



# RE Newsletter

Spring Term 2024

# Global Christianity

Welcome to 2024.

We call it a New Year, but for many of us it may seem as though nothing has changed. Issues of war and climate justice are still on our newsfeeds, SIAMS inspections continue as do those conducted by Ofsted.

One of the key issues often identified in SIAMS reports is that Christianity is not often well taught from a diverse and global position. The Church of England Education Office is working on resources that will help schools to deliver teaching about Christianity that will take more account of global differences.

If you want to listen to some of the background to these resources, there are some podcasts from the CEFEL These are well worth a listen. Keep your eyes open for the Global Christianity resources, which I will share with you as soon as they are publicly available.

[Christianity As A Global World Faith by Called, Connected, Committed \(spotify.com\)](#)

The RE Network in January will endeavour to continue this conversation, so if you can listen ahead of time, that would be great. We will explore the concept of salvation across global Christianity and hopefully hear from Sharon Masters and Marion Standing on their visit to India.

If you have an ECT in your school, do encourage them to sign up for the RE training afternoon designed especially for ECTs.

I am available for online and in-person support depending on school requirements, but, just like last term, my diary is already filling up between now and Easter. I do not have any more twilight sessions available, so afternoon support will probably need to be online, if it can be fitted in at all. It's great that you are all seeking to improve your RE, and I will continue to do my best to help you.

I look forward to hearing from you. Have a great term.

Anne Andrews by [email](#) or phone 07884 655097  
Diocesan RE Adviser



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## DIOCESAN TRAINING THIS TERM

All RE training events and booking links for this term can be found below and on the [website](#). Click on the date for the live link to the booking page. Please ensure that even for free courses you book on Eventbrite. You will not receive the link in time for the meeting if you have not booked a place and entered the correct, delegate email into the required fields on the booking form.



Bookings usually close four working days before the start of the course so ensure that you book in time to receive the link for any online courses.

### RE FOR ECTS

**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February** 2024 1.30 – 3.30pm Church House Oxford, Langford Locks, Kidlington, OX5 1GF Cost: S4S: £65.00 (+VAT) per person; Non S4S: £90 (+VAT) per person

This short course is designed for those who are new to teaching. Join us as we learn about essentials of teaching RE in a Church of England School – finding out more about the purpose, the methodologies, resources, and support on offer to enable teachers to deliver quality RE.

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RE NETWORK MEETINGS Dates for this year:

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January** 2024 4.00pm – 5.30pm

Microsoft Teams

**Global Christianity** – Easter around the world. How do diverse Christian groups around the world think about, understand, and celebrate Easter.

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March** 4.00pm – 5.30pm

Microsoft Teams

**Assessing the Curriculum** – What does it mean to assess the curriculum and how best can we do that in RE?

**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April** 4.00pm – 5.30pm

Microsoft Teams

**Teaching Humanism**

**Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July** 4.00pm – 5.30pm

Microsoft Teams

**Resource Round-Up**

*These sessions are free to schools that have signed up to the Service Level Agreement. For other schools there is an annual charge of £110 + VAT to join the Network.*

*If you teach in Milton Keynes, Bracknell Forest or Windsor and Maidenhead look out for fliers about the additional SACRE funded networks taking place in those areas.*

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP, SPIRITUALITY AND SPACE MAKERS

Don't forget that the Diocese offers training to support collective worship and Christian distinctiveness. If that's not your responsibility in school, please pass on to the relevant person.

**DATES for your diary:**

CW and Spirituality Workshop – 10.1.24 1-4pm

CW & Spirituality Network Meeting – 4.3.23 4-5pm

Godly Play Training at Church House – 15.3.24

[Katie.dickens@oxford.Anglican.org](mailto:Katie.dickens@oxford.Anglican.org)

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## NATIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

