

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SUBJECT LEADERS' NEWSLETTER

For Primary & Secondary Schools
January 2024

Introduction

Dear Colleagues,

Happy New Year!

I do hope that everyone had opportunity over the school break to have some time for relaxation and refreshment despite the busyness of the time of year and all the bugs that were flying around!

In my church, specifically at Messy Church, we picked up the tradition of 'Posada' once again. This was something we had done pre pandemic but for obvious reasons we had not been able to do it for the last few years. Posada is a tradition originally from Mexico and the word 'posada' translates to 'dwelling' or 'lodging'. It celebrates the journey of Mary and Joseph - accompanied by an angel to watch over them - as they travel from Nazareth, their home, to Bethlehem. The 3 figures travel from home to home in a local community, with each home and family giving 'shelter' to the characters. We provide a diary to go with our posada figures and some of the reflections people write are very inspiring, others are more mundane, but all equally precious. The figures are brought to church on Christmas Eve and a baby Jesus figure is placed with them on Christmas Day.

This time, a number of reflections in the diary were about journeys. Here are a few:

'We will reflect on our own journey, spiritually and physically as we walk the posada through the snow to the next hosts'.

'We took the posada figures to meet the rest of our family in the Peak District when we met for a meal. We talked about Mary and Joseph and the journey they had to make. It must have been very hard for them.'

'As we looked at the posada figures as a family, we talked about the long journey Mary and Joseph had to go on. Sometimes journeys are hard and sometimes they are easy, but we decided this was a hard one for Mary and Joseph, but God was watching over them (the angel).'

If you are interested in this idea of the 'Posada' to share in your school community next Christmas do let me know.

I hope that your journey through RE in your school will be inspiring this coming year. Some of you have new (or fairly new) agreed syllabi to support your RE planning, others can anticipate a new agreed syllabus and of course we will have a new diocesan syllabus launched in April. These, alongside 'Understanding Christianity' support our journey in schools to provide the very best RE we can to support our children in their spiritual development, but also in their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Thank you for all that you do to inspire children and young people on their journey of discovery through RE. It is not always an easy task, but one that is vital as they journey through their lives in the here and now, and as they mature into the adults of the future.

Do let me know if I can support you with anything that you are doing or planning to do in RE. Please let me know of the great RE happening in your school so that I can include it in future editions of this newsletter. It is great to be part of a community that inspires one another and your great idea might just inspire someone else to develop RE a little bit more in their school.

I wish you all a happy and healthy term and look forward to seeing you soon.
All good wishes
Jane

Jane Lewis

Assistant Diocesan Director of Education

SIAMS, RE and Collective Worship Adviser - Diocese of Peterborough

E-mail: jane.lewis@peterborough-diocese.org.uk



Dates for your Diary		CPD Opportunities	
Course	Date and Time	Venue	Trainer
OFSTED & the improvement of RE	Tuesday 30 th January 1.00pm - 3.15pm	Via Zoom	Ian Nicholson (RE Today Staff team)
Understanding Christianity Day 2 The second of 3 days training. <i>(Participants will have attended day 1 in the autumn term and must attend all 3 days)</i>	Thursday 15 th February 9.30am - 3.30pm	Hayfield Cross C of E School Hayfield Crescent, Kettering, NN15 5FJ	Jane Lewis
Holy Week & Easter in the classroom	Tuesday 27 th February 9.00am-11.15am	Via Zoom	Ian Nicholson (RE Today staff team)
Primary RE subject leaders Network Meeting	Thursday 29 th February 4.15-5.30pm	Via Zoom	Jane Lewis
New to RE leadership	Thursday 7 th March 9.30am-3.30pm	Hayfield Cross C of E School Hayfield Crescent, Kettering, NN15 5FJ	Jane Lewis
SIAMS Update for head teachers <i>(This session will focus specifically on SIAMS self-evaluation in the 2023 SIAMS Framework)</i>	Tuesday 12 th March 1.30 - 3.00pm	Via Zoom	Jane Lewis
Early summer term Book in your calendars now!			
Understanding Christianity Day 3 Training <i>(For those who have attended days 1 & 2)</i>	Tuesday 23 rd April (Please note change of date) 9.30am-3.30pm	Hayfield Cross CE Primary School	Jane Lewis
Diocese of Peterborough Launch of RE syllabus 2024-2029 <i>(See more details in newsletter - a charge will be made for all participants)</i>	Tuesday 30 th April 9.30am-3.30pm	Kettering Park Hotel Kettering Parkway Kettering NN15 6XT	Stephen Pett/Fiona Moss (RE Today staff team)
Learning about non-religious worldviews	Thursday 23 rd May 1.00pm-3.15pm	Via Zoom	Ian Nicholson (RE Today staff team member)

For further details, costs and bookings please go to the website:
<http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/news-and-events/events?tags=school>
or contact Alex on 01604 887060 or e-mailing: education@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

RE Training

Launch of Diocesan Syllabus for The Diocese of Peterborough (2024-2029)

Join us on:
Tuesday April 30th 2024
At
The Kettering Park Hotel
Kettering Parkway
NN15 6XT

For the launch of the revised RE Syllabus for Church schools in
the Diocese of Peterborough
With

Stephen Pett & Fiona Moss
(RE Today staff team)

Alongside the launch of the syllabus, there will be workshops to
support the teaching and development of the units in schools.

