

SACRE NEWS



Issue 20

EDITORIAL



The Autumn is often a time for reflection of the past year and for considering changes needed for the new year.

Alongside sharing holiday photographs and summer memories and celebrating the harvest of the year's work in many fields, not merely agricultural, we can reflect on changes we intend to make for next year. For many communities that our SACREs work with this has been a difficult and sad summer and the memories are uncomfortable. We have seen dreadful floods, a 'foot and mouth' outbreak in the south, continued sadness over the case of the much loved but missing little Madeleine and more random shooting and knifing incidents across the country than we would ever believe. Such terrible experiences brought into our homes on a daily basis by the media also give us a glimpse of community cohesion in practice as people support their friends, families and neighbours through all such experiences.

This is the world we are preparing the children in our schools to live in, with all many challenges, distress and sadly all too rare occasional stories of personal courage and sacrifice. Adults of all generations often comment that the world which this generation of children will inherit will be a very different world from that which they and their parents and grandparents grew up in – but will it? Experiences such as those mentioned above are paralleled in themes addressed in religious education lessons, and the

agonising cries of 'why us?' 'Why them?' 'Why him?' echo the experiences of people of all religions and none throughout time as they try to make sense of their world and the interventions or not of their God. The problem of suffering, the value placed on human life, the responsibilities of accepting stewardship of the planet and the question of 'who is my brother?' all take on poignancy and relevance when related to the personal experiences of contemporary lives in our communities. Community Cohesion will be the theme of a Conference for SACRE representatives later this term organised in London by QCA and NASACRE. Please ensure we have your SACRE contact details up to date so that QCA can make sure your invitation gets to you as soon as the date and programme are finalised.

Over the second half of the summer term we made the temporary move of our Administration to the South London Multifaith Resources Centre in Lewisham and Yvonne Cameron, the Centre Administrator is now your point of contact. All emails addressed to

admin@nasacre.org.uk will go to Yvonne. You can find more about the Multifaith Centre on its website: <http://www.lgfl.net/lgfl/leas/lewisham/schools/schooleffectiveness/accounts/mfmc/homepage/home/>

Unfortunately due to the move from Birmingham, this edition of the newsletter will be electronic rather than printed and the burden of



printing and distributing copies to your SACRE members has unfortunately fallen to SACREs. We are sorry about this situation and hope that the full colour nature of the newsletter on line at least partly compensates for this. We can assure you it is intended this is a temporary measure.

There is hopefully greater national support for religious education and for SACREs coming soon. The new minister responsible for religious education, Jim Knight MP, has met with the RE Council representatives and we hope for greater support for RE and for SACREs in the next year and the future.

Denise Chaplin: Chair

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HELPING EACH OTHER



Just recently I have been asked several times if NASACRE has, for example, a model constitution or an exemplar job description for a SACRE clerk, or a SACRE development plan, or some other document, to save reinventing the wheel. The answer is no, NASACRE has not in the past produced any such documents officially. However, when requests like this come in, various members of the Executive will offer theirs and they are duly despatched. We think we can be more efficient with this service.



It is important to stress we would not be making a judgement about the quality of something that is posted; it would not be receiving an endorsement by NASACRE; this is simply a facilitating operation. The discrimination about what you deem to be exemplary would be your prerogative!

So, if you have policy documents, job descriptions, terms of reference, an annual report, (we hope so!) development plans or even a handbook for your SACRE that you would be prepared to share, please email it to me at secretary@nasacre.org

and I will send it on to our website manager. The only stipulation is that you own it, please; we hope anyone who makes use of your work in any way would acknowledge it and to do that they have to know whose it is.

Thank you...I look forward to being deluged!

Julie Grove: Secretary

We are already convinced of the benefit of collecting and uploading annual reports and there is now a section of the NASACRE website ready to receive them. Of course, it has no purpose unless we have examples to share!

It would be very simple to use the website to share other documents too. If SACREs were prepared to release their paperwork to help those SACREs that may not have a particular document, it would save having to start with a blank sheet of paper when there's a task to be done.

HUNT THE SACRE

What happens if someone logs onto your council's website and tries to find out how to contact your SACRE?

Can enquirers locate anything to do with religious education at all? Even by telephone?

SACREs are advised to try this out and if you find you are lost somewhere in the council and cannot be located, please take time to work with the Local Authority to make sure your SACRE has a profile.

Remember parents, members of faith communities, teachers, even NASACRE representatives may wish to contact you and you may be missing out on new members, invitations and interested enquiries relating to your work.



