

**St Gabriel's RE Community Conference 1/2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 2011**

**Wokefield Park, Reading.**

**Key Note Speech: John Keast**

Chair of the RE Council of England and Wales

**Threats to RE** – critical situation but also a unique opportunity

**Opportunity and Challenge**

Failure to grasp this will set it back – but grasp it and greater opportunity and success.

RE is an essential component in English Education, since the 1970s - widen to all religions + CW declined

Dual system – LAs and Voluntary schools –supported by L.A.s (and diocese)

Nat. Curriculum + NS framework – Ofsted Short Course all have improved provision within context of 1944

**Changes now – Possible threats**

Academies +Free Schools – undermines statutory requirement – by virtue of their funding agreements RE must be taught.

Ofsted no longer endorses entitlement

LAs and SACREs – could become redundant and impotent

ITT – fewer trained teachers

Review of the Nat Curriculum –no RE

EBacc – no RE

No Nat RE adviser

Government impervious to advice about decisions made and consequences of decisions made and the decline of RE.

**Positives**

RE offers an essential and unique contribution to Education

Legal Requirement – re-affirmed by Govt

RE mostly taught by trained professionals

Quality and commitment of RE teachers and at an all time high

Public exam system – better than 20 yrs ago

RE community more organised and better committed than other times-

EBacc campaign – a swell of support

**Opportunity and Challenge**

Education changing – provision changing – choice led – training will be led by HTs in context

Professionalism lies within the RE subject community – which comprises all teachers and lecturers and bodies

Turn current changes into opportunities – ( the EBacc swell of support needs capitalising)

No longer dependent on Govt or LAs – but working with

**RE community should be the custodian of its own standards and success**

Must look forward not back – cannot turn the clock back

Ofsted – no subject reports – no resurrection of 2004 framework

RE community needs to be more confident – we are not used to working together – used to Nat initiatives – standards which the RE community has worked out parallel version.

Work together – providing a lead not following other's footsteps

Need to demonstrate we can work in a united and professional way – working more closely together in a climate of competitive bidding

All RE department interests – children's needs must be of paramount.

Agreed structure –we must handle our differences well

### **Serious threats**

Biggest risk fracture and fragmentation

- different pedagogies and faiths power bases etc
- Potential to set the subject back decades.

### **Analogy of an orchestra**

Together making good music

All groups are members of the RE council – RE council is the conductor – all the instruments playing to make great music.

Using the first person plural

“RE Council are Us”

### **RE Council – role**

Commonality of purpose – working through its member bodies

A national forum

A clear Nat. voice

Influence policy

Positive image + public understanding

Represent collective interests

### **Now has a 5 year plan for RE**

Which aims to restate and reinvigorate RE

- High quality of teaching + assessment curriculum and qualifications
- Public policy - relations
- Professional development
- Resources
- Structures and operation – governance