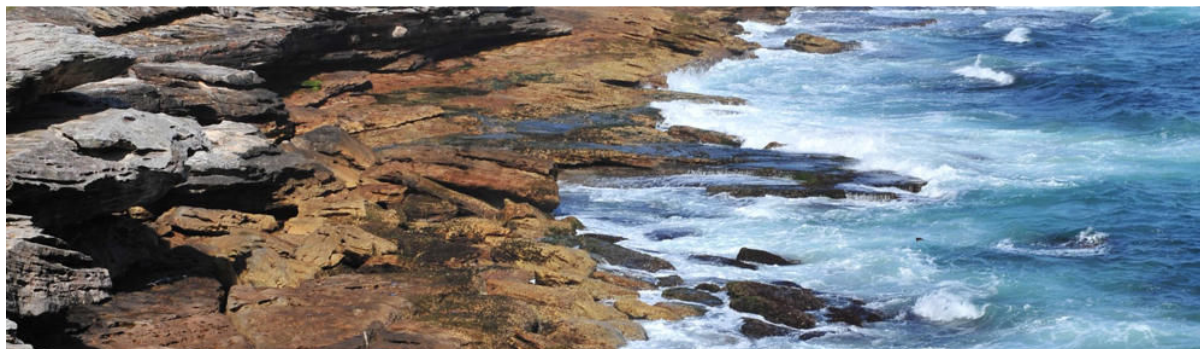


LEARN/TEACH/LEAD: Enhancing RE in the South-West

Briefing paper 7 – for CStG RE Leadership weekend (28th/29th)

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www.ltlRE.org is under development with Project Lead Teachers (PLREs) and Steering Group members. Please visit it for updates and forums.

Context

This paper is based on the most recent briefing papers in circulation around the south-west region's continuing professional development (CPD) providers and within the project's teams. The aim of the seminar at the RE Leadership weekend is to share this model of CPD nationally, and to promote an on-going (on-line) discussion about the project's findings to date. This is partly in order to test their validity on a wider scale.

This aim will be achieved through a report on the project's history, development and findingsⁱ and a question/answer session to start the discussions. By the end of the seminar participants should be able to i) understand the project's rationale and ii) be able to reflect on its relevance to their own needs and local area.

The 'Learn/Teach/Lead RE' (LTLRE) Project

The project was launched in October 2012 through funding in excess of £100,000ⁱⁱ, for a three year period, from the St Luke's College Foundation (often referred to as St Luke's Trust) <http://www.st-lukes-foundation.org.uk/>

The overall aim of the project is to identify and address unmet needs of RE (Religious Education) teachers in Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth and Torbay and thereby to improve the quality of teaching & learning outcomes, and leadership. It intends to achieve this by the leadership of local teachers in clusters/hubs across the region, working closely with established advisory staff in local authorities, diocesan boards of education and universities. There is an emphasis in the project on the needs of

newly-qualified or early RE career teachers, and on the needs of teachers (and teaching assistants) with other specialisms and responsibilities.

The hypotheses underpinning the project's design were stated in the original funding bid.

1. *There is need for improvement in the quality of RE teaching, learning and leadership in schools.*
2. *There is a decline in support available to teachers of RE.*
3. *There is diminished capacity of LAs to provide effective training in RE.*
4. *There is a need to establish more effective partnerships between faith communities, SACREs and all education settings for the betterment of RE. (CCYP, Exeter, Nov 2011ⁱⁱⁱ)*

These ideas are not surprising given the historical context of the period of the bid, and the interests of the principal authors; like any hypothesis they are open to challenge, investigation, review, ratification, or even rejection^{iv}. However, the underlying principles of effective partnerships and the recognition of teachers' enthusiasm, hard work and professional quest for learning in RE, mean that the project has been welcomed across the region.