ON IMPROVING A SACRE'S VISIBILITY

These reflections are offered by an Executive member but, for obvious reasons, steps have been taken to preserve the anonymity of the writer of this article and the SACRE and LA involved.

In the good old days when Ofsted had begun inspecting SACREs, two questions were regularly posed: how strong was the relationship between the SACRE and its parent LA, and how “visible” was the SACRE within the LA – or to put it another way, who within the LA would notice if the SACRE ceased to exist?

These questions remain pertinent and provoking, and underline one potential weakness in the structures within which SACREs operate. It is almost self-evident that a successful SACRE should have a positive and constructive relationship with its LA, yet there is no formal obligation on the part of the LA to be pro-active towards achieving this. Indeed, the pressure of other core responsibilities, financial and staffing constraints, and changes such as the recent restructuring of education departments to take on children's services, mean that many LAs struggle to find the energy and time merely to cope with their perceived bread and butter work.

Relations between a SACRE and its LA therefore vary greatly in quality from LA to LA, and tend to be dependent upon there being a source of goodwill and advocacy on the part of individual councillors or senior officers. Where relations are weak, this is typically not through any fault of the SACRE, or for lack of trying to bring about closer links and a deeper sense of partnership with the LA.

There was for a while a hope that Ofsted might be prompted to include relations with the SACRE in their inspection of LAs, even if this just consisted of one modest question within the whole inspection. However, this hope never progressed further, as it came up both against a hierarchy of Ofsted priorities for inspecting LAs in which SACREs and their work were given a low place, and then also against a shift in the inspection regime itself towards a lighter style and greater self-evaluation

Given this unpromising context, is there anything the SACRE itself can do to improve its ‘visibility’? Two ideas have occurred to me which I am following up with my particular LA. They both involve the new and somewhat arcane structures whereby cabinet portfolio holders and their departmental staff are required to

report regularly to an all-party Scrutiny and Performance Panel. Although cumbersome, this new machinery is designed to provide better public accountability and can be made to work quite effectively.

The first ploy is to try to get the relevant Scrutiny Panel to ‘receive’ the SACRE's Annual Report, as a formal item at one of its meetings. It may be that the Panel's Chair will be sympathetic to a direct request; otherwise it might be necessary to find a way of introducing the Report via a ‘planted’ question from a member. This will need a member willing to cooperate, not forgetting that this specific Panel may include co-opted members from e.g. parent associations and the C. of E. and R.C. Dioceses.

In my own LA, the Panel Chair reluctantly agreed in principle that the Panel should receive the Annual Report, but this has yet to be translated into action. (Nothing more should be read into this reluctance than the sheer pressure of work to be covered and a sense of relative priorities like Ofsted's.) I am considering now whether to push things on further with a planted question, which might be counter-productive, or to wait patiently and offer a polite reminder if necessary in due course.

The second ploy is for the SACRE to raise the question as to how well the Agreed Syllabus contributes towards the LA's strategy for building community cohesion. This approach serves not only to ‘fly the flag’ for RE and SACRE, but also to draw attention to the fact that the nature and role of RE are evolving significantly and creatively in relation to our multi-faith and diverse society.

When I put this question in writing to the LA's educational directorate, I received a response which focussed rather on issues relating to inclusion than on community cohesion, and implied that the LA had no explicit or implicit strategy for community cohesion as such. I am therefore considering again whether to follow this up with a planted question at a Scrutiny Panel meeting. Watch this space!

This account illustrates how difficult it is to improve the quality of the SACRE/LA relationship unilaterally. It would be interesting to hear from other SACREs of any worthwhile and transferable strategies they themselves have used in attempting to improve their own visibility within their LA, and with what results.

NASACRE response for SACREs on the HMI report “making sense of religion”

A discussion document

NASACRE welcomes the contribution the HMI report makes to the current debate about the future shape of RE and is keen to work alongside all professionals to raise the national profile and quality of Religious Education. Clearly it is for local SACREs to read, digest and discuss the HMI report in their specific local context and the following is intended to support you in doing this.



As the HMI report stresses in numerous places, RE is more important now than for a long time and where it is taught well, it contributes significantly to the academic and personal development of pupils and to community cohesion within and beyond the school gates. NASACRE believes that all parties involved in RE nationally and locally need to work positively in partnership to establish and maintain the right balance between the consistency that the National Framework can bring to, and the creativity that local determination can add to, pupils' learning experiences in RE.

