



SACRE GUIDANCE: OFFERING A SPACE FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION IN SCHOOL



Context and Introduction

SACRE has received an increasing number of requests for advice from headteachers and Governing Body representatives in the primary phase, regarding the provision of a space that can be used for prayer in school. In order to prepare this guidance, SACRE has consulted schools which already offer this provision, has listened to some pupils who make use of this provision, and has taken advice from its faith group representatives.

This document has guidance status. It is intended to prompt school leaders to take into account not only the practicalities of providing for prayer during school hours and on school property, but also to consider to what extent such additional provision might benefit pupils and the school community. It is not intended to replace genuine and responsive dialogue between school leaders and the community. It remains the responsibility of school leaders to consult and communicate with pupils and parents about the proposal and the Governing Body response.

The religious and ethnic profile of the London Borough of Harrow is unique in England and Wales. Harrow has the highest religious affiliation in England and Wales and is ranked as having the:

- highest percentage of Hindus (25.3%)
- highest percentage of Jains (2.2%)
- second highest percentage of Zoroastrians (0.1%)
- second lowest percentage of residents declaring No Religion (9.6%)

(2011 Census data)

The Census data also reveals that 37.3% of residents have identified themselves as Christian, 12.5% as Muslim, 4.4% as Jewish, 1.1% as Buddhist and 1.2% as Sikh.

Harrow schools are therefore plural communities. They include families and staff from a number of faith traditions, with religious, cultural and ethnic diversity within these, and from non-religious secular backgrounds.

A high proportion of Harrow schools has attained or is working towards accreditation as a Rights Respecting School, giving high status to pupils' rights and responsibilities as members of multi-faith, multi-ethnic societies locally and as global citizens. Our schools work hard at equipping children and young people to be leaders and to develop the behaviours for successful, independent learning. We have taken these contextual factors into account in this guidance.

Schools have consulted SACRE about requests from parents and / or pupils to make provision for prayer in school. This SACRE guidance is intended to enable schools to anticipate such requests and plan strategically. We are promoting the inclusive concept of a space for prayer and reflection that could be accessed by any pupil, from any religious tradition and those who are not from a religious background.

The guidance, therefore, comprises clear information on:

- Benefits for pupils and for the school community
- Practical arrangements and considerations
- Faith-specific guidance

Published guidance from individual faith organisations may seem demanding. We hope that you will find this SACRE guidance to be practical and inclusive.

Benefits for pupils and the school community

What are the potential benefits to the child / young person?

The duty upon schools to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development has been enshrined in legislation since 1988. School inspections take account of the range of opportunities a school provides and their impact upon pupils' SMSC. In its guidance for inspectors, the School Inspection Handbook (January 2013) indicates that evidence of pupils' spiritual development can be found where pupils "are reflective about beliefs, values and more profound aspects of human experience." SACRE suggests that provision of a space for prayer and reflection might contribute in the following ways to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

1. For some pupils their faith is a source of strength and resilience. Touching base in one's faith tradition allows one to be, or to work towards being, grounded, centred, peaceful, energised and focussed. Assessment for learning is built upon skills of reflection and self-awareness. Prayer can help pupils to become deep thinkers, accustomed to contemplation and 'active' silence.
2. In some religious families prayer is a normal routine at regular intervals during the day. Without a place for prayer or reflection young people may feel uneasy or uncomfortable, may feel a 'need' to pray or feel 'not quite right.' When there is provision for prayer and reflection the child / young person may benefit from feeling 'joined up.'
3. In a secular community those who have a religious commitment sometimes feel that they can never be totally themselves, they are keeping silent about a central part of their identity. This 'bi-cultural' life can sometimes be stressful. A space for prayer and reflection may allow pupils to bring their 'whole self' to school, that is, to feel that they wholly belong to their school community. In this way, the school may be contributing directly to pupils' increased self-esteem and self-confidence and indirectly to their learning and achievement.
4. Society exerts its own pressures on children as they grow and schools are very strong in helping children to navigate their journeys and make good choices for themselves. A space for prayer and reflection (in conjunction with other affirmative curricular practices) can be a place from which children successfully develop such fundamental skills such as self discipline and self-control.
5. 'Allowing' a child to adapt school uniform to meet religious requirements – such as a Sikh boy wearing a patka – or to eat halal school meals, are permissive practices. Provision of a space for prayer and reflection is an affirmative school practice, enabling pupils to choose what they eat and wear. When a Governing Body makes this additional provision, it is choosing to celebrate young people's faith and identity, enabling them to express their beliefs and values at school.
6. Children who attend lunch time activities/clubs are expected to develop commitment to these extra-curricular events and to demonstrate a sense of responsibility, by coming prepared and bringing the necessary equipment. In the same way, children and young people, who choose to do their prayers at lunch time, develop time management skills because they want to fit prayer around eating their lunch and having time to play or catch up with friends.
7. Providing a choice of lunch time activities and zoned areas often improves behaviour in the playground and avoids squabbles and fights spilling over into lessons. Just as Brain Gym can aid concentration by recruiting pupils' physical energies, a spiritual 'work out' also has benefits. Indeed, in some faith traditions prayer is also a physical activity. Reflection and prayer can have a calming, refreshing and invigorating effect on children. Individual children may be able to resolve their issues through prayer and reflection or to feel that they are using spiritual and mental methods to deal with a particular cause of stress.

