

Effective SACRES Effective Learning: a Conference for South West SACRE members 27 March 2012

RE 2012: Still Critical?

Dave Francis & David Hampshire

Continuing drive towards academies and free schools; no national adviser for RE curriculum, assessment and qualifications in RE; loss of RE adviser posts; a trend towards appointing non-specialists as subject leaders in schools; changes to Initial Teacher Training; relaxing of statutory curriculum requirements and Ofsted framework.

Signs of Recovery?

The REC: Strategic Plan: Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications, Public Relations, Professional Development, Resources and Governance; All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG); NASACRE / Westhill Awards; NATRE: Free resources including guidance on academies; Supporting RE in the Curriculum; new pedagogy films; REonline: new self—evaluation toolkit & assessment and ICT. New build on the way.

More Challenges & Opportunities

Ofsted Report new framework — smscd (guidelines to go into RE classes); EBac: good news/bad news – exam potential or human development potential? A new knowledge based curriculum? Culham St Gabriel's Teacher Weekend: 29-30 Sept 2012: Warwick university Research Project on Materials used to Teach about World Religions in schools in England; Research Projects on RE in the UK (including Does RE Work?): 'Sacred Space

Curriculum

RE is not included in the review; reduction of the capacity of local areas to develop and support their own syllabuses; full course GCSE RS does not count towards the English Baccalaureate; (but EBac may go) the future of short course GCSEs is very uncertain: schools will have more freedom not to provide accredited courses in RE at all, Key Stage3 may be shortened and KS4 lengthened

Next Steps for SACRES

turn threats into opportunities; establish a more effective broad subject; community by linking with other RE interest groups; make the situation known to a wider audience — local MP to join APPG?; build relationships with the diversity of schools within their area; build a new source of consensus for the RE

curriculum; continue to campaign to get full course GCSE RS included as a humanity in the EBac; find new ways to cater for the curriculum and assessment of pupils who do not choose RS in the EBac; use the complaints procedure where individual schools fail to meet their statutory obligations to provide RE

Teachers and pupils view of RE *David Hampshire*

Primary and secondary teachers have different approaches to agreed syllabuses. Primary teachers adhere more closely to an agreed syllabus and are more likely to plan from it. Secondary teachers adhere less closely, rather they create what they do and reference to it.

We know that experience at RE in school is largely determined by the way that teachers view the subject. Such views impact differently the way that RE is focused. Two major narratives affecting RE delivery can be summed up as 'spiritual quest' and 'social melioration'.

'spiritual quest' equipping pupils with the tools to answer significant human questions – religions and philosophies are there to provide answers when needed. There is no sense that you have to 'buy the whole package'. Rather you can pick and mix.

'social melioration' RE is shaped by societal change And the recognition that pupils will encounter people with different beliefs and cultural practices. The key virtue is tolerance, promoted by knowledge. Rarely does this RE focus on the 'self' as it is mostly concerned with the 'other'.

What do teachers want from an agreed syllabus?

Not much - they wanted a scheme of work they could use, not a syllabus they had to negotiate. Many teachers don't want curriculum change at all, even when there is compelling evidence that it is needed. It isn't possible to create schemes of work to meet the needs of all schools.

What else do we know about the teachers?

Their teaching is shaped by a myriad of influences. Teaching RE is a value-laden activity even when teachers don't think it is.

What constrains RE teachers?

Interviews with RE teachers clearly show that often they don't act in accordance with their consciences – instead, they act according to predicted reactions of other staff and of pupils./

Other members of staff

Where some teachers had a clear idea of what they wanted to do and why they wanted to do it: it didn't follow they would act on that because of other

members of staff. They thought that other members of staff would be unwilling to try things because what was happening seemed to be working or because other teachers didn't think pupils would tolerate the changes proposed. Perceptions of other teachers' philosophies also played a part.

Pupils

Teachers felt that RE already had an image problem so it needed to engage by not being too boring. It was felt that pupils were turned off by religion in general and the Bible specifically. Giving pupils positive experiences was seen to override other considerations – leading to **activity-rich but learning poor** scenarios.

So what?

There is a mismatch between what teachers think pupils want and what pupils want for themselves.

What pupils wanted

To study 'religions, how belonging to a religious tradition impacted on the way a person lived their lives. Beliefs rather than worship or ritual
Teachers were often interested in philosophy or 'secularised' Buddhism rather than religion per se.