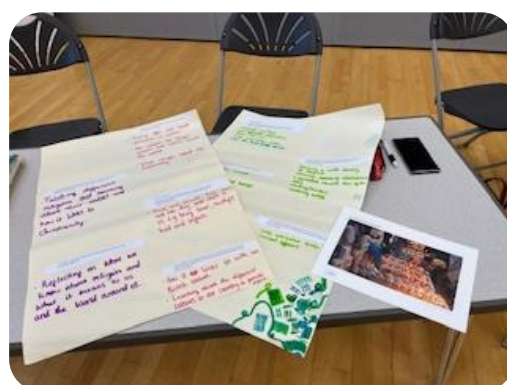
This event is for primary and secondary teachers of RE.

Cost: £150.00 per school representative

For further details, costs and bookings please go to the website:
[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfKKBh8QbHieVrp01v0Ayk
mx0p2Z3M8YFpu8NdMrhAb0nyzBA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfKKBh8QbHieVrp01v0Ayk mx0p2Z3M8YFpu8NdMrhAb0nyzBA/viewform)

We look forward to welcoming you to this key RE event in 2024.

Teachers **new to working in Church schools** spent a day in October at Hayfield Cross CE Primary School. Part of the day was spent exploring the importance of RE in the church school and Paige, RE leader at Hayfield Cross, shared some of the wonderful work they do to develop RE in the classroom. The introductory session looked at the National C of E Statement of Entitlement for RE. Delegates considered the aims of RE from the document and then suggested examples of RE in the classroom that would work towards fulfilling that aim. Teachers then engaged in some of the activities used at Hayfield Cross in delivering high quality RE.



Training from RE Today

We are delighted that RE Today are part of our training offer once again. It has been so good to see RE leaders attending the online training run by Lat Blaylock, during the autumn term.

In September, he led a session on '**Creativity in RE**' - there were some fantastic ideas offered for pupils across the primary school to inspire and motivate the delivery of high quality RE.

The session on '**Islam and Muslims**' provided some great ideas for teaching this important world religion. Teachers at both key stage 1 and 2



were inspired to explore creative approaches to teaching a range of aspects of Islam, and what it means to be a Muslim in today's world.

Lat is no longer working for RE Today on a full time basis (he is now semi-retired!) but we welcome **Ian Nicholson**, a new team member at RE Today, who will be leading the RE Today training sessions through the rest of the year. We hope that teachers will continue to support these training events as we seek to continue providing high quality RE in our schools.

Comments from teachers attending RE Today on-line courses/webinars

I loved the story of Rais. I'm going to share that with my class after Christmas.

Loved the usable ideas to translate into the classroom. A range of ideas, across the ages in school, is brilliant. Thank you.

This course was really useful. I liked the different ideas and the examples of work. Particularly the different art work and how to extend children's ideas with the different stories. I wouldn't change anything about the course!

It's really helped with my subject knowledge in general too, thank you!
(Islam & Muslims course)

I've enjoyed every aspect of this afternoon. Lots of great ideas for teaching Islam, which would really engage the children.

Attending these on-line courses is so easy! They last just over 2 hours, you access them on zoom and the afternoon ones always end around the close of the school day so teachers can go back to their classes if necessary to see children out or see parents.

Sharing Great Ideas! Around our schools

Allyson Ford - from **Langham CE Primary School** has shared the following great idea around activities in the lead up to Christmas.

'The simplest ideas can often be the best. Our nativity trail involves a list of countries to find, a world map to find them, and nativity scenes from those countries. This is to emphasise that Christianity is a living, varied and worldwide religion. It ends with a dark cupboard that lights up to show a Nativity scene. Children are challenged to say which scene they like best and why. They are asked if there is a country that they would have liked to see included. This year the Nativity Trail ended with a nativity scene in a box to set up in the classroom - finding the box was part of the hunt.'



'This is a quick and easy way to make an advent calendar for our Year 1 unit. Decorate envelopes and put old Christmas cards with images of the nativity into each. The children are enjoying using it and talking about the events on the pictures.'



Many thanks to Allyson for sharing these lovely ideas to inspire learning about Advent and Christmas.

Congratulations to Gabriella Carter from Stanion CE Primary School who received the Bishops Award for RE.

Head teacher **Wayne Jones** writes: 'Gabby always works extremely hard in our R.E lessons and demonstrates our Christian Values. She is thoughtful and reflects on what has been taught. Gabby also supported the church council at the recent Headteacher Conference and shared a presentation about courageous advocacy.'



Really well done Gabby!

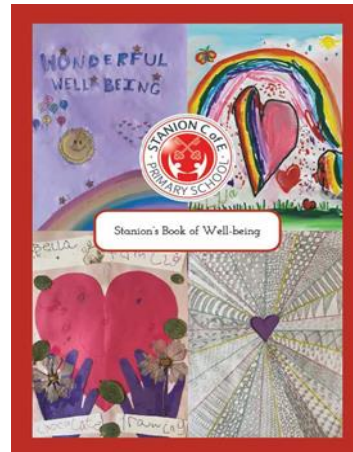
This photograph shows Year 1-6 pupils at **Hayfield Cross CE School** that received the Autumn term Bishop's Award, for demonstrating the Hayfield Cross school vision and living out the values of joy, fellowship and integrity.