What are the benefits for schools? Good learners, good citizens

9. A space for prayer and reflection will allow pupils to learn to respect personal elements of each others' lives. They will gain hands-on experience of the use of a space which models the 'multi-faith'* reflection rooms in hospitals, shopping centres, airports and such like. They will learn first-hand the part that such a space has to play in people's lives, that is of empowering people to carry out useful and profitable lives whilst at the same time observing religious practices or stopping for personal reflection.
10. Within the curriculum there are subjects and aspects which explore how belonging to a religious community influences the moral and ethical decisions of individuals and which requires self-discipline in lifestyles. When there are pupils, and perhaps staff, modelling those choices regularly and independently, this allows both adults and children to learn about and from religions as observers, whose integrity and own backgrounds and beliefs are protected and respected. It can dispel myths and stereotypes and establish awareness that, in a plural community, people live and work comfortably alongside each other, sharing many fundamental values. It also demonstrates that for many within religious communities, observance of religious obligations is about more than what people eat and wear and is about daily disciplines not just festival celebrations!
11. Through their curriculum and made explicit in their values statements, schools aim to develop pupils as independent learners making a contribution to their school and wider community and making responsible choices about their health and well-being. Users of the space for prayer and reflection will develop self-discipline, time management and personal organisation skills which will benefit the learning community.
12. Pupils who use a space for prayer and reflection in school may find that it gives them a sense of 'touching base' regularly, monitoring their behaviour. Pupils do make sense of what is right and wrong through their faith system. For some pupils this may reinforce or model those threads running through Philosophy for Children and PSHE.
13. Pupils in many schools, including those with the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award, are already exploring rights and responsibilities in relation to freedom of thought, belief and religion. Pupils using the space for prayer or reflection will be able to learn how to fulfil their individual religious/non-religious requirements responsibly within a community that may not be religious. Pupils who do not use the space will be able to learn about its normalised use by others. Communities which like to pray or reflect will realise that they can easily and practically fit their needs into a societal role. Those who do not use the space will realise that the children who do use it can still be purposeful member of the school community. Introducing a space for prayer and reflection can demonstrate how easily those with secular and faith-based lives can harmoniously co-exist in society.
14. There is, of course, no legal requirement to provide a space for prayer and reflection but in the interests of generating and maintaining excellent relationships within a school community there may be a very strong case for providing one. Acknowledging pupils' needs by providing a space for prayer and reflection may contribute to fostering good relations between the school and its community groups, which is relevant to meeting its public sector duty of the Equality Act 2010. It can also help pupils to "develop awareness of and respect for diversity in relation to ..religion" and to "understand and appreciate the range of different cultures within school and further afield as an essential element of their preparation for life."

Starting points at Welldon Park Junior School

Context

A sizeable proportion of pupils are Muslim and their ethnicities, first languages and cultures reflect the diversity of the ummah, the worldwide Muslim community. There are also Muslims amongst the staff. No children are withdrawn from RE or collective worship and the school is an inclusive and respectful learning community which celebrates its unity and diversity.

Pupils as leaders

A small group of Y6 Muslim pupils asked the headteacher if they could use a space in school for prayer at lunch time. They were given permission and once they began to organise themselves, there were more requests from pupils in other year groups. Boys and girls pray in separate areas of the school hall. About 25 Muslim pupils regularly use this provision and sometimes children of other faiths sit quietly at the back for their own prayer or reflection.

