

Autumn 2012 newsletter



www.recentres.org.uk

Chair and acting Treasurer:

Lydia Revett

Hampshire County RE Centre

Falcon House, Monarch Way

Winchester SO22 5PL

Tel: 01962 863134

lydia.revett@hants.gov.uk



Letter from the chair:

Our summer conference in Ludlow and Hereford in July earlier this year was very enjoyable. Thank you so much on behalf of all of us to Mel Wilson-Claridge who organised this conference. All who attended enjoyed the networking, activities and sights, and returned to work reinvigorated. There may be some interesting photos emerging later in this newsletter!

There have been some changes to centres during the year, including the fact that Fauzia Ali (Resources Manager at [Croydon Faith Education Resources](#)) has decided to concentrate on teaching and so has resigned from her post. We will miss Fauzia's warmth and significant contribution to the Federation. Her successor is Sheila Fenner, who we welcome to the Federation and wish her well in her new role.

This chair's letter comes with a request ... or two! Since our Treasurer Ron Upton's illness, I have been acting treasurer. There is now the role of membership secretary to fill, since Fauzia is no longer part of the Federation. So if you would like to offer to help in either of these key roles, I would be most grateful to hear from you.

Unfortunately this has meant that the organisation of this year's summer conference has not happened as expected, and as I emailed in July. If, therefore, anyone of you would like to arrange a small meeting in the summer – along the lines that had been initially suggested or alternatively something completely different near your centre - please do get in touch.

My thanks to Ken Johnson for his considerable assistance on the newsletter and support for me.

We'd be most grateful if you please could take a moment to check your centre contact details are correct on [our website](#).

As I'm sure you know, the Federation is a member of the [RE Council](#); our two representatives are Chris Boxley (email boxley@talktalk.net) and myself. I recently attended a full REC meeting and my notes follow in this newsletter. If you have any concerns or questions, please do come back to me.

Looking forward to seeing you soon,

Lydia

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Notes from the RE Council meeting 7 November 2012

REC website: <http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/>

Our representatives are:-

Lydia Revett (re.centre@hants.gov.uk) and Chris Boxley (boxley@talktalk.net)

This recent RE Council meeting under John Keast's chairmanship was held in the Learning Zone of Wembley Stadium.

For REC members' news, I would recommend that you [subscribe to the regular e-newsletter](#).

A number of issues regarding RE were raised at the meeting:

- John Keast expressed real concern about the future of RE, following the impact that the current Government has had on *dismantling national support structures for RE*, proposed changes to qualifications, EBacc, and loss of bursaries for RE PGCE students.

[Consultation on Michael Gove's KS4 qualification reforms](#) – please note deadline Monday 10 December 2012

[John Keast's paper on qualification reform](#) in response to the DfE consultation document.

[Response from Mark Chater](#), Director of Culham St Gabriel's Trust.

[Recent letter to Michael Gove from John Keast](#), Chair, RE Council.

[Recent letter to Nick Clegg from John Keast](#), Chair, RE Council.

- The [REC strategic plan](#) is made up of four parts:
 - **Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications Committee**
[RE Subject Review](#) – Phase 1 of this review, managed by Janet Orchard, was circulated and discussed at the meeting. It is going out for public consultation wef 12.11.12 and I would urge you and your contacts to read it and respond. On the basis of this, phase 2 will address the agenda for change identified in this first phase with the proposed publication of the final report a year from now. *I would urge you and your contacts to read it and respond by 7 December*
 - **PR Committee**
[The All Party Parliamentary Group \(APPG\)](#) of MPs has been successfully launched and is conducting its first enquiry, led by Barbara Winterskill, into local support and training of RE teachers, to be reported Spring 2013. Members of the RE community and RE teachers have been asked to respond to a [call for evidence for the APPG](#) by **14 December**.
The REC agreed that patrons of the organisation was something that could be helpful. PR committee is intent on raising the profile of the subject - *REthink RE* campaign is being worked on.
[NATRE](#) is actively working with the PR committee after their two recent surveys of RE teachers

➤ **Professional Development Committee**

[RE Quality Mark](#) recognising outstanding learning in RE – a new pilot initiative, currently being extended to all schools to apply.

Completion of the **REsilience pilot project in the FE sector** through the publication of *Challenging voices*, [downloadable here](#).

➤ **Resources Committee**

This is the fundraising arm of the REC. The latest venture is a **sponsored walk during May 2013** to celebrate the REC's 40th anniversary. Please consider whether this is something that you and colleagues could arrange locally, perhaps with an inter-faith network, to visit local places of worship - further details circulated with this newsletter.