These 2 contributions to the newsletter might remind some schools to let Jane know when pupils are given this award. It is a great way of acknowledging some of the fantastic RE work that pupils engage in and the way some of them work so actively as pupil leaders.

Stanion C of E Primary School Well-being project

Sandy Ettridge, who works with **Stanion CE Primary School** on lots of projects, sent us this report of a wellbeing project at the school during the summer of 2023.



'At Stanion C of E Primary School we have recognised the importance of wellbeing for our whole school and wider community.

The Ethos Committee and the Church Council have worked together to plan a wellbeing project that has culminated in the publication of 'Stanion's Book of Well-being.'

We asked the Church Council why it was important to focus on wellbeing, and we had a range of thoughtful responses such as:

"It is important to be happy and to enjoy each moment."

"Sometimes you need to find time for yourself, to find quiet moments so you can feel calm."

"You can live your life to the fullest if you are happy."

We agreed that a focus on wellbeing would be such an important and valuable ethos project, for adults as well as for children.

As a school, wellbeing is always at the heart of each day. We recognise that there are so many ways in which we can support the wellbeing of others and ourselves. As an Ethos Committee, we felt that it would be so valuable to share the many ways in which we can encourage positive mental health. Our vicar, Reverend Heather, worked with us to plan a range of activities with wellbeing at the heart. She planned activities to support physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, as well as encouraging children to focus on the beauty of each moment.

The children engaged with such activities as cloud-watching, making tree faces, searching for creatures and finding a range of tiny objects to fit into a small container.

Using a very small container or tiny box, see how many different things you can fit inside- each one must be different.

Who can find the most different things?

What was the most common thing?

What do you think is the most interesting thing?

What was your favourite, and why?

This was the contents of the container of Sonny and Dhrishav. What will YOU find?



As with all of our Ethos projects at Stanion, we followed up the thoughtful, inspiring church-led activities with an afternoon of wellbeing activities in the classroom. We focussed on the key NHS principles of wellbeing, and planned activities that encouraged everyone to connect, show kindness, be active, be present and to learn new things. We also considered the importance of spiritual wellbeing by finding those spiritual moments linked to 'Wow', 'Ow' and 'Now' that help us to feel happier, calmer and more at peace.

EYFS children connected with nature and each other.



In Year 1 and 2, the children focused on the different ways that we can learn new things, and created their own little books of well-being. The creative club developed sewing skills and found great joy in sewing their sock creations!



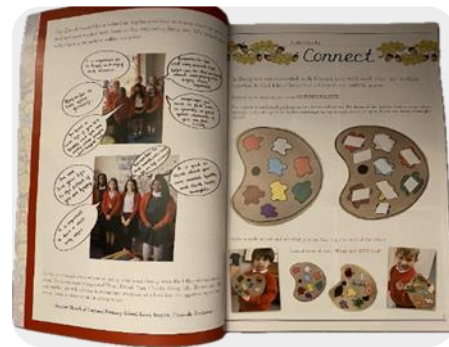
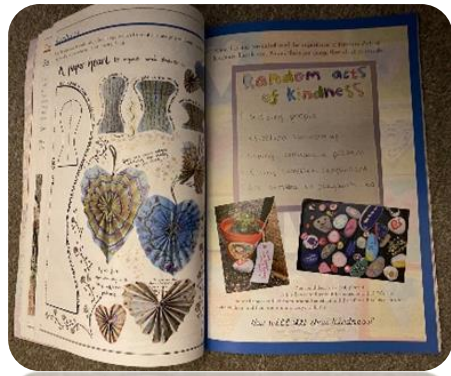
In Year 3 and 4, the children thought about the importance of showing care and kindness towards our environment, making bug houses and creating wildlife charts to encourage others to look for the beauty in nature- and to nurture it.

In Year 5 and 6, the children reflected again on our spiritual wellbeing with a focus on those WOW, OW and NOW moments that help us to feel peaceful, calm and happy inside. We found that by reflecting on WOW moments we can appreciate more fully all that is special around us. OW moments are those times when things go wrong, but with resilience we can make them even better than before. Enjoying the NOW moments means that we live more fully 'in the moment', appreciating the detail of the moment that is NOW. We created our own pictures to represent these moments:

We also took the time to write to all of our families, asking for details of the ways in which families support their own well-being. Staff and governors also contributed their own ideas, and we had a truly wonderful and eclectic mix of activities to share.

All of these responses have been put into a 64 page book. The result is a professional publication that has made all of us feel so proud. It is a wonderful book to read- and it is full of useful, creative, thought-provoking ideas, which many of us are using. Our Church Council were proud to launch the book at the end of November, and the book has gone on sale within the school community. Any profits that we make will be donated to a wellbeing charity, so our book truly supports wellbeing at every level.'





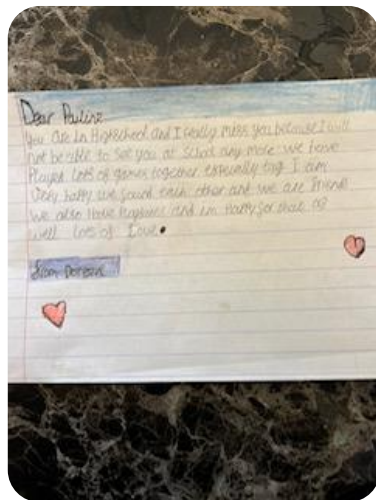
Many thanks to Sandy and the team of staff, governors, pupils and parents at Stanion for sharing this great piece of work with us. Anyone interested in purchasing copies of the book, please contact Stanion School.