Thoughtful but low key response

The head and deputy wanted to accommodate pupils' religious choices and commitments inclusively within the daily routines of the school. Having consulted the Chair of Governors, they prepared a letter which pupils could take home if they thought they were likely to use the space for prayer. Supervision is not burdensome because staff, on a rota, provide a quiet presence and the pupils organise themselves and follow an agreed code of conduct:

- *Ask your teacher for permission to leave the classroom at 12.20pm*
- *Arrive promptly at the small hall for 12.25pm*
- *Walk to the small hall, please do not stop to pick up your friends*
- *Enter the hall quietly and respectfully as some pupils may already be there*
- *Leave the hall quietly and go straight back to class to eat lunch*
- *Be respectful of all other pupils' belief choices, whether they choose to attend or stay in class*
- *Listen to and follow instructions you are given by the adult supervising*
- *Remember and follow the School's Golden Rules*

Small change, big difference

School leaders have had positive feedback from parents who feel that their children's religious commitments are valued. Children's feedback has been mature and reflective:

"When I pray in the morning, I feel refreshed. Now I feel refreshed at lunchtime!"

"Being quiet helps me not to feel distracted. It helps me not to be distracted in the afternoon."

"It helps me to reflect on what I've done and what I could change to be better."

"Praying helps me to forget bad things that have happened and make a fresh start."

There has been an impact upon pupils' self-esteem and behaviour, with some children enjoying the responsibility and status of leading prayer and making good choices.

An established space for prayer and reflection at Rooks Heath College

SACRE representatives visited Rooks Heath College at a lunch time. Two classrooms are made available during the lunch break so that male and female staff and students can pray separately. The rooms are deliberately located near to the staff room but students use the room responsibly and there has been no need for staff intervention.

SACRE members spoke to some Muslim students and a Muslim member of staff. Students who use this provision were surprised by the interest of SACRE members Prayer for them, as young Muslims, is part of their daily routine and they expect to be able to fit in their prayer at lunch time as well as to eat their lunch and meet their friends or play football.

They welcome the provision of a classroom that can be used for prayer because they acknowledge that prayer five times a day is a duty and they would feel uncomfortable and anxious if they had to wait to 'catch up' with their midday prayer after school.

The number of students wanting to pray at lunch time increases significantly during Ramadan and a larger space is made available. This demonstrates what the pupils told us, that peer pressure does not force students to be more observant at school than they would be at home. But there is discussion amongst pupils of faith about the obligations of being a Muslim and about how this influences their decisions and actions.

A Muslim member of staff described a number of benefits for the school community and for pupils:

- *Students who take their prayers seriously are likely to take their academic studies seriously too*
- *A school which enables pupils to pray within a secular environment is modelling that it values freedom of religion, respect for diversity and inclusion*
- *The Muslim students are providing good role models for the whole school community and challenging negative stereotypes and Islamophobia. They are conducting themselves peacefully and calmly, they are seen as law abiding. They are observant of their own religious obligations without proselytising. Sunni and Shia Muslims are praying alongside each other in fellowship.*
- *Students of other backgrounds, who see Muslim students using the prayer room unobtrusively but routinely, are seeing models of self-discipline and time management.*

Practical arrangements and considerations

This section, in conjunction with the 'faith specific guidance', aims to inform schools so that they are able to reach mutually agreeable arrangements with pupils, families and staff for providing a space for prayer and reflection that does not require vast resourcing.

Perhaps the most helpful guidance for schools is that they conceive of the Space for Prayer and Reflection as they would any other lunch time 'drop-in' club for pupils as it can easily run along those lines. One school, for example, successfully runs a 'quiet club' which meets the needs of those pupils wishing to pray or reflect. It is voluntary; students do not need to attend regularly, to book a place or to register.

The following points offer additional advice:

Do we need to make the space available for the whole of lunch time?

- No! The provision could be offered and the 'space' staffed for an agreed slot of time, for example, 10 minutes at lunch break. Pupils will need to turn up on time to use the facility. Secondary school students may need an early lunch pass.

Are there any timing requirements?

- There are generally no specific timing requirements.
- See Appendix 1 for guidance specific to Muslim prayer.

Who leads / manages access to and use of the space for prayer and reflection?

- Any school adult may supervise the room/space as they are there to ensure pupils' safety. The adult does not need to be from a faith background.

What is the suggested role for the school adult supervising the space?

- The suggested role is to ensure that there is a calm environment and that the children's behaviour permits all to pray or to reflect, whatever their faith background.

Do we need a special room set aside solely for prayer?

- No. As for other lunchtime activities the space for prayer and reflection can be a classroom. (See also Appendix 1)

Will the space for prayer result in peer pressure from other pupils?

- The school's bullying and behaviour policies continue to apply. Schools could, in addition, engage relevant pupils in developing a code of conduct (see Welldon Park Junior example). School leaders might review the provision of the space for prayer and reflection after a term and then regularly.

