



# RE and SMSC at Queen Elizabeth High School, Hexham continued

## RE Conference led by David Wilkinson

David Jones and Ashley Endacott took a group of Year 11 students to an RE conference at King Edward VI High School, Morpeth. The Reverend Professor David Wilkinson, principal of St. John's College and lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University, provided a thought-provoking lecture on the relationship between faith and religion. Students thought about questions they would be considering at A-level and many left the day excited at the prospect of continuing their study of religion.

Staff in the RE Department work hard to provide enrichment opportunities for students and are therefore pleased that they can share this information with recipients of the Northumberland SACRE Newsletter.

David Jones (Head of RE/Philosophy), Queen Elizabeth High School, Hexham  
Andy Hedley (RE Department), Queen Elizabeth High School, Hexham  
Ashley Endacott (PGCE Placement Student, Newcastle University)

## RE can reduce misunderstanding and conflict, a new report finds

An inquiry by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on RE has found that RE lessons play a key role in reducing religious misunderstanding and conflict. The investigation heard that, when schools provide young people with a good education on religion and belief, the potential for tension and friction in multi-faith communities is reduced. The inquiry found that a strong RE-based community ethic exists in many schools and colleges. Its summary report, "RE and Good Community Relations", recommends how this approach can be made universal. In its review of evidence, the group heard from subject and community experts that understanding about RE in schools is often misinformed and inaccurate. The APPG summary report calls for:

- clearer school-based community relations and equalities policies on matters of religion and belief to help young people learn skills of dialogue and acceptance
- better and consistent good practice guidance so that teachers can confidently educate on intra-religious conflicts
- use of the SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on RE) and other networks to promote contact between young people from all backgrounds, including through youth conferences, linking schools and intercultural projects
- teacher training on the use of technology, especially social media, to help forge links between young people from different religion and belief backgrounds.

Chair of the APPG on RE, Stephen Lloyd MP, said: "Religion and belief are often portrayed inaccurately. Myths and stereotypes permeate the popular media and have become embedded in the national psyche. It is vital that all young people are armed with the right knowledge and facts to discriminate between myth and reality. Schools and colleges are a safe and trusted place to explore religions, conflict and world views in a constructive and positive way. There are a large number of excellent RE teachers in schools and colleges nationwide who are doing an outstanding job in linking RE back to their communities. This prepares children for the challenges and opportunities of multicultural life, and helps them live harmoniously with others. Ofsted no longer monitors schools' duty to promote community cohesion. However, there is an opportunity for RE to contribute to stronger community links and provide strong resource materials that support religious and non-religious diversity in our society."

Stephen Lloyd added: "This report shows how good RE can support a school's broader responsibility to create well-rounded, knowledgeable and adaptable young people."

# "Face to Faith"

## Video Conferencing at The Duchess Community High School, Alnwick

Introduced by Louis Spence, Head of RE/RS

For some time now, The Duchess Community High School has been involved with The Tony Blair Faith Foundation through "Face to Faith", a schools' project aimed at developing dialogue between students of all faiths and world views all over the globe. To take part, students must have studied an excellent introductory course about tolerance, a course showing that students can respect those they disagree with, even when dealing with sensitive topics. Through "Face to Faith", we have had dialogue on topics such as Women's Rights, Buddhism, Peace One Day, World Poverty, The Environment and What is Faith? Such dialogue has been with students in India, Indonesia, the USA, Canada, Israel, Palestine and the Philippines. Below is a response from a Year 10 student who was involved in the last conference on 14th March 2014 with the Philippines:

*Over the course of the past few years, The Duchess Community High School (DCHS) has participated in a number of video conferences with schools from around the world. Students are invited to take part in these conferences in which they can share their views on many different (and sometimes controversial) topics. Recent subject matter, discussed with schools in the Philippines and Bangladesh, included religion and the environment.*

*These conferences sparked some interesting, and also educating, discussions, which schools at both ends of the conference will certainly remember. The video conferences are an excellent opportunity to discover and learn about other*

*cultures around the world directly from the people who live there. You can also share your own culture and let people know about the way we live here in Great Britain.*

*The conferences are always very well organised and there's a facilitator between the two schools who asks questions and prompts answers so that you don't have to start the conversation all by yourself. Overall, it's an absolutely wonderful experience and it's certainly worthwhile to participate in. Despite a few technical malfunctions (the microphone never seems to work very well), it is always fascinating to have a direct conversation with a school somewhere else in the world.*

*In the latest video conference, between The DCHS and Xavier School in the Philippines, the main topic discussed was the environment and how it has an effect on our lives and the way we live. This was an incredibly interesting topic because one of the main themes explored was natural disasters. Here in the UK we all start to panic if a few inches of snow falls. But listening to the Filipino students talk, about the disasters that they have had to survive, it really puts everything into perspective. They described some of the effects of the severe typhoons they experienced recently. Houses were destroyed, livelihoods were ruined and many people died. It makes you really think twice before complaining about the snow (or lack of it, as the case may be).*

*However, they also explained how they coped with major disasters and they described the ways that they were prepared for those*

*situations and were equipped to deal with them, should they need to. Another of the major things that we discussed was how richer and poorer countries cope with calamity. The UK definitely has more money than the Philippines, as a country. But, after talking about it for a bit, we realised that, if our country was hit by a typhoon, we would panic and descend into chaos because we aren't prepared for that eventuality. Despite being poorer than us, the Philippines would reply more calmly and efficiently.*

*The discussions were very interesting and even a bit of an eye-opener. And, all in all, an excellent experience. They offer an opportunity that is just too good to pass up.*

Rachel Stephenson, Year 10  
The Duchess Community High School, Alnwick.

**P.S. Note the article in this Newsletter entitled "RE can reduce misunderstanding and conflict, a new report finds" for confirmation that the conferences described by Louis and Rachel comply with some of the recommendations advocated by the All Party Parliamentary Group on RE. In fact, the same applies to the educational initiatives described elsewhere in the Newsletter by staff at Queen Elizabeth High School in Hexham. We would love to hear from other schools in Northumberland engaged in similar work which promotes excellent community and/or international relations. As per usual, send all copy to [Linda.Papaioannou@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Linda.Papaioannou@northumberland.gov.uk) or Phil André at [phil.andre@ntlworld.com](mailto:phil.andre@ntlworld.com)**