### RE HUBS

The screenshot shows the RE Hubs website interface. At the top left is the RE Hubs logo, which consists of the text 'RE HUBS' next to a circular icon of connected nodes. To the right of the logo is a horizontal navigation menu with the following items: Home (underlined), Hubs, Calendar, Upskill, Get Involved, About, Contact, and Search. Below the navigation menu is a grid of eight content cards, each with a title, an image, and a call-to-action link. The cards are: 1. 'Hubs' with an image of people in a meeting and the link 'Find your hub location'. 2. 'Calendar' with an image of a calendar and the link 'Courses and events'. 3. 'Local groups' with an image of people at a table and the link 'Find local groups'. 4. 'Places of interest' with an image of children and the link 'Find places of interest'. 5. 'School speakers' with an image of a speaker at a podium and the link 'Find school speakers'. 6. 'ITT/ECT & NQT' with an image of a woman pointing at a whiteboard and the link 'Access our support area'. 7. 'News & blogs' with an image of newspapers and the link 'Read latest news & blogs'. 8. 'Get involved' with an image of a document and the link 'Register to be featured'.

Check out the new [RE Hubs](#) if you want to find information about some of the training and opportunities for CPD in RE nationally.

## NATIONAL UPDATES

As usual the RE world has been busy. Last term saw the publication of the first draft of the [National Content Standard](#) document. Produced by the Religious Education Council (REC), this document sets out to turn the National Statement of Entitlement, proposed by the Worldviews Project into something resembling a National Curriculum subject standard. The document is very clear that it is setting out a standard for content, rather than the content itself, so don't expect it to tell you what to teach.

It also contains a very useful resume of many of the most recent reports into the state of RE in England. It sets out the purposes of RE but does not provide a specified programme of study.

The REC is looking for feedback on the document, so take the time to read it for yourself. Please note though, that this document has no statutory force and does not replace current Agreed Syllabuses or Schemes of work.

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However, when you read [The Annual Report of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2022/23](#) you will see why many believe that a National Standard for RE is desperately needed. This is what was reported about the state of RE:

*RE in schools is generally of poor quality. Although it is a statutory subject, schools often consider RE as an afterthought. As a subject on the curriculum, it is under-valued. RE is a complex subject, and the lack of clarity and support from government makes schools' job harder.*

*Some schools steer through these challenges well, but most do not. We found that:*

- *many schools do not meet the statutory requirement to teach RE at all stages.*
- *pupils are rarely taught enough substance to prepare them to engage in a complex, multi-religious and multi-secular society (where religion and non-religion play different parts in different people's lives).*
- *too often, schools do not teach topics in the RE curriculum deeply enough for pupils to develop a substantial understanding of the subject matter.*
- *non-examined RE is typically not high quality.*

*All pupils should develop a broad and secure knowledge of the complexity of religious and non-religious traditions. It will take coordinated effort by stakeholders to improve the quality of RE in schools:*

- *schools need high-quality professional development to teach RE well.*
- *curriculum publishers need to identify clearly what pupils will learn and when, building on knowledge over time, so that pupils develop a deep knowledge of the chosen religious and non-religious traditions.*
- *the government should provide clear expectations about RE provision in schools. Schools should follow these. Current non-statutory guidance for RE should be updated and include clear information for schools about the breadth and depth of the syllabus they are expected to teach.*

I hope that the RE in your school would not be subject to the same criticisms, but these issues provide a useful benchmark against which to evaluate your provision.

Take some time to read these documents when you get a chance and we will include discussion of these in the second RE network of the term, when we look at Assessing the Curriculum.

The long-awaited Ofsted Subject Report into RE is due out early in January, so keep your eyes open for this document.

## REPORTS FROM AUTUMN TERM RE NETWORKS

### PLANNING AN RE DAY

Planning an RE day needs to begin with clarity of purpose. Why are you planning an RE day? What might the best reasons be for having an RE day? We considered five possible reasons, though I am sure that there are others.

- A) Going deeper into a topic.
- B) Covering a religion/topic tradition that is not in the main curriculum.
- C) Increasing the amount of time for RE.
- D) Giving additional time for Christianity
- E) Allowing for a seasonal focus.

In planning a day to achieve any of these purposes, there were other considerations too, some of which may be dictated by the purpose of the day.