Does the room have to be available every day?

- Schools could trial the provision on certain days of the week or even once a week initially.

Conclusion

This document has advice status only. There is no legal requirement to provide a space for prayer and reflection. In the interests of generating and maintaining excellent relationships within a school community there may be a very strong case for providing one. Acknowledging pupils' needs by providing a space for prayer and reflection may contribute to fostering good relations between different groups, a general public sector duty of the Equality Act 2010.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of the benefits for pupils and communities. We hope we might hear about more of those from schools as you review and consult pupils and parents about on-going provision of a space for prayer and reflection.

Similarly SACRE cannot claim to have itemised every organisational factor that should be considered in advance.

Most families/pupils will appreciate the efforts the school has made to allow their child to express their religious identity. Most schools are responsive communities which will welcome opportunities to learn more about and from their pupils and families religious identity within the school day.

SACRE thanks:

Claire Ali, Muslim Education Consultant whom they commissioned to draft this guidance and whose approach is inclusive and whose advice is realistically practical.

Dr John Reavley, headteacher, for facilitating a SACRE visit to Rooks Heath College and to Fatima Ibrahim, member of the science department, and pupils.

Judy Lethbridge, headteacher, and James Simmons, deputy, for giving a presentation to SACRE about use of the space for prayer and reflection at Welldon Park Junior School.

Appendix 1: Faith-specific guidance

Muslims:

Prayer times

Muslims are taught to pray (perform 'salah' – the second pillar of Islam) five times a day at specific times:

- The morning and night prayers will never coincide with school hours.
- Only the midday (zuhr) prayer will coincide with the school day during British Summer Time although it may not fall within the school lunchtime.
- The midday and afternoon prayer may coincide with the school day during British Winter Time, but only the midday prayer would fall within lunchtime. The afternoon prayer (Asr) will only fall within the school day between November and February.
- Muslims cannot perform their prayers 'early'.
- The prayer takes just a few minutes to perform.
- Muslims may also want to use the space for prayer and reflection for purposes other than the 'salaat' e.g. for quietly supplicating ('dua'), reading Quran or reflecting.

Preparation for prayer

- Muslims need to be in a state of purity 'wudu' before they pray. This is a simple cleansing routine. Children can come to school 'in wudu' but may need to renew this by lunch time. This need not make a lot of mess and could be accommodated in the school toilets.
- Pupils do not need to wash their feet but can 'wipe' over their socks instead if they have performed wudu in the last 24 hours and have had their feet covered since then. Pupils can be encouraged to come to school in wudu to avoid the need for feet washing. In this case they can just 'wipe' the feet if they need to renew their wudu e.g. after using the toilet.

Special requirements

- Muslims need to pray in the direction of Mecca. From London, this is South East and is easily identifiable with an app, compass or map. A small sign in the place for prayer is sufficient to indicate this and this could be erected and removed each time, it does not need to remain permanently in position.
- Muslims need to pray in a clean place but a special room is not necessary. The only inappropriate place for Muslim prayer is a toilet.
- Pupils may want to temporarily move pictures or cover objects that are in the direction of prayer or those which are symbols and emblems of other religions.
- Pupils may wish to bring their own prayer mat, in which case a small storage cupboard would be useful. It is equally appropriate to pray on a clean sheet or even just a clean piece of paper for one's head.

Individual responsibility

- As with the use of a space for prayer and reflection by others, Muslim pupils should be encouraged and taught to use the space responsibly.
- Prayer is performed quietly.
- Muslims learn to pray from a young age – indeed many of them begin to copy the prayer as toddlers! The prayer is 'obliged' from the onset of puberty, but is learnt and performed by children before then.
- School pupils will probably perform their prayer individually but can also pray together. In the madrassah pupils are often taught to lead prayer and so will not require an adult.
- There would not be a requirement to bring in a leader for Friday prayer – where Friday prayer is not established, children can pray the normal midday prayer on a Friday.

Beyond the requirements for a quiet, calm environment, which is supervised by an adult, there are no specific requirements for other faith groups or for those pupils using the space for personal meditation or reflection.



SACRE GUIDANCE:
Authorised absence for religious festivals 2012 - 2013



Harrow Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Authorised Absence for Religious festivals: Guidance for headteachers and Governing Bodies

This document has advice status. It is the Governing Body which determines the school's attendance policy. On a day to day basis, the headteacher implements that policy and decides whether or not to authorise absence for religious observance, balancing religious requirements with the importance of regular attendance.

