



RE Newsletter

Autumn Term 2020

BACK TO SCHOOL?

The usual autumn phrase “Back to school” has a different ring to it this year. For some of your pupils this will be the first time then have been in school since March, and if any of you have been shielding that may be true for you too.

What will this new normal look like? It will be a while before we are really sure what all of this will mean, but what we are certain of is that the DfE is expecting schools to be offering a broad and balanced curriculum including RE. NATRE (National Association of Teachers of Religious Education) has issued additional guidance which will be summarised later in this newsletter and the expectation of the diocese is that RE will be taught to all pupils as usual.

How will we in the diocese be able to support you? Even though we may not be coming into your schools, we can still offer you support through Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

This edition of the RE Newsletter will feature the new online training programme, resources to help you in the classroom and updates on the national debate about RE.

To comment on anything in this publication, to submit an article for next term or to request support from the diocesan RE adviser please contact:

Anne Andrews: anne.andrews@oxford.anglican.org or 07884 655097



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AUTUMN 2020 TRAINING PROGRAMME

All training events this term will be online, using either Microsoft Teams or Zoom, as appropriate for the session.

DIOCESAN RE NETWORK MEETINGS

At the RE Network last autumn we began looking at Islam. These two sessions aim to dig deeper and extend teachers' subject knowledge.

Autumn 1: Subject knowledge building session on Islam

Thursday 1 October 2020 4.15 – 5.30

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/odbe-online-re-networks-tickets-122053883451>



Autumn 2: Workshop on teaching Islam, producing, and sharing resources

Wednesday 2 December 2020 4.15 – 5.30

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/odbe-excellence-in-schools-online-re-networks-tickets-121514056815>

Free to all schools in the SLA

For community schools and non-SLA schools a membership fee of £90 will be charged to cover the cost of the 6 meetings per year.

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY - REVISITED

Does your school already have the Understanding Christianity Resource Pack but has a new RE leader? Have you got the pack and need to revisit it? If that is your situation this 6-hour online course delivered over 4 sessions of 90 minutes, offers the opportunity to explore the content and methodology of the resource.

This will run fortnightly on Wednesdays in October and November from 4 pm to 5.30pm using Zoom with breakout rooms and discussion.

Cost: £225+VAT (£145+VAT for schools in the SLA)

Dates: 7 October 20, 21 October 20, 4 November, and 18 November. The same member of staff should attend all four sessions.

Book here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/120379330819>

EXTERNALLY PROVIDED TRAINING

God and the Big Bang are offering a series of one hour CPD courses delivered using Zoom. The courses are informative and interactive, equipping teachers to tackle tricky areas of learning where science and faith collide. They have been informed by the National Curriculum, resources such as Understanding Christianity as well as with inspection frameworks in mind.



Bookings are £50 per teacher. Find out more from the flier with this newsletter or to register for a place, email sarahmoring@manchester.anglican.org

SPRING TRAINING DATES (provisional)

Spring 1: Subject knowledge building session on Hinduism

Tuesday 2 February 4.15 – 5.30

Spring 2: Workshop on teaching Hinduism, sharing, and creating resources

Tuesday 2 March 4.15 – 5.30



RE Central Spring Conference



Wednesday 10 March 2021 – Bicester Golf Club 1.30 – 6 pm

Topic: Developing a coherent, balanced RE Curriculum.

Speakers: Gillian Georgiou – RE Adviser to the Diocese of Lincoln and

Dr Kate Christopher – Lead Consultant at Culham St Gabriels

SAVE THE DATE: Details to follow

Understanding Christianity - *Course for schools new to the resource only - to be confirmed*



Day 1: 28 January 2021 (<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/121339982153>)

Or 12 March 2021 (<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/121342365281>)

in Church House Oxford, Kidlington OX5 1GF 9.30 – 3.30

Followed by 6 x 1 hour sessions online using Zoom (summer term dates to be confirmed)

Cost £525 + VAT (£395 + VAT for schools in SLA) to include all resources

Strictly RE @Home 2021

NATRE will be hosting its national annual conference online to keep you safe, whilst still giving you all the things you love about Strictly RE without having to leave the comfort of your home.

With 24 seminars, 4 Keynotes, networking and discussion opportunities, Saturday night entertainment, we have something for everyone. There is a lot to choose from, and you can pick and mix from across the month and weekend to create a programme that works for you. You do not have to attend a seminar at every time slot.