St Andrew's CE Primary School, Kettering

Ben Arnell, head teacher at St Andrew's has a very active Twitter feed for the school! Ben regularly tweets about the great activities the pupils are involved in, promoting and living out their values and showing how their RE learning connects to life and behaviour. This work is carried out with the support of **Claire Barber, Diocesan Mission Enabler**. Claire's role is to encourage growing faith and spirituality in primary schools, homes and churches. The work that goes on at St Andrew's is another great example of how productive relationships between school and church (at whatever level) can have a real impact on children and young people.

This year the school has introduced a '**Love Thy Neighbour**' award. Children have to complete 5 of the 11 challenges over the year to earn their badge. Here are some examples of the challenges the children have engaged in.

September - 'Letters of Love'. Children were invited to send a letter in any form to anyone who has helped them, or is in need of some kind. Some of the letters were personally delivered!



Some of the letters were very BIG!



October - 'Shops and Services'.



LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AWARD

THIS MONTH'S CHALLENGE: SHOPS AND SERVICES

Is there a shop, a church, a leisure centre, a library, a cafe or restaurant or somewhere else in your community that you think does a great job with being helpful and friendly? Write a letter or draw a picture telling them, and drop it off when you're next visiting!

Send a picture of your letter/picture, with your name and class to head@standrews.pdet.org.uk to claim a sticker for the back cover of your passport. Complete five challenges to get your award!



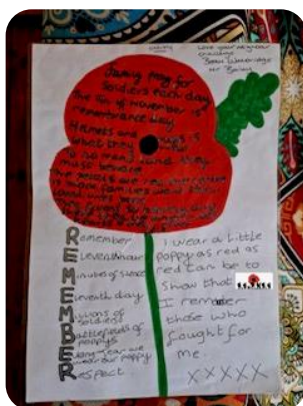
This little boy wanted to thank Kerry, in Asda. He delivered his letter to her.



A Y1 boy took some 'thank you' biscuits to his local fire station.



November - 'Remembrance Day'. Children were encouraged to write poems, draw pictures or attend a service to earn their sticker this month.



December - 'Christmas Greetings' - Children were encouraged to send Christmas cards to people they knew, local to them, who might be struggling at Christmas.



This card (below & right) was from a Yr 3 boy who sent a neighbour a card who had lost her husband the year before.



Many thanks Ben for allowing us to share this work you do. Anyone wanting more information about the 'Love Thy Neighbour' Award, please contact Ben at St Andrew's School, Kettering.

Great Addington has always taken its pupils from across the school to a diverse range of places of worship. The BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Hindu Mandir in Neasden, Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Bedford, Birmingham Central Mosque and Northampton Synagogue were all on the long term R.E Plan, along with visits to Peterborough Cathedral and local churches.

During the 'Covid Years' many children missed opportunities to attend such visits which we believe has left significant gaps in terms of their understanding and appreciation of a diverse range of religions and of cultural diversity in general.

When re-establishing the long term plan 'Post Covid', the school has not only concentrated on ensuring that current cohorts take part in these important educational visits, but that attention has also been paid to 'closing the gap' for pupils that were not able to experience exciting opportunities to consolidate and

give context to their learning.

We have talked about 'closing the gap' generally in English and Maths quite regularly of late, but at Great Addington we believe that this also extends to the knowledge and experiences gained from visiting places of worship.

Last year, we ensured that the departing Year 6, who were probably one of the most impacted cohorts from the Covid years, visited both the Gurdwara in Bedford and Birmingham Central Mosque, before moving onto their next phase of education at Secondary School. We have further 'catch-up' visits planned for this year focussed on the current Years 5 and 6 and this week (first week of January) we have combined visits to the Hindu Mandir in Wellingborough planned to coincide with the studies being undertaken by KS1 children, with a 'catch up' visit for pupils in Years 3 and 4.

Great Addington Principal Lucy Kingsnorth said, "The children in KS1



have been learning about Hinduism alongside their English studies based around India and traditional tales. They were fascinated by the customs and traditions so were very excited about seeing all that they had learnt about come to life. When arriving at the Mandir in Wellingborough, the awe and wonder that crept across their faces was obvious as they spotted the golden domes arching the roof. When inside, KS1 took great pleasure in telling the temple volunteers why they should take off their shoes and 'step over the threshold. As their class-teacher, I

was incredibly proud of the knowledge that KS1 had retained but also, so articularly shared with the temple volunteers. One worshipper at the temple commented that he had never met a group of children so knowledgeable about the temple itself and Hinduism. The children talked on the way home about what they had seen, their 'favourite gods and goddesses' which evidently showed the joy and impact the visit had had on their learning. Our thanks go to the brilliant volunteers at the temple who wisely spoke to the children and engaged them in such interesting facts. They were incredibly accommodating and we will definitely be returning."

Thanks to **Richard Meekings** and **Lucy Kingsnorth** for contributing this article. Do contact them if you would like more information about visiting these places of worship.



Sandy Ettridge, who works with a number of Church schools supporting RE and is a DSC, also supports **Meadowside Primary School**. She has sent this article about a recent RE project at the school.

