



IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ABOUT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR ALL OF US

Sometimes someone else can say something much more clearly than you can say it yourself, here is such an occasion.

This is reproduced with thanks to Bill Moore who is an independent education consultant, part-time teacher of RE in a secondary modern school in Buckinghamshire and a primary school governor. He is also vice-chair of the Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) You can follow Bill on Twitter at @bjymoore.

It has been an interesting time for religious education with the publication of two reports on the extent and quality of provision in the last week. The first report “The State of the Nation” by the RE Council and NARE (National Association of Teachers of RE) focused on the extent of provision (or lack of it) in secondary schools. The second, published on Thursday 21st September, was the interim report “Religious Education for All” from the Commission on RE. This is the half-way report on the status, importance and place of RE in schools and the curriculum, both primary and secondary. Both reports highlight some good things in RE but also areas of concern and for development.

I suppose the question could be, and indeed often is, asked: “So what? Does it really matter?” This is an important and valid question that I would encourage governors to ask as they consider the curriculum offer in their schools. This article will, I hope, encourage serious consideration of the issues of RE in a secular education system – and in the context of the many faith and church schools we have. But before going any further, a basic – though in my view ultimately unsatisfying – response is: **like it or not, as schools it is our statutory duty to do so.**

This cannot be ignored, but read on and I hope you will see that it is *not* the best of all possible reasons...

Education is about understanding the world we live in – locally, nationally and globally. RE contributes significantly to this. Religion and belief influence all

aspects of life, sometimes negatively, but actually, in day-to-day encounters very positively. People base their lives on whatever their beliefs are – and this includes pupils in the classroom. As is stated in the Bucks Agreed Syllabus – used in the rich mix of cultures and languages in the school where I teach – RE offers an opportunity to explore beliefs that influence how we behave and the kinds of communities that we create.

Schools play a vital role in our communities. They are places where people of all backgrounds live and work together, sharing their efforts, creativity, hopes and fears, growing collaboratively into cohesive communities of learning and living. RE allows for such sharing of important experiences and questions that shape who we are.

It is hugely important that we prepare our future generations for the challenges of modern living – spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. RE develops academic skills such as discernment, critical thinking and conceptual creativity so that pupils are able to handle the big questions that life throws at them and to think for themselves rather than be sucked into negative narratives and destructive visions, whether from religious or non-religious ideologies, or from distorted press coverage and ‘fake news’.

Finally – and some may take exception to what I am about to say – **education is more than just academic performance** – it is about us *all* growing as human beings who need to make sense of the world in which we live. RE helps pupils of all backgrounds and all ages to express and develop their own beliefs and ideas, listen to and learn from other people and to explore – in a safe place – controversial issues and what it means to be human. Linked with other humanities subjects – and the creative and expressive arts – this can form a core part of a well-rounded, balanced and exciting curriculum that meets the needs of its pupils in 21st-century Britain.

RESOURCES FOR THE COMING TERM AND YEAR

Inter Faith Week 2017 will take place from Sunday 12 November to Sunday 19 November.

Building good relationships and working partnerships between people of different faiths and beliefs is part of the year-round work of many people and organisations across the UK.

Having a special Week provides a focal point, helping to open inter faith activity up to a wider audience so that more and more people are made aware of the importance of this vital work and are able to participate in it.



GET INSPIRED FOR 2017!

A new report on Inter Faith Week 2016, *Stories from 2016, Inspiration for 2017*, has now been published and is

packed with pictures, key statistics, social media posts and media coverage from the Week. The report concludes with a short section looking forward to the Week in 2017. We hope that it inspires you to take part!

SOME OTHER USEFUL LINKS RELATED TO INTER FAITH WEEK 2017:

The *Inter Faith Week Toolkit* is packed with suggestions for marking the Week and examples and illustrations drawn from the many successful activities held to date. It also includes practical guidance and links to further information.

Let's Talk: Practical pointers for inter faith dialogue is a booklet offering some short reflections and examples drawn from the work of IFN and its member bodies, with the aim of inspiring and encouraging further discussion and engagement in inter faith activity.

The *Faiths Working Together Toolkit* contains practical pointers for making contact, planning

and publicising inter faith activities, and advice on key principles for engagement. The resource was produced in partnership between **Near Neighbours** and the **Inter Faith Network for the UK**.



Shap e-Calendar and Wall Chart of Religious Festivals - not just for RE!

The Shap e-Calendar and Wall Chart of Religious Festivals for July 2017 to December 2018 is available to purchase from the [Shap website](#)

The Shap e-Calendar of Religious Festivals is an invaluable resource for the teaching profession, students, businesses, chaplaincies, those in health sector and public services, to name but a few. It is recognised as the most accurate and most informative calendar. Our clients

include the NHS, ministry of Justice, prisons, universities, chaplaincies, Lambeth Palace, Local Authorities as well as secondary and primary schools. The Shap calendar is used extensively in the UK but also across Europe.

This helps the school to keep step with the cycle of the year within the local community – its celebrations and its remembrances.



