

Religious Education

Making every child matter

A key part of making every child matter is to value the children's faith communities. In this first issue of *Primary Subjects* Jean Brookes offers advice to RE subject leaders; then Paul Hopkins, Julie Grove, Helen Harrison and Claire Clinton offer some practical ways of weaving the ECM agenda into your RE lessons. These will give you a flavour of the work of the RE subject associations: what we do, and why we do it. Whether you are a subject leader or classroom teacher we hope you'll join us!



RE subject leader? You don't have to go it alone!

I joined the local RE network group to get guidance on assessment as, in common with most of my colleagues, I was struggling. My first port of call, of course, was the county RE Consultant and SACRE¹ officer, who invited me to join the network. I began to look forward to and enjoy the meetings, and now I derive three main benefits from the network:

Sharing

It was so good to meet other professionals in the same situation as me and realise I wasn't alone in my concerns and problems. It was a relief to be able to share my successes and failures with other interested colleagues, and some very knowledgeable ones at that! We could talk about any RE topic: what had gone well, but more importantly anything that had gone wrong – no one judged and someone would always have a helpful suggestion or answer for particular problems we had, or any questions we asked.

Interesting meeting places

In Lancashire, we have a Buddhist Centre, a Gurdwara, and other schools – great environments to take our time to find things out that we may be unsure of and make contacts to

support us in school. For me, this has been a really important part of being a network member.

Keeping up to date

Of course the third outcome of the meetings is receiving all the up-to-date information about things happening in RE – it's good to be ahead of the game – and be able to offer our opinions on questions and decisions that are being made locally, or in some cases, nationally.

If you are fortunate enough to have one of these network groups locally and have not yet been, I would suggest you give it a go. (You can find out if there is a group near you at www.natre.org.uk.) I know it is in our own time but it is well worth it, and you get a peaceful cup of coffee and biscuits after a busy day – roll on the next meeting!

Jean Brookes, NATRE local RE Network group member, South Lancashire

¹ Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education



A network group meeting



Classroom activities to stimulate every child's thinking

Video, visitors, enjoying and achieving

When you're trying to get children to understand how our beliefs affect our lives, the only thing better than getting a visitor into the school is getting six! One of the primary schools I work with wanted the children to meet with, and question, different local religious believers to ask how their faith affected their day-to-day lives. Nothing new in that, you might say, but the way in which they did it ticked several additional boxes (ICT, speaking and listening, working co-operatively) and produced a useful addition to our RE resources.

valuing children's faith communities is key to making every child matter...

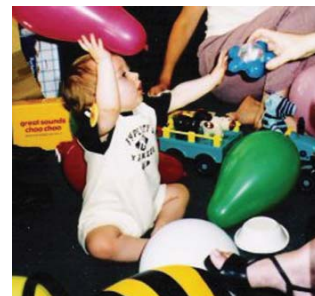
It proved impossible to get all the visitors into the school at the same time so each visitor was assigned an 'interview team' of about five pupils. The whole Year 4 class worked on questions using free open source mind-mapping software (Freemind) and then used digital video to record 'their' visitor, with children taking on the roles of camera operator, sound operator and interviewer. The video was edited, using an Apple laptop and iMovie software, to best answer the RE objective: 'What is it about my faith that changes the way I live my life?'. Once the videos were edited each interview team 'showed' their visitor to the rest of the class. And they have now become a resource for the school to draw on in future. There – three objectives in one activity ...

**Paul Hopkins, RE consultant,
NATRE Executive, AREIAC member**

Every child matters - a visual learning strategy

The child sits in the centre of an adoring circle of adults on his first birthday. He matters, but does every child ... and how? To explore these ideas, give children (of any age – we have used this with all ages from 5-11) photographs of:

- this child's first birthday
- a family in a different context and culture
- a child alone.



Invite children to suggest links.

Add to these photographs to make a set of ten, as different as possible, including at least one of a child in desperate circumstances; one taken in a religious setting and one of a child's grave.

Invite each of the groups to produce a diamond ranking using nine of the pictures, with the child whom they consider *matters most* at the top and the one they consider *matters least* at the bottom of the diamond. They must talk about and agree on the arrangement of photographs, including the one they discard as not appropriate for inclusion.

Use the finished ranking to stimulate discussion about how it feels to know that you matter; how it might feel to think that you don't; what makes caring apparent; whether being religious makes a difference; and if death stops someone mattering or makes the person matter more. Invite pupils to identify the word that expresses 'mattering' in the fullest sense ... love.

Julie Grove, Sub-Editor RE Today; secretary of NASACRE; former chair AREIAC. This is an abbreviated version of an article first published in *REtoday*, Autumn 2006

Reflection on how every child does matter in RE

The tragic case of Victoria Climbié's short life of suffering prompted the government's 'Every Child Matters' agenda, aiming for every child, whatever their circumstances or background, to have the support they need to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.

atheist, believer, agnostic – every child's voice is respectfully heard as they consider life's big questions

RE already makes a significant contribution. It is an irony that RE has been accused of having the potential to indoctrinate and harm children's integrity when in reality it is committed to the opposite. Taught well, RE encourages children to think



for themselves, to avoid the sheep-like mentality that leads them into situations where they are not in control. Good RE will encourage the development of critical skills, giving children the ability to listen carefully and with respect to the beliefs and values of others, while making up their own minds and taking responsibility for their own decisions.

