

REView February 2016

National News

The RE Council

Conversations with politicians and civil servants have suggested that there exists an opportunity for the reassessment of the subject following the publication of '**A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools**', by former Education Secretary Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead; **RE for REal**, a report from the Faiths & Civil Society Unit at Goldsmiths, University of London; and the report of the **Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life**, chaired by Baroness Butler-Schloss and convened by The Woolf Institute. The RE Council is keen to make the best use of this chance to try to effect positive change. It will therefore set up an independent Commission to look into the complex range of issues that relate to the legal and wider policy framework around RE. This will involve appointing a set of commissioners to independently investigate the issues and report back with findings and recommendations. It is hoped that the Commission will begin its work in mid-2016 and complete a final report by mid-2018.

Commission on Religion and Belief in Public Life

The report of the Commission on Religion and Belief in Public Life released last month, makes an important contribution to the growing debate over the future of religious education.

The REC is delighted that the report celebrates the role that religious education plays in preparing pupils for life in Modern Britain

The report calls for religious education to be accorded the same status as other humanities subjects, and for consideration for it to be included within the English Baccalaureate: these would be important steps and the REC supports the Commission in these recommendations.

The RE Quality Mark

The RE Quality Mark team are busy with preparations for the RE Quality Mark Conference to be held on Saturday 6th February at Liverpool Hope University.

This conference offers schools which have achieved the award, and those aspiring to, to come together to share their ideas. It will be an excellent opportunity to learn from others, including those who have taken part in classroom based research about how RE is having an impact on wider school development. The keynote speaker will be Dr Debra Kidd speaking on 'Curriculum with Conscience'.

NB RE Quality Mark Grants

Thanks to REC members Keswick Hall Trust, Culham St Gabriel's Trust and Westhill Endowment trust, there are a number of grants available for small schools (fewer than 150 pupils) and schools requiring improvement which would like to apply for the RE Quality Mark. The grants are managed by the RE Council and schools can indicate on their application forms if they would like to be considered for a grant.

NB Teaching Judaism Conference

The Board of Deputies of British Jews will be running a conference on Teaching Judaism for teachers of the new Religious Studies GCSE, teaching Judaism as the second religion. The conference will be held in London on 22nd February 2016, with Lord Winston of Hammersmith as keynote speaker, and presentations from chief examiners of the main exam boards. Teachers will also have access to relevant resources and teaching materials and be able to see an exhibition of Jewish life in the 21st century.

The conference fee is £200. To book and for more information, please contact Lisa Frickers: office@pajes.thejlc.org

Hindu Council UK website on Reincarnation

The Hindu Council UK has set up a website focusing on reincarnation, one of the key beliefs of Indic religions. The website looks at Reincarnation in relation to issues such as gender orientation, phobias, child prodigies, abortion and euthanasia. Visit <http://reincarnationuk.org/> for more information.

Interfaith Cooking Session

On Sunday 15th November, 20 women came to JW3 (the Jewish Community Centre in London) for an interfaith cookery session specifically for women involved in education. This initiative was organised by Nisa-Nashim, the Jewish Muslim Women's Network, Mitzvah Day and the Jewish and Muslim Teachers Associations and took place in JW3's demonstration kitchen. All food cooked during the afternoon was donated to a nearby homeless shelter. Saba Raza, a teacher at Firs Farm Primary School said that it was "a great experience and very important tool to help promote interfaith dialogue, understanding and respect between Muslims and Jews."

This seems like a really interesting idea. If anyone is interested in hosting a similar event in a school in the East Sussex area. Please contact Lilian Weatherley lilian.weatherley@gmail.com

Three Faiths Forum

3FF works with over 6,000 young people across the UK each academic year. Our award-winning interfaith workshops explore themes of faith, belief and identity, and allow students to ask challenging questions within a safe space. We are currently able to offer grants for our workshops to schools in London and Birmingham for Summer Term 2016. For more info contact siobhan@3ff.org.uk or visit <http://www.3ff.org.uk/schools/education-workshops.php>.

A new curriculum for Wales

A new curriculum for Wales for 3 to 16-year-olds will be developed with education professionals across Wales, with the aim of it being available to settings and schools by September 2018.

The curriculum's framework will be underpinned by four purposes and consist of key elements including six Areas of Learning and Experience, and three cross curriculum responsibilities: literacy, numeracy and digital competence, progression reference points at ages 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16 and achievement outcomes which describe expected achievements at each progression reference point.

Survey: Leadership, Religion and Society course

A new project '**Leadership, Religion and Society**' has begun at the University of Sheffield, which will engage with leaders from many areas of public and professional life interested in the equalities area of Religion and Belief.

The project and proposed course seek to engage with people working in many sectors including, Social Policy & Politics; Health and Social Care; Education; Arts and Culture; Religion and Belief; Journalism and the Media; Law and Criminal Justice.

The project team are inviting people to complete a 2-minute survey indicating their views on and interest in various aspects of a proposed course (taster days through to Masters level).