➤ **Governance Committee**

The constitution of the REC (*Memorandum and Articles*) is being reviewed, so that (amongst other alterations) each member organisation has one vote, electronic voting can be allowed and the membership criteria are being reviewed. Lydia has the proposed documents, so that if you are concerned or interested to know more, please get in touch. These are going to be further discussed and ratified at a meeting on 31 January 2013.

- [Hockerill/NATRE prize for Innovations in RE teaching](#) deadline 31 January 2013.
- [NATRE 2013 Conference Inspiring RE](#) takes place in Bolton on Saturday and Sunday 18-19 May 2013. Conference booking is now open and teachers are encouraged to book their place as soon as possible as it is envisaged that the conference will be sold out fairly quickly.
- [RE online](#) is in the process of being rebuilt and transferring content, to be launched January 2013.





Is there any place for Books in R.E. Centres today?

Recently a school contacted me at Nottingham and asked for books instead of pupils using the Internet to find information and **Hannah Hauxwell** who is the Resource Centre manager in the Gloucester Diocese submitted this article for the newsletter.

RE centres offer teachers a wide variety of resources to support their teaching. Artefacts, DVDs, games and CD-ROMs are all useful and engaging ways of introducing a topic. When it comes to content, however, you can't beat books.



“Why do we still need books?” I hear you ask in mystified tones. “Don't they just look it all up on the internet these days?” Well, they can, but I would argue that books are a better place to start. Books encourage and support learning in a number of ways, and offer a unique contribution to the development of knowledge.

Firstly, a well-chosen book offers words and images at just the right level for the class in question. The relevant chapters and sections offer an introduction to the subject, explaining beliefs and practices in an interesting way, such as books which are “narrated” by a child of similar age to the target audience. There are very few websites out there categorised by Key Stage. So a book offers a filtered experience of knowledge, tailor-made to give the right amount of information expressed in language at the right level.

Secondly, it is easier to find exactly what you are looking for if you start with a book. Anyone who has ever tried to “Google” a vague enquiry will know exactly what I mean! With a book, a good index takes you to the right section at the flick of a page. A glossary helps to elucidate unfamiliar language and concepts. Thus a book provides a framework for knowledge and understanding, a good foundation on which to build. Once a child has a firm grasp of the topic from books, they are better equipped to search for more on the web if needs be.

Thirdly, a book comes pre-checked for accuracy and reliability of content.

Of course nothing is completely infallible, but a textbook from a reputable publisher is your best bet for the authoritative word on a subject and a balanced account of differing points of view. Yes, the web offers a democratic forum for the expression of many shades and variation of belief, but that makes it all the more bewildering. Anyone can write a web page, and even seemingly “official” websites can have hidden agendas. Again, a book gives a filtered experience, an overview of the subject without too many complications.



Then there are the practical advantages of books. Using a book to learn allows the child to go at their own pace, to stop and check something, to refer back to something read earlier, to build up knowledge and to revise topics before going onto something new. Web pages can change and disappear, have new, potentially confusing, content added, and one can easily get lost in a maze of following link after link after link....

Even if schools have their own materials, the RE centre still has something to offer. RE centres have a greater breadth of resources than many school libraries. Crucially, though, the RE centre acts as a filter, amassing a wealth of knowledge on which books cover different topics, which are the most popular. It is the human touch which will always be the RE Centre's *raison d'être*: the ways in which our brains can do things a computer can't.

Helpful human staff (yes, real people!) are the RE centre's greatest asset. We are the ones who help teachers to select material at the right level for their classes, and can go straight to the right book to answer a particular enquiry.



We know how to match books to the preferences and foibles of different borrowers. We explain things, repeat things, get to know our books, listen to our borrowers, and build up our collections based on all the strands of communication that make up our daily work. So for relevant, reliable, filtered resources, the RE centre is the place to go.

Long live the RE centres!!

What's happening in the North East?

See the update on page 8



The 29th annual conference of FREC in Ludlow and Hereford

So it was to be that the FREC descended upon the towns of Ludlow and Hereford.



So pleased were the people of Ludlow, that there were flags and bunting put out and a festival was decreed.

Some members attended a performance of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* in the Castle Grounds, and went past the canons in the evening;



whilst others had a deep discussion as music thronged the air.



A guided tour of Ludlow Church brought out some new perspectives and insights of this building dedicated to St Laurence, as well as discovering more of the history of this place.



The 29th annual conference of FREC in Ludlow and Hereford

On the Friday, though the rain fell down, we travelled to Hereford to see The Hereford Mappa Mundi. This is unique in Britain's heritage; an outstanding treasure of the medieval world, it records how thirteenth-century scholars interpreted the world in spiritual as well as geographical terms. We then visited the Chained Library at Hereford Cathedral which is a fascinating treasure in Britain's rich heritage of library history.