Well-taught RE makes every child matter by putting them at the centre of learning. To *learn from* religion they have to reflect thoughtfully and be 'their own person'. We want children with roots and wings, the very things that Victoria Climbié was denied.

Helen Harrison, RE Consultant for Lancashire, NATRE Steering Group, AREIAC Executive member

This is an abbreviated version of an article first published in *REtoday*, Autumn 2006.



Listening to the children's voices: The Newham junior SACRE

Every Child Matters aims to help children to be healthy and safe; to think critically; and to make a positive contribution to their social environments. So setting up a junior SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) seemed to be a good way of involving schools in their pupils' spiritual health. Newham already has a SACRE made up of secondary students, and this has given our adult SACRE a way of listening to children's voices on the spiritual, moral and religious issues that matter to them.

Six interested teachers met three times over the summer of 2007 to plan the junior SACRE. Each brought with them between three and six children to represent different faiths. We used the Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach to consider and discuss a Muslim story written over a thousand years ago that speaks about humanity's role in looking after the world. The children thought and listened deeply, and created the most amazing work. Each made a clay footprint, then when it was fired wrote on the reverse the message that they would like to leave a footprint of on the world.

With their teachers, the children from each school are now running the project with other primary schools in their locality, and hopefully setting up a sustainable way of running a junior SACRE that benefits every child.

Claire Clinton, RE Advisor for the London Borough of Newham, AREIAC member

Who's who in RE education?

The world of RE is rich and varied! There are many supportive organisations, and in this first issue of *Primary Subjects* we thought it would be helpful for you to know who some of them are and what they do and encourage you to get involved.

National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE)

NATRE is the subject association for RE teachers, and is a partner organisation with RE Today Services.

As a teachers' association NATRE's primary audience is teachers of RE and all membership packages include a subscription to RE Today's termly mailing: the magazine *REtoday*, a themed RE curriculum book, online access to *Space for Reflection* and the professional journal *REsource*, all three times a year.

NATRE

1020 Bristol Road, Selly Oak

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tel 0121 472 4242

www.natre.org.uk



NATRE Spirited Arts Competition 2008

The 2008 Spirited Arts competition has been launched and details can be found on the NATRE website: www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts. The 2008 themes are:

- vision
- a fairer world
- spiritual stories
- giving thanks
- searching for God.

There are special categories for digital video and group entries, and entries from SEN contexts are also encouraged. Check out the entries to last year's competition on the website – and be inspired – your pupils too!

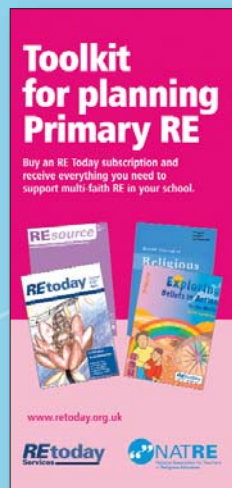
The deadline for entries is 31 July 2008. Send entries to Art in Heaven, NATRE, 1020 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LB.

RE Today Services

RE Today Services is part of an educational charity which works nationally and internationally to support RE in schools. RE Today supports NATRE.

RE Today publishes teaching materials, a termly magazine *REtoday*, and the *British Journal of Religious Education*. Its subscription service is a cost effective way for teachers to obtain curriculum materials and keep up to date with developments in RE.

Through its team of five subject specialist advisers RE Today provides professional development opportunities for teachers.



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REtoday
Services

NATRE supports local network groups

There are more than 120 NATRE-linked local network groups of RE teachers providing support, encouragement and professional development opportunities for teachers. Locations and contact details are available on the NATRE website (www.natre.org.uk). Why not log on and check out if there is a local group near you – or if the group you already attend is listed?

Local group training days

During the summer term 2008 NATRE is running a series of free one-day events for local network groups. They will be a mixture of training and sharing of your own group's good practice, and will be based in places of worship. Places are available for the second event:

7 June - St George's Orthodox Church and Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London

14 June - Wells Cathedral

NATRE is able to offer small travel bursaries for those unable to claim travel expenses. Places are limited and will be offered on a first come, first served basis.

If your local group organiser and up to one other group member would like to attend one of these events, please e-mail us at exec@natre.org.uk by 9 May 2008

Religious Education Council of England and Wales

The Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) has a membership of some fifty organisations of which five cover the subject association constituencies:

- National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE)
- Association of University Lecturers in Religious Education (AULRE)
- Association of RE Inspectors Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC)
- National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on RE (NASACRE)
- SHAP working party on World religions in Education (SHAP)

Together, they reflect a national collaborative network comprising different professional interests and faith perspectives (all the principal religions of the UK, along with humanists).

REC

c/o CAN, 1 London Bridge

London SE1 9BG

www.religiouseducationcouncil.org

Council for Subject Associations
A Voice for Subjects