The NASACRE Executive would seriously question the value of a National Curriculum for RE as this would make the national government rather than RE specialists responsible for its role and purpose in the curriculum. This could diminish the spiritual and more 'prophetic' and 'wisdom' dimensions that may not sit easily with Citizenship or the standards agenda. Whilst it may provide an easy solution to consistency, it could reduce RE to a secular liberal programme for social policy rather than a creative pedagogy for personal learning in which children and young people are encouraged to make sense of and create meaning in a changing world.

We encourage SACREs to explore the issues raised in the HMI report in relation to their local context so that all pupils can experience quality RE that challenges them, and all schools can be supported effectively in promoting community cohesion. We particularly encourage you to explore the following points:

1. How effective is your locally agreed syllabus in enabling teachers to plan appropriately challenging and stimulating RE? How do you know? To what extent does it reflect recent developments in RE (including the non-statutory National Framework) and more generally in learning and teaching? Does it provide a coherent and exciting vision for RE? How does it enable progression in learning to be planned and measured? Are the requirements for assessment adequate? Does it ensure that skills and concepts are developed and explored? How does it enable teachers to engage pupils of all backgrounds and abilities?
2. What is the quality of RE in local primary, secondary and special schools? How consistent is this? How do you know? What goes on locally and nationally to support quality RE? What do you consider to be the barriers to effective RE? What can you do to improve the quality of RE?

3. How well do different schools implement the agreed syllabus? How effective is leadership in the schools at ensuring quality RE that is in line with the AS? What are the barriers to effective implementation and what can you, with the LA, do about it? How highly is RE valued and prioritised in the LA and the schools?
4. What is RE about? How does it link with and/or contribute to Citizenship, PSHE, creativity, science, pastoral issues, Spiritual, Moral, Social, Emotional and Cultural values and development, English and Community Cohesion? Should this be determined centrally or locally? How do we ensure an appropriate tension between 'religion' and 'education' that does justice to both and also to the pupils?
5. What are SACRE's views about current statutory arrangements and requirements such as post-16 provision, right of withdrawal and the locally agreed syllabus? What is the role of SACRE in relation to recent developments? How can SACREs fulfil their functions? How should SACREs relate to other national bodies for the development and improvement of RE in our schools?



We need to ensure that the RE promoted in locally agreed syllabuses is creative and of significance, and there is much in the HMI report to help us to do so. Whether there be one attainment target or two, the important issues are that pupils are appropriately challenged and that they can respond to the 'so what?' (learning from religion) of the 'what?' (learning about religion) in a way that helps them to understand themselves, others and the world more fully as they get older. The NASACRE Executive believes that keeping the two attainment targets separate clarifies the nature of RE for professionals, faith communities and also for parents. What we must ensure is that RE helps all young people, whatever their beliefs, to cope with complex concepts, to explore the meaning and value of what it means to be a person, not just to see the subject as a means to achieving a level.

The HMI report has the potential to open up the future for effective RE, but we need to reflect very carefully on the recommendations made, the assumptions underpinning them and the implications of what is said.

NASACRE Executive
October 2007



NASACRE: SHOULD WE TAKE ON A REGIONAL STRUCTURE?



Over the past months, during the preparation of the National RE Strategy proposals, we have considered the implications to NASACRE and to SACREs of developing a Regional dimension to our work. To see how this might work and to get some feedback from SACREs, a pilot Regional day Seminar was held for London SACRE Chairs and LA representatives at City Hall on 11th July 2007.

Twenty-five London Local Authorities were represented by one or more delegates and, due to the generosity of the Mayor for London, we were able to hold the conference at a very low cost. Delegates were charged £5 per head. As there is a good café at City Hall delegates purchased their own refreshments during the day and there was the opportunity to sit and listen to music whilst we ate.

Delegates discussed with each other the Ofsted long Report on RE, the National Strategy proposals and NASACRE's work behind those proposals aimed at strengthening SACREs. They shared their views on the implications of the above on the work of SACREs now and in the future.

Sarah Lane from the Free Church Education Committee came to talk to the meeting about how the FCEC are able to support SACRE recruitment and training and there was also a discussion on the benefits of an annual regional meeting.

All delegates participated actively and feedback was informed and interesting. There was overwhelming support for a regional meeting from the London SACREs represented. Delegates appreciated that we had tried to find a venue that was reasonably economical and central to the region.