**Whole school or class?**



**Standalone topic or cross-curricular?**



**Intended outcomes?**



**Type of activities?**

There are also some key issues to avoid:



Too many activities with little or no RE focus.



Lack of clarity about outcomes.



Too much time spent moving rather than learning.



Lack of progression between the classes or groups.

The conclusion we came to was that an RE day needed to be as well planned as any other unit of work for it to achieve the best outcomes for the pupils.

If you have run a successful RE day in your school, consider writing an article for the next edition of this newsletter, due out early in April.

*Neither the Diocese nor Ofsted recommend delivering the whole RE curriculum through concentrated days, as the gaps between learning do not create the best opportunities to embed learning and can therefore lead to a lack of coherence and progression.*

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**Worldviews are multidimensional. The disciplines are tools designed to make sense of different dimensions of human experience and as educators they help us do our job.**

© Kate Christopher: <https://reformingre.wordpress.com/2021/05/18/disciplinarity-in-religion-worldviews/> accessed 30/10/2023

The disciplines that the Church of England Statement of Entitlement (not to be confused with the proposed National Statement of Entitlement) promotes are theology, philosophy and social and human science. Most areas of substantive knowledge in RE (Baptism, Pilgrimage, Langar, Sewa etc) can be looked at through the lenses of the different disciplines.

Looking at service/Sewa (a Sikh concept) from a theological point of view would ask what Sewa shows about Sikh beliefs about God and humanity. From a human/social sciences point of view consider how Sewa contributes to Sikh identity and community relations. From a philosophical point of view, consider how Sewa contributes to Sikh morality and how serving the community demonstrates what it means to be a good Sikh.

In the session we considered what it means to be a **theologian**:

- Exploring and explaining the origin of a belief or concept
- Discussing the authority or reliability of key texts
- Examining the different ways that a belief or concept is interpreted or understood and
- Exploring the significance and influence of a belief or concept

The kind of skills that a theologian needs are textual analysis, Source evaluation, presentation, research, question framing, interpretation of information – often text and critical thinking.

The Understanding Christianity resource is very supportive for a theological approach. It uses text and encourages pupils to ask and interpret text. What does a psalm teach Christians or Jewish people about God? What do Sikhs learn about God from The Mool Mantra?

A **social scientist** does some of the following:

- Examines how people within the same worldview practice their beliefs differently,
- Explores the impact of geography, culture and psychology on the ways in which people practice their beliefs,
- Studies and evaluates how belonging to a particular religion can impact individual identity,
- Explores the relationship between an individual's religious/non-religious identity and other forms of identity e.g., nationality, sexuality and
- Asks questions and examines data.



Many of the skills of science, such as making hypotheses, interpreting data, formulating questions and analysing and evaluating information are equally applicable in RE. Use data from surveys, either those available online, or create your own survey, asking pupils to generate the questions.

**Philosophers**, on the other hand

- Examine the different ways in which people have tried to gain knowledge of reality,
- Study and evaluate the chains of reasoning within an argument or belief,
- Explore how humans have determined what is right and wrong,
- Read, debate, and discuss the big questions of life.

Many of the skills of a philosopher are similar to those of theologians and social scientists, but they will also be looking at the ethos, morality and reality of material.

These skills are also not necessarily unique to RE. Looking at the curriculum as a whole, make links to other subjects where similar skills are employed.

The recommendation is to aim for a balanced curriculum, which is why the new Diocesan Scheme of work uses the disciplines as the strands that run through it. There are two units focused on each discipline in each year group. However, these disciplines are not entirely separate and there will be some elements of other disciplines within a unit. If you are using Understanding Christianity for all of the Christian units in your curriculum, you will likely have a greater quantity of theological material, so you may need to rebalance the other disciplines. Ultimately, your curriculum and the way you structure it is up to you as a school, and you need to be clear about what you are doing and why.

Carrying out an audit on your curriculum is one of the key activities that you need to do regularly as an RE leader. One of the six key questions to ask is about the balance that you offer in your curriculum, while another is about the coherence of the sequencing of learning.

