

REview November 2016

National News

At the end of September and beginning of October, the RE Council was busy representing RE with NATRE and RE Today at the Labour and Conservative Party Conferences. We were encouraged to hear the Secretary of State for Education, Justine Greening, tell us that she was already aware of the Commission on Religious Education. The final report from the Commission, expected in mid-2018, will be designed to inform policy-makers, with its ultimate aim being to improve the quality and rigor of religious education and its capacity to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

News from Hansard

Craig Whittaker (Conservative, Calder Valley) asked the Secretary of State for Education, what support she is providing to SACRE's for developing syllabuses. Nick Gibb, the Minister for schools, responded that local authorities currently receive funding through the Education Services Grant to support Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs to develop an agreed syllabus for religious education). Local authorities will continue to receive funding to develop an agreed syllabus for RE once the Education Services Grant has been removed.

SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences may use resources that meet the needs of the local area they serve, such as the Religious Education Council's non-statutory framework for RE which can be found online at:

<http://resubjectreview.recouncil.org.uk/re-review-report>

The New 'Commission on Religious Education'

A high-profile independent Commission has been established with a remit to make wide-ranging recommendations to overhaul religious education in schools. The Commission has been asked to review the legal, education and policy frameworks for religious education in all primary schools, secondary schools and further education colleges in England.

The establishment of the Commission comes at a critical time for religious education, and its work will be vital. A series of recent reports have noted the state of religious education with increasing concern, making a thorough review of the subject essential. The Commission's work has been made even more essential by the Government's programme of educational reform.

The current intention for full academisation of schools means that there will be severe implications for Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs). The Commission on Religious Education will review this challenge along with the broader education and policy issues that affect religious education. By doing so, the Commission hopes to provide a new vision for the subject. The ultimate aim is to improve the quality and rigor of religious education and its capacity to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

The Commission's remit will cover four tasks:

- *To consider the nature, purposes, and scope of religious education.*
- *To identify the enabling factors that currently promote high quality RE, and the barriers that currently limit it.*
- *To identify what changes are needed to ensure the highest quality provision of RE.*
- *To ensure that recommendations focus on realistic and specific proposals aimed at both immediate and long-term implementation in the context of continuing educational reform.*

Specific areas – including the quality of RE teaching and learning; teacher

recruitment, training and continuous professional development; the public and professional profile of the subject; and the right to withdraw from RE – will all be considered by the Commission.

The Commissioners, all experts in their different fields, bring together a wealth of experience from teaching, school leadership, academia, journalism and law. Each of them has been chosen for their particular experience after extensive consultation on the range of expertise necessary for the Commission.

The Commissioners are:

- **The Very Rev Dr John Hall**, Dean of Westminster. Former Chief Education Officer for the Church of England, who will Chair the Commission.
- **Samira Ahmed**, journalist and broadcaster of a range of culture and religious programme and documentaries across television and radio.
- **Alan Brine**, Ofsted National Advisor for RE from 2007 to 2014.
- **Professor Denise Cush**, former Head of Study of Religions at Bath Spa University.
- **Esther Deans MBE**, Humanities KS4 Lead at Malmesbury School. Chair Stand Against Racism & Inequality, and Chair Bristol Standing Advisory Council on RE (SACRE).
- **Professor Sir Malcolm Evans KCMG OBE**, Professor of Public International Law, University of Bristol. Member of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Advisory Council on Freedom of Religion and Belief between 2004 and 2013.
- **Dame Helen Hyde**, Head of Watford Grammar School for Girls between 1987 and 2016, Commissioner on the National Holocaust Commission and chair of its education work stream.
- **Emma Knights**, Chief Executive Officer, National Governors' Association.
- **Juliet Lyal**, teacher at Cunningham Hill Infant School, St Albans.
- **Dr Joyce Miller**, Associate Fellow in the Religions and Education Research Unit at the University of Warwick (WRERU), formerly Head of Diversity and Cohesion at Education Bradford and Senior Lecturer in religious studies at the University of Wolverhampton.
- **Professor Eleanor Nesbitt**, Emeritus Professor in Religions and Education at the University of Warwick.
- **Dr Vanessa Ogden**, CEO of the Mulberry Schools Trust, Tower Hamlets.
- **Dr Farid Panjwani**, Director, Centre for Research and Evaluation in Muslim Education, UCL Institute of Education.
- **Dr Anthony Towey**, Director of the Aquinas Centre for Theological Literacy at St Mary's University, Twickenham.

The Commission will consider RE in all schools and colleges in England that educate pupils of any age up to 19, irrespective of whether they are mainstream, special or alternative provision, independent or maintained, and of a religious character or not.