The evaluation summary of the pilot seminar will be posted on the NASACRE website and we welcome responses from SACREs around the country to the suggestion of meeting regionally. What do you think? Please discuss this at your SACRE meeting and let us know your views.

In the meantime the London SACREs have started a pilot regional area on the NASACRE website to share good practice and initiate discussions. We will evaluate the effectiveness of that at the end of the autumn term. Should any other region wish to set up a regional area on the website in parallel to this, please contact us to get in touch with our NASACRE webmaster.

Denise Chaplin: Chair



UPDATES

Over the past term there have been three occasions when NASACRE has responded to national issues on behalf of SACREs. Where possible we have indicated to SACREs via our newsletter and our website that such consultations are happening; because they are important, many of you may have already discussed these issues and made your own SACRE responses to the same consultations.

1. Community Cohesion

The consultation document sought the views of schools and other interested groups on the content of guidance on the implementation of the new duty on schools to promote community cohesion under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. A final version of guidance was to be informed by the responses received to the consultation and published in July – we have not yet seen a final version. NASACRE's response form can be read on our website.

2. QCA Consultation on revised GCSE criteria

QCA have consulted with all stakeholders about proposed revisions to the GCSE criteria for RS. These criteria govern all the specifications for RS GCSE; short and full course. The consultation ran through the summer until 14th September and again we have responded on behalf of SACREs. The regulations will come into effect for specifications which will be taught from September 2009.

The proposal that all GCSE specifications should include a compulsory element of 'controlled tasks' weighted at 25% was one element that we have particularly highlighted as being potentially extremely damaging for the subject. These controlled tasks would not be coursework as such but would be tasks set by the board, undertaken by candidates in school under controlled conditions and marked by the teacher.

Many teachers and SACREs are extremely concerned about this, especially in terms of the potential increase in workload that it would represent. If a single teacher is responsible for the whole cohort in a school, s/he could be responsible for marking, assessing and completing the administration of some 400 controlled tasks. It is feared that schools would find continuing with entering such high numbers for GCSE impossible.

3. Making Sense of Religion – the Ofsted 'Long Report'

This has proved to be quite a controversial report. Whilst it contains some very important findings, many SACREs and individuals have questioned aspects of its conclusions and evidence. NASACRE has responded to OFSTED on your behalf and also developed a paper with questions for individual SACREs to reflect on when discussing the report in their meetings. This can be found elsewhere in the newsletter and is available on the website. SACREs may wish also to respond individually after such discussions.

THE NASACRE / WESTHILL YOUNG INTER-FAITH PROJECTS

There have now been three successive years of awards to SACREs. The aim of the awards is to support local inter-faith projects involving young people which the SACRE has initiated or in which it has a significant role. The awards have been made possible through a generous allocation of funds by the Trustees of the Westhill Foundation, and their support is gratefully acknowledged. This article gives an overview of what has been achieved so far in these stimulating and innovative projects. Further information about them may be found on the NASACRE website or from the SACREs/LAs themselves.

The 2005 Awards

In 2005, five awards were made, to the SACREs of **Bristol, Hounslow, Portsmouth, Solihull**, and jointly **Kingston-upon-Hull working with Yorkshire: East Riding**. These early projects were all concerned in one way or another with setting up a young people's faith forum or major conference, often with resource materials for RE as an envisaged outcome. The joint Hull/East Riding project indeed had the production of a video/DVD as a primary aim, while Solihull's involved a wide age-range of pupils in a competition on Breaking Down Barriers in preparation for a multi-faith festival.

One key feature in many of these projects was a dimension which would become more prominent and central in the award process in subsequent years, namely partnership with groups and bodies going beyond the immediate school/SACRE axis, e.g. faith communities, universities, and the wider civic and business communities. Other important aspects which emerged were that the process of developing the project could be quite lengthy, and that the maximum benefit would be gained when the project generated enough momentum to carry the activity beyond its original funding and lifespan into a sustainable and buoyant future.

Bristol SACRE, working with Bristol City Council to defuse racism and bullying in school settings and to link RE with Citizenship, held a "Unity and Diversity" Forum on 28th March this year, based on responses to a questionnaire on faith and values.

Hounslow SACRE circulated a questionnaire on RE around all Sixth-Formers, and mounted an initial major conference in July, which will stimulate the creation of RE resources, particularly for Sixth-Form General Studies.

Hull and East Riding SACREs sponsored a student video project, leading on to a high profile "Faith2Faith" Conference for the secondary age range in November 2006. Both of these have been featured at NASACRE AGMs. A second phase is planned with a regional dimension building towards a conference in Bridlington in Spring 2008.