Free Conference: Alternative Visions in the Public Sphere

Alternative Visions in the Public Sphere is a free conference to be hosted by FaithXChange, a network supported by the Faiths and Civil Society at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Over the last forty years, understandings of the public sphere have been dominated by secular discourses. Literature over the last twenty years has identified a renewed visibility of religion. Yet religion is a culturally specific category, identified most closely with Protestant Christianity, and so talk of its return raises questions of hegemony. Alongside secular and Christian discourses, this symposium seeks to give voice to alternative visions, representative of the vast array of religion and belief in the contemporary world. Speakers include: Dr. Katie Aston, Goldsmiths; Dr. Daniel Nilsson DeHanas, King's College London; Dr. Jasjit Singh, University of Leeds.

Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

Spaces are limited and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. To register, please follow the link below:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/alternative-visions-in-the-public-sphere-tickets-20507265784>

NASACRE Conference and AGM 2016 - Shaping the Future May 17th 2016 | Central Hall Westminster | London.

Conference programme

- 11:00 Arrival, registration and coffee
- 11:30 Welcome and introductions
- 11:40 Keynote address: **The Rt Hon Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss GBE**
- 12:10 Question time
- 12:45 Business meeting
- 13:30 Lunch
- 14:15 Keynote address: **Professor Adam Dinham**
- 15:00 Discussions and questions
- 15:35 Table discussions/panel discussion
- 16:15 Closing remarks from Chair
- 16:30 Close

The Rt Hon Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss GBE, formerly President of the Family Division of the High Court was the first female Lord Justice of Appeal and until 2004, was the highest-ranking female judge in the United Kingdom. She has chaired many high profile enquiries and inquests. Baroness Butler-Sloss served as Chair for the recently published Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life: **Living with Difference**.

Professor Adam Dinham is Professor of Faith and Public Policy at Goldsmiths, University of London. He is also Chair of the British Sociological Association Sociology of Religion Study Group (Socrel), Professor of Religious Literacy, Diakonhjemmet University College, Oslo, Norway and Honorary Stephenson Professor of Leadership, Religion & Society, Sheffield Institute for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies, Sheffield University, UK. With Martha Shaw, Professor Dinham is the co-author of **RE for REal: The future of teaching and learning about belief**.

Delegate cost: £100 member SACREs; £125 non-member SACREs

For booking details, visit the **Conference and AGM 2016** page of the website.

Humanism and Agreed Syllabuses – the High Court Ruling

David Hampshire writes:

On 25th November 2015, Mr Justice Warby issued a judgement about a statement made by the Secretary of State for Education in relation to the new criteria and content for GCSE Religious Studies. The Secretary of State claimed that a school would automatically fulfil its duty to provide religious education at key stage 4 for all of its pupils if they followed the new GCSE syllabuses. Mr Justice Warby disagreed with that statement, holding that religious education is wider than that defined by a religious studies qualification.

Since then, there has been much speculation as to what the judgement means for Agreed Syllabus Conferences, Agreed Syllabuses and RE in maintained non-aided schools. Similarly, there is a question about how Academies and Free Schools should fulfil their funding agreements with regard to RE, where those institutions have no specific religious designation.

In light of this uncertainty on 28th December 2015 the government issued updated guidance entitled: **Guidance for schools and awarding organisations about the Religious Studies GCSE.**

SACRE advice about Ramadan 2016

Denise Chaplin writes:

Many SACREs provide advice to schools annually on catering for the needs of their Muslim pupils during Ramadan. For this academic year, it would be timely to issue advice earlier than usual.

It is very important for many Muslim families that their children should begin participating in the practice of fasting at an early age. Most children of secondary school age, as they are considered adult members of their communities, will be expected to fast and many primary school children will be fasting as well with younger pupils fasting possibly for part of Ramadan, or only on certain days of each week, teachers therefore need to bear in mind that the routine of Muslim families is entirely different during Ramadan. The whole household will be awake much earlier in the morning and will stay up later at night, particularly when, as in 2016, Ramadan falls in the summer months with long daylight hours.

Young children may well become more tired or excitable in school during this time even if they are not fasting themselves. Those students who are fasting may become very tired and thirsty during the school day.

Ramadan will fall this summer at the hottest time, when the days are at their longest and pupils in local schools are doing public and internal exams and tests, so it is important to get the advice out as soon as possible. It is to everyone's benefit if education providers aim to reduce any disadvantages by considering how best to support staff and students during periods of fasting that clash with the exam season.

Schools will be aware that pupils observing the fast will have consumed their last food and drink before dawn, which could mean as early as 3am. Given the importance of hydration for maintaining concentration, it would not be surprising if exam performance was to suffer. Clearly, exam candidates who are fasting will be at an unfair disadvantage going into their exams having consumed no food or water for some hours, this could mean not only lower grades for individual pupils but also poorer performance for their schools in league tables.