Context

In the UK, the pattern of the school year takes account of most of the western Christian festivals and holy days. Important days of religious observance in the calendars of other religious traditions and denominations, however, often fall in term time and on school days.

Those parents, who are nurturing children and young people within a faith tradition, understandably want them to be able to engage in those key events which involve corporate worship and celebration and which affirm their religious beliefs. Schools will want to be sensitive to parental requests for the authorisation of absence for religious observance because they recognize that a family's religious beliefs and traditions are intrinsic to their sense of identity and contribute to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Whilst sympathetic to the need of families to remain in contact with relatives and their 'heritage' overseas, headteachers will seldom authorise absence for extended visits abroad because of the consequences for pupils' attendance and learning.

Guidance to school leaders

In preparing this guidance, SACRE has taken full account of current legislation in relation to attendance:

"The child shall not be taken to have failed to attend regularly at the school by reason of his absence from the school -

(c) on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his parent belongs"

Education Act 1996, Part VI, Chapter II, Paragraph 444

A long-standing agreement has been established within the Local Authority that up to three days in the school year may be authorised for pupil absence for religious observance. SACRE has traditionally published an annual list of religious festival dates on which absence might be authorised. Harrow SACRE is aware that headteachers have requested further guidance in order that this agreement does not diminish robust procedures aimed at improving attendance. SACRE therefore advises that:-

- headteachers should authorise absence **only** for a festival date 'exclusively set apart by the religious body;
- if a festival date has not been 'exclusively set apart' on the SACRE list or by the relevant religious body, headteachers might enquire whether religious observance can be accommodated outside of school hours;¹
- in some religious calendar years, a 'religious body' sets apart holy days on which religious observance will require absence from school amounting to more than three week-days in term time² and headteachers are advised to consider this sensitively;

¹ In the Christian tradition, for example, Ash Wednesday observance does not require absence from school and families can attend church for worship outside of school hours.

² The Board of Deputies of British Jews, for example, publishes a Jewish Holiday Calendar indicating those days on which obligations and restrictions similar to Shabbat apply. In some years of the Jewish calendar, this will amount to more than 3 days on which Jews are obliged to be absent from school, because work is forbidden.

- absence taken on a school day for a festival falling at a weekend, or in a school holiday, would not be authorised;
- additional days taken on either side of the festival day would not be authorised;
- the LA agreement of up to 3 days should not be viewed as an entitlement which is to be taken in full. For example, if only 1 festival day falls on a week day in term time then a school would only authorise that 1 day's absence. The school would not authorise an additional 2 days absence;

The needs of different religious groups

Within some religious traditions, observance varies between different denominations and communities. Ashura, for example, is a relatively minor festival for Sunni Muslims but a holy day of major significance for the Shia community.

Whilst headteachers and teachers must ensure that requests are genuine and reasonable, they are recommended not to doubt a request on grounds that other families of the same faith have not requested absence on the same day or at the same time. It may be the case that:

- the level of observance differs amongst families within the same faith tradition;
- a particular denominational or cultural grouping observes different holy days to other groups within the same faith;
- some pupils, though growing up within a faith community, may prefer to attend school on festival days.

What can schools do to meet the needs of families from religious traditions whilst promoting high attendance rates?

Harrow schools are aware of the religious communities represented within their school and are advised to take reasonable steps to ensure, whenever possible, that events in the school diary – such as parents evenings, school performances - do not clash with days of significant religious importance to pupils and staff.³

As part of their written communications with families, some schools send a termly or annual proforma asking for advance information of requests for absence for religious observance. However, some communities may not be able to identify festival dates that far in advance. Parents should be asked to give the school as much notice of a proposed absence as is reasonably possible and be willing to discuss with the school how pupils will catch up with work missed.

For religiously observant children and young people there are expectations of religious prayer and observance throughout the year. Schools can usually make provision for pupils to fulfil these observances without the need for absence during the school day. For example, through consultation with the Muslim communities represented within the school, a prayer room and nearby facilities for washing can enable young Muslims to perform salah on the school site (see SACRE Guidance on offering a place for prayer and reflection).

SACRE has been involved in the Consultation with Schools on the Local Authority's Duties and Legal Measures to Secure School Attendance. Although absences are no longer separately categorized as authorised and unauthorised, SACRE encourages schools to analyse attendance data against a range of criteria, including absence each half-term for religious observance.