Portsmouth SACRE initiated a representative inter-faith Forum of 15-18 year olds, now called "Interfusion", who have taken an active role in developing inter-faith work among young people and built up a strong public profile. A multicultural music and faith event was successfully mounted on 3rd Dec 2005. Home Office funding was obtained to enable the project to continue.

Solihull SACRE invited all schools with pupils in the 8 to 18 age range to enter a competition on the theme of "Breaking down Barriers – What do we believe?" The winners will be celebrated in a large multi-faith festival for schools on October 3rd this year, from which the intent is to establish a Young People's Faith Forum.



The 2006 Awards

The 2006 Awards were chosen with the experience of judging the first round of Awards in 2005 to build on, but with their resulting projects at the time mostly still in the early stages of progress. (Portsmouth had got off to a flying start.) There were significantly more applications for an Award this time, from all regions in the country, and with a more diverse range of projects, and the standard was high. The successful projects have been coming to fruition throughout the present year.

Blackburn with Darwen SACRE have helped develop a primary school programme "Kids United". 240 children in 4 diverse Primary Schools have been engaged in interfaith exchanges and activity days (e.g. art, music, sport, computers) and used various media to record and share their experiences, including a colourful newspaper. A new secondary school programme "My home town" is in progress, with a mix of youngsters interviewing a mix of adults.



Kirklees SACRE are creating and helping to fund a Virtual Learning Environment linking local educational and faith-community and inter-faith websites, due to be available to schools from this September and more widely from January 2008. This will increase the facility for sharing inter-faith resources and conducting dialogue between young people and across generations.

Newham SACRE have involved their Student SACRE in amending their schools' Sex and Relationships Education. Faith perspectives on these topics have arisen from student discussion within and among different faith-groups, and this has been incorporated in a series of DVDs for use in all Secondary Schools and in support of Governor training, excerpts being highlighted at NASACRE's AGM this year.



Surrey SACRE, responding to the impetus of their Youth SACRE, have sponsored a residential interfaith weekend for young people exploring the ideas of respect, acceptance and transformation, and recorded on DVD as a resource for RE and for the Youth Service and Youth Parliament.

Tameside SACRE's project, building on an initial interfaith event in November 2005, focussed on presenting a large exhibition for four days in March 2007, on the theme "Belonging to Faith Communities", involving pupils from both LA and supplementary religious schools in preparation and displays. Its DVD is being circulated. A third event is now being planned and a Young People's Faith Forum is under discussion.

The 2007 Awards

Although the recipients of the 2007 Awards have been announced, these Awards are intended to support work planned for the school year 2007-8, and there is therefore little yet to report on in terms of progress. In order to support and affirm as many of the very worthwhile projects as possible, some of the total available was divided into several part-awards. The projects are summarised below, and include Greenwich SACRE's project, for which an Award was belatedly made when it transpired that some



additional funding could be drawn on.

Bedfordshire SACRE. Focussing on three striking faith buildings (mosque, gurdwara, Anglican church) in an economically poor area of Bedford, the project builds on existing educational and community resources to prepare KS2/3 pupils for visits to the buildings and contacts with faith community members, with follow-up.

Greenwich SACRE. A new young people's inter-faith forum will plan a conference to enable young people to express their hopes, aspirations and faith, portraying these through art and a DVD which will both give young people a voice and be a versatile resource for schools in e.g. collective worship and citizenship.

Guernsey SACRE. A group of Year 9 pupils, having electronic links with a Solihull school, will travel to the school and join in visits to faith communities in Birmingham, creating a base for long-term links, the project being posted as it develops on Guernsey's Grid for Learning to enable all Guernsey's Year 9 pupils to engage with the experience.

Hampshire SACRE. In partnership with Children's Services, faith groups and Winchester University, the project will establish a sustainable framework for promoting interaction among young people aged 13-19 from different faiths, with opportunities to influence and inform local policy and decision makers.

Lewisham SACRE. Modelled on an earlier successful initiative, SACRE will organise a two day event "Going to Secondary School" for Year 6 pupils in five primary schools, coming from many faith communities, which will address issues of concern for them about faith and its practice in their new schools.

Liverpool SACRE. A major inter-faith conference for all Year 12 pupils is being planned for 2008 (when Liverpool will be the European Capital of Culture) by Liverpool's SACRE and Youth SACRE and a local community partnership, supported by Merseyside Council of Faiths, Liverpool Hope University and other significant organisations. (Provisional Conference date: June 26th 2008.)

