Newcastle University Mosque. As we arrived at the Mosque we were met by Mahmoud Kurdi who made us feel very welcome. We listened to and watched the midday prayer, which was such a special experience for the children.**

The children enjoyed trying on the scarves and skullcaps and found out the importance of these items. We then listened to the prayer and Mahmoud explained the importance of the Mihrab and the Minbar.

This was followed by a question and answer session during which we discussed the importance of The Five Pillars of Islam. This was an excellent session because it consolidated and deepened the children's knowledge. The children had to deliver a lesson about the trip when they were back at school, so this session helped them greatly. Mahmoud then wrote every child's name in Arabic on a booklet to take home with them.

This is the first time our school has visited a mosque and it is definitely a trip we will do again. Liam Bland loved the experience: "I enjoyed learning about how much money is given to charity and what Muslims are not allowed to eat and drink." Megan Napier found the prayers fascinating: "I enjoyed learning more about the mosque itself and watching the prayers."

**Mrs. Davies,**  
Seaton Sluice Middle School



Seaton Sluice Middle School's visit to...

# The United Hebrew Orthodox Synagogue

Our Year 5 children recently took part in a visit to the United Hebrew Orthodox Synagogue in Gosforth. It's the first time our Year 5s have visited a synagogue and the children thoroughly enjoyed it. Sophie Stanyer said, "I loved seeing inside the Ark," while Aaron Renton said, "I enjoyed everything!"



Deanna Van Der Velde and Kim were very welcoming and told us so much more than we had discovered in the classroom. Deanna gave an excellent talk on the origins of Judaism and about the community spirit within the synagogue. She also gave the children a good insight about the different artefacts within the synagogue. The visit was very interactive and the children were able to look at different types of mezuzahs and kippahs. They were able to look at Hebrew writing in prayers and used stencils to write in Hebrew. Kim kindly wrote each child's name in Hebrew to take home with them.

The boys enjoyed trying on the kippahs and the tallit, while the girls enjoyed reading some Jewish prayers.

Sam Timlin was lucky enough to wear the tallit and hold a Torah scroll. He said, "I didn't realise the scrolls were so big."

Back in school the children prepared and delivered a lesson about the synagogue to the rest of their form classes. We will definitely visit the synagogue next year as the children thoroughly enjoyed the experience, but next year we will take the whole year group, as it is an experience they should all take part in for their understanding to grow.



**Mrs. Davies,**  
Seaton Sluice Middle School

# The New RE Agreed Syllabus: it's ready for use in Schools!

... and can be accessed via the Northumberland County Council (NCC) website. Once on the NCC Homepage, type "SACRE" into the "Search for our services here" box. This will lead to the SACRE "Search Result" page, from where you click on "Useful SACRE documents (more info.)". You will now find all the components of the RE Agreed Syllabus listed for you to examine. Enjoy!

People who have followed progress on production of the new RE Agreed Syllabus will recall that, about two years ago, all interested parties in Northumberland were advised via this Newsletter that a revision would be undertaken, with a view to the new syllabus being in place for September 2016. People were urged to share with the SACRE what were the strengths and the weaknesses of the existing RE Agreed Syllabus and what they would like retained or changed. All such comments were taken into account as a SACRE sub-group began the task of generating copy for the new syllabus, as were publications from the Government and the Religious Education Council (REC) for England and Wales. Such publications helped to shape a consensus about what, in the contemporary era, qualified as best practice in relation to the production of RE agreed syllabuses.

In the light of all these influences, and discussions within the SACRE itself, it was unanimously agreed that the new RE Agreed Syllabus would comprise three parts.

The introductory section (in effect, the statutory component of the RE Agreed Syllabus) comprises the REC "RE Framework" contained in its ground-shifting "RE Review" of 2013, a framework which has secured the support of almost all the stakeholders in what might be called the UK's RE community



(cosmetic changes were made to the text to better reflect conditions and circumstances in Northumberland,

and to remove any real or imagined ambiguities in the original text). The main body of the new RE Agreed Syllabus contains the units of work in the last syllabus after being closely examined to remove any typographical, etc. errors, and after some teaching and learning opportunities had been added to reflect contemporary issues of national concern (thus, teaching and learning opportunities have been added about promoting the fundamental British values and challenging extremism and radicalisation, among other things).

Teachers who engaged in the consultation process about revising the syllabus were almost unanimous in asking that the units of work be retained, partly to assist non-specialists, but also to reduce the amount of time that teachers had to spend planning lessons. The units of work are not a statutory component of the syllabus; they can be utilised by teachers if they think they will help to meet the statutory requirements contained in the introductory section  
*continued overleaf .....*

of the syllabus. An important refinement that teachers will notice when they see the complete syllabus is that advice is provided at the end of each 'Requirement' in the statutory component of the syllabus to indicate which units of work should be examined for suitable teaching and learning opportunities. We believe such joined-up thinking will make the new Agreed Syllabus much easier to use.

The last section of the syllabus is called "The Guidance" and, as its name implies, it is simply this, no more and no less. It is here where teachers and others will find advice about RE provision for the youngest pupils and the oldest students, assessment, equality, diversity, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, British values, challenging extremism and radicalisation, RE resources and good places to take pupils and students on visits. The SACRE would urge teachers and others to examine "The Guidance", perhaps especially for information about RE resources and good places to visit.

