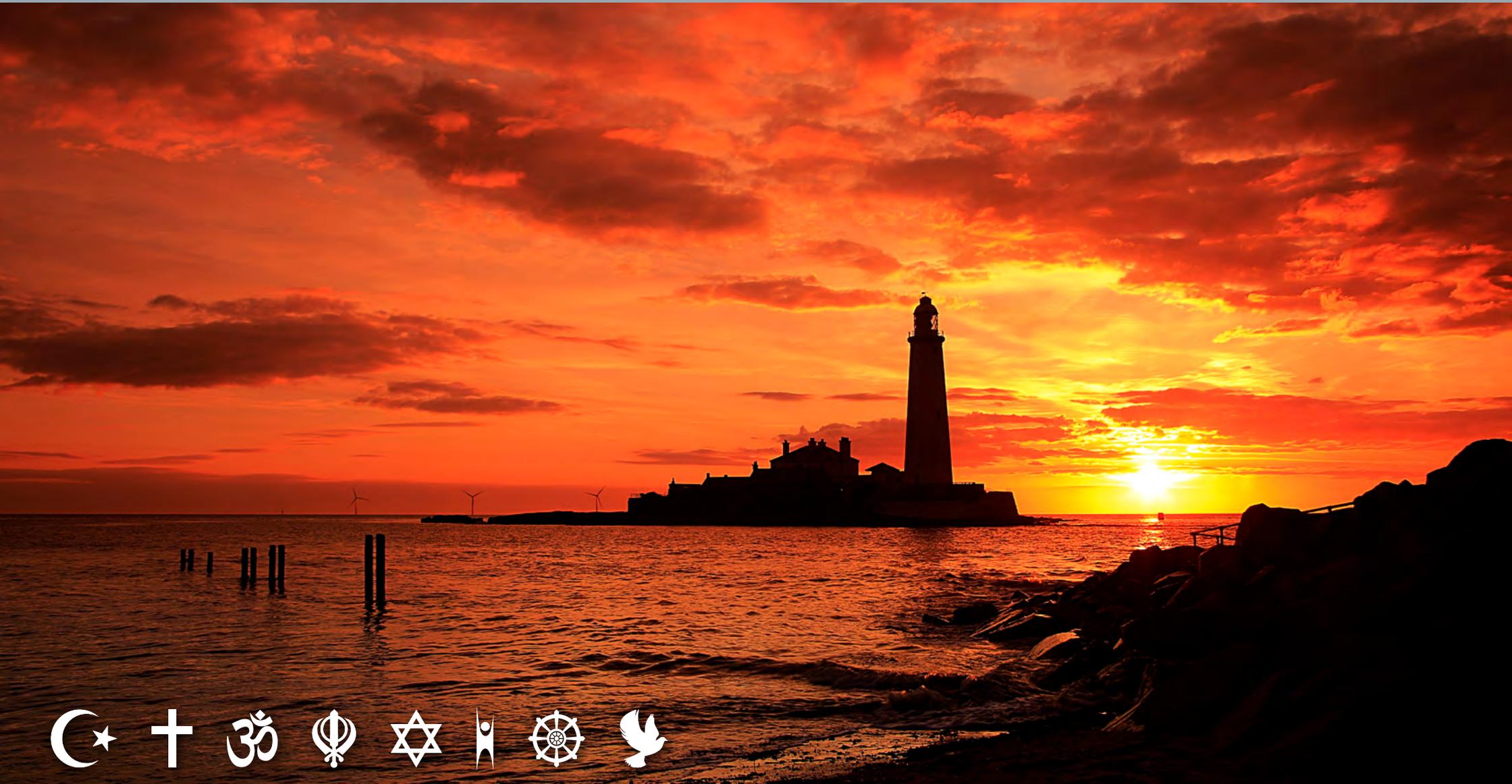


# SACRE



Northumberland  
County Council

Newsletter for the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education for Northumberland



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# Anyone for RE CPD?

As is now widely understood, the local authority arranges a whole day CPD event every year (so far, such events have always been in the Autumn term), but there is no need for schools, teachers or TAs to confine such CPD to this occasion alone. Why not arrange some RE CPD for the whole school, the teachers and TAs responsible for RE in a single school and/or the RE teachers and TAs in a partnership or cluster of schools within easy reach of one another?

Moreover, do not forget that nowadays CPD can take many forms. Some of the most productive CPD is when an expert can sit down with one, two or three teachers and/or TAs to offer very precise information and insights addressing specific problems or issues faced by a school or its staff.