The following areas will be considered by the Commission:

- *The quality of teaching and learning in RE*
- *The legal and structural arrangements*
- *The public and professional profile of the subject*
- *Teacher recruitment, Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development*
- *The range of school settings in which RE should be required*
- *The age range for which RE should be required*
- *The right to withdraw (parents or carers, pupils and teachers)*
- *Whether or not there should be a common entitlement in RE, and if so what the entitlement should be*

Teacher Recruitment Campaign

The second year of the Beyond the Ordinary RE teacher recruitment campaign generated some great results. Although we are waiting for the final data to be published for this year we can deduce the following from the September statistics from UCAS.

- Year-on-year, RE PGCE applications are up 14.1% versus September 2015, and successful applications are up 14.3%. This means 480 students are training to teach RE this year compared to 420 last year.
- RE teacher recruitment is closer to its target this year for the first time in a number of years.

We are delighted with these outcomes, and are keen to build on them for the year ahead.

For five ways that you can help to support the teacher recruitment campaign, click [here](#)

RE Quality Mark

The RE Quality Mark scheme continues to attract applications from schools in all sectors and phases. There are now well over 300 schools holding the award, and we are looking forward to new awards this term. Assessor training sessions will be announced shortly. The fourth annual conference will be held in February 2017 at Canterbury Christchurch University. Linda Rudge took over the management of the REQM in September.

For more information about the REQM, please visit the REQM website and follow the scheme on Twitter at [@REQualityMark](#).

Young Ambassadors for RE

The REC is delighted to welcome Lynsey Wilkinson, RE teacher at Redhill Academy, as the new Young Ambassadors' Co-ordinator. She takes over from the brilliant Helen Harrison, who led the scheme for 18 months; the REC is extremely grateful for all the work that Helen put into the scheme, which in large part led to the success of the Young Ambassadors' conference earlier this year.

This half term, schools will be asked to submit a mini-assignment answering the question *What does it mean to be a Young Ambassador for RE?*

RE teacher survey

The online survey on **the purpose of RE** seeks views from all RE teachers in primary, secondary and special schools. It only takes a few minutes to complete and can be accessed at: <https://bishopg.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/reteacher-what-is-re-for>

Please encourage your colleagues, including non-specialist RE teachers, to complete it as well. For further information, contact mark.plater@bishopg.ac.uk

Interact with Judaism

Interact with Judaism is a new digital resource about Judaism. It is the result of a collaboration between Jewish Interactive and RE: ONLINE Jewish Interactive have designed interactive apps and programs about Judaism that are used around the world. Now all the educator guides have been adapted and designed specifically so teachers and pupils in non-Jewish settings can access their products. Some of the digital versions have also been adapted for this project.

To see their interactive games, please visit the [Jewish Interactive website](#).

Hindu Council UK: Science and Spirituality

The Hindu Council UK continues to produce resources suited to the needs of youngsters trying to reconcile a rational science-oriented worldview with religious worldviews.

Understanding Humanism

Understanding Humanism is a website packed full of teaching resources about Humanism, featuring lesson plans, presentations, classroom activities, videos, and information on CPD opportunities. Teachers can also **book a free visit** from a humanist school speaker. In September teachers can find new lesson plans, activities, and humanist perspectives on a wide variety of themes, topics, and debates. To keep up-to-date with all the latest resources, and other news relating to Humanism, teachers can follow Understanding Humanism on Twitter on [@HumanismEdu](#).

RE Today courses

RE Today's latest CPD opportunities are now up on the website. This terms courses cover an array of RE related topics suitable for teachers of all key stages.

Primary: Teaching 3 Religions, Creative Primary RE, Understanding Christianity and Help! I'm the RE Subject Leader

Secondary: GCSE RS renewed, Understanding Christianity

3forRE Scheme

Culham St Gabriel's Trust still has places available on this scheme which supports those who want to do an MA with an RE pathway. Details of partner universities and how to apply for up to 60% funding are available from [Culham St Gabriel's website](#).

The Shap Calendar for World Religions 2016-2017

This renowned and unique calendar delineates dates from 14 world religions, as well as indications of people of faith. Available as either a printed wall-chart or as an electronic downloadable PDF, with significant reductions for multiple copies, this calendar is an invaluable resource for schools, universities, hospitals, the police service, prisons, law firms or anyone who needs to deal with multi faith Britain. The Shap Calendar for World Religions 2016-2017 is available via the [Shap website](#) or contact Shap at calendar@shapworkingparty.org.uk.

