



RE Newsletter

Summer Term 2021

YET ANOTHER FRESH START!

It seems as though this year is to be a year of false starts and fresh starts, at least as far as education is concerned.

Many religious festivals have a focus on a fresh start or a new beginning. For Christians, Easter focuses on new life as Christ overcame the hold of death and rises from the dead. Further new life was breathed on his followers at the festival of Pentecost, 50 days after Easter, when the Holy Spirit came on them in tongues of fire.

The festival of Passover also celebrates a new start as the people of Israel were liberated from slavery in Egypt. Part of the preparations for Passover involve a deep clean of the house, to ensure that all traces of yeast are removed from the home.

The Muslim season of Ramadan can also be seen as offering an opportunity for a fresh start. A month of fasting, prayer and introspection creates a chance for a follower to reconnect with Allah and recommit themselves to their faith.

And teachers too are now finding themselves at yet another new start, as schools begin to function more normally again and there is a hope that this is also a fresh start for the nation as some of our restrictions ease. Linking these experiences to the RE being taught can help to show pupils that for many people the lived reality of their faith makes a difference to how they cope with the vicissitudes of life.

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:

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CPD OPPORTUNITIES – THIS TERM AND NEXT

DIOCESAN RE NETWORK MEETINGS - ONLINE

Summer 1: 18 May 2021 4.15 – 5.30 pm

This session will enable teachers to see a Hindu Mandir and ask questions of a panel from the Hindu community.

Book here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/odbe-online-re-networks-tickets-126533592381>



Spring 2: 1st July 2021 4.15 – 5.30 pm

Virtual Mosque and Muslim Panel

This session will enable teachers to see a Mosque and ask questions of a panel from the Muslim community.

Book here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/odbe-online-re-networks-tickets-126533831095>

Please book **all events** through Eventbrite, even when there is no cost. The Zoom link is only sent to those who have booked.

Looking to include a non-religious worldview in your curriculum?



This summer, [Understanding Humanism](#) is offering new **online training sessions for teachers at both primary and secondary level** to deepen subject knowledge of humanism, and provide engaging and practical ideas for lessons. The training breaks humanism down into five core aspects and covers how these can be taught in a clear and effective way.

Booking is easy using the link to the website.

[Understanding Humanism](#) also offers **bespoke training sessions for schools, universities, and organisations** that can be arranged as part of initial teacher training (ITT) or for continuing professional development (CPD).

If you prefer to talk to someone about this locally before deciding if this is for you then please do get in touch with a local Humanist UK School Speaker and Chair of Windsor Humanists Dr Anthony Lewis who will be able to discuss and explain things further - their contact email is windsor@humanistgroups.org.uk

AUTUMN 2021 TERM CPD

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The costs and booking links for the following courses will be published later this term in the Development, Training and Support brochure.

New to RE 1 October 9.30 – 3.30

This session is designed for teachers new to leading RE in a church school. Covering the basics of subject leadership delegates will have the opportunity to consider the purpose of RE, curriculum development and sequencing, monitoring, and planning with reference to SIAMS and Ofsted.

Understanding Christianity Revisited 6 and 20 October; 10 and 24 November 4 – 5.30pm

This course is designed for teachers who are new to leading RE in a school already using the Understanding Christianity resource. Available only to schools that have undertaken training, this course will cover the structure of the resource, the methodology and an exploration of the materials. Delegates should attend all four sessions.

RE for NQTs 14 October 4 – 5.30pm

This session will cover the essentials of teaching RE in a church school. Delegates will consider the purpose of RE, various methodologies and consider a range of resources. Reference will be made to the appropriate locally agreed syllabus as well as the expectations of SIAMS and Ofsted.

Diocesan network meetings 2021 – 2022

22 September 2021 4.15 – 5.30pm (online)

18 November 2021 4.15 – 5.30pm (online)

26 January 2022 4.15 – 5.30pm (online)

09 March 2022 4.15 – 5.30pm (work monitoring session in venues across the diocese)

19 May 2022 4.15 – 5.30pm (online)

22 June 2022 4.15 – 5.30pm (collaborative action planning in venues across the diocese)

The diocesan wide RE network meetings offer an opportunity to teachers of RE to meet together to improve their subject knowledge, discuss developments in RE and carry out work moderation. Four sessions will be online and two will be face to face held in venues across the diocese. These meetings are free for school in the Diocesan Service Level Agreement, and a small charge is levied per meeting for schools that are not in the SLA.