In recent months, CPD/consultations of this nature have been provided in about a dozen schools in the County, whether first, primary, middle or special (a high school benefited from similar CPD/consultations about a year ago, but we wish to keep the article as contemporary as possible). The content of such CPD/consultations covered:

- The structure and content of the Agreed Syllabus
- Developing long-term RE plans based on the Agreed Syllabus
- Developing long-term RE plans based on key questions
- Denominational diversity in Christianity
- Teaching Islam across the school
- Teaching Sikhism across the school
- What qualifies as inspirational RE?
- Assessment and RE.

*“...some teachers and TAs said they lacked knowledge and understanding about the religions and secular world views”.*

The best thing about such CPD/consultations is that schools, teachers and/or TAs dictate the content based on what they perceive to be their priorities in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding.

When the Autumn 2018 survey about RE and collective worship was completed by schools, some teachers and TAs said they lacked knowledge and understanding about the religions and secular world views they MUST teach if they use the Agreed Syllabus. CPD/consultations devoted to such religions and secular world views can quickly fill the knowledge and understanding gap.

Why not reflect on what content in terms of RE knowledge, skills and understanding your staff would most benefit from, then contact Phil André at [phil.andre@ntlworld.com](mailto:phil.andre@ntlworld.com) who will advise about who is best equipped to provide the required support. Such support may derive from someone already associated with the SACRE or someone known to the SACRE. Phil will also advise about what the cost implications are, if any.



# Some of the findings from the RE and collective worship survey, Autumn 2018

With luck, the summary of the RE and collective worship survey sent to all schools in Autumn 2018 has reached you, but just in case some of you have yet to read it, here are a few of the most interesting and/or important findings.

First, 31 to 60 minutes is the most popular amount of time to devote to non-examined RE among schools responding to the survey, although some pupils and students receive up to two hours of such RE a week. Second, RE is provided as a discreet subject to all or most pupils and students in a majority of schools, but experimentation in the delivery of the subject is apparent, not least to emphasise the cross-curricular potential of religion and belief. Third, although very few specialists teach RE, a majority of teachers and TAs responsible for it say they are “very” or “mostly” confident about teaching the subject, although they would love to engage in more CPD. Fourth, a majority of schools that MUST use the locally agreed RE syllabus use it regularly to help deliver the subject. Fifth, opportunities to study religions and world views other than Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism are at present limited, but change is taking place in some schools. Last, the number of pupils and students withdrawn from RE is small, suggesting a majority of our schools make every effort to ensure the subject is relevant to all pupils and students, with a faith commitment or not.

But what of collective worship? First, a majority of schools understand the important distinction between an act of collective worship (which must be provided in a majority of our schools on a daily basis) and an assembly (which is not a daily requirement). Second, most schools provide an act of collective worship daily or for a majority of days every week. Third, every school can easily identify content that ensures the act of collective worship is “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character”, thereby meeting the legislative requirements as they currently exist. Fourth, no school has asked the SACRE



for permission to suspend the requirement to provide collective worship that is “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character”. Fifth, evidence confirms that some schools meet the needs of pupils and students who subscribe to religions or secular world views other than Christianity, which may explain why so few pupils and students are withdrawn from collective worship. Last, some schools update their policy and guidelines for collective worship on a regular basis and for inspiration refer to the County’s “Policy and Guidelines for Collective Worship in Community Schools”.

Respondents to the survey were very detailed and perceptive, so much so that the SACRE and the local

authority have some action points to shape their work in the months ahead. This said, we would love to have more schools fill in the survey so that we have data and opinions even more reliable and intriguing than is already the case. If your school has yet to fill in the survey, make contact with Phil André at [phil.andre@ntlworld.com](mailto:phil.andre@ntlworld.com) and he will arrange for the survey to be forwarded to you. The more data, etc. we have, the more we know about RE and collective worship in the County, and the more effective we can be when providing support.

P.S. You cannot find a copy of the summary of the survey in school but wish to read it? Contact Phil and he will send you an electronic copy. It is very enlightening.

# RE and Thinking Skills

It is widely acknowledged that RE lends itself very well to cultivating thinking skills, so let's quickly remind ourselves what thinking skills embrace.

Thinking skills are mental processes we use to do things like solve problems, make decisions, ask questions, construct plans, evaluate ideas, organise information and create objects. You want to learn more? Access material on the internet, etc. that explains Bloom's taxonomy, DeBono's thinking tools and Lipman's modes.