³ Indirect discrimination may occur if provision is applied generally but has the effect of disadvantaging those with a particular 'characteristic.' (Equality Act 2010 – DfE Advice for School leaders Sept 2012)

SACRE Guidance: Dates 'set apart' for religious observance 2012 – 2013

SACRE has traditionally published an annual list of religious festival dates. In line with its newly published and robust guidance to school leaders, representatives of local faith communities have identified those dates which they regard as *"exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs."* These dates are recommended to schools as those on which they would authorise absence from school.

This list can only have advice status because the reference in law to *"the religious body to which the parent belongs"* is not easily defined. Within faith communities there may be a range of religious 'bodies', which are invested - locally, nationally and internationally - with the status of determining which festivals require absence from school and the exact date on which a festival should be celebrated.

	Spring Term 2013	Summer Term 2013	Autumn Term 2013
Baha'i	21.03.13 New Year		12.11.13 The Birth of Baha'u'llah
In the Baha'i tradition it is recommended that, where possible, work is suspended on these days. In 2013 The Declaration of Baha'u'llah (21.04.13) falls on a Sunday.			
Buddhism		24.05.13 Vesakha Puja / Buddha Day	05.11.13 Kathina Day*
Such is the religious, cultural and ethnic diversity within Buddhism that different Buddhist denominations – for example Theravada, Mahayana - follow different religious calendars. The same festival may be celebrated on different dates and different Buddhist communities will celebrate different festivals. Within those traditions that follow a lunar calendar, New Year Festivals may be religiously significant. These include Lhosar (New Year within the Tibetan and Nepalese Buddhist communities) and Songkran for Thai Buddhists. Many Buddhist communities celebrate their religious festivals collectively on the nearest Sunday.			
Christianity	07.01.13 Christmas Day (Eastern Orthodox tradition)	03.05.13 Holy Friday (Orthodox)	
In the Orthodox tradition Easter is calculated using the Julian calendar. It is a 'moveable' feast and so the date of Easter, and the beginning of the Lenten fast, will differ every year. In 2013 Pascha, the Orthodox Easter Sunday, falls on 05.05.13.			
Hinduism			04.11.2013 Hindu New Year
Such is the diversity within Hinduism that almost every working day might be a festival. However, few Hindu festivals require a day off school. In most temples, observances take place in the evenings in recognition of the need to attend work and school. Hindu communities in the UK also tend to celebrate festivals collectively on the nearest Sunday, either before or after major festivals, for the same reason. Most observances during the 5 days of Diwali take place in the evening and it is not necessary for pupils to be absent from school on each of those days. In 2013 Lakshmi Puja, the third day of Diwali, and usually known as Diwali Day, falls on a Sunday. Krishna Janmashtami is a key festival for many Hindus but in 2013 it falls in the school summer holiday (28.08.13).			
Islam			15.10.13 Eid-ul-Adha* 13.11.13 Ashura** (Shia)
In 2013 Ramadan will be observed from 09.07.13 – 07.08.13. There is no religious obligation requiring pupils to be absent from school during Ramadan. However, Muslim pupils, parents and staff will welcome the provision of a space for prayer and thoughtful arrangements at lunchtime. *A range of methods is used to determine when Eid begins. Muslim families will follow their masjid or community leaders. Therefore parents from different Muslim communities may request absence for Eid on two different dates and some may not be able to calculate the date in advance because they must sight the moon. In 2013 Eid-ul-Fitr falls on 08.08.13 in the school summer holiday. ** Shia Muslims might request absence on Ashura.			

Jainism			04.11.2013 Gautam Keval Gyan (New Year)
In 2013 Mahavir Janma Kalyanak - Mahavir's birthday - (03.11.2013) falls on a Sunday. Jains are likely to request absence for one day at Diwali, that is for New Year. On other festival days, observance can be fulfilled in after school hours unless a family has pledged to partake in a special puja, aarti, mangal diva, or shanti kalash. Sometimes extended families plan a special pilgrimage. The Jain representative on SACRE urges that schools make decisions about authorising student absence for these rare pilgrimages that are consistent with decisions about authorisation of absence for Hajj. Jains of the Svetambara tradition may request absence on Samvatsari (Bhadarva vad choth) on 09.09.13			
Judaism	26 – 27.03.13 & 1 – 2.04.13 Pesach	15 – 16.05.13 Shavuot	5 – 6.09.13 Rosh Hashanah 19 – 20.09.13 & 26 – 27.09.13 Sukkot
Jewish law prohibits work on the Sabbath and certain festivals. The traditional Jewish interpretation of work includes any kind of creative activity, such as writing, operating equipment, such as computers and telephones, and traveling, other than on foot. Attending classes and taking examinations are classified as work. There is no provision in Jewish law for a dispensation to be given from these religious obligations. However, levels of observance vary between families.			
Sikhism			
In 2013 dates corresponding to the Nanakshahi calendar fall at the weekend: Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh 05.01.13 Vaisakhi 13.04.13 Sikh Diwali (Bhandichor Day) 03.11.13 Guru Nanak Jayanti (Birthday of Guru Nanak) 17.11.13			
Zoroastrianism	21.03.13 Jamsdeedi NoRuz*		
* Observance on Jamsdeedi NoRuz will not require a day's absence. However, families may have a thanks giving prayer ceremony in the morning followed by a festive breakfast, and so children would be late coming to school.			