Through background research from three principal sources (Conroy, Jackson^v and OFSTED), through focus group discussions in the original steering group, and through a questionnaire to schools, the project proposal to St Luke's reported that the 'unmet' CPD needs of teachers were not remarkably different to national trends and perceptions, and they tended to be associated with uncertainties about the subject:

- *'the core purpose of the subject*
- *how attainment is defined*
- *the way pupils' progress is defined*
- *how key concepts and questions can be used in RE*
- *how to secure continuity and progression in the RE curriculum*
- *the way to structure and define a clear process of learning in RE*
- *the approach to teaching about Christianity*
- *ways of balancing the need to foster respect for pupils' religions and beliefs within open, critical, investigative learning in RE*
- *the place of teaching about humanism and non-religious beliefs*

(OFSTED, 2010^{vi})

The project's original and emerging data can be clustered around these headings, although the approach to teaching about Christianity is not explicitly identified as an 'unmet need' in the SW region; this might indicate a misconception about this area of the curriculum, not that 'all is well'. There are others, such as the ambiguous legal position of RE in different school settings and the impact of this ambiguity on continuity and progression. One unmet need identified by the steering group, and reiterated in the conference data and hub meetings, was the level of teachers' subject knowledge and understanding across such a wide-ranging and challenging curriculum:

As a group we feel strongly that there is a clear need to strengthen subject knowledge in the teaching of RE. This is a particularly important when cross-curricular approaches to teaching RE are employed as sometimes the religious element of this is diminished. A priority for this project is strengthening the links teachers have with faith traditions, especially in the south west, so that their own understanding of different faith traditions can be extended. (CCYP, 2011)

The perceived need to celebrate the diverse nature of religion, religions, spiritualities and worldviews represented in agreed syllabuses have all been mentioned in hub groups, with a plea for

more resources and opportunities to enable interfaith dialogue in (and beyond) schools. There have also been requests for more exemplification of units of work and examples of pupils' learning. Teachers are keen to observe outstanding practice in other schools.

During the first year, hub leaders have reported increasing anxiety in schools about RE's position in the curriculum and its status in schools. Other providers (e.g. RE-Online, the RE Quality Mark, RE Today and the National Association for Teachers of RE) are already working with us in our efforts to support teachers and other educators across the south-west during this difficult period of change. RE training to support teaching assistants in primary school has also been a recurring theme in hub discussions. Some meetings have a high percentage of attendance by people in these roles, though there is some uncertainty about how long this will continue under proposed government changes to employment conditions.

The project (2012-15) is being externally evaluated by Dr John Gay, Oxford. It is led by Tatiana Wilson (Exeter Diocesan Board of Education, which is also the administrative centre) and the director is Linda Rudge. A Steering Group, representing all the partners in the project, meets three times a year; it advises the project leader and director on the development of the programme, and on future bids for funds.^{vii} An additional bid to St Luke's for an enhancement grant of just over £15,000 to sustain growth in 2013-15 has been approved. We are also planning a bid for the continuation of the project beyond its current 'end date' of 2015, and this bid may include other funding agencies. St Luke's Foundation is keen to 'pump-prime' initiatives so that they can be demonstrated as viable to other potential partners.

Hub Leaders (PLREs)

The project's underlying rationale can be illustrated by the diagrams that use the words 'Teach' and 'Learn' as reflections of one another (you can find many on-line, but please note copyright material). The rationale is also encapsulated in the motto '*Docere est Discere*' – to teach is to learn. The teachers in lead roles in the project are simultaneously in the positions of learners and teachers. They learn from the training and from each other, they teach, and learn from, others in the hub meetings and contribute to the learning of the advisory team. Then they share their learning in their own schools both as teachers of children and young people and as leaders of RE amongst their peers and school leaders. A community of enquiry and learning (see for example Cassidy, Christie et al, 2008)^{viii} supported through a virtual environment and in face to face meetings is being created across a large and diverse region.

