

Forthcoming Festivals/Commemorations

11th September	Ethiopian New Year Rastafarian
17 - 18th Sept	Rosh Hashanah Jewish
21st Sept	International Day of Peace
26 - 27 Sept	Yom Kippur Jewish
Sept or Oct	Harvest Christian
Oct	Black History Month
1st Oct	International Day of Older Persons
1st - 8th Oct	Sukkot Jewish
9th Oct	Simchat Torah Jewish
16 - 24th Oct	Navaratri/Durga Puja Hindu
17th - 28th Oct	National Anti-Racism Weeks of Action in Football
20th Oct	Anniversary of the Birth of the Bab Bahai
21st - 28th Oct	Interfaith Week of Prayer for World Peace
23rd Oct	Chung Yuan Chinese
24th Oct	United Nations Day
26th Oct	Eid-ul-Adha Muslim
1st Nov	All Saints Day Christian
5th Nov	Anniversary of Guy Fawkes' Gunpowder Plot
10th Nov	Birthday of Guru Nanak Sikh
11th Nov	Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday
12th Nov	Anniversary of the Birth of Baha'u'llah Bahai
12th - 16th Nov	Anti-Bullying Week
13 Nov	Divali Hindu
13 Nov	Divali Sikh
15th Nov	Al-Hijrah Muslim
15th Nov	Guru Granth Sahib Ji given the eternal Guruship Sikh
16th Nov	International Day for Tolerance
18th - 27th Nov	National Interfaith Week
24th Nov	Ashura Shia Muslim
28th Nov	Birthday of Guru Nanak Sikh
30th Nov	St. Andrew's Day
2nd Dec	Advent Sunday Christian
9th - 16th Dec	Hanukah Jewish
10th Dec	Human Rights Day
17th Dec	Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sikh
25th Dec	Christmas Day Christian
31st Dec	Hogmanay

Please send your contributions or comments to;
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For further information, please see NASACRE newsletters at www.nasacre.org.uk

SACRE

Northumberland

Northumberland County Council

Newsletter for the Standing Advisory Council
for Religious Education for Northumberland

Issue 21
September 2012

Please display on your school notice board

Never fear.... help is at hand "Help! Where on Earth can we find enough RE resources quickly?"



That was our Year 5 teacher's cry when we thought about how we were to teach Sikhism in our RE lessons. We had no text books, no artefacts and not much personal knowledge, either. Happily, help really was at hand, in the persons of the librarians at the North-East Religious Learning Resources

Centre. Mhairi and Sean, who were on duty that day, not only pointed me in the right direction for books for assembly ideas, which I also needed, but booked the Sikhism artefacts boxes for me.

The librarians even went to the shelves to check things were there. Coincidentally, Sean was working on preparing 'Lenten veils' for shelving, which I realised would be great for our 'Philosophy for Children' sessions.

I was expecting to have a 'working morning' but, actually, it was like a day out. The place is a repository of all sorts of treasures, and not just Christian ones. When I visited, there was a fantastic display about Buddhism. All the major faiths are catered for, and the whole school age-range is covered. There are not only books and artefacts, but DVDs, banners and CDs, too.

"But North Shields!" I hear you cry, perhaps. "It's miles from where I live." That's true for lots of us in Northumberland, and, for teachers, weekends are precious. A couple of ideas present themselves. Firstly, how about combining a trip to the Centre with a quick shopping expedition to Royal Quays, or even to Newcastle? The Centre is open on the first Saturday in every month from 9.30am to 1.00pm (during the week the hours are 10.00am to 5.30pm, closed for lunch from 12.30pm to 1.30pm). Secondly, how about ringing up with your request, and then asking a friendly vicar, reader or parent to pick things up for you?

It costs £18 per year to belong to the Centre and you can contact the Centre on 0191-270 -4161, or on-line via www.resourcecentreonline.co.uk
Problem solved, for us. I hope your problem will be solved as well!