NATRE conference 13 October 2021 9.30 – 3.15 pm

Milton Keynes Christians Centre, Strudwick Drive, Oldbrook MK6 2TG

This conference has been rescheduled several times from its original date of March 2020. All the details remain the same. Look out for more information in the autumn edition of this newsletter, although bookings are open for the October date. Contact sarah@natre.org.uk for more information.

TEACHING HINDUISM: THE RE NETWORK MEETINGS



A recent report by Insight UK, an organisation working for the promotion of Hindu faith and culture recently produced a report that showed how dissatisfied many Hindu parents and others are with the standard of teaching about their faith in RE.

Although planned before the report was published, the RE network meetings last term sought to address some of the issues that the report raised as we sought to identify the key concepts that define Hinduism.

The report raised a number of concepts that many Hindus consider fundamental to their faith and many of those were covered in the sessions. The report also emphasises the need to separate the religious and cultural practices, as it is felt that too much teaching about the Hindu dharma focuses on the caste system and some outmoded practices such as sati, both of which are cultural rather than religious.

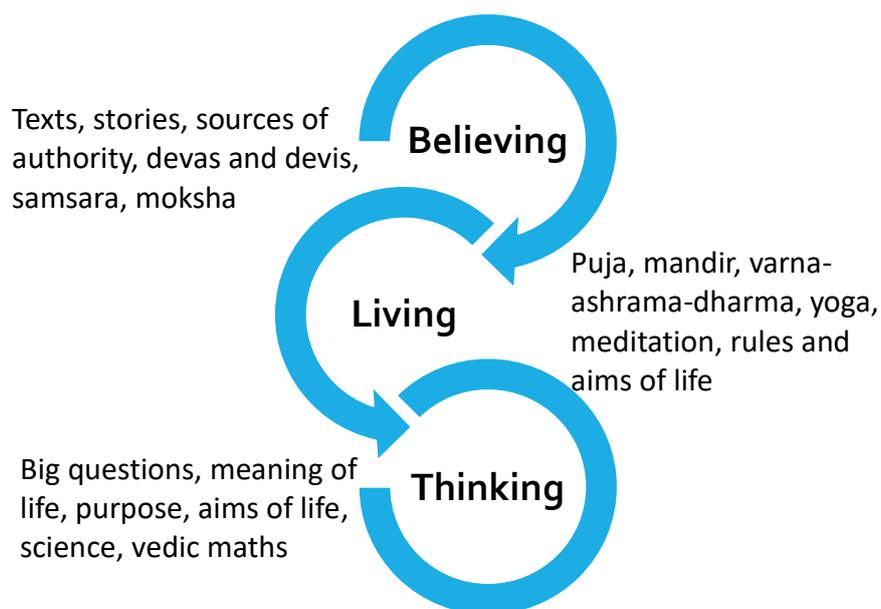
So what do we need to know about Hindu Dharma to teach it well? Here are some suggestions:

- There is One God (Brahman), manifested through many deities (devis and devas).
- There are 3 main deities: called the Trimurti – Creator (Brahma), Sustainer (Vishnu), Destroyer (Shiva).
- Many of the deities have different forms or incarnations, sometimes known as avatars. Rama and Krishna for example, are considered by many to be avatars of Vishnu.
- Belief in the cycle of life and death including re-incarnation (Samsara)
- Belief in re-incarnation leads to many Hindus being vegetarian.
- Karma, the Law of cause and effect, determines a person's next life.
- The goal of life is to be united with the divine, escaping the cycle of life (Moksha).
- The cycle encompasses the whole of creation; the universe as we know it is not the first and it will not be the last.
- There is a traditional belief in non-violence (Ahimsa).
- There are religious duties due to the family and community (Dharma)
- There are samskaras (sanskaras) that are the rituals concerned with rites of passage.
- There are many practices linked to Hindu beliefs: yoga, ayurveda (medicine based on the balance of the body) and meditation for example.
- Scientific rationale and vedic maths show how Hindus have contribute to modern thought.
- Hinduism (a Western term) is a way of life more than a belief system and beliefs can be very varied. Most Hindus prefer the word Dharma.
- There are different sects of Hindu belief, favouring different deities.
- The figures in a Mandir, called Murtis, are not worshipped, but act as a focus for worship of the deity they represent.
- Hindu symbols include the Aum (the sound that created the universe), the lotus flower, the coconut, the swastika (not to be confused with the Nazi Hakenkreuz) and the Chakra (wheel representing the cycle of life).