MORE RESOURCES

Jewish Museum exhibition - Sukkot: Seeking Shelter

The Jewish Museum London invites you to visit and take part in its upcoming exhibition 'Sukkot: Seeking Shelter' between 25 September – 3 December 2017.

The Learning Team has had an integral role in developing the exhibition and the Migration Festival that sits alongside it, and as part of the exhibition, they have adapted the workshop Journey Through the Jewish Year to have a focus on Sukkot. There will also be Micro Migration Talks, new gallery interpretation surrounding Migration Stories and the Sukkah itself will invite visitors and students to discuss what shelter means to them. The Learning Team aims to engage young people with the rituals and beliefs surrounding Sukkot in a way that makes the festival relevant to today's social and political climate.

For more information on 'Sukkot: Seeking Shelter' and the Migration Festival visit the website: <http://www.jewishmuseum.org.uk/seeking-shelter>
If you would like to book a school trip or hear more about Sukkot within the Learning Programme please email learning@jewishmuseum.org.uk.

THE POWER OF WORDS

Holocaust Memorial Day is on 27 January 2018, with the theme of **The power of words**.

The aftermath of the Holocaust and of subsequent genocides continues to raise challenging questions for individuals, communities and nations. Spoken and written words from individuals, corporations, community organisations or the state, can have a huge impact, whether good or bad. The theme for HMD 2018 explores how language has been used in the past, and how it is used in the present day.

The Activity Pack is the most important resource for you, whether you are planning a community event, a school activity or a display in your office; you'll find all the materials you need in this pack.

If you would like to order your free Activity Pack for HMD 2018 or any of our other resources, please fill in our simple online form: hmd.org.uk/activitypack

We also have free resources for schools, including lesson plans, assemblies and classroom activities which you can find here: hmd.org.uk/educators

*'When I write I can shake off
all my cares; my sorrow disappears;
my spirits are revived.'*

Anne Frank, written in her diary, 5 April 1944



HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY TRUST

Making the most of Paperless Christmas The Adventures of Mary and Joseph - The Road Movie

These thought provoking snippets might provide you with a different way of looking at the Christmas story in 9 short episodes when used with the appropriate age groups. They relate to parts of the Christmas story that you might be looking at in the RE curriculum but they also provide some interesting perspectives and questions for collective worship especially for older children.

These will enable children and adults to work with the Christmas story in a thoughtful and fun way. In the material for each episode, you will find:

- Suggestions to get groups talking about the video
- Discussion starters for small group work
- The Bible story in contemporary English with reflective questions
- A choice of activities for topic work on the theme of the video(s)
- Drama activities that explore the theme
- A set of final reflective questions

For more details, <http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/paperlesschristmas>



**ISSUE NO: 38
NOVEMBER 2017**

St Nicholas Church
Boley Hill
Rochester
ME1 1SL

Phone: 01634 560000
Fax: 01634 408942
Website: www.rochester-board-of-education.co.uk

Further information can be found on : www.rochester-board-of-education.co.uk

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES 2017



NOVEMBER

Tuesday 21st November Governor Training for Understanding Christianity 4.30 pm to 6-30pm at the Diocesan Offices, St. Nicholas Church Boley Hill, Rochester ME1 1SL

Monday 27th November CoE Vision Training - 1.30 - 4pm. Christ Church Orpington BR6 9EP

Wednesday 29 November - CoE Vision training - 1.30 - 4pm. Southborough CoE Primary School, Southborough TN4 0JY

Thursday 30th November CoE Vision Training - 1.30 - 4pm. Rochester FULLY BOOKED.

DECEMBER

Wednesday 6th December New to a Church School? This course is suitable for NQT's and class teachers new to Church Schools. 1-30pm - 4pm. Diocesan Offices Rochester ME1 1SL *(This course will only run if there are sufficient bookings)*

Thursday 7th December

New to a Church School? FULLY BOOKED

Friday 8th December CoE Vision Training 1.30 - 4pm. Diocesan Offices, Boley Hill, Rochester ME1 1SL

Tuesday 12th December New to Leading Religious Education? For new (or fairly new) subject Leaders for RE. 1.30pm-4.30 pm Diocesan Offices, Rochester ME1 1SL

FEBRUARY 2018

Wednesday 21st February RE Support Group—1.30 pm —4 pm Bennett Memorial Diocesan School, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9SH

Thursday 22nd February RE Support Group—1.30 pm —4 pm Diocesan Offices, ME1 1SL

Bromley schools should contact Lee Kings for details of their REConnect meetings.

JUNE 2018

Wednesday 6th June RE Support Group—1.30 pm —4 pm Bennett Memorial Diocesan School, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9SH

Thursday 7th June RE Support Group—1.30 pm —4 pm Diocesan Offices ME1 1SL

*****Heads & Chairs breakfast briefings*****

Thursday 25th January —8.30—11 am (coffee/pastries from 8am) Diocesan Offices Rochester ME1 1SL
Friday 26th January —8.30-11 am (coffee/pastries from 8am) Holiday Inn Wrotham