NATRE will be running twilight sessions throughout January, culminating in a weekend of keynotes, seminars, and networking. These will be announced soon.

Date: 30 & 31 January 2021 (PLUS additional seminars leading up to Strictly)

Location: Online **Full price:** £100* (includes downloadable handouts and all presentations)

EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT! Book before 31 October - only £85! Prices start as low as £45 for NATRE members* Book your place here: www.natre.org.uk/strictlyRE-2021



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PUTTING RE BACK IN THE CURRICULUM

We know that the last two terms of the academic year 2019-20 have looked very different across the diocese. Different to usual that is and very different from one school to the next. Many of you have managed to offer almost a full teaching curriculum to every child; others have only had face-to-face contact with very small numbers of children. Most of you probably fall somewhere in between, as for each school the context has been different.

As I write this in late July, there is still a great deal of uncertainty about what the future holds for our schools and we know that our expectations may be challenged at many levels. What we do know is that we need to ensure that our pupils still get the best educational experience that can be offered, and that the expectation, particularly in church schools, is that RE will play a large part in getting everyone learning again.

The Church of England Education Office has drawn on the guidance issued by NATRE: <https://www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/guidance-for-full-opening-of-schools-implications-for-teachers-of-re/> and makes the following observations:

The guidance sets out three key principles that underpins the advice as follows:

- Education is not optional: all pupils receive a high-quality education that promotes their development and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of later life.
- The curriculum remains broad and ambitious: all pupils continue to be taught a wide range of subjects, maintaining their choices for further study and employment.
- Remote education, where needed, is high quality and aligns as closely as possible with in-school provision: schools and other settings continue to build their capability to educate pupils remotely, where this is needed.

The key points the Church of England have identified in relation to RE are:

1. Where the breadth of curriculum is specified at primary and KS3, **RE is specifically listed as a subject that must be part of a broad curriculum.**
2. To 'catch up' schools are advised to prioritise the most important components for progression within each subject. **So, while that may influence the breadth of RE, it should not mean RE is dropped from the curriculum.**
3. Schools are allowed to make some short-term modification to the curriculum at the start of the autumn term, but the aim is for all to be back to normal as soon as possible and by the summer term at the latest.

4. At KS4 in *exceptional circumstances* and only if it is in the best interests of the pupil, a subject can be '*discontinued*'. If a pupil is not doing well at a specific non-core subject and dropping it would give them a better chance of achieving *significantly better* in their remaining examinations, then discontinuing a subject is permitted. **However, if RE is the pupil's weakest subject, it needs to be remembered that the legal entitlement to core RE remains for all pupils.**
5. The DfE advise that educational visits that do not involve overnight stays can resume in the Autumn term with the usual risk assessment. It would appear that visits can therefore take place to places of worship, including the local church, museums, galleries etc. but extra care should be taken to ensure that social distancing and the regular use of sanitizers is part of the school's risk assessment. This will include ensuring that the place visited has robust procedures in place.
6. Schools should carefully consider how to manage visitors to the school for educational purposes and ensure guidance on physical distancing and hygiene is explained to them on or before arrival.

As a diocese therefore we expect that our schools should continue to set RE as a priority subject, which will support pupils' broader learning and reintegration back into the school environment.



RE, COVID-19 AND THE BIG QUESTIONS OF LIFE

RE deals with some of the big questions of life and this will provide some opportunities for pupils to process what has happened in the last few months. The syllabus questions from around the diocese will allow you to make links between learning in RE and the response to the pandemic. What follows are some of the ways that the crisis can be approached in RE.

At KS1 the Oxfordshire Agreed Syllabus asks, "What do people believe about God, humanity and the natural world?" The current situation may allow pupils to explore this from the perspective of change – that what we know about God, Humans, and the world changes over time.

At KS2 one of the questions is "How do people's beliefs about and attitudes towards God, the universe and humanity act as a guide through life?" Here an exploration of how the faith communities have responded to the pandemic and a link to the religious teaching will allow pupils to explore the impact of faith on the lives of believers.

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Also at KS2 is the question: In what different ways do people worship and what difference does this make in their lives? Access to large amounts of contemporary online worship, across a range of religious traditions as well as an exploration of the relevance of virtual worship will add a new dynamic to this debate.

The Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus also poses questions at KS2 about worship and community to which the Covid-19 pandemic will have given a new twist:

- Is there any point to worship?
- Are religious buildings really needed?
- What holds a community together?

