

REView February 2013

National News

REC Newsletter February 2013

No-one with a serious interest in RE can ignore the fact that there exist very real threats to the future of the subject. If there can be a positive side to this, perhaps it is that it has given us the opportunity to find out just how many people from different sections of the community are prepared to stand up for RE and its vital place in our schools and colleges. In addition to the 64 diverse organisations that make up the membership of the RE Council, we have seen an increasing number of parliamentarians, academics and, crucially, young people willing to take a stand and talk about the reasons RE is so important. Tapping into this fount of enthusiasm and determination is part of what the REC is all about; initiatives such as the RethinkRE campaign (see below) can really help us build on this groundswell of support, asking people to take simple but effective actions to keep RE on the public agenda.

Sponsored Walk

Please join others who care about RE in one of the sponsored walks taking place around the country during May this year. They will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the RE Council, raise funds for both the REC and a charity chosen by each local group, provide an interesting walk in the company of others who want to support RE and in some cases create the basis of an RE trail for schools to use in the future. The dedicated Sponsored Walk newsletters give details of where walks are happening and how to get involved.

Three Faiths Forum – Interfaith Workshops

3FF's interfaith workshops help young people build religious literacy and empathy skills, while supporting the RE and Citizenship curriculum. Workshops include *Encountering Faiths and Beliefs*, *The Art of Empathy* and *The Art of Asking*, and enable students to develop dialogue and communication skills. For more information, please contact Sophie Loftus: sophie@3ff.org.uk

Summer Biblical Study in Oxford

St Anne's College, Oxford, will host a residential summer school from 27 July – 10 August 2013, offering two one-week programmes of lectures. The courses are suitable for ordained and lay worship leaders, students of theology and related subjects, and any individuals who wish to develop their understanding of the Bible through academic study. Prices are from £520 per week (residential full-board), £120 per week (non-resident); for all enquiries and copies of the brochure please contact Richard Garner: jrmgarner@btinternet.com

Westminster Forum projects seminar on the Humanities Curriculum

John Keast, Chair of the RE Council, will be speaking at a seminar on the humanities curriculum on Thursday 7th March 2013. The event, part of the National Curriculum Seminar Series, and will bring together key policymakers in the Department for Education with school and college leaders, teaching unions, publishers, universities, employers and representatives from cultural venues. With a particular focus in

History and Geography, there will also be discussion of the future role of RE. More information can be found on the Westminster Education Forum website.

ReThink RE

The RE Council has just launched a new campaign website; ReThink RE. Religious Education in our schools is under threat and action is needed to protect it. The aim is to see every young person in every school given access to good quality RE. The RE Council is urging those responsible for RE to **rethink** their approach. You can read more about the campaign, and sign up to support it at www.rethinkre.org

RE Subject Review for England

Under the present coalition government, an extensive review of the National Curriculum is taking place. There is a perception of need as well as entitlement for RE to be reviewed as well, in order to produce new RE documentation which clarifies the subject's distinctive place in the wider school curriculum as well as giving guidance about suitable content. As part of its Strategic Plan, the RE Council (REC) has undertaken to carry out such a review ('The RE Subject Review'), a significant outcome of which will be proposals that help teachers to develop and sustain high quality RE alongside the rest of the curriculum.

In July 2012 the REC commissioned an Expert Panel for Phase One of the RE Subject Review comprising four members and with Dr Bill Gent as its chair. The Panel met twice and received submissions from over forty expert witnesses who brought to the process additional specialist professional knowledge of the four particular foci under consideration. The Phase One Expert Panel draft report was presented to the Steering Group for the project at the end of October 2012. After further revision it was presented to a specially constituted Reference Group for the project at an Extraordinary General Meeting of the REC on 7th November 2012. Following that meeting, a final draft was posted on line for wider consultation.

The recruitment of Task Group 1 for Phase 2 of the RE Review has now been completed, the REC is now accepting applications for a second Task Group, to take a leading role in Phase 2 of the RE Subject Review.

REC Young Ambassadors Programme

The Religious Education Council for England and Wales champions RE at all levels - from students and teachers, to politicians and policy makers. REC is launching a new Young Ambassadors for RE scheme. The scheme will give students aged 11 - 18 opportunities to:

- share their enthusiasm and interest for RE and gain leadership experience
- give their perspective to adults who work to support RE at the highest levels, such as the RE Council and MPs in parliament
- develop skills in communicating successfully to a wide range of audiences
- build up relevant experience for college, UCAS or job applications

- meet and debate with other young people about why RE matters

The closing date is **1st March 2013**.

This was sent out to all East Sussex schools

Religious Education Quality Mark

The Religious Education Quality Mark has now been achieved by over 40 schools. Two pilots have been completed and account taken of the feedback from schools and assessors. As a consequence, the criteria have been revised and the processes refined.

Subject leaders and head teachers are very enthusiastic: one Year 11 pupil commented on compulsory GCSE, 'It feels a though we have chosen to do RE rather than someone made us do it.'

All the schools which have achieved the award are listed on the website www.reqm.org. If schools are interested in self evaluation and do not wish to apply for the RE quality mark, they can download the criteria as an improvement tool.

The RE Quality Mark is open to all schools and the cost of applying is £475. Schools' improvement budgets should pay for the application. However, if a school cannot afford to apply and needs financial support, there is some funding available. Please contact the administrator at admin@reqm.org and give details of why the school needs funding for the award.

The APPG

The All Party Parliamentary Group on RE is starting its work with an inquiry into the supply of and support for teachers of RE. Stephen Lloyd MP, who chairs the group, has sent out a call for evidence, to which East Sussex SACRE has responded.

Dr Barbara Wintersgill, who is the professional lead officer for the inquiry, has also prepared a more specific request for information from individual teachers. The MPs who have joined the APPG are all keen to champion the subject but to do so effectively they need information about RE and about what impact, if any, recent changes in education have had. They will be taking oral evidence in a meeting mid January but this needs to be supplemented by evidence.

Local News

REQM

The RE consultant will be holding a series of network meetings about the RE Quality Mark. The first two are being held on:

7th February at Cavendish School

6th March Dean's at Place Alfriston

Resources

The resources have now been moved from the Magnet Centre and are being held at County Hall. Information for schools on how to borrow these is to be found on CZone. The list of all of the RE Resources is on the RE discs.

Apart from books there are boxes on:

Christianity, Judaism, Islam

Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism

SMSC

Following the SMSC day with the PSHE team there have also been several requests for support with pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are being followed up.

RE in Academies

Department of Education Publishes FAQs on Academies and RE

The DfE has just published some long awaited but helpful guidance on requirements for RE and Collective Worship in free schools and academies. It is good to have this set of questions and answers about issues which SACREs, teachers and others have been asking about for some time.

The Funding Agreement for an Academy without a religious designation states that it **must** arrange for RE to be given to all pupils in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses that are set out in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph '(5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This means a syllabus that reflects that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

It also means that an Academy without a religious designation must not provide an RE syllabus to pupils by means of any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of any particular religious denomination.

The funding agreement should state that all pupils must receive RE – but there is no stipulation about how the school organises it. If the school has removed GCSE provision, that is legal but they must offer RE as a subject that is identifiable as RE.

This is the latest and clearest statement on RE in academies:

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/r/re%20and%20collective%20worship%20in%20acads%20and%20fs%20qanda.pdf>