'CREATIVE MISSION' RE project at Meadowside Primary School

Meadowside Primary School would like to share their recent whole school creative RE project, which has celebrated a range of religions, and has focused on all that we can learn from the beliefs of each religion in our everyday lives.

Maria Nouredine (RE lead at Meadowside Primary School) has worked with Sandy on a creative project that has shown the importance of valuing and celebrating the differences and similarities within all religions that are studied within primary schools.

The culmination of the work was to produce a large piece of creative artwork that celebrates the unique and special aspects of each religion, whilst also celebrating all that they have in common. The work also involved using sequential skills in art and DT, enabling a cross-curricular approach- with some rewarding and spectacular results.

We began the project with an assembly, with the focus on the importance of RE within all schools.

In RE, we learn about a range of religions so that we can talk about religion and belief in an informed and balanced way.

We learn about the unique aspects of each religion, as well as the similarities. We learn of the values that are important within each religion, and we find that compassion, love and kindness are important within all of them.

Most religions also address the issue of Creation, and agree that the Earth should also be treated with love and respect.

The work that we do will hopefully help all of us to gain an understanding of some of the unique and important aspects of each religion- as well as sharing all that they have in common.

Together we will create a beautiful picture that celebrates all that is special about each religion- and all that is special about sharing our beliefs and enjoying them together.

YEAR 6: BUDDHISM

Each of the Year 6 children created their own prayer flags, using the Buddhist prayer flag colours of blue, white, red, green and yellow. Their designs were transferred to fabric flags, and applied using a range of DT skills. Each design had a focus of hope and gratitude, and an appreciation of the beauty in nature.



YEAR 5: ISLAM

The children in Year 5 focused on the beauty in nature, and created beautiful landscape pictures to inspire us all.



In Year 4, the children created flowers using the Khanda symbol...

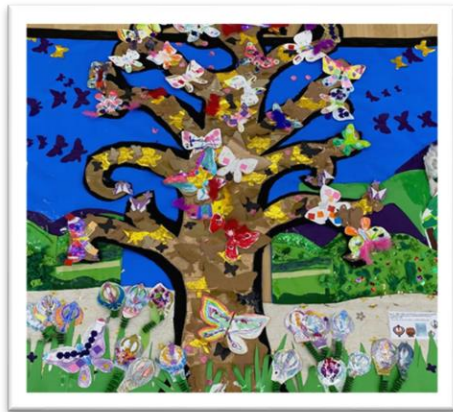
In Year 3, the children had been learning about Judaism. Their focus for the creative project was to focus on the symbol of the dove. The children created their own doves in a range of ways, and their watercolour doves were used within the whole-school display.



In Year 2, the children had been studying Hinduism, and learnt about the importance of the lotus flower as a symbol of life and purity. They created their own mixed-media section of water, and a coloured drawing of a lotus flower. Every flower is included within the display.

In Year 1, the children had been studying Christianity and they learnt about the butterfly as a symbol of the resurrection. The

caterpillar disappears into a cocoon and seems to have died, but then emerges stronger and more beautiful than before, symbolizing endurance, hope and life. The children created butterflies for a 'butterfly tree', with every child creating their own symbol of life and hope.



The children in EYFS learnt about the rainbow as a symbol of God's promise, representing hope and protection. Every child created their own rainbow, and they all worked together to create one large rainbow for the display, using a range of materials and media.

The work of every child has been used on the display, which reflects the inclusivity and importance of RE within the school. The children are so proud of the display, which also shows what can be achieved when the whole school comes together. The work is displayed on a huge board in the hall, seen by every child every day, which adds to the impact of the work.



Maria Nouredine, RE lead, shares the wider impact of the learning: "We are not a Church of England school, but the work shows the value that we place on RE and the importance of a creative approach within the curriculum. The project has shown that no matter what your religious background or your core beliefs, we can come together and work

National RE News

RE in the 2023 SIAMS Framework

We have had 3 schools in the diocese inspected under the SIAMS 2023 Framework. All of these schools achieved Judgement 1. In all 3 of these inspection reports RE was commented on very positively. These comments might be of help to other RE leaders as they prepare for SIAMS in the coming terms.

'Pupils speak positively about RE lessons. They value and know the importance of learning about Christianity and a range of faiths. They understand how this helps them appreciate the beliefs of others. However, opportunities to explore Christianity as a diverse, living world faith are not as well developed. RE days and visitors, enhance pupils' enjoyment of this subject. Big questions stimulate thinking and discussion within lessons. Reflection questions symbolised as 'blue hearts' at the start of each lesson allow pupils to reflect more deeply on the topics they are studying. As a result of good teaching, pupils make at least expected progress.'

'Pupils flourish in RE as it is very well led. RE is taught in a lively and engaging way using the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. Special RE days and trips to different places of worship emphasise the high priority given to the subject... pupils are enthusiastic about RE and are developing their understanding in different ways. They demonstrate good subject knowledge and this enables them to be prepared for the modern world they live in. A range of monitoring activities, including book scrutiny and learning walks has helped in the formation of an accurate action plan. Pupils' work is well presented and their books and class journals provide an effective record of their learning journey.'

