

In this issue:

- Secondary curriculum advice
- Primary curriculum review
- Spirited Arts
- Using virtual learning
- NATRE conferences 2009
- Holocaust Education survey
- Publications - special offer

Local groups and national issues



Ed Pawson
NATRE executive member

Welcome to the sixth edition of this NATRE local groups newsletter. As usual, there are a number of important issues bubbling away in the RE cauldron at present.

It's been superb to see all the applications for bursary funding coming in through the autumn, demonstrating the vibrancy and activity of life in local RE communities (see report on page 5).

Also in this edition, you'll find reports on Spirited Poetry and Spirited Arts, which continue to showcase creativity taking place in many RE classrooms.

There is a reminder below about how to access information on local groups, and how to inform others of your activities!

With developments in the new

secondary curriculum well under-way, there is still a need for some schools to access training - details of how to do this are on page 3.

NATRE has been working with the QCA to develop the new primary curriculum, and to ensure that RE's place is secure. Consultation takes place later this term.

At the other end of the school spectrum, the proposed introduction of diplomas is vexing some of our members as to what attitude the RE community should be taking towards the Humanities diploma qualification. Some details on these issues are included here, but as always, the NATRE website and RE Today are also excellent sources of information, to keep you in touch with current issues in the RE world.

Contact:

epawson@thekings.devon.sch.uk

Contents:

NATRE website	1
Spirited creativity	2
Secondary curriculum	3
SHAP journal	4
VLEs	4
Science and religion	4
NATRE bursaries	5
Digital videos	5
Holocaust survey	6
Contact us	6

Local groups on the web

NATRE's web site supports local groups.

Through this site, everyone can view details of the many NATRE-affiliated local groups. Check out your own network group!

- **If it's there**, why not log on and add some brief details about the group - see the Lancashire groups to get the idea.
- **If it isn't there**, and you would like it to be added - contact us and we can take it from there.

The more information you make available on the site, the more likely it is that new members will find their way to you by this route.

It would be useful if local groups could put up information on their calendar sites, to act as message points for others who are interested.

See: www.natre.org.uk

Contact: exec@natre.org.uk



2008 Spirited Poetry competition

Look out for the results!



This year, the Spirited Poetry Competition was designed to coincide with National Poetry Day, in October 2008. Closing date for entries was 1st December and the results will be published in the April edition of REtoday magazine.

There are 20 prizes to be awarded (£20 vouchers) to the best young poets, and their schools will receive a complimentary copy of 'Spirited Poetry'

from our sponsors, RMEP.

In our competition for Spirited Poetry in RE two years ago, 8-year-old Nicholas Martin, from Manston St James School wrote this on the theme 'Where is God?'

God is everywhere
 God is where the sea meets the land
 And where the land joins the sky
 Where sky ends and storm starts
 And where earth becomes space
 God is everywhere

Spirited Arts 2009 competition

The NATRE Spirited Arts project is underway again, too. The 2008 competition was a huge success, with nearly 20,000 entries and an even higher standard than before.

The aim is to help schools to link creativity with Religious Education, and this year's themes are:

- Mystery
- Open-minded
- Life is Sacred
- Justice for everyone
- Who is God?

Entry is open to all pupils from 5-19 years. Entries should be no larger than A3, and pupils should write briefly about their work.

Closing date: 31st July 2009

For information about how to enter and to view the Art in Heaven Gallery see:

www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts/about.php



Spirited Music

We've been asking pupils if they had a 'spiritual music' playlist on their iPod, what would be on it. Three pupils said:

'I'd choose 'What a wonderful world' by Louis Armstrong, a calm happy piece of music to help you settle when you're stressed.'

'I'd have the 'Autumn' movement of 'The Four Seasons', which reminds me of the Brecon Beacons on a sunny day. It is calm, relaxing'

'I'd choose 'Cancer' by 'My Chemical Romance'. This sad song makes me remember my Nan - it's a reminder of loved ones.'

What would spirited music sound like?