The recourse to online worship across a wide range of religious communities will allow pupils a genuinely contemporary engagement with questions that are also being asked within religious communities.

At KS3 the question “What responsibility do we have for the world around us?” would certainly give pupils an opportunity to reflect on the pandemic in a wider sense and could be the springboard for discussing some of the behaviour witnessed during lockdown.

Several of the questions on the Pan-Berkshire Agreed Syllabus could also be adapted. At KS1 pupils are asked to consider how some people’s beliefs help them to care for the world, and at KS2 there is the opportunity to explore whether participating in prayer and worship can create a sense of belonging. A whole new level to that question could be opened up by exploring people worshipping online rather than together. For KS3, pupils could look at the interaction between science and belief with regards to the virus response, perhaps with a focus on some of the church traditions in the USA.

The Milton Keynes Syllabus also has questions about how, where, and why people worship for KS1, and about responsibility to the wider world at KS2. At KS3, three questions seem to be particularly appropriate for the current situation:

- How do religions and, where appropriate, secular philosophies promote a balance between rights and responsibilities?
- Why and how might believers accept they have responsibilities to care for the world in which they live?
- How and why do people of different faith traditions engage in activities to help the wider community and sometimes come into conflict?

Exploring how faith communities have responded to the Covid-19 crisis will allow pupils to encounter contemporary responses to these questions. Historical examples could be compared, and evidence of theological interpretations looked for.

There are of course other ways to allow pupils to engage with what has been happening, but the enquiring, evaluative and reflective nature of RE, as well as the safe space that it offers make it an ideal vehicle for engaging with the current situation, while remaining true to the fundamental nature of religious education. This is theology, philosophy and human science in action.

RESOURCES FOR RE IN THE CLASSROOM OR AT HOME

A lot of resources have become available that can be used either in the classroom or given to pupils to do at home. Many of these were listed in the Summer 2020 edition of RE News and available to read or download at: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/schools/religious-education/bulletins/>

Also on our website are links to some of the most popular RE websites such as RE Online, True Tube, RE Today and BBC clips.

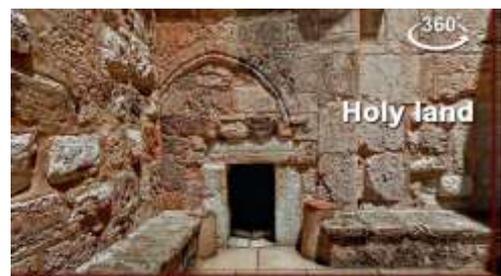


Undoubtedly of the most interesting places to go for resources at the current time is the website of the Culham St Gabriel's Trust (CstG) under the direction of their new CEO, Dr Kathryn Wright: <https://www.cstg.org.uk/>. With a strong focus on research and making research available and applicable to teachers this is a site worth bookmarking and keeping in your favourites. They offer grants, training courses and self-study modules as well as classroom resources and are linked to the RE online website : <https://www.reonline.org.uk/> where you will find even more resources for school and home.

The RE Online website has been undergoing a major overhaul and there are many new, free teaching resources and subject knowledge building articles. The search facility has been much improved and allows a teacher to search on a range of religions, themes, key stage, and type of resource. There are supporting blogs for teachers on subject leadership, including curriculum development and assessment.

If you have ever wanted to go to the Holy Land, but not managed it, lockdown has seen the production of a 360° Tour: <https://www.p4panorama.com/Gallery.aspx/holy-land-360-virtual-reality-tour/>

This resource offers a contemporary tour of many sites of the Middle East, including Mount Nebo, the church of the Holy Sepulchre and the village at Cana where the miracle of turning water into wine is believed to have taken place. At each stop along the tour, you can take a photograph which can be inserted into other documents and there are information boards that you can activate.



This tour enables pupils to see the places talked about in the Bible and the Torah and the Qur'an as they are today.

A virtual tour of the Kaaba in Mecca during the Hajj is also available, and there may well be more resources of this kind soon as this year's Hajj is taking place with travel and social distancing restrictions: <http://www.360tr.net/saudi-arabia/mecca-kaabe-al-masjid/> As with the Holy Land Tour this presents pupils with the opportunity to see the places mentioned in the narratives.