Portsmouth SACRE. Interfusion, the Portsmouth Youth Diversity Forum created following an earlier successful Award bid, is continuing to develop its scope and activities; the part award will enable equality of access for a range of visits to religious centres to promote discussion on spiritual and inter-faith issues.

Conclusion

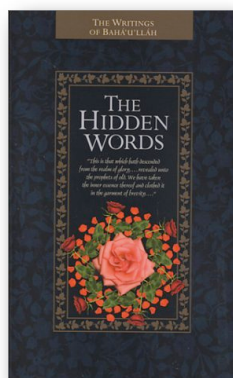
This brief overview gives only a taste of the rich and varied menu represented by the successful projects, and that in turn is only a more visible part of the much greater range of young people's projects with an inter-faith dimension which we know very many local SACREs are involved in. NASACRE feels deeply privileged and greatly encouraged to be associated with all this work and with the seminal contributions being achieved in so many local communities by SACRE initiatives.

Michael Metcalf
NASACRE Awards Panel Convenor



AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

Here NASACRE Executive Committee member Debbie Tibbey provides a very helpful introduction to the Baha'i Faith.



The Hidden Words

As a very young child, the imagery in religious texts always captured my imagination. I attended a C of E Primary school, and the same readings from the Bible were used in assemblies every year. By the age of 7 or 8, I remember waiting as Good

Friday approached to hear the reading about the sky turning black, the cock crowing in the afternoon and the curtain of the Temple being torn in two – powerful imagery to a child raised on Beatrix Potter and Winnie the Pooh.

By the time I was 17, having read passages from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and the *Koran*, as well as *The Prophet* by Kahil Gibran, it was with excitement that I opened my first copy of *The Hidden Words* by Bahá'u'lláh. I had been given this book by a group of Bahá'is in Hull who were holding 'firesides' – meetings of prayer, song and discussion – for anyone to attend. This little book of verses still remains, some 25 years after I became a Bahá'i, my favourite book to dip into when I need to refocus, regenerate and reflect.

Typically, each verse is an exhortation for mankind to live to our purpose of developing our spiritual nature through human virtue, in unity, love and service to one another.

"O SON OF SPIRIT!" reads one verse, *"My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting."*

The book is split into two sections, written originally in Arabic and Persian in 1857-8 by Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Baha'i Faith,

during His exile in Baghdad. As He paced the banks of the river Tigris, the verses came to Him and He recited them aloud whilst an amanuensis wrote them down. He described the Hidden Words as the 'inner essence' of 'that which hath descended from the realm of glory... revealed unto the Prophets of old.' One of Bahá'u'lláh's main teachings was that all religions come from the same source, Almighty God, and the essential truths of all religions resonate throughout the Hidden Words.

"O SON OF SPIRIT! With the joyful tidings of light I hail thee: rejoice! To the court of holiness I summon thee; abide therein that thou mayest live in peace for evermore."

"O SON OF DUST! Verily I say unto thee: Of all men the most negligent is he that disputeth idly and seeketh to advance himself over his brother. Say, O brethren! Let deeds, not words, be your adorning."

There are 103 verses in the Hidden Words, ranging in theme from trustworthiness and putting one's faith into action, to assurance of the continuation of the soul after death:

"O OFFSPRING OF DUST! Be not content with the ease of a passing day, and deprive not thyself of everlasting rest. Barter not the garden of eternal delight for the dust-heap of a mortal world. Up from thy prison ascend unto the glorious meads above, and from thy mortal cage wing thy flight unto the paradise of the Placeless."

Whilst some are gentle and poetic, others pull no punches in their tone:

"O CHILDREN OF DESIRE! Put away the garment of vainglory, and divest yourselves of the attire of haughtiness."

"O SON OF DESIRE! How long wilt thou soar in the realms of desire? Wings have I bestowed upon thee, that thou mayest fly to the realms of mystic holiness and not the regions of satanic fancy."

It may be worth noting that all of the Bahá'í writings remain in their original form. People sometimes ask why the formal, archaic language (Thee, Thy and so on) is used, and my understanding is that the translations must be as close as possible to the original meaning. Unlike many other languages, English has no respectful form of 'you'. Personally, I feel that the poetry and dignity of Holy writings are upheld by this use of language. Besides, being a good Yorkshire lass, 'thee' and 'thy' sound normal to me!