Up the stairs we climbed to see the Cathedral Working Library and the Cathedral Archive. Here we looked at ancient manuscripts and our questions were answered by the librarian. Our visit resumed looking round the Cathedral, followed by lunch and then it was time to depart.

What a great time was had by all and the hard work of those who organised it was very much appreciated.



News from our Member Centres

North East Religious Learning Resources Centre

[North East Religious Learning Resources Centre](#)

The Centre has received an encouraging review in recent weeks. A lot of energy and time has been used to develop more user friendly packaging of items which has meant a clear out of stock.

Storage space has been redesigned with improved signage and presentation of materials. AS a centre we have been pro-active in seeking out user feedback through questionnaires, telephone surveys and by focus groups in order to clearly understand the needs of our three main user groups, that is teachers, clergy and students. Other user data was also gathered from our library system to track patterns in use, users and stock as we endeavour to improve our services. This made us all tired!

The big question was always: do we have the right things for the right people at the right time? And the answers have been very encouraging. In fact the biggest single issue that's come out (apart from the fact that we can't be on the doorstep of every individual member) is that we have what people need and want (in most cases) but they don't know we do!

Access to the Centre and the convenience of the web as a quick (and sometimes not-so-quick) fix were issues that came repeatedly up but we have taken some steps to address this with extended user-led loan periods and the evaluation of websites to ensure quality.

We still feel we have a long way to go as we improve our capacity to meet those identified needs. As a direct comparison with last year we are, month on month, seeing more people borrowing more things so we're happy if not content!

On the other side we're working on a project to improve the resources that may support baptism preparation in parishes and education about baptism in schools. This is a really fun piece of work but still in its early stages with trials of the materials to go on for at least 9 months .. so watch this space!

In the meantime we are awaiting news on the move of one of our sites (the Diocesan offices in Durham will be moving and we're hopefully going with them!) and anticipating the disruption and potential creativity of all that.

Other bits and pieces of work go on (a re-design of the website, attempts to improve interfaith engagement) and efforts to work more closely with Diocesan and LA partners in times of cut backs everywhere but all in all things seem to be well so no complaints from our end of the Isle!

Karenza Passmore

K.passmore@resourcescentreonline.co.uk

Nottingham RSResource Centre

www.rsresources.org.uk

Over the summer, we had to down size; which has meant removing all videos and books which have not been going out for a long time along with posters which have seen the best of their days. This has created more space with the room used as the base of the Centre, which is now being also used more by Bluecoat Academy. This has meant that our open displays of artefacts have now gone into cupboards so that they can be secured.

Our re-vamped web site has been put on hold due to this downsizing as we have to bring the catalogue up to date and hopefully this will become live after Christmas.

As a centre we have been invited to attend Diocesan Heads of schools conference where we have made many contacts, we have also been involved in supporting the setting up of teacher networks. Our involvement in Nottingham Inter Faith, which still has its office within the Centre, has meant that we have been involved in some promotional work in the City of Nottingham.

Our work with faith experiences still continues and evolves as we develop more materials to meet the requests of schools. We are now assisting schools in RE weeks or days. In a primary academy, we did a whole day on Hinduism working with a Hindu priest with over 158 pupils. The following e-mail was received from the co-ordinator.

The Hindu Experience was an interactive, engaging time of discovery all our children. The subject matter was appropriate for each age group and the communication was at the right level too. There was a definite buzz around the school throughout our whole week of Hinduism and your input aided this.

A Sikh experience set up in a school hall.



Display at Diocesan Heads Conference



RESOURCE DIRECTORY

THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK YOUTH TRUST

The Archbishop of York Youth Trust is here to help and enable young people throughout the north of England to *be the change they want to see...* wherever they live! Young people are our greatest hope and bring us such potential for an exciting future.

www.archbishopofyorkyouthtrust.co.uk/

Why not share resources you have discovered, especially if they are fresh ones?



www.prayerspacesinschools.com



Innervation Trust's primary school singing and recording project is designed to give pupils the chance to record their very own CD and perform in a concert.

During a five day project every child in the school gets the chance to learn a fun-filled set of catchy and energetic pop songs. These are then recorded at the school by our technical team and then mixed and mastered at our very own recording studios.

The following week a concert, featuring all the children in the school, takes place in a local church, providing a great opportunity for school, church and community to come together. This always proves to be a fantastic finale to the project. Each pupil has the chance to go home with their very own copy of the school CD. This is a Christian based activity

www.isingpop.com