



Are we making a difference? – questions raised by a report about RE in Church of England primary schools

I like good news as much as the next person so I enjoyed reading the best and most positive parts of 'Making a difference? A review of Religious Education in Church of England schools'. The secondary school picture is very strong with the effectiveness of RE being good or better in 70% of schools visited, 25% of these being outstanding. Well done to our secondary schools who form a part of this encouraging picture. In primary schools, there was a recognition that where RE was most effective, it developed the pupils' expertise in understanding religion and belief, their religious literacy, whilst also fostering their personal development, nurturing a search for meaning, and encountering the Christian faith. However, the overall picture raises some questions that we must all be prepared to tackle together,

There was too much variability in the quality of RE both between and within the primary schools visited. In 18 of the 30 schools (60%) RE was not good enough. The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be good or better in just 12 schools (40%). There was little difference in the findings between voluntary aided and controlled schools.

How are we going to ensure that there is consistency within our school? More importantly, if there is not, how will we address this quickly and effectively?

A key weakness of RE in the majority of schools was the superficial nature of the pupils' learning. Too often teaching failed to challenge pupils with the depth of pupils' knowledge and understanding of religion and belief lacking, especially for Christianity. Their ability to apply higher level skills such as investigation, interpretation and evaluation was also limited.

Are higher order skills being promoted throughout the school but especially in upper key stage 2? – we have been working on this with your RE subject leaders over the past couple of years.

In the schools where the effectiveness of RE was judged to be good or outstanding the support of the senior leadership team and governors was a key factor in securing and promoting high quality.

Is your commitment to RE as strong as it could possibly be? Is it promoted as a 'core subject'?

In many schools, detailed assessment data was being collected about pupil progress. However, in most cases this data was unreliable and generated over-generous

information which misled schools about the real quality of the RE provision.

Are all teachers confident about 'the RE-ness of RE' – are the level descriptors at the heart of RE assessment? – we have worked hard with subject leaders to offer some suggestions for this.

In the majority of schools, the governors took RE seriously. However, there was a wide variation in the degree to which the governors fulfilled their role in checking on the effectiveness of the RE provision. In many cases governors had an over-inflated view of the quality of RE in their school.

Are governors confident about RE? Do they know what to look for in order to build a realistic picture?

In the majority of schools, the leadership of the school had a limited or inaccurate view of the quality of teaching in RE because arrangements to monitor it were weak.

Is enough time and resource given to the monitoring of RE in ways which make a difference? – we have given lots of advice on this especially in rolling out the new SIAMS evaluation schedule

One key factor limiting the effectiveness of RE in many schools was confusion about the relationship between the subject and the wider Christian ethos of the school.

What is the nature and purpose of RE in your school? (see the opening paragraph of this article for some ideas from the report).

In two-thirds of the schools visited, there was some training and support for RE. Most schools had access to the local diocesan adviser and/or local network group. However, the impact of this support in raising standards and improving the quality of teaching was very variable.

This is where the Diocese needs to know what would be most effective for you as we try to address any needs in training and support which flow out of this report.

This is an open invitation to let me know what you think would be the best support for you

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The link to the report in its entirety is

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2076944/making%20a%20difference%20a%20review%20of%20religious%20education%20in%20church%20of%20england%20schools.pdf>

Damaris Trust and Entertainment One are running a wonderfully fun and festive competition with an amazing prize of £500 plus film goodies for your school!

The Competition



Invite your pupils to engage with the narrative of the Nativity by writing **between 50 and 150 words** telling the

story from the perspective of the original nativity donkey.

Why should you enter?

- A £500 prize for your school
- Opportunity to engage with Nativity 3: Dude Where's My Donkey before its release on November 14th
- A thought-provoking and creative literacy or RE lesson for all the children
- Resources provided for a special KSI and KS2 school assembly

Question - What would the donkey have seen, heard and felt on that very special first Christmas day?

How to enter?

Choose the three best descriptive accounts from your school entries, then submit those three online [here](#), by **12 noon on Wednesday 12th November**, to be in with a chance to win this fantastic prize of £500 (kindly provided by Entertainment One)

Resources

- Go to www.damaris.org/nativity3/school to download a hilarious and thought-provoking clip from the film, in which the children explain the nativity story in their own words.
- Build the clip into your literacy or RE lessons – or use the complete downloadable assembly also available on www.damaris.org/nativity3/school



THE GIFT - CHRISTMAS 2014 - from Ten Ten Theatre

What is the best gift you've ever been given?

Who gave it to you?

Why is it so special?

This Christmas, Ten Ten Theatre is delighted to be touring schools across the UK with 'The Gift' – a fun, moving and thought provoking play which is perfect for the Advent season.

The Gift tells the story of Ally and Kate. Ally and Kate are twins. Through a "Gifts and Giving" project at school, Ally reveals that her best-ever present was a violin that cost her parents "over two hundred pounds"; Kate reveals that her most precious gift is a tatty musical box given by her auntie before she passed away.

However, as the story unfolds, Ally learns that valuable gifts are not necessarily the most expensive and Kate learns that one of the most precious gifts she can give to Ally is forgiveness. A beautiful Christmas tale - 'The Legend of the Poinsettia' - is central to how Ally and Kate learn about the true nature of gifts and giving.