We have appointed ten out of fourteen project leaders for RE (PLREs) who are all teachers of RE in primary and secondary schools across the region. One reserve PLRE covers absences where feasible. PLREs have tenure on these roles (and an annual honorarium) until at least January 2015.

We are still looking for **four** colleagues to fill the PLRE roles in Cornwall as part of the enhancement bid created the opportunity for a third Cornwall hub. The deadline for applications is **30th September**. Supported by steering group members, and by the equivalent of two days training each year, PLREs are expected to lead the hub groups in developing quality RE which raises standards and improves teacher knowledge and confidence.

The project's lead teachers are chosen through an open and widely advertised regional selection process. Candidates are asked to make a five minute presentation within a peer focus group setting of their skills in subject leadership, specifically as these relate to leadership of other colleagues. Five out of the ten leaders so far are in the early stages of their RE careers.

PLRE	e-mail contact	Home/ school base	HUB/area
Nicola Bonell	Nicki@st-marys-ce-pz.cornwall.sch.uk	St Mary's (CE) Primary, Penzance	West Cornwall(PY)
Michael Heron	MHeron@helston.cornwall.sch.uk	Helston Community College	West Cornwall
Rachel Willcocks	Rachel.Hughes@exmouthcollege.devon.sch.uk	Exmouth Community College	Exeter and East Devon (SY)
Sarah Hopkins	shopkins@drakes.devon.sch.uk	Drake's (CE) Primary School East Budleigh	Exeter and East Devon (PY)
Joseph Matthews	jmatthews@ilfracombecollege.devon.sch.uk	Ilfracombe Community College	North Devon (SY)
Gill Tewkesbury	gtewkesbury@piltonbluecoat.devon.sch.uk	Pilton Bluecoat School, Barnstaple	North Devon - PY
Corrine Price	corrineprice@wolborough-primary.devon.sch.uk	Wolborough (CE) Primary, Newton Abbot	Newton Abbot/ Torbay Area
Charlotte Caluori	Charlotte.Caluori@stcm.torbay.sch.uk	St Cuthbert Mayne (RC/CE) Secondary	Newton Abbott/ Torbay Area
Ian Hartley	HartleyI@ridgeway.plymouth.sch.uk	The Ridgeway School, Plymouth	Plymouth (SY) and website lead
Katie Freeman	hyde.park.infants.school@plymouth.gov.uk	Hyde Park Infants, Plymouth	Plymouth - PY
			East Cornwall – PY and SY vacancies
			Mid/North Cornwall – PY and SY vacancies
Simon Knight	sknight@asap.org.uk	All Saints Academy Plymouth	SY – reserve Plymouth area

Hub Meetings

Details about dates of termly hub meetings and venues are posted on the website and they are sent round to schools through partnership networks. These are now underway in all areas and some have met twice. Steering group members and the project director are leading in areas where PLREs are yet to be appointed. Reports of the meetings are added to the website by PLREs through the website manager, Ian Hartley.

Attendance rates are promising – between ten and twenty attendees in most hubs across the region – and venues change to make sure meetings are accessible to more staff. This presents some questions about continuity in the training, but it takes account of the large geographical areas^{ix} and

travel times to twilight sessions. Meetings last about one hour and a half, and venues are offered a small fee for accommodation and refreshments. Topics for sessions are governed partly by the cycle of training for PLREs, but as meetings do not all happen at the same time in the cycle, agendas are usually agreed by PLREs with teachers who attend the session. There is a strong element of 'bring and share' – RE planning, curriculum materials and refreshments!