'The importance of RE is recognised by pupils. They rightly say, 'we learn how to appreciate other people's beliefs and cultures'. This mutual respect ensures a safe space in which they can explore and discuss a range of worldviews. For example, they confidently discuss Islam and Judaism addressing misunderstandings between themselves. Visitors from world faiths enrich the RE curriculum and increase their understanding of key beliefs. The use of knowledge organisers and live feedback ensures that assessments are accurate and inform future planning. Reflection points during learning enrich and deepen pupil's subject knowledge. Consequently, they make good progress and thrive in RE.'

If there is anything referenced here that you are not sure about, or want to know more about, then do get in touch with Jane.

These examples show us the importance of RE in our schools. A wide-ranging, broad curriculum is key. The way in which different materials and agreed syllabi are blended together creates that strong, rich curriculum. Encouraging pupils to develop respect and understanding is one of the key drivers for RE and these 3 examples clearly show that is happening in these schools. For those of you in VA (or formally VA schools) it is important that you show how you assess in RE and how you know the progress pupils are making.

The SIAMS Headteacher briefing session this term will focus on SIAMS updates and specifically on self-evaluation for SIAMS. This will be on Tuesday 12th March 1.30-3.00pm.

RE Hubs - more on the hubs mentioned in the last newsletter

Have you used the RE Hub yet?

<https://www.re-hubs.uk/>

The content of the website is growing! There are 4 main themes for the hub: Equip, Link, Grow, Resource. The website lists courses and events, how to find a local RE teachers group, finding places of interest for school visits, school speakers, ECT/NQT focus, news and blogs and ways to get involved.

The areas of the website that are likely to be most useful are the ones that list places to visit and visitors. Listed for our region currently are:

Places of Interest

- *Leicester Secular Society*
- *The Open Centre, Derby*
- *St Philips Centre, Leicester*

School speakers

- *Jo-Elijah Sigston - Judaism*
- *Humanists UK*
- *Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal OBE - Islam (the website doesn't make clear exact location of this speaker so teachers need to check)*

We know there are others who visit your schools that some of you have personal contact with. Do please share with us who these people are and how they can be contacted. We often receive requests from schools about speakers or visits, especially linked to Islam and Hinduism, and it would be good to recommend.

Can you also encourage these people to sign up to joining the network promoted on the RE Hub website?

Speakers and organisations/places of worship need to obtain accreditation to be included on the lists.

Anyone interested in accreditation should contact marketing@regionalhubs.co.uk

Ofsted Annual Report

This is not the subject report for RE. It is the report by Ofsted that covers all subjects and all inspection areas.

However, some interesting comments are made in this report regarding RE, which are useful for us all to be aware of. ***(Do remember that these comments relate to community schools and VC church schools where RE is/can be, inspected by Ofsted)***

- RE in schools is generally of poor quality. Although it is a statutory subject, schools often consider RE as an afterthought.
- RE is under-valued in many schools. It is a complex subject, and the lack of clarity and support from government makes schools' job harder. Some schools steer through these challenges well, but most do not.

You probably recognise here the experience of colleagues who teach in non-church schools especially.



Ofsted found that:

- Many schools do not meet the statutory requirement to teach RE at all stages
- Pupils are rarely taught enough substance to prepare them to engage in a complex, multi-religious and multi-secular society (where religion and non-religion play different parts in different people's lives)
- Too often, schools do not teach topics in the RE curriculum deeply enough for pupils to develop a substantial understanding of the subject matter
- Non-examined RE is typically not high quality.
- All pupils should develop a broad and secure knowledge of the complexity of religious and non-religious traditions. It will take coordinated effort by stakeholders to improve the quality of RE in schools:
- Schools need high-quality professional development to teach RE well
- Curriculum publishers need to identify clearly, what pupils will learn and when, building on knowledge over time, so that pupils develop a deep knowledge of the chosen religious and non-religious traditions
- Government should provide clear expectations about RE provision in schools. Schools should follow these. Current non-statutory guidance for RE should be updated and include clear information for schools about the breadth and depth of the syllabus they are expected to teach.

Watch this space to see how (if) there is development on any of these areas. Some of you work as part of MAT's with schools that are not Church schools and others of you will work in a family of schools that draws in Church and non - Church schools. Thank you for all you do to support those colleagues with advice, support and resources.

National Content Standard for RE published

This was launched by the RE Council. A draft resource was published in November 2022. The work was then handed over to 3 teams to look at, and provide guidance for, syllabus writers - this is not something for use in schools but it is important, especially for those of you that use Agreed Syllabi, to know about this work. The guidance produced includes principles for the selection of content for RE syllabi. The headline seems to be 'It's about the standard, not the stuff'.

Currently one of the aims is to produce a handbook that will identify what high quality RE looks like. The final publication of the handbook will be May 2024.

'The expectation is not that all schools will include certain content in developing their curriculum for RE, but rather that the curriculum they develop will be comparable in breadth, depth and ambition to the standards exemplified in the National Content Standard.'

More information can be found at:

<https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resource/national-content-standard-1st-edition-2023/>

Resources

Faith visits on line

<https://birmingham-faith-visits.theartsociety.org/>

A series of online experiences for schools to undertake a virtual visit to a place of worship. The places of worship are in Birmingham and all 6 major faith traditions are included. Currently there are video tours of 3 religions - Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam but more will be added. There are videos, information sheets and quizzes. (The resource was recommended by Lat Blaylock from RE Today) This material is suitable for UKS2.