The locally agreed RE syllabuses all focus teaching on Hinduism into KS2, so it is clear that not all of this material can be covered. Very few schools offer a GCSE in Hinduism, despite the fact that all the exam boards offer it as an option. So what should be focused on in a primary school?

The Balanced RE concepts, Theology (believing), Human Science (living) and Philosophy (thinking) might provide a structure into which some of the concepts above could be ordered.



Which key stages would you look to cover them and how might you deliver it? Do the following questions seem to offer a coherent journey in understanding Hinduism?

- **KS1:** Story? Festival? – What do the Ramayana and the festival of Divali teach Hindus about God? What do Hindus learn from creation stories?
- **KS2:** Worship? Lifestyle? Choices? – Does participating in worship at home or in the Mandir have a greater impact on a Hindu? Do the duties of Dharma help a Hindu to feel part of a community?
- **KS3:** Ritual? Rites of passage? Moral and ethical issues? - Does a Hindu have to espouse beliefs in non-violence and vegetarianism? Are science and Hindu beliefs compatible?

Examine what you already teach to identify the concepts that you cover and use the information given above to see if you can strengthen the conceptual basis of your curriculum.

Here are some ideas that were shared by teachers at the RE network meeting:

1. Build a 'shrine' in the classroom

Set aside a table in the classroom with a nice cloth on and various Hindu artefacts that might be found in a shrine in a Hindu's house. Discuss what is on there, what ideas the artefacts represent or how they might be used, how they would help a Hindu in their faith, and compare it to what might be found in a mandir – similarities and differences. Think about what impact it would have on a family to have a room or space in a room set aside for worship and how it might help them be a better Hindu.

2. Different roles – one person

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Put the teacher's name in the middle and then around that write all the different 'characters' the teacher is, e.g. chef, driver, teacher, knitter, footballer, daughter, mother, etc. As a class think of people who are famous examples of those 'characters'. For example, The Queen is a famous mother, Jamie Oliver – chef, Lewis Hamilton – driver, etc. Discuss how these famous people show you something about the one person in the middle of the picture – a variety of roles but one person. The children could do one for themselves, too. Then can discuss what the murtis show believers about Brahman – different roles, one God, neither male or female. Discuss how different aspects of Brahman might be more important in a believer's life at different times depending on needs/stage of the family and link back to the shrine – how might the artefacts change to reflect what is going on the believer's life?

3. Aspects of the divine

Place a range of physical objects around the room that are symbols for the Hindu God for the children to explore and discuss in small groups. Find a pomegranate (or picture), incense, salt water, photos, or figures of Murtis. Then, use this as a gateway into looking at the aspects of the Hindu God.

Have you got a brilliant idea to share? Send in your lesson or suggestion activities for the next edition of this newsletter.

RE CENTRAL – CONFERENCE REPORT

On the 10 March 50 delegates from across the diocese attended the first ever online diocesan RE conference.

Entitled Developing a Coherent, Balanced RE Curriculum, the two speakers explored the ideas behind the Balanced RE project and how to use knowledge in context to create curricula that engage and inspire learners.

In the keynote session on Balanced RE the question was posed as to whether the current model of the "Big Six" religions is really fit for purpose in the 21st Century and whether in an age when the internet can answer many of our fact based questions, we need a different approach to knowledge.

Gillian Georgiou demonstrated, using an example from science, how the same topic can be looked at through the different scientific disciplines. Looking at water from the point of view of physics, biology or chemistry leads to a different enquiry and a full understanding of the topic requires some knowledge from each of those disciplines. A topic in RE can be looked at from a disciplinary point of view as well. Gillian identifies Theology (believing) Human/social science (living) and Philosophy (thinking) three core disciplines of RE. She used the example of the concept of Ummah (the worldwide community of Muslims) to explore this approach. A theological lens would look at Qur'anic texts, a social science lens would look at Muslim practices and the philosophical lens would consider the significance of Ummah to the Muslim worldview.

Drawing the distinction between substantive and disciplinary knowledge and using the latter to provide progression can lead to a much more coherent curriculum, where learning in one religion can relate to learning in another.

