

The RE Inspector Report

Durham SACRE

Spring Term 2016

Durham RE Networks

Durham Education Development Service offers termly RE networks for co-ordinators.

The **SPECIAL SCHOOL** network was scheduled for **19 January 2016** – no delegates attended.

SECONDARY

21 January 2016. 17 delegates (11 from Durham schools, 6 from other local authorities: Middlesbrough, Darlington, Sunderland, Redcar and Cleveland).

Agenda items:

- Recap and analysis of questionnaires from the previous network on GCSE results 2015 (see attached).
- Discussion paper “What is progress in RE?” Network discussion on models of progression and assessment in RE.
- “What do Christians believe?” Discussion of overview planning for this Key Stage 3 unit of work. Delegates shared resources and ideas for teaching this unit. Delegates will bring more ideas and resources to the next meeting.

PRIMARY

Taking place on **Tuesday 15th March 2016**. Numbers applied so far: 38.

TALKING RE NETWORKS

These are new termly networks this year for any RE teachers/co-ordinators who want to come and talk all things RE. They are held at Durham Leadership Centre, Spennymoor, from 4.00-5.30 pm. Attendance last term was good and a range of issues discussed included:

- planning for RE
- sharing good practice
- using artefacts in RE
- training and support for HLTAs
- advice for new RE co-ordinators
- the new GCSEs
- assessment and progress in RE.



Teaching RE in PPA Time

Evidence from talking to RE co-ordinators and Headteachers suggests that RE is taught in many schools in teachers' PPA time (Planning, Preparation and Assessment). This means that Teaching Assistants teach RE often with no training and little support. The Humanities training course for HLTAs, offered by the RE and Humanities inspectors, had no take up. It may be that a different way has to be found to support and train Teaching Assistants in how to teach good RE.

The New GCSEs

We still await the specifications from the exam boards for teaching Religious Studies from September 2016. This has caused some **real** difficulties for our colleagues in schools, many of whom are teaching GCSE from Year 9 without a specification. Representatives from the exam boards are coming to our GCSE conference on 18 March (see below) so hopefully we will have news and specifications by then. Note the big change: **all** schools must study 2 religions with greater emphasis on beliefs, practices and sources of authority in religion than in previous specifications.

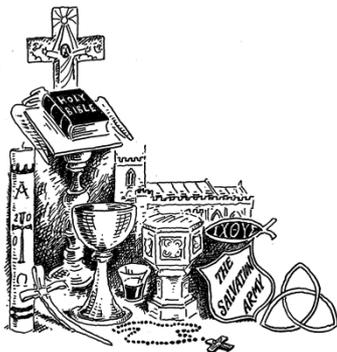
GCSE RE Conference

Durham is holding a regional conference for the new GCSE in Religious Studies on **Friday 18 March 2016**. We hope teachers from across the North East will attend. Contributors:

- presentations from 4 exam boards
- RE Today
- Islamic Diversity Centre
- Karenza Passmore from North East Resources Centre
- Durham Library Services and Oxford Press.

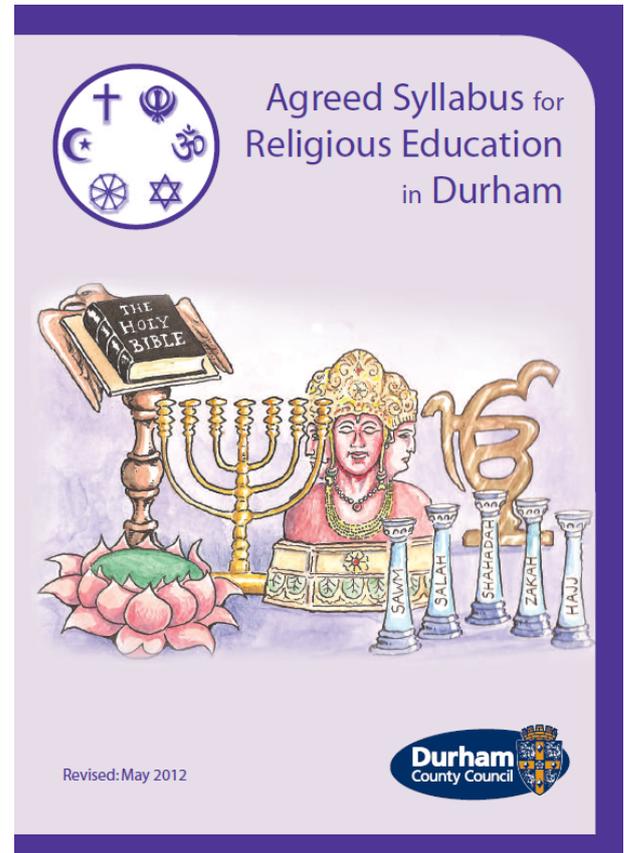
Teaching Christianity

This course will run on **Friday 17 June 2016**. It is hoped that overview planning for all primary Christianity units in the Durham Agreed Syllabus can be provided for delegates and this will form the basis of the course.