For some years now, teachers have devised long-term RE plans in which each programme of study is shaped by a key question. Work on thinking skills is often best driven by such key questions, so, if your long-term plan contains key questions, identify the ones that are most likely to develop thinking skills and experiment! You will know best whether class members should work individually, in pairs or small groups as they "answer" the question.

Here are some key questions found in one Northumberland primary school's RE long-term plan and, with a little bit of planning and imagination, each can develop thinking skills:

- Q) How and why do Jewish people celebrate Shabat?
- Q) What are the similarities and differences between Sunni, Shia and Sufi Muslims?
- Q) What are miracles and do they happen today?
- Q) Reflecting on your own life and the religions and secular world views you have studied, what are the five best rules to live by and why?
- Q) How can a Hindu attain liberation?

Let's be honest: more than one of the above questions can develop thinking skills in older pupils and students (e.g. the one about Sunni, Shia and Sufi Muslims and the

five best rules to live by), although with older pupils and students the sort of questions that might be asked are almost limitless. Some of my favourites include:

- Q) What makes more sense, the dyophysite or the miophysite conception of Jesus?
- Q) What are the similarities and differences between Orthodox and Reform Judaism (or between Haredi, Hassidic and Modern Orthodox Jews)?
- Q) What are the advantages and disadvantages of interpreting scripture literally?
- Q) To what extent are the Abrahamic religions preoccupied with orthodoxy and the Dharmic religions with orthopraxy, and what are the consequences of such preoccupations?
- Q) After explaining what each of the following mean - monotheism, polytheism, dualism, monism and atheism - identify which you most agree with and why?
- Q) Why are so many expressions of religion patriarchal?
- Q) Why are so few expressions of religion pacifist?
- Q) Do religions contribute to or inhibit community cohesion?

How about this for something completely different: ask the class, which has already been divided into small groups, to plan a short programme of study, the centrepiece of which is a visit to a house of worship. This requires that each group must reflect on what takes place before, during and after the trip. Or ask the class to imagine that the world needs a new religion and they are going to invent one. Even before they can



put flesh on the bones, they will have to agree what are the essential things ALL religions have and the non-essential things they COULD have. I find this activity works best with Key Stage 4 and 5 students, although older Key Stage 3 pupils find it stimulating.

For more information and ideas about RE and thinking skills, access the sub-sections in the "Guidance" section of the RE Agreed Syllabus titled "RE, Skills and Attitudes", "RE, Creativity, Imagination, Critical Thinking and Thinking Skills" and "Enquiry-based Learning".

Anyone who wants to tell a wider audience about the programmes of study, key questions or practical activities that have encouraged thinking skills with their pupils or students, send an article to Phil André at [phil.andre@ntlworld.com](mailto:phil.andre@ntlworld.com) and it will be published in a future edition of the SACRE Newsletter.

# An excellent resource about RE and Assessment (and a reminder about an excellent RE resource bank)

Many RE CPD sessions and consultations at some point turn to the question of assessing RE. For obvious reasons, teachers and TAs responsible for teaching RE should examine the RE Agreed Syllabus “Guidance” section where some very sound and sensible advice is provided about assessing RE, but thereafter there are many books, etc. that can be used to help with the matter.

**R**E Today recently published “Assessment in RE: a practical guide” (eds. Fiona Moss and Stephen Pett), which is packed with assessment ideas for all the key stages. The advantage of the book is that its content is shaped by assessment methods already used in the classroom by teachers themselves.

Teachers, etc. will find overviews of 15 assessment models currently used by teachers including descriptor-based assessment, the mastery approach and the comparative judgement approach. Teachers, etc. responsible for RE assessment might decide to use one or more of the models as they are described or combine what they regard as the best ideas from two or more models to develop their own approach. Introductory sections outline general assessment issues and key principles (and the commentary dovetails excellently with what our RE Agreed Syllabus has to say about assessment).

*“Teachers, etc. will find overviews of 15 assessment models currently used by teachers including descriptor-based assessment, the mastery approach and the comparative judgement approach.”*

An order for the book can be placed by phone (0121-458-3313) or by writing to RE Today Services, 5-6 Imperial Court, 12 Sovereign Road, Birmingham, B30 3FH. Alternatively, access the RE Today website ([www.retoday.org.uk/](http://www.retoday.org.uk/)).