Or you can watch people going to pray at the Western Wall in Jerusalem: <https://www.skylinewebcams.com/en/webcam/israel/jerusalem-district/jerusalem/western-wall.html> This is a live webcam, so don't plan to watch for

long, but it gives you some idea of how many people go regularly to pray at the last remaining wall of the Temple in Jerusalem. The golden dome of the Mosque is just visible to the left of the picture, giving a real sense of the proximity with which Muslims and Jews live and worship in the city. Or visit the historic synagogue in Vilnius, Lithuania: <https://youtu.be/um409o69iI0>

For something closer to home try a virtual tour of Salisbury, Canterbury, Southwark, Gloucester, Exeter, Westminster, or Bristol Cathedrals, as well as Westminster Abbey as mentioned in the previous edition of this newsletter.

Let me know if you find any other interesting live or recorded virtual tours.



You may be looking for ways to re-engage pupils with learning in the classroom and give them a chance to re-establish friendships. To help with this, have a look at the SOLARITY website. There are materials written by RE advisers and teachers to help children and young people THINK about and EXPLORE a variety of life's questions in ways that go beyond the usual school curriculum. There are sessions for infant, primary and secondary aged pupils, designed to encourage them to develop their own ideas, values and identities. There are sessions on friendship, bereavement, courage, hope, happiness, morality and much more. The resources can be used in school, for home education and out-of-school-hours learning. All the resources are free to use and are available as web pages or PDF downloads.

Follow this link for full access: www.solarity.org.uk

Walk through the Bible

FREE video resource of the Old Testament



Linking with Understanding Christianity concept of the People of God

there are ten 20-minute videos of Old Testament stories with lesson notes to order and download.

Each of the videos has a short activity part way through. All the preparation is done, and you just need to press play - and encourage your children to join in. Our teacher PDF Pack includes activity outlines and extension materials. There are three printed resources which accompany the children as they Walk Through the Old Testament. (Please note these resources have been designed for and are only available for schools within the British Isles)

1. Workmaps* - a foldable A3 sheet per child will provide evidence for learning.
2. Storybooks* - can be used to consolidate learning.
3. Activity Booklets - extension materials (available from Sept 2021)

* In light of COVID Guidelines, all materials will be packed and sent ahead of time to ensure they arrive safely.

More information and all the links are available here:

<https://www.bible.org.uk/video-lessons.php>

Springs Dance Company

This touring company is offering two workshops this season: one is on Well-being and the other is entitled A Christmas Story: Refugee. More information is available on the flier sent out with this newsletter

REAL PEOPLE, REAL FAITH – A NEW FILM RESOURCE

There will soon be a range of films, made on location in places of worship in Berkshire and featuring interviews of members of the faith communities. Called Real People, Real Faith these short films will hopefully be available on True Tube (and maybe the diocesan website) with some notes putting the answers in context, drawing out key vocabulary and suggesting some next steps or questions to consider. The picture on the cover of



this newsletter shows part of the filming session at the Hindu Mandir in Reading. There are also films made in an Anglican Church (picture to the left), a Reform Jewish Synagogue, and a Shi'a Mosque. Plans to film in a Gurdwara, a Baptist Church, an Orthodox synagogue and a Sunni Mosque have been put on hold by the restrictions imposed on places of worship. While most suitable for viewing in a class setting, older pupils could watch the films at home when they are available. In each venue two questions were asked at each of KS 1- 3, but the films will be available in short sections focussing on an individual question. Look out for more information early in the new academic year.

SYLLABUS REVIEWS IN BUCKS AND OXON

It is a legal requirement that the Locally Agreed RE syllabus in every Local Authority area is reviewed every five years. Those of you in Oxfordshire may be aware that the current syllabus is dated 2015 – 2020 and should therefore be about to be replaced, while the Buckinghamshire syllabus has just one more year to run. Both of these syllabus reviews have been delayed, but the process of review is getting underway. The diocese is not directly involved in either review, though there are diocesan representatives on both SACREs. Please read emails that come from the SACRE and ensure that you engage with the review processes when they go out for teacher consultation. There will also be opportunities to be involved in the writing group for each syllabus.

If you are not sure what your locally agreed syllabus currently requires in RE, all of them are available on the diocesan website. Voluntary controlled schools in particular need to engage with this process as the finished syllabus will be the statutory document for RE in VC schools.

I would like to finish by wishing you all the best for the coming term, and I look forward to hearing how you are getting on and seeing lots of you at training events online and eventually, in person.