Training for PLREs

The first training day took place in Plymouth in January 2013, and explored assessment (especially AT2, Dilwyn Hunt) and subject knowledge (Judaism, David Hampshire). These topics emerged from the first conference. The second training date was 27th June (Exeter). Leaders included Jonathan Marshall MBE, Director of the Centre for Faiths and Diversity, Tatiana Wilson from Exeter DBE, and Linda Rudge (Project Director). Training sessions focused on planning RE, CPD for PLREs including accreditation, interfaith dialogue and RE, and managing hub meetings

2012 conference: 'The Teacher as the Key to Successful RE'

The project was launched at a conference in Plymouth. This was attended by 64 delegates and speakers, mainly teachers from primary and secondary schools (approximately - 10 from Cornwall, 24 from Devon, and 19 from Plymouth and Torbay.) The programme lived up to its promise to provide opportunities for teachers and other educators in the region to enjoy positive experiences of continuing professional development at another challenging time in the history of this subject. All the evaluations showed how much teachers and other guests appreciated this opportunity.

Our two nationally renowned keynote speakers (Mark Chater and Dilwyn Hunt) presented sessions that raised (and answered) questions about the meaning of 'learning from 'religion, and about assessment for learning in RE. Workshop and session leaders from the steering group, and the PLREs, added to the professional and academic challenges presented by the keynote speeches. These sessions also provided teachers with an excellent start to the CPD promised in this project, and suggestions for the two training days (above) were drawn from evaluations and requests from PLREs.

2013 conference – 'Sustaining RE: developing the Art of Subject Leadership'

This will take place at Dartington Hall near Totnes, Devon. Keynote speakers at this historic educational venue will include Alan Brine, HMI, National Adviser for RE who will focus on the forthcoming long report from OFSTED on RE. Other speakers are Kathryn Wright (CPD4RE) and Lat Blaylock (RE Today). It is a free event for all teachers of RE (state sector) in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Workshops will include *RE-Route*, *RE-Online* and presentations from Project Lead Teachers of RE, and local RE advisers from across the south-west region. At the moment we are holding a waiting list as all available residential places have been booked.

Bid to St Luke's Foundation to enhance the project between 2013 and 2015

An additional bid to St Luke's for an enhancement grant to sustain growth in 2013-15 has been awarded (June 2013) – see below. We are also planning a bid for the continuation of the project

beyond its current 'end date' of January 2015. During the first year of funding (April 2012-April 2013) several areas for development were identified. These were based on additional needs highlighted by the project lead, project director and steering group. They reflect the enthusiasm with which the PLREs have shown in their roles, their emerging success, and the practical issues and new opportunities that team members have encountered in the first year of the project. The project is currently funded to run until January 2015, and the funds for this extension are intended to take the activities through to the current end date.

AIMS of the programme extension in year 2/3:

1. to create opportunities for PLREs to enhance RE in local cluster groups through a) being enabled to observe good practice and b) being enabled to visit other schools in their immediate hub area to offer on-site CPD through modelling good practice in classrooms or staff meetings;
2. to create third Cornwall hub, with two PLREs, in Cornwall covering mid and northern areas;
3. to facilitate academic or vocational accreditation for the PLREs through project partner Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) – this will also boost the research base for the project as a whole;
4. to provide direct support from the project director to PLREs in their own schools through annual visits/on-site CPD;
5. to continue to develop the website (www.ltIRE.org) with a view to launching a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) section for project members in 2015;
6. to provide administrative support for the extended programme.

Beyond 'the end' - 2015

In a CPD project of this kind the principal intention is to leave a legacy for the future (CCYP, 2011) both in the participating schools and in the wider learning networks across the region. Any bid for funding beyond 2015 will need to take account of the external evaluation report as well as the programme evaluations taking place throughout the project. Detailed future planning is not appropriate at this stage.

However, early indications suggest some gaps in provision that were not anticipated. These have appeared because of the initial success of the project's provision i.e. we are finding it challenging to meet demand, and we need to find ways not to disappoint our colleagues when we have raised expectations. These reflections lead to four additional areas for consideration in relation to future funding:

1. The geographical limits on the programmes (peninsula of Devon and Cornwall, and the Isles) have presented some disappointment amongst schools engaged with the project's Higher Education partners beyond these limits. This might be an area for consideration in any continuation or expansion.
2. It has also been difficult so far to engage students on ITE courses directly, and we need to find a way either to encourage their participation or to recognise that the constraints of ITE programmes (in all settings) will usually prevent their attendance at hub meetings or the annual conference.