Knowledge in RE

Less than 50% of secondary RE teachers had any specialism in RE and hadn't expanded their knowledge beyond what they expected of their pupils yet pupils believe teachers to be a significant source of knowledge.

Apologising for RE

'We have to do this so let's make the best of it.' Or 'It's not about religion really'

The issue for SACREs

Researching your teachers can be really useful and a review can be a good opportunity. You can't give advice without researching the context. Research pupils too – a corrective to what teachers say.

Core Knowledge and Understanding in RE: Primary Focus *Dave Francis*

Core Knowledge

Michael Gove: 'What specifically concerns me is an approach that denies children access to knowledge because time, and effort, is spent on cultivating abstract thinking skills rather than deepening the knowledge base which is the best foundation for reasoning' (Speech to the RSA, 30/6/09);

ED Hirsch: schooling should be about equality; children who don't get academic knowledge at home should have the chance to catch up;

Joel Shatzky: Hirsch is too concerned with content and not enough with pedagogy;

Dylan Wiliam: a five-to-ten year project, not four months.

Tm Oates '**The National Curriculum** should focus on being a clear statement of *content* - a listing of concepts, principles, fundamental operations, and key knowledge.' 'In line with research on high quality pedagogy (Stigler & Stevenson 1999), contextualisation of this content should be left to teachers and schools.' *Could Do Better: Using international comparisons to refine the Notional Curriculum in England*, Cambridge, p.7

The DfE Paradigm A student goes to university and gets a degree; they are inspired to teach; The student goes to an TT institution/school. The teacher then inspires pupils with knowledge they have gained at *university*. But: Teachers mostly spoke of knowledge in terms of 'social melioration' or 'spiritual search'. David Hampshire 2012, 'So what do we know about *RE* teachers?

Someone who 'knows' makes educational conversation impossible;

Jack Priestley: wisdom > knowledge - formation -data;

John Rudge: understanding is a component of knowledge;

Biblical 'knowledge' (who was the oldest man in the Bible?) - 'And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived';

Sociology of knowledge: who decides? political context? skills more important? does it matter? RE discussions: the 'recycling of ignorance?

Key Features of Each Religion at Each Key Stage

The range of content that *might* be selected for study at each key stage. Users of an agreed syllabus should give priority to the programmes of study core and supplementary questions and to the required coverage of religions and beliefs, Ideas for appropriate content might then be selected from the guidelines put together by working groups representing these religions under the auspices of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) in 1994.

MAIN FINDINGS - WHAT DO TEENAGERS THINK THE SPIRIT/SPIRITUALITY IS?

Barbra Wintersgill

Spirituality means holding beliefs

'spirituality is a belief that stays with you through life'; 'some people that believe in the dead and people you love that have died'; 'some people ... don't know their beliefs/ideas about life because they are too distracted by society'; 'everyone has beliefs in something - even believing superficially is being spiritual' 'everyone is a spiritual person because everyone has their own beliefs even if they do not follow a religion' 'If the person believes in God and worships him out of their own free will and allow him to enter their lives then they could be classed spiritual'; 'everyone has a belief whether god is unreal or is not'; 'even an atheist has to consider God to choose not to believe in it.

This may be because they have not found their spirituality yet, not because they don't have one'; 'everyone has their own personal God and this does not have to be encountered through an already established religion. God is completely individual and personal to everyone and therefore no one has the right to be prejudice against you about your own beliefs. God can be present at any time and anywhere and no one religion can explain Him fully because he is infallible'

26% Total 27% B 25% G **The real me** The spirit inside is created by God or 'something else' such as a universal essence. This person inside acts as a discipline and guide **The spiritual struggle** Everyone has the potential to be spiritual Some people are more spiritual than others because they take their spirituality seriously and make the effort to strengthen their relationship with God **The eternal spirit** After death the spirit goes on to a new life in a new place, that may be heaven or hell. Its destiny reflects the quality of the life lived and is decided by God. It is possible that the dead can communicate with the living. **Relationship between spirituality and the spirit** The spirit determines one's humanity and uniqueness; it controls and guides our lives. Spirituality is a dynamic process that awakens awareness and recognition of the spirit, giving rise to specific traits such as a sense of direction and an instinct for good or evil as well as helping us understand our beliefs.

Spirituality is characterized by caring relationships based on a knowledge and understanding of others.

