

Forthcoming Festivals/Commemorations

21 April	Ridvan Bahai
23 April	St. George's Day National
1 May	Beltane Pagan
3 May	Holy Friday Orthodox Christian
5 May	Easter Day Orthodox Christian
9 May	Ascension Day Christian
12 - 18 May	Christian Aid Week Christian
15 - 16 May	Shavuot Jewish
19 May	Pentecost Christian
23 May	Anniversary of the Declaration of the Bab Bahai
24 May	Wesak Buddhist
5 June	The Prophet's Night Journey and Ascension Muslim
12 June	Dragon Boat Festival Chinese
16 June	Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji Sikh
21 June	Midsummer Solstice Pagan/Druid/Wicca
21 June	World Humanist Day Humanist
24 June	The Night of Forgiveness Muslim
9 July	Anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Bab Bahai
9 July - 7 Aug	Ramadan Muslim
8 Aug	Eid-ul-Fitr Muslim
15 Aug	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Christian
21 Aug	Raksha Bandhan Hindu
21 Aug	Hungry Ghosts Festival Chinese
5 - 6 Sept	Rosh Hashanah Jewish
10 - 17 Sept	Paryushana Jain
11 Sept	Ethiopian New Year Rastafarian
14 - 15 Sept	Yom Kippur Jewish



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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

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Please display on your school notice board

Visit to a Mosque - Branton First School



On the 4th July we went to a Mosque in Newcastle. We met the Iman who said to us that we could not wear our shoes inside the Mosque because it is a mark of respect. After that the Iman took us to the room next to the praying room upstairs where the women and children pray as they do not pray alongside the men in the main prayer hall. We watched the people pray. Then the boys put caps on and the girls put on scarfs. They do this because they don't believe in make-up and making themselves pretty and looking handsome.



Then we watched the men while they prayed in the prayer room. Before they prayed they had to wash their feet, hands and face. When they prayed they knelt down with their heads tucked in. Following that we had the chance to try on some scarfs and hats so we could experience how they felt when they wore those items. The girls tried on the scarfs and the boys tried on the small hats.

By Harriet, Jonah and Gabi. Branton Community First School.



The Religious Education Quality Mark and The Accord Award

Given that a considerable number of schools in Northumberland engage in excellent RE, we thought you might like to know about an exciting new initiative which will bring national recognition for such work.

The Religious Education Quality Mark (REQM) is now available to schools across the land following successful trials in selected regions of England and Wales. The REQM recognises outstanding learning in RE. It has been developed to celebrate high quality RE; to provide community schools, faith schools and academies with a framework to sustain good practice; and encourages the development and celebration of school-wide commitment to excellent teaching and learning within the subject.

How does the REQM work? The REQM has five strands:

- Learners and learning
- Teachers and teaching
- The curriculum
- Subject leadership
- Continuing professional development.

There are three award levels, bronze, silver and gold. Schools applying for the REQM highlight where they think they meet the criteria. After applying for the REQM, an assessor will visit the school, interview learners, and meet the subject leader and a member of the senior leadership team.

Any school interested in securing the REQM should, in the first instance, access the REQM website at www.reqm.org Explore the criteria against

which judgements are made. If you think your school can achieve the award, email admin@reqm.org to find out more, including information about costs.

This highly worthwhile national initiative is just what is needed at this challenging time in the world of education. Moreover, schools that feel they have a chance of securing the REQM should also consider examining the excellent Accord Award for Inclusive Schools. The Accord Award has been around for a few years and is an absolute must for those schools that address matters to do with inclusion, equality, diversity and community cohesion holistically. For more information about the Accord Award, visit:

<http://accordcoalition.org.uk/accord-award-2013>

“RE: The Truth Unmasked”

Not since Ofsted published “Transforming Religious Education” in June 2010 has a report about Religious Education (RE) been as eagerly awaited as the one launched in March 2013 by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on RE. Entitled “RE: The Truth Unmasked – the supply of and support for RE Teachers”, the report makes depressing reading, although people who regularly access copies of the SACRE Newsletter will know that the SACRE is aware that some of the issues raised in the APPG report already impact on the provision of RE in Northumberland.