Janet Hedley, James
Calvert Spence College,
Amble.

north east
Religious Resources
your religious learning resources centre



News about RE/RS from the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on RE (NASACRE) Annual General Meeting.

Every year, Northumberland's SACRE tries to send a representative to the NASACRE AGM. The AGM is a wonderful opportunity to network and to stay in touch with the latest developments relating to RE/RS. Below, this year's representative provides an overview of the latest Government thinking in relation to RE/RS, and how the RE/RS world is responding to the challenges and opportunities.

Delegates were of the opinion that 2012's NASACRE AGM was the best for some years, and the main reason given was that the keynote speakers really knew about RE/RS and had substantive things to share with their audience. Let me begin with **Robert Jackson, Professor of RE at Warwick University**, who opened his talk by asking: "Is it time to look again at how our subject is named and therefore taught?"

While in England and Wales we call the subject Religious Education or Religious Studies, some European neighbours call the subject Religion Education. The EU prefers the term The Religious Dimension of Intercultural Education and the UN prefers the term Education about Religion and Belief (which seems to be the direction the 2004 RE Framework is/was steering us in England and Wales). In Quebec, it is called Ethics and Religious Culture, and in Scotland, Religious and Moral Education. To some degree, how we name the subject shapes the content and the teaching and learning methodology.

What do students aged 14-16 say about the subject?

Such students want democratic/participative/interactive principles to prevail in the

classroom (but feel that such principles too rarely shape their classroom experiences). As a general rule, RE/RS lessons are seen by students as "a safe environment" in which to engage in discussion and debate. Students want "peaceful co-existence" based on knowledge and understanding about the religions and beliefs of others. Moreover, most students report that they do NOT feel threatened by learning about the religion or beliefs of others.

Are current approaches to RE/RS having positive outcomes?

Yes. For example, recent research reveals that when the subject addresses a variety of religions and beliefs, pupils and students develop positive attitudes toward people who subscribe to different religions, beliefs or lifestyles. Visits and visitors reflecting diversity in religion and belief have, as a general rule, "a significant positive impact" on developing knowledge, understanding, tolerance and respect. Where such visits and visitors cannot be accessed, electronic and audio-visual resources provide "worthwhile alternative real-life encounters". Moreover, RE/RS helps many students "find meaning and purpose in their lives".

One consistent criticism levelled at RE/RS by 14-16 students is that insufficient account is taken of the differences that exist WITHIN a given faith.

Students aged 14-16 would like to see more emphasis placed on:

media understandings/representations/misrepresentations of religion and belief; the (potential) conflict between freedom of expression on the one hand and the extent to which we should respect viewpoints/practices that might

repel us on the other; topical matters that arise in the news/current affairs; whether or not religious artefacts, etc. should be worn in school/public; non-religious world views; human rights and whether religions and beliefs enhance or threaten such rights;

international case studies that examine aspects of religion and belief in a thoughtful and meticulous manner (e.g. the "sociological" approaches to RE/RS advocated by the OU).

Jackson sees in the students' comments/requests a desire to emphasise AT2 far more than AT1. When students enter secondary school, the emphasis should be on the development of "skills required to engage in courteous, informed, rational and responsible debate and discussion". AT1 should dominate RE/RS in primary school, AT2 should dominate RE/RS in secondary school.

Lat Blaycock, of RE Today Services, reviewed some exciting all-day conferences undertaken in different LAs on behalf of individual schools or clusters of schools (mainly middle and secondary schools), then challenged such schools and individual SACREs to consider: taking a lead on arranging similar conferences, perhaps planning the content around consideration of a single big/ultimate/topical question; some form of RE/RS accreditation for pupils/students, perhaps especially at the end of KS4. **John Keast, Chair of the Religious Education Council, said "We live in challenging times!"**