Spirituality is about getting to know and understand others and learning about their beliefs and cultures. The relationships forged should be characterized by love, care and 'being at peace'.
'If a person is openly spiritual, they are able to tolerate other people better and understand and respect their points of view'.

6% Total 6% B 5% G **The real me** The real self is often hidden behind the need to conform and make friends, **The spiritual struggle** Everyone is spiritual to some extent but those who get on better with friends and family and are tolerant of other people and live at peace with others, respecting their point of view actually put their spirituality into practice while others don't.

The eternal spirit The spirit lives on in some form, **Relationship between spirituality and the spirit** The spirit determines one's humanity and uniqueness; it controls and guides the emotions. Spirituality is a process that enables one person to uncover the spirit of another by helping us understand their beliefs. Spirituality enables us to do this because it gives rise to specific traits such as respect for others' beliefs.

Spirituality is individual identity, sometimes referred to as personality, character, soul or essence.

'My spirit . . . my personality that is true to myself' 'The spirit is the part of us that makes us who we are. It is our soul - a deeper level within ourselves'.
'Your spirit is your character, who you are, the essence of the person you are' 'It will be my essence', 'the essence of your being', 'the essence of the person you are', 'the essence of you'.

P 50% Total 27% B 58% G

The real me The inner person is the authentic, pure self that is hidden from all but closest friends. It is free and not subject to social conventions

The spiritual struggle Everyone has a spirit but to be a spiritual person, the spirit must be acknowledged and understood. Some people are more aware of their spirituality than others and some choose not to show their spirituality. Spirituality may be intermittent and awakened by experience

The eternal spirit The spirit continues after death but is apparently earthbound, It exists either a ghost or in the memory of loved ones, where conversations may be had.

Relationship between spirituality and the spirit The spirit determines one's humanity and uniqueness; it controls and guides our lives. Spirituality helps us understand ourselves and gives rise to specific traits such as confidence and receptivity.

Religion is a prerequisite for spirituality

Spirituality is: 'something religious'; 'belief in a religion that stays inside you' ; 'spirituality is my religion Islam because I'm a Muslim' 'I believe religion is a key factor in spiritual behaviour'; 'some people are not spiritual because they don't believe in their religion or do things that are not part of their culture or religion'. 'people who have no religion are ignorant. Spiritual is when they have a religion'. 'not everyone is spiritual because I think you need to have a connection with a religion. And not everyone does' 'Spiritual people are like monks and nuns who spend their time praying about what they believe in' 'spirituality is your feelings and beliefs towards God and whether you follow a religion and your feelings towards other religions' All but five of the twenty nine students in this cluster were Christians (11) or Muslims (13).

9% total 13% B 5% G

The real me The inner self is the God-given conscience

The spiritual struggle Some more than others because some people are more religious

The eternal spirit After death the spirit goes on to a new life in a new place, Its destiny reflects the quality of the life lived and is decided by God that may be heaven or hell.

Relationship between spirituality and the spirit The spirit determines one's humanity and uniqueness; it controls and guides our choices and beliefs. Spirituality gives rise to specific traits such as religiosity and helps us understand our religion and that of others.

The spiritual profiles of subjects (NB only RE, PHE and Assembly have rounded profiles)

SUBJECT	RE	PSHE	Assembly	Art	PE	Tutor period	History	Music	English	Drama
Key learning processes	Talk think discuss Express opinion meditate reflect	Listen talk express opinion	Listen think talk contemplate, reflect silence	research think express imagine create design	concentrate	Talk discuss express opinion	Talk discuss express opinion	Listen create express	Talk discuss create	Listen talk discuss, share ideas express opinion create express
Personal involvement	Feelings	Feelings	Feelings	emotion self-revelation	Self-transcendence	feelings		feelings self-transcendence	feelings	feelings self-revelation self-transcendence
Learning environment	Freedom Choice enjoyment, relaxation atmosphere	Freedom working with friends, developing relationships		Freedom Enjoyment Relaxation Fun calming	enjoyment, calming discipline control	working with friends		Enjoyment escape calming		Relaxation working with friends
Substantive concepts	Questions ideas beliefs religion spirituality God morality cultures	morality racism relationships community, problems	Questions Beliefs Religion morality bullying world issues people	issues		Problems Home	Religion spirituality cultures war		cultures	
Personal spiritual; outcomes	understanding respect open-mindedness, awareness	understanding respect awareness	understanding	self-understanding self-esteem, vision	confidence, self-esteem, improvement, achievement of goals	confidence		Vision	understanding	confidence,

WHY RE?