Production of the new RE Agreed Syllabus was very much a team effort involving many people and interest groups. There will be much that is familiar to teachers and others (this is most apparent in relation to the units of work and some of "The Guidance"). However, the decision to utilise the REC's "RE Framework" of 2013 for the statutory component has proved a wise one, given that a majority of teachers and other stakeholders in the RE community now agree that a national framework for RE is long overdue to ensure that all pupils and students in schools using agreed syllabuses are in receipt of the same basic entitlement. Moreover, in the absence of anything better, most stakeholders in the RE community are of the opinion that the REC's "RE Framework" of 2013 provides a sound basis for any such national RE syllabus.

Once again, our thanks to everyone who helped with this mammoth but highly worthwhile project.

**The Northumberland SACRE.**

# The UK's best RE resource bank

## the North-East Religious Resources Centre



**With a new RE Agreed Syllabus ready for use in schools from 1st September 2016, schools in Northumberland will want to access the best collection of RE-related resources anywhere in England, thereby saving themselves money at a time of financial austerity and ensuring that RE of the highest quality is provided to all our pupils and students.**

The North East Religious Resources Centre has facilities in Percy Main, North Tyneside, and Durham City.

Many Northumberland teachers (or schools on behalf of their teachers) have already joined the Centre because they know that, once a member, they can access 38,000 items addressing a host of different religious and belief systems. Such items include text books, posters, photo packs, audio-visual material including films and documentaries, copies of RE agreed syllabuses and diocesan syllabuses, and, perhaps best of all, religious artefacts. There are also many books designed to ensure that acts of collective worship are stimulating and worthwhile educational experiences.

In recent years, Karenza Pasmore and her colleagues have ensured that the ever-expanding resource bank not only covers the six religions we MUST teach (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism), but also some of the faiths and secular world views which, in recent years, have become more popular to study.

Thus, Karenza and her colleagues have excellent resources relating to, for example, the Bahai Faith, Jainism, Rastafarianism and Humanism.

Before deciding to join the Centre, you may wish to visit to see what you have missed out on for so long! Staff at the Centre are happy for visits to take place at times convenient to all concerned. Moreover, the Centre has sensible and flexible opening hours. Opening hours can be confirmed when you make contact with the staff.

### **For more information,**

telephone the Centre in Percy Main on 0191-270-4161. The postal address is NE Religious Resources Centre, Church House, St. John's Terrace, Percy Main, North Shields, NE29 6HS. To access additional information about the Centre, and to find out in more detail about all the services staff provide, visit the Centre's excellent website: **[www.resourcescentreonline.co.uk](http://www.resourcescentreonline.co.uk)**

# Forthcoming Festivals/Commemorations

5th September	Ganesh Chaturthi (Hindu)
11th September	Ethiopian New Year (Rastafarian)
3rd - 4th October	Rosh Hashanah (Jewish)
21st September	International Day of Peace
11th - 12th October	Yom Kippur (Jewish)
13th September	Eid-ul-Adha (Muslim)
17th Oct - 24th Oct	Sukkot (Jewish)
September or October	Harvest (Christian)
October	Black History Month
1st October	International Day of Older Persons
24th - 25th October	Simchat Torah (Jewish)
1st - 9th October	Navaratri (Hindu)
3rd October	Al-Hijrah (Muslim)
16th - 23rd October	Interfaith Week of Prayer for World Peace
20th October	Guru Granth Sahib Ji given the Eternal Guruship Sikh (Nanakshahi calendar)
20th October	Anniversary of the Birth of the Bab (Bahai)
7th October	Durga Puja (Hindu)
24th October	United Nations Day
11th October	Ashura (Shia Muslim)
1st November	All Saints Day (Christian)
5th November	Anniversary of Guy Fawkes' Gunpowder Plot
13th November	Remembrance Sunday
11th November	Armistice Day
30th October	Diwali (Hindu)
30th October	Diwali/Bandi Chor Divas (Sikh)
30th October	Diwali (Jain)
31st October	Halloween
31st October	Annakuta (Hindu)
12th November	Anniversary of the Birth of Baha'u'llah (Bahai)
13th - 20th November	National Interfaith Week
16th November	International Day for Tolerance
14th - 18th November	Anti-Bullying Week
24th November	Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sikh (Nanakshahi calendar)
14th November	Birthday of Guru Nanak Sikh (lunar calendar)
27th November	Advent Sunday (Christian)
30th November	St. Andrew's Day
25th Dec - 1st Jan	Hanukah (Jewish)
10th December	Human Rights Day
21st December	Yule/Winter Solstice (Pagan/Druid)
12th December	The Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (Sunni Muslim)
25th December	Christmas Day (Christian)
17th December	The Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (Shia Muslim)
31st December	Hogmanay

P.S. Anyone seeking to identify the dates for additional festivals and/or commemorations from April to early September should access the many lists available on the internet. Some of the best such lists (in terms of inclusiveness and accuracy) derive from the BBC and RE:Online. The Shap Working Party on World Religion also produces a very good list, but the list must be purchased whether in hard or electronic form.

## Please send your contributions or comments to:

Linda Papaioannou, Democratic Services Officer, Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF  
Telephone: 01670 622615 E-mail: Linda.Papaioannou@northumberland.gov.uk

For further information, please see NASACRE newsletters at:  
[www.nasacre.org.uk](http://www.nasacre.org.uk) and [www.multifaiths.com](http://www.multifaiths.com)