50% of secondary schools are already academies or will be by September 2012. Specialist RE/RS posts have

been lost in many secondary schools, but not quite at the rate feared a year ago. Specialist RE/RS teachers who remain are often required to teach lessons other than RE/RS. Some secondary schools have already axed RE/RS exam courses, and others will do so from September 2012. Some secondary schools have already cut the amount of RE/RS lessons students receive, or will do so from September 2012 (e.g. RE/RS is sometimes taught with Geography and History on a carousel basis, thereby reducing time devoted to RE/RS to about 13 hours per annum). From September 2012, there will be a significant reduction in the number of RE/RS PGCE student teachers in universities, with 19 of 34 universities offering such courses compelled to recruit fewer students than last year.

Thankfully, primary school RE/RS has not been detrimentally affected (yet?) by recent developments in secondary school RE/RS.

Evidence suggests that RE/RS is under greatest threat in secondary academies and free schools, even though such academies and free schools, in almost all cases, have a statutory responsibility to provide the subject (but they do NOT have a statutory responsibility to provide RE/RS that conforms with the content of the locally agreed RE syllabus. They are free, by and large, to choose what the content of the subject will be).

The impact of RE's/RS's absence from the EBacc is obvious, but there are other concerns. Firstly, recent criticism levelled at the quality of many of the RE/RS short courses, combined with the lack of "value" attached to short courses (in future years, results in RE/RS short courses will not be included in the performance

data accessible to the general public measuring one school's performance in relation to that of other schools), means that, if schools continue to offer RE/RS at GCSE, it is likely to be an RE/RS long course. Secondly, although the Government is undertaking a review of the National Curriculum, RE/RS will not benefit from a similar review, which means that the 2004 Framework will remain the Government's final word in relation to the subject for some time to come. RE/RS interest groups are very worried about this (among other things, such interest groups see this as confirmation that RE/RS is not regarded by the Government as a priority). The Government has said that the status quo will prevail - which means, among other things, that RE/RS syllabuses will still be locally determined (even though the thrust in Government thinking since the mid-1990s has been toward the introduction of a "national curriculum" for RE/RS).

On a more encouraging note, 2013 should witness the launch of the RE Quality Mark (a pilot scheme to trial the Quality Mark is progressing well); and the Religious Education Council (REC) has been asked by the Government and interested RE/RS organisations to lead on generating a new RE/RS Framework which builds on the work of the 2004 Framework. The REC includes representatives of many faith and non-faith groups, the British Humanist Association included, and it is hoped that the new Framework will not only address content and methodology, but assessment of RE/RS as well.

"We haven't arrived yet at the point predicted by many people twelve months ago, that RE faces 'meltdown'. Whether 'meltdown' has merely been deferred, only time will tell!"

Extras:

There is now almost universal recognition within the RE/RS community that the current statutory requirements relating to collective worship in community schools are impossible for most such schools to comply with, both from a practical and from a human rights point of view. NASACRE is one of many RE/RS interest groups that has asked the Government to amend the current legislative requirements, but the Government has said it won't (nor will the Government withdraw Circular 1/94 on collective worship, seen by the vast majority as even more unhelpful than the legislation itself). This said, a recently published document from the Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) attempts to summarise best practice as it currently applies to collective worship (and RE/RS teachers, etc. in Northumberland will be heartened to learn that much of this document's content could have been taken directly from our Policy and Guidelines launched a few years ago).

Given the current situation in the RE/RS world, NASACRE advises those Agreed Syllabus Conferences about to undertake revisions of their RE Agreed Syllabus to "adopt a minimalist approach" (which, in a sense, is what we did in Northumberland by retaining the pre-existing units of work and up-dating the non-statutory guidance).

NASACRE is currently going through a re-branding process, and, as part of the process, its website is being overhauled to make it easier to navigate and find information. I would urge people with an interest in RE/RS to access this website because it contains a wealth of useful practical advice for senior school managers, teachers and governors. NASACRE web site link is <http://www.nasacre.org.uk/>