Strictly RE

Strictly RE, the National Association of Teachers of RE's (NATRE) national conference returns to central London for another engaging and inspiring day. Dedicated to all RE professionals, there will be something for everyone: from ITTs to heads of RE, subject leaders to headteachers and everyone in between. Enjoy a day full of thought-provoking keynotes and practical seminars filled with classroom-ready ideas. 28th January 2017, St Paul's 200 Aldergate, London EC1A 4HD
Price: £175 Visit the [NATRE website](#) to book your place today

Since 9/11 National Education Conference

The SINCE 9/11 National Education Conference offers a unique opportunity for school leaders across the country to come together to discuss how to promote tolerance, and respect for all faith and religions. The conference will be held on Friday 27 January, with opportunities to access free classroom resources, network with other school leaders and hear from inspiring speakers on:

- Whole school approaches to meeting the prevent duty and promoting fundamental British values
- How to tackle controversial and socially sensitive topics in the classroom and beyond
- The role of schools in bringing together communities.

To register for the conference, and access the education programme online, visit www.SINCE911.com

Local News

Understanding Christianity

Following the 2014 HMI report on RE 'Realising the Potential' and the Church of England report 'Making a Difference', the Church of England in collaboration with RE Today set about writing a new set of resources to support the teaching of

Christianity in schools. This is a substantial resource and requires 15 hours of training to ensure that teachers fully understand the methodology used and the key Christian concepts to be explored.

'The key purpose of this project is to help all teachers support pupils in developing their own thinking and their understanding of Christianity, as a contribution to their understanding of the world and their own experience within it.

We aim to see pupils leave school with a coherent understanding of Christian belief and practice. Pupils from 4-14 explore the significant theological concepts within Christianity as part of developing their wider religious, theological and cultural literacy.

We seek to support teachers in developing their own knowledge and understanding of Christianity theology to be able to teach with confidence.

Who is Understanding Christianity for?

For every teacher in Primary and Secondary classes, teaching RE from EYFS right through to KS3, laying down excellent foundations for further study at GCSE and beyond. It is relevant to RE in every classroom in every school, in Church of England and in Community, Academy and Free schools.'

The Church of England

The Aims of Understanding Christianity

- to enable pupils to learn about and understand Christianity as a living world faith by exploring core theological concepts
- to enable pupils to develop knowledge and skills in making sense of biblical texts and to understand their impact in the lives of Christians
- to develop pupils' abilities to connect, critically reflect upon, evaluate and apply their learning to their own growing understanding of Christianity, of religion and belief more widely, of themselves, the world and human experience.

'We want all teachers to have everything that they need to be able to teach Understanding Christianity well. When you attend one of our accredited training courses you will be given the Understanding Christianity resources packed with a huge range of thoughtful and engaging teaching and learning ideas and materials.'
RE Today

The materials include:

- a Teacher's Handbook
- 29 full units of work, from Foundation Stage 2 through to Year 9
- introductory booklets for each phase
- over 150 photocopiable resource sheets
- the Big Frieze illustration, setting the concepts within a wider biblical context
- picturing Christianity – a visual teaching resource pack for learning from global Christianity
- online access to additional materials and support.

At the moment groups of advisers, myself included, have already been trained and are beginning to train staff in both church and non- church schools.

Teachers in East Sussex will find the materials easy to slot into their schemes of work because unlike some authorities, we have been focusing on 'concepts' for some time and the units of work in fit well to our 'overview' and support the East Sussex discs.

The materials are heavily copyrighted and will only be sold to those schools who attend training. Passwords to access additional resources are also given out on training.

'RE Think RE'

These materials are now complete and have been placed onto a disc. The Understanding Christianity concepts have also been added to the disc to give teachers additional background information to these concepts.

'Twi-light' sessions for teachers are provisionally booked for 21st/23rd February 2017 to release these materials.

East Sussex Annual RE Conference March 29th 2017

Sadly our conference this year was fraught with problems from the word go.

There was a change of date, change of venue and then difficulties trying to find workshop leaders who could manage the changes. Added to this, the numbers attending were then not enough to make it viable.

Not wishing to be beaten, as this is a popular and important event for those involved in RE, we have now been given a new date of **29th March**.

Dean's Place is once again able to accommodate us and provide the required amount of break out rooms so please put this date into your diary.

Following the growing success of 'Understanding Christianity' we have decided to use this day to launch the new revised East Sussex Agreed Syllabus and to major on the Understanding Christianity materials.

You will note that Understanding Christianity requires 15 hours of training so we felt that it would be time well spent to use the day conference as day one of your training days. (Another will be arranged later in the term). Ann Holt from the Chichester Diocese will deliver the key-note speech and national trainers for this project to lead the workshops.

We shall also be able to offer the materials to those non-church schools attending at a reduced rate. Church schools who have not completed diocesan training will also be able to access the resources at the conference.

Church schools who have attended all or part of their training will have the option of either attending a workshop at their level or attending a workshop on Judaism.

Lilian Weatherley
RE Consultant to ESCC
November 2016