Agreed Syllabus

The Durham Agreed Syllabus was approved in March 2012 and launched June that year. This means that the next review process must begin by March 2017 at the latest to meet statutory requirements.



National Documents on Religious Education

Below is a list of national reports and documents relating to Religious Education which have been produced since the last Agreed Syllabus review in Durham. This extensive list demonstrates that there has been a great deal of activity and debate surrounding RE in schools, particularly in relation to the nature of RE, its purpose and the ways in which various schools interpret statutory requirements in their provision for RE. Much of the debate relates to the changing landscape in education generally (reduction in funding to local authorities, increase in number of academies and free schools, reduction in funding for initial teacher training in RE, new GCSEs, changing nature of school performance measures) and the impact this has for the subject.

- RE: The Truth Unmasked, the supply of and support for Religious Education teachers (*APPG – All Party Parliamentary Group on RE, March 2013*)
- Religious Education: realising the potential (*Ofsted, October 2013*)
- A Review of Religious Education in England (*Religious Education Council of England and Wales, October 2013*). This includes the Non-Statutory National Framework for RE.
- RE and Good Community Relations (*APPG on RE, March 2014*)
- Religious Studies AS and A level subject content, Religious Studies GCSE subject content (*Department for Education, February 2015*)
- GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Religious Studies, GCSE Subject Level Guidance for RS (*Ofqual, July 2015*)
- Religious Education in Schools (*Robert Long, Briefing Paper, House of Commons Library, May 2015*)
- A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools (*Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead, Westminster Faith Debates, July 2015*)
- RE for Real: the future of teaching and learning about religion and belief (*Adam Dinham and Martha Shaw for Culham St Gabriel's and Goldsmiths University of London, November 2015*)
- Living with Difference: community, diversity and the common good (*Report of the commission on religion and belief in public life, The Woolf Institute, December 2015*)

In addition

- There is some guidance on the REOnline website for curriculum planning. This is useful for schools and Agreed Syllabus Conferences.
- Letter sent by Lord Nash, minister for faith schools to all local authorities in relation to the importance of good RE teaching and the central role of SACREs and local authorities, January 2015.
- Ofsted handbooks since September 2014 give direct and explicit guidance on Religious Education and collective worship in differing types of schools (maintained, faith, free schools, academies) and how these will be inspected.
- All schools are now required (since 2014) to actively promote fundamental British values including mutual respect and tolerance for other faiths and beliefs.

This documentation will prove useful when advising schools and when Durham next reviews its Agreed Syllabus for RE.

The RE Inspector continues to keep abreast of national reports and developments and can hold a briefing session for interested SACRE members.

GCSE Religious Studies Questionnaire Analysis

The RE Inspector distributed a questionnaire on GCSE Religious Studies at the Autumn network 2015. This enabled Head of RE to reflect on their GCSE results from the summer and discuss together issues surrounding GCSE Key Stage 4 provision.

MAIN FINDINGS

Provision at Key Stage 4

- The majority of schools now predominantly provide Full Course Religious Studies (RS) either as option or within core Religious Education (RE) time (therefore, restricted time). The most popular models are:
 - Option Full Course with non-examination core RE
 - Full Course RE in core RE time with entry only for top sets or top up classes.
 - Very few schools now offer Short Course across the County and region.
 - Senior leaders generally decide the Key Stage 4 provision model. Heads of department have some input into decision making in some schools.
 - Some Heads of department expressed concern about the following: lack of curriculum time, lack of specialist teachers, no RE at Key Stage 4 offered.
 - Many schools start teaching Full Course in Year 9 (unless RS taught as an option). This is creating some difficulties eg Key Stage 3 curriculum squeezed, not in line with other subjects who have a two year Key Stage 4.
 - Some schools undertake Full Course RS but are obliged to cover other areas of curriculum in the time eg PSHE/Citizenship. This shows a lack of clear purpose about RE (academic or personal development) by senior leaders.
- Most RE leaders are happy that RE is statutory as it gives protection for the subject, although they feel it would have been better if RE was part of the English Baccalaureate.

Inspector Observations

- Some teachers (senior or RE leaders) lack clarity about the purpose of RE at Key Stage 4. Is it for academic achievement or for personal development? If RE is the main provision for PSHE/Citizenship, religious literacy and academic rigour may be lost.
- Provision for RE is often chosen to meet the needs of the school not to ensure pupil entitlement or appropriate academic success in Religious Education.
- Full Course is delivered in many schools in restricted curriculum time (eg one hour a week). This is putting huge pressure on pupils and teachers. There is little evidence of this being taken into account by senior leaders eg through offering extra drop down days, extra marking/preparation time for RE teachers.
- There is still some expectations by leaders that lower standards in RE are acceptable because of restricted curriculum time. This is not the case.
- RE leaders feel most confident when they are fully supported by senior leaders and involved in decision making about curriculum provision, student entry to examinations etc.

Isobel Short is the Inspector for Religious Education for Durham County Council and is the professional support and advisor to SACRE.

Durham SACRE holds their formal meeting once a term in County Hall, Durham.