

**Culham St Gabriel's : Press release on union of trusts**

*For immediate use*

**Union of Trusts Offers New Boost for Religious Education**

Two grant-giving trusts, renowned for their support for religious education in UK schools, will be uniting at the end of this month to form a new trust. St Gabriel's Trust and the Culham Educational Foundation, which have worked closely together for more than a decade, will formally merge to become Culham St Gabriel's, from 2 July 2012 onwards.

Culham St Gabriel's will continue giving grants for research, development and innovation in RE, and running a programme of events, websites and training opportunities for those who teach RE.

Dr Priscilla Chadwick, Chair-designate of Culham St Gabriel's, expressed her enthusiasm for the united trust and its work: 'By combining forces, we are able to offer more help for RE teachers, to promote excellence in this vital subject which is challenging but so rewarding to teach'. At a time of rapid change in schools and the curriculum, Dr Chadwick added: 'the kind of help we can offer to those who teach RE is more important now than ever.'

The two trusts have been working towards the union for more than a year and anticipate a great deal of work in the future. Canon Tony Williamson, Chair of Culham and a designated member of Culham St Gabriel's, said he was delighted that the team, led so well by Dr John Gay for so many years and now led by Dr Mark Chater, will be based in a much larger charity. He emphasised his strong belief in the future: 'Culham St Gabriel's will have a significant capacity, through its grant-giving and programme of activities, to improve standards in RE and to support education and lifelong learning.'

The two trusts are endowed charities resulting from the closure of Anglican teacher training colleges in the 1970s – St Gabriel's in Southwark and Culham in Oxfordshire. The merged trust retains its links with Southwark and Oxford dioceses, together with an ex officio trustee from the Church of England's National Society for Religious Education. Culham St Gabriel's will be a Christian and Anglican charity supporting an open and diverse model of Religious Education for all learners, in church schools, other faith schools and community schools.

Dr Mark Chater, Director-Designate of Culham St Gabriel's, looked forward to the 'energy, faith and optimism we will bring to supporting and challenging the RE community. There is much to do in our commitment to excellence and to working with partners in achieving the best learning in RE.'