For a full calendar of Religious Festivals in 2013 – 2014 please see the Shap Calendar which is available on subscription at www.shap.org

REC NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2013

No-one with a serious interest in RE can ignore the fact that there exist very real threats to the future of the subject. If there can be a positive side to this, perhaps it is that it has given us the opportunity to find out just how many people from different sections of the community are prepared to stand up for RE and its vital place in our schools and colleges. In addition to the 64 diverse organisations that make up the membership of the RE Council, we have seen an increasing number of parliamentarians, academics and, crucially, young people willing to take a stand and talk about the reasons RE is so important. Tapping into this fount of enthusiasm and determination is part of what the REC is all about; initiatives such as the RethinkRE campaign (see news item below) can really help us build on this groundswell of support, asking people to take simple but effective actions to keep RE on the public agenda.

YOUNG AMBASSADORS FOR RE

The /Young Ambassadors for RE/ scheme has now been launched as a pilot venture. An information leaflet for teachers and another for students, along with an application form, are available on the REC website <http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRCwNEUQVJBIZQ>

Schools are warmly invited to consider entering a team of young people from their school to be part of this initiative which will provide leadership opportunities for young people as well as helping to raise the profile of RE. Closing date: 1st March 2013.

RETHINK/RE CAMPAIGN

This is a new campaign initiated by the REC which aims to bring together all who are concerned about RE to speak with a united voice on a single aim: that every young person in every school should have access to good quality RE. The website has some straightforward key messages and a sign-up facility which is intended to demonstrate to politicians and others the breadth of support for RE as an essential part of every pupil's education. For more details and to sign up yourself, please see [rethinkRE.org](http://www.rethinkre.org)

<<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRCwBEUQVJBIZQ>>

ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

The APPG on Religious Education is going from strength to strength.

Its Chair, Stephen Lloyd, has been vocal in support of RE in the media. The APPG is currently holding an inquiry into the supply of and support for teachers of RE and on 16 January held a second meeting at Westminster to hear experts give evidence about the problems affecting the subject such as the decline in training places and the removal of bursaries from RE PGCE trainees. The presentations can be seen on the REC website <http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRCwFEUQVJBIZQ>

The report is being written and edited by Dr Barbara Wintersgill and will be published on 12th March.

GRANTS TOWARDS TRAINING TO TEACH RE IN 2013

For 2013-14, trainees in secondary RE could be eligible to apply to one of the Church College Trusts for a grant towards course costs or living expenses; candidates can check

<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRCw5EUQVJBIZQ>

for details of the trusts and foundations to which they can apply.

The Association of Church College Trusts has issued a statement on training to teach religious education in 2013, saying that candidates can train to teach RE through a PGCE course at 28 universities in England, two in Wales and two in Scotland, and that, although the government no longer provides a bursary for RE, there are other sources of support.

RE SUBJECT REVIEW CONSULTATION

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the consultation process in Phase One of the RE Subject Review. Bill Gent, Chair of the Expert Panel for Phase One, has now completed the final version of the Phase One report, and this is available to download from the REC website

<<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRCw9EUQVJBIZQ>>

A preliminary version of the report produced by the project's external evaluator, Lorraine Foreman-Peck, which contains an analysis of answers to Section One of the online survey, and a separate analysis of extended responses submitted separately, will be made available on the REC website very shortly.