"The teacher takes the class into a small room, full of cushions, and the students are asked to take a seat and close their eyes, whilst they are played a piece of relaxing music. It is entirely up to the students how they spend this time. They are really expected to sit quietly and reflect on their lives, their emotions or things that are bothering them."

"At home I'm mostly taught about my own religion however at school there was a contrast ... Other religions which I disagreed with now I have a better understanding and respect for ... throughout my life I will encounter people with different social/religious backgrounds. It has in general made me a better and more understanding person."

"In RE I study Judaism and Christianity and this enables me to research thoroughly into the different aspects and nature of God within these religions e.g. the Trinity. It also enables me to understand and accept that everyone has a different opinion on the subject and therefore no one person has the correct answer and I have to accept God in my own way. Personally talking RE has changed my opinions on my Christian points of view, being Christian myself, it has lead me to develop my own personal beliefs which I understand more clearly, however I also accept that other people have different points of view and doing RE has enabled me to gain an insight into them and question certain areas of the religion which previously I was unsure about. I believe everyone has their own personal God and this does not have to be encountered through an already established religion. However, an established religion does offer the opportunity to learn about God and his covenant with you as a human being. An established religion is also recognized throughout the majority of the world and therefore people are more likely to accept your beliefs, but as already stated God is completely individual and personal to everyone and therefore no one has the right to be prejudice against you about your own beliefs. God can be present at any time and anywhere and no one religion can explain Him fully because he is infallible."

"RE helped me to become religious and believe what i think is best; ISLAM in school I learnt about islam about the holy cabba but theres lots more to come"

"In RE i am currently studyin 2 religions which are sikhism and islam... in islam i have learnt more about my religion, things such as how to live my life"

WHY THE ARTS?

Through art it is possible to: 'let my spirit show through'; 'you put the inner you in a picture'. 'express my individuality'.

Art 'helps you learn about yourself and views by giving you the freedom to design things which reflect yourself and how you are feeling... I remember. . the piece of art I did ... in year 9 about freedom. It was very powerful to find out how people felt about imprisonment and freedom'.

When I have thoughts or feelings that I can't put into words, I show how I feel through

painting or drawing. This is usually for more religious aspects of my life, for example I have done many paintings of different interpretations of the Goddess figure.

'I produce my own piece of art to let relieve a lot of stress and express my emotions. It made me consider what I'm feeling and why, which at times help solve a lot of problems.

'i tend to ignore the objective and just see what happens... you can just let all of your emotions and veiws on things put themselves on paper'

In drama, instead of keeping feelings locked up you can let it off your chest during drama, you told everyone your problem but they think it's an idea.

you can express yourself easily in drama by showing your mood though the character you are acting and no-one will never know that you feel like that really in side.

Learning environments in the arts

Art is such a personal subj, youre always doin things youre own way, havin to choose pieces you want to do rather than in other subjects where you may be told wot to do.

I didn't actually feel that my artwork at GCSE really represented me and how I felt. Although, in theory, we could paint what we liked within certain topic areas, everything we produced in one topic had to be interlinked so that I could make one final piece at the end, mixing together parts from all the other pieces. So what we could actually draw was restricted in a way. And i also felt that sometimes, when I did draw something that meant something to me, i was told that it didn't fit in with the topic i was doing and should probably draw something else if i wanted to get a good mark.

Personal outcomes in the arts

subjects such as art, drama and music where u can be creative, help u find a special 'calling' whatever it maybe.

in drama you get to take on so many roles and in doing so u get to experiment on which type of role u are most comfortable in being and that helps u understand what sort of person u are

During my GCSE music lessons, we did a lot of listening work, and I was particularly interested in Beethoven. I think the fact that, even though he became deaf, he kept on doing what he loved. Music meant so much to his life, he was willing to overcome any obstacle to make sure it stayed in his life. I think this affected the way I look at life. If there is something that you love, then, no matter what, you have to keep it a part of your life somehow.

theres a lot of interpreting wot the pieces are about - with todays development in technology art has changed its purpose so when we look at modern art its normally about modern issues i think ... its learnin bout how other ppl think n see things tht helps me learn things bout myself and how i want to live.i hope tht makes sense.

With Thanks to Derek Jay from South Glos SACRE for taking and sharing these Notes