3. With limited (but generous) funding, the hub areas are very large, mostly rural with small populations, and often challenging in terms of transport links. While we are conscious of the potential benefits of the website as a means of communication, the central method of the LTLRE approach to CPD is face to face support and learning. It might be possible to engage in partnership with other schemes and funding streams to establish satellite hubs between 2014 and 2018. For example, NATRE has offered to link all the existing hubs to their resources and benefits; this is under discussion for 2013-14.

4. The eight original partners in the project currently represent traditional providers of RE ITE and CPD. This could be reviewed and others might offer support. As it is, the only direct funding comes from the Foundation and partners support some aspects of the work by offering venues and administrative support, workshops and professional time. Funding streams could be expanded. These prospects need to be researched and approached with some sensitivity and realism in the changing context for teacher education and learning.

In the meantime, we are looking forward to this second year, to further data from PLREs and their hubs to inform planning, and to feedback from others in similar CPD settings across the country.

(Briefing paper 7 ends – LR/16/09/13)

ⁱ Further details of these will be presented in power-point format at the seminar.

ⁱⁱ Similarly, there will be a slide with a budget outline.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bid to St Luke's College Foundation for a grant to support 'Unmet Needs in RE', (Council for Children and Young People, Diocese of Exeter, November 2011)

^{iv} The project Director (who was not part of the original steering group) has taken them as 'proven' for the first year of the project given the limited research resource within the project as a whole; we would all welcome the opportunity to explore them in more depth.

^v Conroy, J. C. (2011) *Does Religious Education Work? A three-year investigation into the practices and outcomes of religious education: A Briefing Paper* University of Glasgow

Jackson R, et al. (2010) *Materials used to teach about World Religions in schools in England* Institute of Education, University of Warwick, Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, Warwick: DCSF

^{vi} Office for Standards in Education (2010) *Transforming religious education: Religious Education in Schools 2006-2009*. London: OFSTED

^{vii} The steering group contributes actively to hub meetings, the conference, and to strategic developments. It represents partners across the region, and includes SACRE members. From 2014, nominated PLREs will take turns to attend steering group meetings; PLREs already make reports to local Standing Advisory Councils for RE (SACREs). Current membership of the group is:

Exeter Diocesan Board of Education: Tatiana Wilson

Truro Diocesan Board of Education: Irene Pooley

Cornwall LA/SACRE: David Hampshire

Devon LA/SACRE and NATRE: Graham Langtree/Ed Pawson

Torbay LA/SACRE: David Hampshire

Plymouth LA/SACRE: Jonathan Marshall

University of Exeter: Karen Walshe

University of St Mark and St John: Karen Stockham

Teacher representative (St Luke's Foundation): Giles Freathy

St Luke's College Foundation (Trustees): Dick Powell

Project Director: Linda Rudge

Other individuals are consulted as appropriate, and at the request of the group. We are grateful to Teresa Griffiths for continuing to advise us after a change of employer, to Penny Burnside (Early Years Specialist in the Diocese of Exeter) who was in the original steering group, to Dave Francis (RE consultant) and Cathy Davie (National Society) who both supported the bid as referees, and to Barbara Wintersgill, former HMI for RE, for all her support.

^{viii} Cassidy, C, Christie, D, Coutts, N, Dunn, J, Sinclair, C, Skinner, D, Wilson, A, 'Building communities of educational enquiry', OXFORD REVIEW OF EDUCATION 34:2, 217-235 (Routledge)

Although there is a deliberate and valid link to educational research in the original proposal, this still to be formalised in the project's life; this paper is the first draft of a jointly written article for review and publication.

^{ix} A map demonstrating the hub areas will be included in the power-point presentation at the seminar.