The Gift helps children to discover the beauty of self-giving and sacrifice and to reflect on Jesus as the greatest gift we have been given.

Through the performance and follow up workshop, the Ten Ten team lead pupils into a deeper reflection on the true meaning of Christmas. The play and workshop is available for Years 3 – 6 and the full cost of the session is £350.

To book a visit by Ten Ten Theatre to your school:

Email: office@tententheatre.co.uk

Telephone: 0845 388 3162



WWI Remembered - Resources for Schools RE Today: Planned Investigations for the Classroom

see <http://www.westyorkshiredales.anglican.org/ww1REresourcesforschools>

UNITS

Unit 1 - Years 2 -3

What happened in the war 100 years ago
What can we learn about war and peace?

Unit 2 - Years 4 -6

What can we learn from the First World War in RE?

Questions about peace and God.

Unit 3 - Years 7 -9

War and Peace: How did the 1914-18 war challenge Christian theology and ethics?
How can Christians respond to these challenges?

Additional resources are also available on the website



EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN RE

It is interesting and helpful to see other ideas – they can spark off our own thoughts in similar directions or help us to try something new, knowing that it has worked for others.

Who do you say I am?



This structure is a "Who do you say I am?" box. This was painted black inside and collaged with pictures of Jesus at all different stages of his life. The children were invited to look inside then write their ideas about who they think Jesus is on the outside - this produced some fantastic ideas!

Christian Symbolism

Work on the fish as a symbol of Christianity led to an art project which was used in a Cathedral service and as a display which was used in the local church, and in school. Pupils designed and created banners which made use of the fish symbol, by using batik paint to create the water background, ironing on fish shapes which were then linked with sewing and other materials. The fish symbol was also used to create clay shapes which were then displayed on a creation themed background around the school.



ENHANCING THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

It is important to review the school environment once in a while—take a 'SIAMS walk' around your school and think about how you have created a distinctively Christian space in which to work, play and worship. Here are the names of firms which create crosses and other Christian symbols which can be used in the assembly hall or classrooms - there are links to some websites below whose work is of high quality and which are a little bit different.

<http://www.ribblevalleywoodcraft.co.uk/>



http://www.jonathonhemingray.co.uk/Jonathon_Hemingray_Sculpture/Home.html

<http://www.lindisfarne-scriptorium.co.uk/>

<http://www.wooden-crosses.co.uk/>

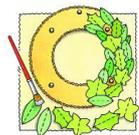
<http://www.bethlehemfairtrade.org/shop/index.php?route=product/category&path=35>



JOY TO THE WORLD, The Lord is come



An array of Advent and Christmas ideas and activities clearly focussed on the Christian message and designed for ages and stages can be found



all at



www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/advent-and-christmas-support-material/

Fill the school with as many messages as possible about preparing for Jesus, welcoming Jesus and celebrating the gift of Jesus at Christmas.



**ISSUE NO: 20
NOVEMBER 2014**

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES 2014



NOVEMBER

Thursday 6th November

RE Support Group Meeting—Diocesan Offices, St. Nicholas Church, Boley Hill, Rochester ME1 1SL
1.30 pm—4 pm

Wednesday 19th November

RE Connect for Bromley CE primary Schools, - SIAMS And RE (**twilight at St Paul's Cray**) please book with Lee Kings

Thursday 27th November
(see flier)

Leading Lights (repeat session for those who have not attended before) **1.30 pm—4 pm** Diocesan Offices, St. Nicholas Church Boley Hill, Rochester ME1 1SL

DECEMBER

Tuesday 9th December
(see flier)

Applying for the RE Quality Mark (REQM) **1.30 pm—4 pm** Diocesan Offices, St. Nicholas Church, Boley Hill, Rochester ME1 1SL

2015

JANUARY

Thursday 15th January

SIAMS training for Senior Leaders **9.30 am—12 noon** (beginners **repeat** of Distinctive Christian Character (first run in 2013) **1.30 pm—4 pm** (advanced **next stage** of training building on training run in 2013/14) Diocesan Offices St. Nicholas Church, Boley Hill, ME1 1SL

FEBRUARY

Wednesday 25th February

RE Support Meeting Wednesday 25 February 2015 - Bennett Memorial, Tunbridge Wells

Thursday 26 February 2015

Rochester Diocesan offices This meeting will focus on teaching Christianity using 'The Christianity Project' materials which are due out early in 2015.

Friday 27th February

Bexley— (more details to follow through the ASP)

Tuesday 3rd March

What is Distinctive about Spiritual , Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC) in our Church Schools? **9.30 am to 12 noon** and then again from **1.30 pm—4 pm** Please book the most convenient time for you.

*******HEADS AND CHAIRS BRIEFINGS*******

After consultation with schools there will now be 1 breakfast meeting and 1 afternoon meeting

Thursday 29th January

Breakfast meeting 8 am—10.30 am The Holiday Inn TN15 7RS

Friday 30th January

Diocesan Offices St. Nicholas Church, Boley Hill, Rochester ME1 1SL **1.30 pm—4pm**