

Morpeth County First School's World Faiths Project



In June 2014, Morpeth (Goosehill) County First School organised a very successful World Faiths Project during which our part-time Northumberland RE consultant, Mr P. André, helped to lead visits to different worship centres and taught the children about a specific festival relating to each religion represented by the centre.

The children thoroughly enjoyed their visits, which supported our remit to promote cultural diversity and religious tolerance and understanding. Back at school, there was a buzz about the visits and it was clear that the children had not only gained knowledge, but were asking questions in order to further aid their understanding and make comparisons between the lifestyles of different people.

Reception re-enacted a wedding ceremony at St. George's URC in Morpeth. The children each had a role and dressed up accordingly, then back at school the wedding reception was a joyous occasion with a wedding cake to cut and eat, following the Christian tradition.

Year 1 visited the Hindu Mandir in Newcastle where they looked at pictures and models of different forms of God and learnt about their significance to the religion. The children were inspired by what they had seen and painted their own forms of God back at school. *"The Gods were cool because they were so colourful."* (Alan)

Year 2 visited the Reform Synagogue in Newcastle and were able to look at the artefacts first hand. The children particularly enjoyed seeing a Torah scroll and were fascinated to learn that it takes about a year to write it! *"I didn't expect the Torah to be so big."* (Evie)

The children in Year 3 were very respectful during their visit to the University Mosque in Newcastle and wore hats and headscarves whilst inside the building. Following their visit they learnt about Muslim artefacts and their significance to the religion. *"I didn't know what to expect when we went to the Mosque but it was really interesting."* (Charlie)

The children in Year 4 visited the Sikh Gurdwara in Newcastle and felt very lucky to try some of the traditional food. Their visit led to some creative writing back in school and all the children agreed that the visit was a much more fun way to learn about the religion.

At the end of the World Faiths Project, the children invited their parents to an assembly in which they could share their learning and experiences. We hope to visit the different worship centres again as part of the R.E. curriculum and would like to thank all of those involved for being so welcoming and for making the children's learning so much fun.

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Holocaust Memorial Day, 27th January 2015

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) is, as always, on 27th January, and we are confident that many Northumberland schools have already planned events to coincide with the national commemoration. The theme for this year is "Keeping the Memory Alive", and it is likely that many events will reach out to individuals or groups that differ in some way from the majority of pupils or students within the school.

However, HMD will have a profile higher than ever before in Northumberland this year, because various individuals and groups have worked hard to ensure that the commemoration will live long in people's memory. Educational workshops for pupils and students have been arranged with the assistance of internationally renowned Show Racism the Red Card; a collection of posters depicting the persecution of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities will be on display at different venues around the County for a week; **and a special commemorative service will be held in the Council Chamber at County Hall, Morpeth (from 4.00pm to about 5.30pm on 27th January)** which will include readings, music, song and the testimony of a genocide survivor. We are confident that schools have already heard about these excellent opportunities to learn more about the Holocaust in particular and genocide more generally, and will engage with them in whatever way they can.

This year's HMD is of particular importance because 2015 commemorates the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland (and it is for this reason that many events in schools and elsewhere will include the lighting of 70 candles, one for each year since the liberation). But HMD 2015 assumes added poignancy because it marks the 20th anniversary of the massacre of over 7,000 Bosniaks in Srebrenica in Bosnia, and the centenary of the beginning of the so-called "forgotten genocide" directed against the Armenians in the crumbling Ottoman Empire (between one and two million Armenians were murdered between April 1915 and the end of World War One).

If your school has yet to confirm how HMD will be commemorated, we suggest that an outstanding starting point for ideas is the HMD Trust website (www.hmd.org.uk), where, among other things, you can find out what is happening in other parts of the country and access a wealth of excellent teaching and learning materials.

Above all, HMD is designed "to challenge prejudice, racism and discrimination, and to promote diversity, equality and harmony between communities". Consequently, schools which address HMD confirm their commitments to community cohesion, equality, diversity and inclusion.

If any schools wish to share with a larger audience what they did to commemorate HMD, please send a summary to Phil André at phil.andre@ntlworld.com and we will publish the article in a forthcoming SACRE Newsletter.