Bahá'ís are encouraged to read from the Writings every morning and evening, and many find that the Hidden Words are just right to set them up for the day and wind them down in the evening. Though there are many beautiful meditations to choose from, the brevity and clarity of these verses is often enough. I have read the book from cover to cover several times, yet occasionally there will be one that I am certain I've never read before, and then there always favourites at which the book seems to open just when I need them.

As a young Bahá'í I was challenged by a much older lady to learn as many as possible by heart, and it amazes me how often a particular verse will pop into my head in a low moment or a time of crisis.

"O FRIENDS! Abandon not the everlasting beauty for a beauty that must die, and set not your affections on this mortal world of dust." This one in particular stays close to my heart, especially as this was one of the first ones I learned back in Hull. It serves me as a reminder not to let myself become attached, greedy or envious. Perhaps this is the purpose of all Holy Scriptures, not just to be enjoyed as poetry but to be committed to heart and become part of our spiritual life.

Further reading:

The Hidden Words, translated by Shoghi Effendi with the assistance of some English friends, (London: Nightingale Books, 1992)

Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, A Compilation, (India, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India, 1986)

Meditations of the Blessed Beauty, selected by Gordon J. Kerr and George M. Ballentyne, (Oxford: Nightingale Books, 1992)

Useful Websites:

<http://www.bahai.org.uk> = official website of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of UK



<http://www.bahai-publishing-trust.co.uk/> = for information and purchasing of Bahá'í books

<http://www.bahai-education.org/ocean/> = a free software library of the world's Religious Literature (can be downloaded free of charge in its entirety!)

Debbie Tibbey joined NASACRE in May 2006. She has served on the Dorset SACRE since 2000 and is a member of BREA, the Bahá'í Religious Education Agency. Debbie is a teacher at a small village primary school in Dorset and is married with two sons.

Contact BREA at: brea@bahai.org.uk

REVIEW: BBC Active: Worship and Sacred Places - BBC 2007

Denise Chaplin and Geoff Marshall-Taylor

Technology is a strange thing. When I first started teaching, videos were the 'new thing' and colleagues were saying that if you could get the pupils watching a video they would be engaged and enjoy the lesson (and presumably/ hopefully learn!). IT developments likewise seemed to carry with them a kind of technological imperative that risked putting technology before learning. The introduction of Interactive White Boards (IWB) has produced much disappointing material in RE either because of a lack of engaging material, or because the activities are limiting.

The BBC Active series is thus a welcome resource. This is the first in a series of 3 packages for KS2 pupils based on a huge range of archive material, some of it never previously published, from BBC Education. As such, what it provides first and foremost is a resource-base of visual materials for teachers to use in the classroom. However, this material has been harnessed onto interactive whiteboard technology to enable flexible and engaging activities to be planned by the teacher. Here we have a genuine RE resource for the IWB that pulls together good material with flexible use of interactive technology to engage pupils to promote good learning. Unfortunately I have not had the chance to connect to an IWB, but have had hours of fun using the facilities on my own computer!

The content is around the three Abrahamic faiths and a theme-based section on Pilgrimage. Each contains a wide range of video, notes, resources and the facility to add to the pre-designed notes. The whole package is based on the non-statutory National Framework so that it can apply to all Agreed Syllabi. It has pre-designed activities that range from basic labelling to more in-depth reflection and writing frames. Because it is interactive, teachers and pupils can design their own

resources and save them. You can add your own markers to the video clips, each with a text question, enabling pupils to focus on particular aspects of the observed materials. Thus for example, you can ask pupils to identify key words, concepts and feelings associated with different types of worship, use the whiteboard to categorise or sort them and so develop greater learning from and about religions.

The video clips are of high quality, both in terms of production and content. The authors have ensured that stereo-types are avoided and that diversity within as well as between faiths is reflected in a balanced way. There is the facility to hide video or mute sound,

meaning that, for example, you can play the sound of a family from Glasgow talking about patterns in nature with the visual image hidden. You can then discuss with the class their impressions of the children and their background and compare this with their impressions when they can see the family.

As with any resource, its effectiveness will depend on the skill and imagination of the people using it. Creative use will benefit the whole class – it can be used to stimulate questioning, provide a stimulus for community of learning-type activities, sorting activities, discussions, - basically getting pupils to think about the materials and reflect on what it means to, or how it relates to, their own lives and experiences.

The more I have used this, the more possibilities have emerged. Whilst designed primarily for KS2, in the hands of the skilled teacher, much of this resource could support effective learning for people of any age and ability. The cost (£100.00) includes site licence and schools can use e-learning credits to purchase. I look forward to seeing the forth-coming title on Festivals and the final one on Rites of Passage in due course.