I would love to hear from you about how you are finding the new scheme of work, even if you are only using the odd unit here and there. If you want to dip your toe in there are several new units that cover similar content to some units on the old syllabus. Perhaps try an amalgamation of two units to see if the new scheme will work for you.

Try one or more of these:

Y1 – How and why is Shabbat important to some Jewish people in Britain?

Y2 - What are the best reasons for following a leader?

Y3 - Does it matter if a story is true or not?

Y4 - How do Hindus understand God (Brahman)?

Y5 – How far does the mosque contribute to the Muslim concept of Ummah?

Y6 - How far is belief in the resurrection important to Christians today?

## NATRE SPIRITED ARTS COMPETITION WINNERS

Congratulations are due to two of our schools who have won prizes in the NATRE funded Spirited Arts competition.



This is what St Edburg's in Bicester have said of their success:

We are delighted that St Edburg's CE School in Bicester have been announced as Winners of the Faith in Action, Values in Action category of the NATRE Spirited Arts Competition, 2023.

Over 45,000 young people from across the globe took part in the 2023 competition: expressing their views on some of the biggest questions in life through art. A total of 3,088 entries from 477 schools were submitted for judging.



The mosaic, created by Year 6s at St Edburg's, was inspired by John 3:16 in the Bible: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not die but have eternal life." The design shows that love must be at the very heart of our world. Christians believe that Jesus died for everyone, even though we are all different, which is why there is a cross in the background.

The year 6s explained, "At St Edburg's, we would like this mosaic to serve as a powerful symbol that we are all valued and loved by God, and that we, in turn, should value and love each other too."

Another Diocesan School has a pupil with a runner up prize – one of their youngest. And here is his entry, with explanation.

I've tried to show my feelings in a picture. In my teacher God is in the act of new life. As one is getting born then they grow up they can explore. The most important part of my work is God giving new life.

J Cooper Minton age 5



**Name: Cooper**

**Age: 5**

**School: Cuddington and Dinton School**

**Artwork Title: Babies**

I've tried to show my feelings in a picture. God is in the part of new life. Someone is getting born when they grow up, they can explore. The most important part of my work is God giving new life.

All the winning entries can be viewed here: [Spirited Arts Gallery \(2023\) \(natre.org.uk\)](http://natre.org.uk)



**Have you done any interesting work with your class in RE?**

**Have you got some examples of floor books?**

**Have you done some work on global Christianity?**

**Have you used resources from training you have attended?**

**I would love to hear from you and share that information wider.**

**I hope to see lots of you at the various training events. I wish those of you who are due SIAMS or Ofsted all the best. We would love to hear your feedback on experiences with the new SIAMS as well as anything in this newsletter.**

**Have a great term.**

**[anne.andrews@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:anne.andrews@oxford.anglican.org)**

## RESOURCES

If you use any of the resources mentioned below, it would be great to have a review.

*Please note that the Diocese of Oxford does not offer an endorsement of any of the resources listed. Please use your professional judgement to decide whether these materials are suitable for your school.*

### Springs Dance Company

Several diocesan schools have recently had sessions from Springs Dance company. Have a look at the website to see if one of this term's sessions would suit your school.

*"Thank you for doing that amazing lesson with us. I loved it!"* - Pupil, Seabrook school

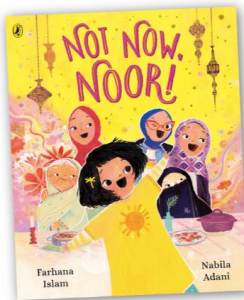
This term Springs Dance company are offering **Creation, Easter** and **Parable**. Further details can be found

at <https://springsdancecompany.org.uk/index.php/join-in/schools-workshops>

To book and to find out more please email [touring@springsdancecompany.org.uk](mailto:touring@springsdancecompany.org.uk) or call **07775 628 442**.



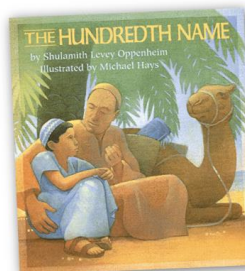
If you are looking for any reading books with a link to RE, you could look at the Teachers Collection. You will need to sign up, but they send out basic information about books linked to all sorts of topics. The RE section is quite sparse but have a look at these and see if anything takes your fancy.