BBC 'My Life, My Religion'

This series contains 5 videos with the title for each one being 'What does it mean to be a...?.' Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity & Sikhism feature. Young people talk about their religion and what it means to them.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05pc1c9>

Lat Blaylock was involved in the production of these programmes.

Early Years BBC Bitesize

Material aimed at EYFS children focussing on different aspects of faith and belief and worldviews.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/levels/zt6svwx>

Religions of the world

Religions of the World is a collection of animated films exploring the origins and stories of a variety of religions.

Alongside each, there is more information about the content of the film, and suggestions of how it could be used in the classroom.

These resources are suitable for use with pupils aged 3-7.



Stories include:

- The Christian story of the first Christmas
- The Christian stories of the Good Samaritan and the Lost Sheep
- The Hindu stories of Rama and Sita
- The Islamic story of the prophet and the ants and the crying camel

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1pYRq2f202rqWHrp3ywhTyX/religions-of-the-world>

Educate against Islamophobia

A plethora of published materials for schools are available to support pupils awareness of Islamophobia

Early Years - a storybook and lesson plans - promoting equity, diversity and respectful behaviours

Primary - 6 lessons KS1/2 - to develop positive attitudes to diversity and Islamic identity

Secondary - 6 lessons - raising awareness of Islamophobia, explored through a range of themes - human rights, anti-bullying, media literacy etc

Free copies from: www.eai.org.uk

Linked to this material is that produced by **NATRE (National Association for Teachers of RE)** to help schools deal with the topic of religious bullying. There are 5 x 60 minute lessons for primary and secondary schools plus resources and films on which to base teaching within lessons.

They can be found here: <https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/anti-bullying/>

Real People Real Faith A series of interviews filmed in locations across Berkshire, featuring local faith communities answering questions about their faith. Two questions, specific to each key stage were asked and in most of these several people answered each question. This allows pupils and teachers to explore some of the diversity both between and within faith communities.

The same six communities were interviewed for each key stage.

Each film has a page of notes outlining the key questions and concepts, with a brief summary of the answers and some suggested follow-on activities.

<https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/real-people-real-faith/>

This production from RISE Theatre might be of interest to those schools looking to develop their eco status and explore how that links to RE.

EARLY BIRD BOOKING DISCOUNT UNTIL 30TH NOVEMBER!

RISEtheatre
www.risetheatre.co.uk

SPRING TOUR 2024

Discounts available for academy/cluster bookings

God's Planet Primary School Day
Now booking January to March 2024

An exciting, interactive day of performance & workshops for the whole school exploring themes of the **environment, climate change, God's love** for each of us & **how we can care** for God's AMAZING planet!

"So many of our children have been singing God's Planet with the actions and (they) will forever remember their day with your team"
St Edmund's School, Surrey

* GET IN TOUCH *
schools@risetheatre.co.uk
to reserve your date today!

Springs Dance Company – have three interactive productions you might like to consider running in school

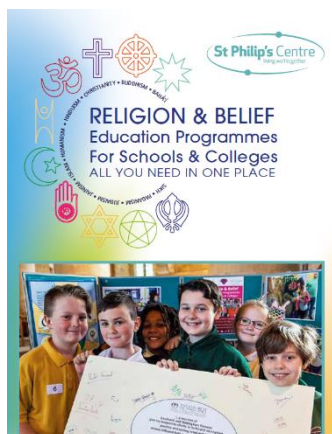
- **The Easter Project** - These much-loved workshops provide a fresh and exciting way to explore the Easter story. The workshops can be delivered as a one-off day or a longer project and can culminate in an informal sharing or performance by the pupils.
- **Creation** - Introducing the Genesis narrative of creation in a fun, inclusive and engaging way through dance. Children will have the opportunity to explore some key concepts such as who made the world, what God is like and the relationship between creator and created.
- **PARABLE** - This is a curriculum-based, interactive performance and workshop that reimagines religious stories, based on the parables that Jesus told. Adventurous, interactive and exciting, children will encounter and overcome creative challenges, accomplish tasks and influence the outcome of the performance, whilst absorbed in a vibrant world of professional movement, dance and theatre.

Other popular workshops include The Good Samaritan and You Are Special. Further details on all of our work for schools can be found at:

<https://springsdancecompany.org.uk/join-in/>

St Philip's Centre – Leicester

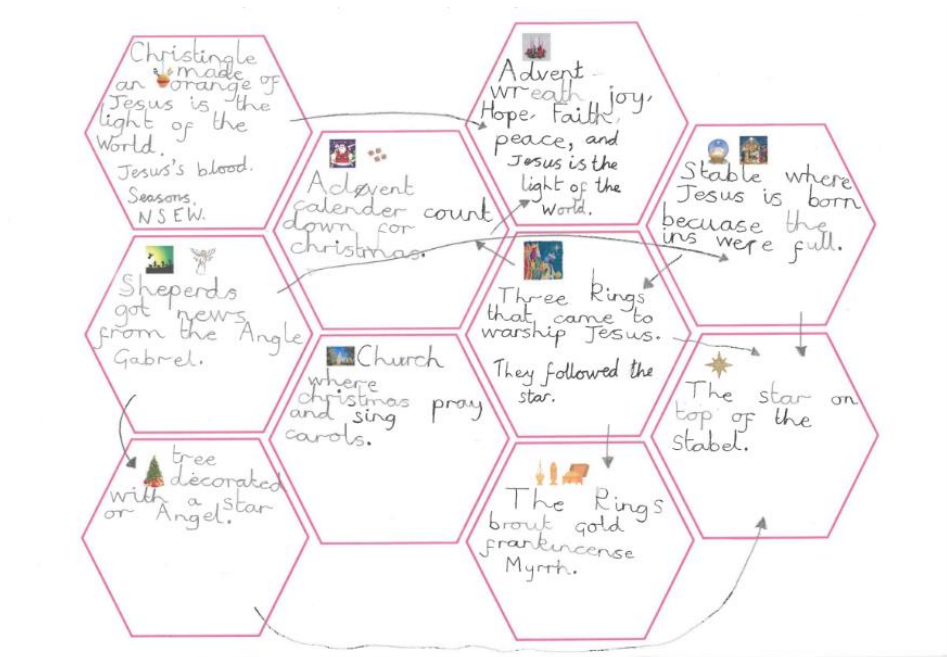
The centre provides many resource opportunities for schools to explore religion and belief. These include a religion and belief roadshow, food of faiths activities and exploring global Christianity. The full programme of what is offered is attached with this newsletter.



The work done by the Centre to provide learning opportunities for children is highly recommended. For a number of years I (Jane) hosted the Faiths Roadshow in the diocese where I worked previously. The faith providers are excellent and are a wonderful example of living with difference.

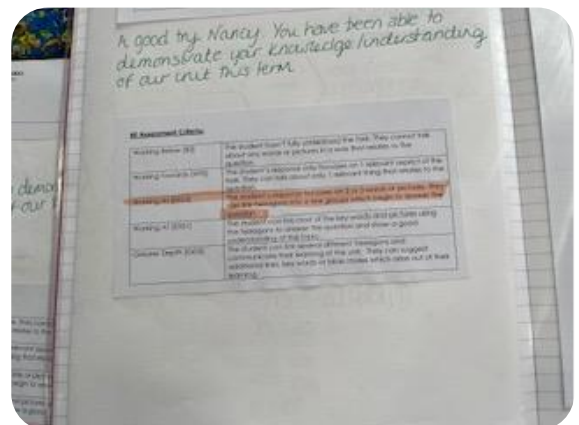
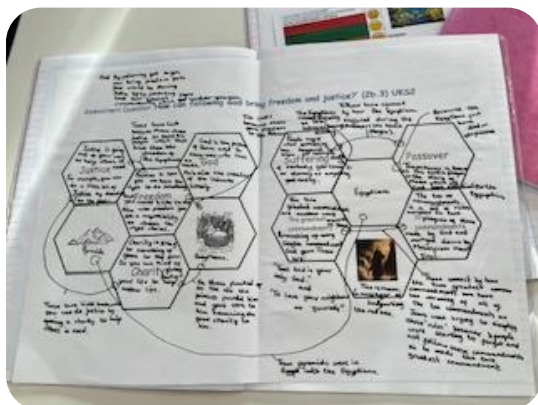
Sharing Good Practice

It has been great to see schools using the assessment materials that some of us worked on to assess Understanding Christianity units of work. Here is an example from **Emma Mercer, head teacher at Clipston Endowed CE School**. This is an example of a KS1 assessment, following the teaching of the Incarnation unit. The children were learning about symbols and representations used during Advent and making connections between them. Thank you for sharing this Emma.

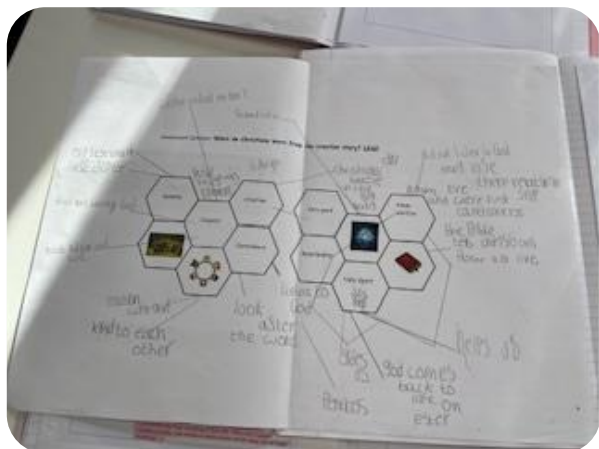


Kim Gospel, RE leader at Welton Academy has also trialled the materials and spoke very positively about them. Here are some examples

of how those assessments were presented. Kim comments on how easy the staff found marking the assessments. They have



simply recorded the assessment outcome for each pupil by highlighting a section of a grid.



Do pass on any other examples of where the assessment materials have been used to good effect.

Please share with me your 'Good Practice in RE'. I would love to hear from you and to include it in future newsletters.

Please also send me an email about resources that you have found useful in RE in your school. Again, these can be included in the Resources section and they might just be the resource that someone else is looking for!

I hope to see you at the next **Primary RE subject leaders network** meeting on **Thursday 29th February from 4.00pm**. **At the meeting we will take some feedback on the assessment materials. Further agenda items to be shared nearer the time.** Please let **Alex Benoy** know if you are able to attend to be sure you receive the zoom link for the meeting.

Jane Lewis
Assistant DDE
(SIAMS, RE & Collective Worship)