Bill Moore



REVIEW: Child's Eye Media: Festivals and Festivals 2

Bob Jackson and the Warwick group have been doing wonderful work over the last few years developing the interpretive approach to the teaching of Religious Education. At the core of this approach is the idea that to talk of 'Judaism' or 'Hinduism' is a pointless task as all you can really observe is the life of a Jew or a Hindu.

One of the resources that I have always felt is underdeveloped is the 'pupil voice' on religion. The child's view of how their religion and the beliefs of that religion shape their lives. Child Eye media has made an excellent contribution to this market with the two DVDs (or VHS video) Festivals and Festivals 2.

Festivals features; Chinese New Year, Divali, Eid-ul-Fitr and Hanukah and Festivals 2; Easter, Vaisakhi, Wesak and Christmas. Each festival is divided into 'at home' and 'at school' and each of these is then sub-divided into short segments suitable for using for discussion stimulus or question and answer sections.



However, it would have been more appropriate to have sourced an authentic song, included the tune as a sound file so the children could learn the song. Music is very important in festivals and as the authentic story is so well done in this is a little disappointing.

Alongside the AV material you can 'accessorize' with the poster collection. Two sets of four posters give a 'big book' resource for the stories. Each poster is A2 size and on one side are beautiful illustrations and on the other the story in suitable language for the target group of 3-6 for the teacher to read. These posters can be used as part of group work, as a whole class circle time or to provide a centerpiece for display work.

These posters are laminated for classroom use and while a little expensive can be purchased with the appropriate DVD/VHS for in a good package deal. See the website:

<http://www.childseyemedia.com/>

for more details.

The video is well produced, the language is very suitable and you feel very involved in the festivals. Showing this video to both a 3 year old and 6 year old they were both very engaged with the materials. The accompanying booklet has a series of good activities linked to the old ELGs but which can easily be mapped to the new EYFS statements. These can be used both at school and at home.

Alongside this is a 'Child's Eye Spy', a series of images where the students are asked reinforcement questions. The weakest resource is the festival song. Understandably the authors have written simple lyrics to a known tune.

Overall this would be a valuable addition to a schools' resource bank. The resource can be used in RE lessons but also in assemblies, as part of the schools intercultural programme and would support PSHE. While a significant expense at £100 (ex-VAT) this does represent great value for money. The resource deserves the awards it has already won.

Paul Hopkins

THANKS

You will be aware by now that we have had to move our administrative base from the School of Education, University of Birmingham after a lifetime of support. Camilla O'Connor has served NASACRE with great efficiency and patient support for many years...and says she enjoyed doing it! Unfortunately she is no longer able to do this kind of work outside the University remit, something she regrets, but not as much as we do!

Cam has just always been there... to organise conferences and AGMs, respond to queries, deal with post and generally be the person who knows where things are and how things are done. And all with a smile! When I took over the secretary's job from Geoff, I would simply have floundered without her.

It is impossible to say how much we valued her and how much we'll miss her. During the summer I took her a small gift to express something of our appreciation. She is a keen gardener, so I chose a camellia...appropriate, I thought, for Camilla!

Thank you, Cam!

Julie Grove

WEBSITE

Do keep an eye on the website where you will find:

- 🕒 News updates
- 🕒 Information about NASACRE
- 🕒 News about events
- 🕒 News on projects
- 🕒 The Newsletter Archive
- 🕒 The FAQ archive
- 🕒 Agenda items for your next SACRE meetings
- 🕒 A membership list
- 🕒 Exemplar documentation



As you will have read above we hope that you will check and update the membership section and add to the exemplar documentation. Contact us at web@nasacre.org.uk

Some dates for the diary

Sept

13th- Oct 11th: Ramadan

October

5th: Simchat Torah

7th: Pavarana

11th: Navaratri

13th: Eid-ul-fitr

15th-21st: Week of prayer for peace

20th: Birth of the Bab

31st: All Hallows' Day

Nov

1st: All Saints' Day

2nd: All Souls' Day

5th: Kathina

Contributors



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DEBBIE
TIBBEY



BILL
MOORE

SACRE News: the newsletter of the National Association of SACREs, published termly. The opinions expressed in articles are those of their authors and not necessarily of the NASACRE Executive. For details see the website

This Spring issue is edited by Geoff Teece and Paul Hopkins