Lat Blaylock has been exploring how RE teachers can create opportunities for young people in these areas, giving expressive creativity a stronger place in RE classrooms.

Lat is collecting as many examples as he can of good ways to use particular pieces of recorded music, or music-making activity, for better RE.

We are now planning the training day conference for 25th February, in Birmingham, to make this go further.

Suggestions to:
exec@natre.org.uk

NATRE is working to enable the creativity and spirituality of music and photography to find a stronger place in RE classrooms.



Pimp My RE

Dear XZbit

My RE curriculum is a total mess. I inherited it from 'one careful owner' but it's a disaster zone. The wheels are coming off and the sound system is a joke - you can't hear it at all when it's raining on my mobile classroom.

I've got no digi-projector or access to the ICT suite, there's no money for trips or books and all the attention round here goes to Literacy and Numeracy - no real time for RE at all.

All the Humanities subjects have to teach a unit on 'The Land of the Red Squirrel' this term, Ofsted is overdue and I'm at a loss as to how I'm supposed to fulfil the requirements of my locally agreed syllabus.

Please, please, please, pimp my RE.
Yours in hope,

A desperate subject leader

Dear Desperate

Man, what a wreck! When I saw your RE curriculum I thought the Large Hadron Collider had blown me into a different universe of curriculum chaos.

But don't despair, we are going to get a top team onto this one, baby.

Our team of specialist regional subject advisers are standing by ready to work all night to pimp your RE. I'm coming round PERSONALLY to drive away your battered old RE curriculum that looks like something from the 1970's and deliver it into the hands of our expert technicians and creative geniuses. Baby, you ain't gonna recognise it when these guys have finished.

Keep the faith,

XZbit



A message from Dave Francis, National RE Subject Lead for the new secondary curriculum

Well, OK, maybe we can't give this kind of personal attention to everyone, but our Regional Subject Advisers are ready to lend a hand and offer some great ideas to help you make the most of the opportunities presented by the new secondary curriculum.

Do invite them to your local group, through your RE adviser or SACRE consultant.

And don't miss the web-based material already available - go first to the NATRE secondary curriculum site for all the resources and links

See: www.natre.org.uk/secondary
See: <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk>



Dave Francis, National RE Subject Lead for the secondary curriculum

Check out Dave Francis's "Think piece" on the changes to the secondary curriculum, giving guidance on how RE can work with other subject areas and still cover our statutory curriculum expectations.

See:

www.natre.org.uk/secondary/video.php



Have you heard of:

- 'green jihad'?
- Orthodox Christian 'spiritual ecology camps'?
- the Sikh 'conscious kitchen'?

Shap Journal (2008): "Trust in God and tie your camel" - faith and action on the environment

Do you have any idea what contemporary Jews, Pagans, Zoroastrians, Bahá'ís, Humanists or Buddhists are thinking and doing about one of today's most worrying issues, the environment?

The annual Shap journal (2008) is entitled: Religion and the Environment and is for anyone who has ever wondered what is happening on environmental issues within faith communities today, who is looking for more than the standard textbook accounts of beliefs about the environment, or who would like to know how those beliefs translate into actions.

Chair of the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education, Clive Lawton comments:

"True to our long standing purpose, Shap has once again provided insights into what a huge array of people really think and do, this time about the hot topic of the environment.

"When much RE is dependent on 'official' descriptions of religions, Shap strives to take the student and teacher deeper into the realities of religions and practical life-stances as they are actually lived."

See:

www.shapworkingparty.org.uk/journals.html



Virtual Learning for RE

On 1st April 2008 your school should have had a Learning Platform or Virtual Learning Environment in place.

What contributions are you making as the RE department / co-ordinator to the platform?

Three things you could be doing are:

- Adding your lesson resources for students to access

- Allowing pupils to contribute work via the system

- Making a resource bank of RE materials for students to access and contribute to

If you are already doing exciting things with your school LP, VLE or website we would love to hear from you.

Contact: exec@natre.org.uk

What contributions are you making to your school VLE?



Science and Religion in Schools

The Science and Religion in Schools project is an exciting way to approach the interface between science and religion; a hot topic at this time.