Do not forget that this and many other resources to do with RE and assessment are on the shelves of the North-East Religious Resources Centre, which has a base convenient for many Northumberland schools at:

Church House  
St. John’s Terrace  
Percy Main  
North Shields  
NE29 6HS

Many schools and/or teachers already pay the annual subscription to access the 30,000-plus items at the resource centre and their books

about assessing RE are extremely good. If you or your school has not yet subscribed to the resource centre, perhaps now would be a good time to do so. The annual subscription is worth it just to access the thousands of posters, the artefact boxes and the collection of films and documentaries with themes relating the religion and belief.



# Forthcoming Important Festivals, etc

Do not forget: many of the important festivals, etc. that follow provide excellent themes for an act of collective worship AS WELL AS a springboard for teaching and learning opportunities in the classroom.

26 April	Holy Friday	(Orthodox Christian)	21 June	World Humanist Day	(Humanist)
28 April	Pascha/Easter Day	(Orthodox Christian)	5 July	Birthday of Guru Hargobind	(Sikh)
1 May	Beltane	(Pagan)	10 July	Anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Bab	(Bahai)
1 - 2 May	Yom Ha-Shoah/Holocaust Day	(Jewish)	16 July	Dharma Day	(Buddhist)
6 May - 4 June	Ramadan	(Muslim)	12 - 15 August	Eid-ul-Adha	(Muslim)
12 - 18 May	Christian Aid Week	(Christian)	15 August	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	(Christian)
19 May	Wesak/Visakha Puja (Buddha Day)	(Buddhist)	15 August	Hungry Ghosts Festival	(Chinese)
23 May	Anniversary of the Declaration of the Bab	(Bahai)	15 August	Raksha Bandhan	(Hindu)
25 May	St. Bede the Venerable	(Christian)	24 August	Krishna Janmashtami	(Hindu)
30 May	Ascension	(Christian)	27 Aug - 3 Sept	Paryushana	(Jain)
31 May	Lailat-al-Qadr	(Muslim)	1 September	New Liturgical Year	(Orthodox Christian)
5 June	Eid-ul-Fitr	(Muslim)	1 Sept	Al-Hijra	(Muslim)
7 June	Dragon Boat Festival	(Chinese)	1 September	Installation of the Guru Granth Sahib in the Harmandir Sahib	(Sikh)
8 - 10 June	Shavuot	(Jewish)	2 - 12 September	Ganesh Chaturthi	(Hindu)
9 June	Pentecost	(Christian)	10 September	Ashura	(Shia Muslim)
16 June	Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev	(Sikh)	11 September	Ethiopian New Year	(Rastafarian)
21 June	Midsummer Solstice	(Pagan/Druid/Wicca)	13 September	Rabbit in the Moon Festival	(Chinese)

P.S. Anyone keen to identify the dates for additional festivals and/or commemorations from the end of April to early September should access the many lists available on the internet. Some of the best such lists (in terms of inclusiveness and accuracy) derive from the BBC and RE:Online. The Shap Working Party on World Religion also produces a very good list, but the list must be purchased whether in hard or electronic form.

# The SACRE members

## Committee A: Other Faiths

Mrs. J. Cousin: Roman Catholic Church

Reverend E. H. Marley, OBE: United Reformed Church (URC)

Represented by the URC: Baptist Church

Represented by the URC: Methodist Church

(SE Northumberland Ecumenical Area)

Bhakti Rasa Adhikhara: Hinduism

Mariam Khan: Islam

Harpal Singh: Sikhism

Mrs. D. Van der Velde: Judaism

## Committee B: Church of England

Mrs. E. Bainbridge

Mr. C. Hudson

Mr. P. Rusby

Reverend J. Scott

## Committee C: Teaching Associations/Unions

Mr. M. Davidson (secondary/high school teacher)

Mr. A. Duffield (middle school teacher)

Miss F. Gannon (secondary/high school teacher)

Miss C. Naylor (secondary/high school teacher)

Mr. T. Nicholls (secondary/high school teacher)

Mrs. H. Shaw (special school teacher, retired)

## Committee D: Local Authority

Councillor B. Crosby

Councillor W. Daley

Councillor T. Thorne

## Co-opted Representatives

Mr. S. Dearlove: North-East Humanists

Maddy Wardingham (special school teacher)

## Observer (representing the academies and free schools)

Steve Gibson of Northumberland CE Academy

## Local Authority Officers in Attendance

Phil André, Part-time RE Consultant

David Cookson, Commissioner for Secondary Education and Sixth Forms

Andrea Todd, Clerk to the SACRE, Democratic Services