The main findings of the APPG report are as follows:

In over half of primary schools, some or all pupils are being taught RE by someone other than their class teacher. In a quarter of primary schools, RE is being taught by teaching assistants. The APPG says: “This is unacceptable and in many cases has a detrimental impact on the quality of RE.”

About half of primary teachers and trainee teachers lack confidence in teaching RE. About half of subject leaders in primary schools lack the expertise or experience to undertake their role effectively.

Over 50% of RE teachers in secondary schools have no qualifications or appropriate expertise in the subject. In the words of the APPG: “This is unacceptable.”

The inclusion of non-specialists in the total number of RE teachers given to the DfE creates a false impression that we have enough RE teachers, and skews statistics regarding the need to train more RE specialists.

Applications for secondary RE teacher training courses are currently 143 down on the same time last year. The loss of bursaries for RE is among

the reasons for this reduction in applicant numbers for 2013.

In nearly 40% of schools, RE teachers have inadequate access to continuing professional development (CPD).

RE teachers, particularly non-specialists, in schools without a religious character have particularly limited access to CPD.

The ability of SACREs to provide support for teachers of RE at the local level has been dramatically reduced by local authority funding decisions and the impact of the academy and free school programme.

Teachers’ access to CPD is “a postcode lottery.” It depends on the resources of the local SACRE or diocese, proximity to training and the priority given to RE in schools.

A range of government policies, notably relating to the EBacc and GCSE short courses, are contributing to the lowering of the status of RE in some schools leading to a reduction in the demand for specialist teachers.

The combined effect of inadequate supply and inadequate access to support is that, whatever their level of commitment, many teachers struggle to reach the levels of subject competence expected of the DfE’s own teaching standards.

Here in Northumberland, the full impact of some of the above has yet been felt, but the SACRE has enough hard and anecdotal evidence to confirm that the above trends are observable in some of our schools, both primary and secondary.

All those concerned for the well-being of RE in Northumberland schools should examine the report in detail. The report is easily accessed via the internet (type the title of the report into your search engine and it will come up instantly). One convenient way of accessing the report is via the excellent Religious Education Council homepage. The report runs to over 40 pages, but a lot of the content is made up of graphs and tables.

Here is not the place to dwell on all the excellent recommendations which derive from the report, but we think the following are worth quoting.

The DfE should:

introduce a system which requires all secondary teachers to receive training in any subject they teach

require academies to use the locally agreed RE syllabus

ensure that SACREs have the resources to carry out their statutory responsibilities.

All schools should:

make proper provision for CPD for subject leaders, specialist teachers and others responsible for teaching RE to improve its quality.

Ofsted should:

require inspectors to report on non-compliance with the statutory requirements regarding RE.

It is in relation to this last very important matter that we conclude the article: What are the statutory requirements as they apply to RE? Where better to turn than to the APPG report itself, which says the following:

RE must be taught to all registered pupils in maintained schools, including those in the sixth form, except to those withdrawn by their parents. This requirement does not apply to nursery classes in maintained schools. RE is a component of the basic curriculum, to be taught alongside the National Curriculum in all maintained schools. In all maintained schools, other than voluntary aided schools with a religious character, it must be taught according to a locally agreed syllabus.

Every LEA must convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference to produce a syllabus. Once adopted by the LEA, the programme of study of the agreed syllabus sets out what pupils should be taught. The attainment targets set out the expected standards of pupils’ performance at different ages.

Do not forget: the Northumberland RE agreed syllabus recommends that, for the content of the programmes of study to be covered in sufficient depth and breadth, between 36 and 45 hours of RE are required per annum, depending on the key stage in which the pupils and students are taught. This has been Northumberland’s recommendation about RE contact time for the last 9 years and conforms with guidance deriving from the Government dating from the end of the 1980s to almost the present day.