It is highly unlikely that exam boards will consider it practicable to rearrange exam timetables

to avoid daylight hours during Ramadan. However, it is understood that talks are taking place between teaching unions, the Joint Council for Qualifications and leading Muslim groups to see if anything can be done to reduce the impact on affected students.

For other year groups, it may be that internal school exam schedules could be retimed to ensure that students do not have too many exams on the same day, or that special arrangements are made to allow some students to sit certain exams at different times. School plans for other exam arrangements, such as revision sessions and the location of rooms could be reviewed to minimise the impact on those who are fasting.

If pupils are normally allowed to take food and drink into an exam room, it would be considerate where possible to allocate a separate exam room for fasting pupils so they are not distracted by others who might have water bottles or snacks on their desks.

Muslim SACRE representatives in partnership with local mosques may be able to provide further local advice to parents about deferring some days of the fast to after exams, so that students are able to achieve the best possible outcomes.

The Islamic calendar is lunar and has 354 or 355 days. Therefore precise dates cannot be forecast as they depend on the sighting of the moon. In 2016, Ramadan begins on June 6th or 7th. Prayer times for June and July will be found on many mosque websites. Id-ul-Fitr (the festival marking the end of Ramadan) will fall on July 7th (plus or minus 1 day).

RE Curriculum Design – a joint conference by NASACRE and AREIAC

Sushma Sahajpal gives a perspective on the joint NASACRE/AREIAC conference held in November. This conference brought together three highly respected RE professionals, **Derek Holloway, Dilwyn Hunt and Pat Hannam** to share respective approaches to building an RE Curriculum 'fit for purpose' in 2015/6. Whilst their work was presented in far greater depth, this article offers a very brief flavour of some key points. The three approaches may be broadly summarised as the pragmatist, the idealist and the philosopher.

- 1. Derek (pragmatic approach)** suggested 5 years on, a drastic reframe was needed due to:
 - reduction in funding
 - other subject curricula (e.g History has only 10 pages)
 - society becoming less religiously literate
 - pressure of Government 'Prevent' and 'British Values' initiatives
 - increased GCSE focus on belief and practiceand presented a '**minimalist**' **NSFRE-based model**, comprising:
 - **A core purpose** - 2 suggested aims: Knowledge/Understanding of a range of religions AND ability to express ideas on the impact of religions/worldviews
 - **Focus on knowledge mastery** - pared down to essential connected knowledge units
 - **Simple definitions of attainment, progress and process of learning** - 3 suggested end of KS outcomes per concept: Developing, Secure & Excelling, and 1 suggested strategy: enquiry method using EAG (Expert Advisory Group) sample questions.
- 2. Dilwyn (idealist approach)** aimed for **purity of the academic subject** where:
 - **Curriculum supplied the 'heavy lifting' for the Primary/non-specialist teacher** – by delivering a progressive model of key concepts per faith with precise specifications of knowledge (**which** concepts, through **which stories/festivals/etc.** to **what level of meaning**) to be secured at each key stage
 - **Assessment** is used to identify whether knowledge 'installed' is right or wrong as a simple yes/no.
- 3. Pat (philosophical approach)** stated that RE must meet the same 3 needs as Education itself: **Academic, Social and Self developmental** and suggests:

- The Objective for students is to **enquire into concepts with increasing skill and depth**
- Defining a **minimum vocabulary and concepts coverage** for each faith
- Progression is defined by mastery of skills and processes necessary to enquire into what it means to live a human (religious or non-religious) life.
- A **single attainment target**: Interpreting religion in relation to human experience

Conclusions

Each model offered stimulating insights that SACREs might consider useful in their own discussions:

- From Derek the need to stay grounded in the real world, to be practical, clear and succinct in whatever is published.
- From Dilwyn the need to take the burden of choice and level of content off non-specialists by having detailed, coherent, well-resourced specifications available.
- From Pat the importance of balancing theological knowledge with philosophical enquiry; to plan and assess for an educated appreciation of what it means to be both religious and human, educated in the wider sense.

Local News

GCSE Results

SACRE was pleased to see the sustained picture of GCSE results this year.

Schools in East Sussex who entered candidates had results in line with or above the national average. Well done to those schools and please pass on congratulations to staff and pupils alike.

Some schools however are still not meeting their statutory obligation.

In these difficult and uncertain times it is more, not less important that all students receive their legal entitlement to RE in accordance with an Agreed Syllabus.

The East Sussex Agreed Syllabus clearly states:

‘ Schools should provide a continuity of provision of RE from KS3 for ALL students which is progressive and rigorous. Schools can make this possible by providing access to courses leading to qualifications that meet legal requirements’.

Courses

Dates for your Diary

May 5th

This will be a day course on Assessment in RE. Schools who partake will be given the completed new materials on assessment. Schools who attended the conference have already received materials on Assessment in Christianity

The Agreed Syllabus

Work will begin on reviewing the current agreed syllabus in April. With all what is happening nationally it was agreed that the current document would only be updated rather than rewritten. Please see above the latest National comments.