This will fit in wonderfully with the new Secondary Curriculum model and also with the thinking skills, SEAL and P4C agendas in primary schools.

If you would like to know more about the project, then please see the SRSP website.

There are a number of complimentary copies of the primary or secondary book for those groups who complete a questionnaire at the website.

For more information about the project or the free copies contact Paul Hopkins - web@srsp.net.

See: www.srsp.net



NATRE Bursaries

The DCSF awarded NATRE a £240,000 grant in 2008, with £80,000 to be allocated in each of three years, 2007 - 2010. This money is to be used to develop the capacity of NATRE to support its members.

As part of this funding, the opportunity to bid for a curriculum bursary has been offered to local NATRE groups during 2008 via this newsletter.

Eighteen bursaries have been awarded to enable teachers to develop resources

and opportunities on areas such as: youth SACREs, thinking skills and collaborative projects, identity and diversity initiatives, developing community cohesion opportunities, developing compelling learning experiences.

Those groups granted funding are due to report at the end of February, and the outcomes from the projects will be posted on a microsite on the NATRE website later in the year.

Look out for the reports of the NATRE local groups projects on the website in the Spring

NATRE conferences for local groups

There were two (free) highly successful, RE conferences held in 2008 for NATRE local groups, one in London and the other in York. These were generously funded by St Gabriels Programme.

There are three more planned for 2009, with a conference in Cornwall planned for February, while details of those in Kirklees and Liverpool are being finalised.

Cornwall:
13th February: "Towards gifted and talented RE in Cornwall", organised by Anna Corbett
(acorbett@penair.cornwall.sch.uk)

Kirklees: organised by Alastair Ross
(alastairross414@btinternet.com)

Liverpool: organised by Heather Marshall
(heather.marshall@calderstones.co.uk)

Look out for information about these events in the Spring newsletter.

Look out for the free NATRE conferences this year, in your area.



Digital videos promoting RE

Work is progressing on a new Digital Video resource for the RE community.

This material aims to provide a comprehensive promotional resource for Religious Education, designed for teachers, and anyone who has a need to explain the role and value of RE in the curriculum. It will demonstrate that good RE is popular and valued by children and young people.

Filming has almost finished and the team is now hard at work identifying the clips they want to make sure the key messages are clearly and interestingly presented.

The delivery date is March 2009!

There will be 4 separate videos, each 4 - 9 minutes long, designed for use with specific audiences:

- primary schools
- secondary schools
- students making RS subject choices at GCSE and post-16
- headteachers, when talking with parents/carers about RE and its value in the curriculum.

When completed, the videos will be available for download from the NATRE website.



Holocaust Education - secondary teachers

Holocaust Education Survey

Can you help?

The Holocaust Education Trust is currently carrying out research to find out the views of secondary teachers on teaching about the Holocaust.

The Trust intends to build on the existing practice and opinions of teachers in the development of a high quality Holocaust Education programme.

This programme will be provided free of charge to teachers in all secondary schools in England.

Data is being collected through an online teacher's survey - it will only take a few minutes of your time, and will feed directly into new and relevant materials for the classroom.

Teachers of any subject are welcome to complete the survey - so do pass details on to your colleagues.

See: www.hedpuk.org



RE Today Publications - Special offer!

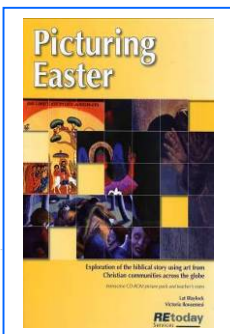
RE Today's picture packs are extremely popular, and in this newsletter we bring you an opportunity to purchase up to four of the following picture packs at a significant discount:

1. Picturing Jesus Pack A (full price £15)
2. Picturing Jesus Pack B (full price £15)
3. Picturing Creation (full price £23.93)
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Buy any two packs and save £6.00 (off full price)

Buy any three packs and save £10.00 (off full price)

Buy all four packs for £65 (a saving of £14.74)



www.retoday.org.uk

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