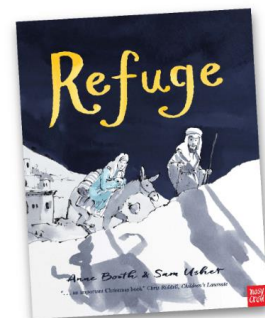
Not Now, Noor!  
by Farhana Islam



The Most Exciting Eid  
by Zeba Talkhani & Abecha Tariq



The Hundredth Name  
by Shulamith Levey Oppenheim



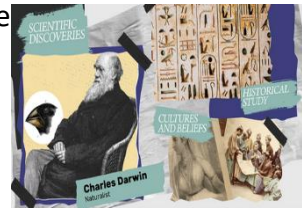
Refuge  
by Anne Booth & Sam Usher

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## UNDERSTANDING HUMANISM

A [brand new animation!](#) **Humanist history: from radical ideas to common sense** brings the rich history of humanism to life for pupils and teachers and explores two millennia of humanist thinking. You can watch the video on the Humanist Heritage website.

[The narrative](#) spans ancient China, India, and Roman Britain, where religious and non-religious schools of thought coexisted. Then followed challenging centuries when expressing humanist ideas was perilous due to the dominance of Christianity. The Renaissance and Enlightenment eras ushered in a period when human reason was celebrated for discovering natural laws, establishing human rights, and driving societal progress.



### 'A rich tradition of humanist thinking'

While this animation will help pupils understand how human beings have historically made sense of the world around them, it also beautifully illustrates the timeline of a range of historical periods and key humanist thinkers from the past and today. This makes it an ideal tool for teachers of History and RE looking to develop students' understanding of the evolution of humanist thinking and its relationship with religious, scientific, and artistic developments.

## REAL PEOPLE, REAL FAITH

The Pan-Berkshire SACRE hub, funded by a NASACRE/Westhill Award is pleased to announce that the most recent films in the [Real People, Real Faith](#) Series are now available on the NATRE website. Humanist, Baha'i and Buddhist films have been added to the collection and so offer teachers the opportunity to engage their pupils in a wider range of religions and worldviews.

For each worldview there are six films – two for each of KS1, KS2 and KS3. Each film is accompanied by a brief introductory document with summary and suggested activities.

The full list of films is as follows:

Baha'i  
Buddhist,  
Christianity – Anglican, Baptist and Catholic.  
Hindu  
Humanist  
Islam – Sunni and Shia  
Jewish – Orthodox and Reform  
Sikh



Filed in locations across Berkshire, mostly in places of worship, these films explore some of the key features of these traditions, offering a wide diversity of voices within each worldview. Build them into your planning, especially if you are finding visits to places of worship hard to fund and organise.





Holocaust Learning UK offers schools a unique array of films, tailor-made for secondary school students.

The films feature many Holocaust survivors, and each tells a very different story. The films include hitherto unseen survivor testimony, archive historical footage and a cast of student actors to foster an understanding of the Holocaust, both its historical importance and its contemporary relevance.

For 2024 there are two outstanding films for school assemblies, and two further remarkable life story films for lesson - all four are available free of charge. The films are accompanied by bespoke resources provided by the Holocaust Educational Trust.

### KINDERTRANSPORT

NEW RELEASE

Three Kindertransport children tell the story of how their parents sent them as unaccompanied refugees to the UK in order to escape Nazi persecution. With historical context and explanation of the Holocaust, this contemporary retracing of their steps offers insight into their experiences, good and bad, and how they had to face the realisation that they would never be reunited with their parents. Ideal for assemblies and lessons.

Narrated by Jonah Hauer King and featuring student actors

20 minutes  
For students aged 11+

### ASSEMBLY FILM

A thought-provoking fifteen-minute film about the Holocaust that includes the testimonies of six Survivors. It features a short history of the Holocaust and helps students understand the significance of Holocaust Memorial Day. For assemblies and lessons.

Presented by student actors, suitable for students aged 11+