Kate Christopher drew attention back to the report published by the Commission on RE (CoRE) which has suggested a worldview approach to teaching, and how this will help with progression. Using examples that drew on progressions she outlined the way that Christmas

can be taught differently in different year groups. Using a different focus for each phase there were clear links to the disciplines from Balanced RE, but with the implicit historical elements drawn out. For KS1 she suggested “Why do Christians give presents at Christmas?” would be a good question that would get pupils thinking historically as well as theologically. The lower KS2 question “Why is Christmas a Winter festival?” drew delegates to the fact that it is only in the Northern Hemisphere that that is the case. What a brilliant opportunity to explore Christmas on the beach in Australia and find out why so many of the symbols associated with Christmas have a winter flavour. The Upper KS2 question would take pupils to the heart of the Gospel story as they explore the differences between the gospel accounts.

Both speakers gave delegates much to think about, and hopefully some ways in which to strengthen the coherence of the RE curriculum. There is no doubt that a more coherent curriculum will help pupils to make progress and for teachers to be able to assess and record that progress.

This is not the end of the conversation about coherent curricula, but the beginning. The RE networks will continue to uncover the core concepts within the different faiths that are taught and seek to explore them from a disciplinary point of view.

NEW RESOURCES FOR RE

Real People Real Faith



The Pan-Berkshire SACRE hub has completed the first phase of the **Real People, Real Faith** film project and all thirty-six films with accompanying notes are available nationally on the NATRE website: <https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/real-people-real-faith>

This project has involved six places of worship across the county of Berkshire, a professional film director/producer and several teachers who have given up their time to travel in order to interview members of a religious community.

The same six questions were asked in each venue, and several members of each community were invited to answer, so these films can be used by teachers to explore diversity within as well as between faiths.

In the second phase of the project it is intended to make films in an Orthodox Synagogue, an Orthodox Church, a Sunni Mosque and a Catholic Church. Phase three of the project will be to produce some more detailed lesson notes and resources to accompany the films, but for that it is necessary to get teachers and faith leaders together safely.

For schools in Berkshire a launch event is taking place online on 28 April from 4 – 5.30 pm. If you are interested in being part of this, please email anne.andrews@oxford.anglican.org to reserve your place. If you are outside of the Berkshire area, but would like to see what the resource is about, do get in touch and you will be added to a reserve list in case there are places available.

Being

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The BBC has produced a new series of programmes which explore what faith means around seminal life moments. It brings together a collection of personal stories from Sikh, Hindu, Christian, Jewish and Muslim individuals opening a window into the lived reality of these faiths today. Each episode covers a life event such as a birth, marriage, death or leaving home for the first time. Other episodes concentrate on matters more specific to a faith, such as getting used to wearing a turban and deals with people who have reverted to or converted to a religion as well as those who have practised for their whole lives.

The Jewish episodes can be found at this link:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p096g916/being-series-1-4-jewish>

and the remaining episodes will also be available on iPlayer.

The BBC Asian network will be marking Ramadan (12 April to 12 May), Eid and Vaisakhi (14 April) this year in programmes called [Ramadan and Me](#) and [Vaisakhi and Me](#) which will involve Muslim and Sikh celebrities respectively talking about what the seasons mean to them. Even if you are unable to listen to any of these programmes, just knowing that these festivals are being observed in the British media is informative.

Several programmes about Easter, and Easter services will have been broadcast by the time this newsletter goes out to schools, but do look back in iPlayer and look at the websites of your local church to see how Easter has been celebrated under the current restrictions. There may be recordings of services available on Facebook or YouTube.

General resources and CPD websites

Ensure that you regularly check out all the usual websites as many of them are being updated at the moment.

Culham St Gabriel's has a new vision and is offering a lot more continuing professional development events (<https://www.cstg.org.uk/activities/events/>)

RE Online (<https://www.reonline.org.uk/>) now offers access to a wide range of research reports and opportunities on its website. The subject knowledge essays, a valuable source of information, continue to be updated to reflect current thinking in RE.

NATRE (www.natre.org.uk) continues to update their free teaching resources, and the diocesan website (<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/schools/religious-education/religious-education-resources/>) has links to a further range of resources.

If you find other useful resources that you want to share, do send an email to anne.andrews@oxford.anglican.org for inclusion on the website and in the next newsletter.