RE SUBJECT REVIEW PHASE 2 APPOINTMENTS

The first recruitments to Task Groups for Phase Two of the Review have now been made and further details about the four people who have been appointed to Task Group One are available here

<<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRDAZEUQVJBIZQ>>

Recruitment for Task Group Two is now underway and the closing date for applications is Wednesday 6th February 2013. Once again we anticipate a very strong field, given the importance of the work to be done and the considerable talent available. Further details about the Review are available on the REC website

<<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRDAZEUQVJBIZQ>>

SPONSORED WALK

Please join others who care about RE in one of the sponsored walks taking place around the country during May this year. They will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the RE Council, raise funds for both the REC and a charity chosen by each local group, provide an interesting walk in the company of others who want to support RE and in some cases create the basis of an RE trail for schools to use in the future. The dedicated Sponsored Walk newsletters <<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRDAREUQVJBIZQ>> give details of where walks are happening and how to get involved, or you can write to ask for more information to info@religiouseducationcouncil.org or <mailto:info@religiouseducationcouncil.org>>

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION PUBLISHES FAQs ON ACADEMIES AND RE

The DfE has just published some long awaited but helpful guidance on requirements for RE and collective worship in free schools and academies

<<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRDAVEUQVJBIZQ>>

It is good to have this set of clarificatory questions and answers about issues which SACREs, teachers and others have been asking about for some time.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION QUALITY MARK

The Religious Education Quality Mark has now been awarded to more than 40 schools. The REQM is open to all schools and the cost of applying is 475. If a school cannot afford the cost and needs financial support, please contact the administrator at admin@reqm.org <<mailto:admin@reqm.org>>

If you would like to become an assessor please contact one of the project managers, jane.brooke@reqm.org <<mailto:jane.brooke@reqm.org>> or mary.myatt@reqm.org <<mailto:mary.myatt@reqm.org>>

CHRISTIANITY AS A GLOBAL FAITH

Where in the World?

<<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRDAJEUQVJBIZQ>>

is the latest project from Barnabas in Schools that encourages teachers and pupils to explore Christianity as a global faith. As well as providing a creative arts Barnabas RE Day for schools using drama and storytelling, they have also produced a useful teacher resource book, a stimulating INSET package and a wide range of free resources that you can access from the Barnabas in Schools website

<<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRDANEUQVJBIZQ>>

FREE SEMINARS ON ISLAM AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The University of Derby is leading a project entitled /Collaborative partnerships between universities and Muslim institutions: dismantling the roadblocks/. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the project features a series of Knowledge Exchange Seminars

<<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRDABEUQVJBIZQ>>

to be held in February and March across the UK; they are designed to raise awareness of research findings and the benefits of collaborative partnerships both for universities and for British Muslim communities, and to enable participants to share their experiences and expertise with the project team. The events are aimed at people working in a variety of settings, including religious organisations, schools and universities, interfaith organisations, voluntary organisations, youth services, social work and policy – for further information please visit the University of Derby website

<<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRDABEUQVJBIZQ>>

or email the Project Administrator, Michelle Wood:

m.wood@derby.ac.uk <<mailto:m.wood@derby.ac.uk>>

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH STUDENTSHIP: OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

The School of Education, Oxford Brookes University, is looking for strong candidates to apply for a three year, full-time PhD studentship; the successful candidate will receive an annual stipend* of 7000 for three years beginning in 2013/14. The studentship is intended for a candidate who will pursue a PhD project that falls within one of the School's key research areas, which include*/ *Learning, Identity and Culture; Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment; and Educational Purposes, Ethics and Belief. The closing date for applications is Monday 4th March; for more information, please email tmorris@brookes.ac.uk <<mailto:tmorris@brookes.ac.uk>> or visit the Oxford Brookes University website

<<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRDAFEUQVJBIZQ>>

THREE FAITHS FORUM – INTERFAITH WORKSHOPS

3FF's interfaith workshops

<<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRDA5EUQVJBIZQ>>

help young people build religious literacy and empathy skills, while supporting the RE and Citizenship curriculum. Workshops include /Encountering Faiths and Beliefs,/ /The Art of Empathy/ and /The Art of Asking, /and enable students to develop dialogue and communication skills. For more information, please contact Sophie Loftus:

sophie@3ff.org.uk

SUMMER BIBLICAL STUDY IN [OXFORD](#)**jrmgarner@btinternet.com <<mailto:jrmgarner@btinternet.com>>

WESTMINSTER FORUM PROJECTS SEMINAR ON THE HUMANITIES CURRICULUM

John Keast, Chair of the RE Council, will be speaking at a seminar on the humanities curriculum on Thursday 7th March 2013. The event, part of the National Curriculum Seminar Series, and will bring together key policymakers in the Department for Education with school and college leaders, teaching unions, publishers, universities, employers and representatives from cultural venues. With a particular focus in History and Geography, there will also be discussion of the future role of RE. More information can be found on the Westminster Education Forum website <<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/maillinglist/lt.php?id=ZU5QAIZRDA9EUQVJBIZQ>>