

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

**PUBLICISING** your

**CELEBRATING** RE

**ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS**



**As you are reading this I can fairly safely assume that you are an RE enthusiast already. That being the case - and with apologies to the donkey in Shrek for plagiarism - I know that you believe that deep down 'Everybody loves RE!' - if only they understood what our wonderful subject is really about... Celebrating RE is a golden opportunity to swell support for a curriculum area that has the Heineken effect - reaching the parts that other areas and subjects do not reach .... But, as we all know, however wonderful the events we plan to open the eyes of the world and celebrate the rich potential RE has for our children and young people, they will only bear fruit if people know about them. Shakespeare would not still be part of our curriculum if the Bard hadn't got the word out there that he was quite a whizz with words and the human condition!**



## Getting people involved

So you've planned your engaging events and activities. How will you make sure people, including the decision makers in our society, get involved or come along? This doesn't have to be daunting or onerous - you just need to consider what potential your situation affords. Start local but think county, country – and even beyond!

Begin with your pupils - enthusing them with the potential (and the fun) of what your community/ the school is planning is key. Give them the challenge of being 'publicity officers' – some flip chart paper and pens and the key question 'How can we get people to support our *Celebrating RE* events?' is a way of engaging them from the start.

Even better, ask a few RE enthusiasts to be part of your planning group – we all know how well young brains think out of the box – and in this way they have ownership of what's going on, thus demonstrating that every child does matter in RE!

## Getting noticed

- Having a punchy headline for your events will help things along and grab interest. Key questions can help here too:
  - ★ *RE - the only hope for the future of mankind?*
  - ★ *RE is Dead – long live Richard Dawkins!*
  - ★ *No RE? No empathy!*
  - ★ *RE – Science's greatest ally'*
  - ★ *Are you human? Let RE help you find out!*
  - ★ *What's the point?*
  - ★ *RE? What's in it for our community?*

- Rightly or wrongly we live in a world where 'Dog bites man' will always be less exciting than 'Man bites dog'. I have often said to my classes, 'Teacher has great lesson with 8S' is no headline, but 'Unengaged pupil attacks Miss with board rubber' will always sell! Now I'm not suggesting gratuitous violence is necessary to further our cause but we need to grab interest. Our relevant, controversial, human centric subject homes in on the big, ultimate questions – and this can be put to good effect when making sure that our careful preparations for *Celebrating RE* attract public interest.
- Why not ask if you could use the space that most schools have to publicise exam results and summer fairs? Faith groups usually have notice boards, newsletters and even web sites to draw attention. SACREs meet in all manner of places, many in local authority buildings – why not ask if you could put up a display explaining what RE and the SACRE are and what the SACRE was doing for *Celebrating RE*? The RE Council [REC] has excellent free leaflets explaining the nature and value of RE [obtainable in bulk from [info@religiouseducationcouncil.org](mailto:info@religiouseducationcouncil.org) – ask for the 'What is RE?' leaflet]

## Pupil power

- While your pupils are busy suggesting ways to promote, give them cameras. After checking they have permission to publish, get them to take pictures that can be used for publicity. This could be linked into some RE planning and could include filming students, teacher, governors etc responding to generic questions such as 'Why RE anyway?' or something more imaginative! This then furnishes you with material to engage the attention of a wider group.

## To parents - and beyond!

- Draw the circle wider – let pupils act as ambassadors to parents. Combine this with the school newsletter and/or website and we have already escaped the school gates. Send out a letter explaining what RE is planning and ask for support/ideas/materials/interested contributors.
- Before you do, have members of the senior management team been persuaded this is a

worthwhile event for the school to support? RE's contribution to community cohesion is well documented so the rich mix of representatives from the local community, including faith members that this event can link to and/or attract, is a golden opportunity for schools to develop understanding and empathy. As part of inspections, Ofsted is also considering the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development – draw attention to this in your pre-event briefing to SMT and ask them for further suggestions about who could be involved and/ or invited. This is a good opportunity to underline the potential of RE to make a major contribution to the school's aims and vision.

- Putting plans to the governors will also raise RE's profile and dip into a potential area of support, ideas and promotion. On the REC's web site you will also find the excellent 'RE Teacher's Media Toolkit' (see [www.religiouseducationcouncil.org](http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org)). This will help you organise many aspects of publicity.

## Publicity materials

Once planning is underway think about publicity going beyond the school and into your local community. Gather your pictures, quotations, films, event summaries and create fliers and materials that can be put on web sites, again with possible help from other colleagues (especially those with good ICT skills) and pupils. The *Celebrating RE* team has provided an eye catching logo (see [www.celebratingre.org](http://www.celebratingre.org) 'What is available?' for this and other downloadable resources – leaflet, PowerPoint, poster blank).



## Standing Advisory Council on RE [SACRE] and faith communities as partners with schools

- Standing Advisory Councils on RE will be very interested in what schools are doing and may be able to supply you details of contacts with faith and belief groups in your area. Check to see if they have a web site.
- Not only may this contribute to planning but they could also be people who would like to attend and/or promote your event. They may also be planning their own events and welcome support from schools.
- Inter Faith Week takes place during November 2010. This event is very likely to provide ideas and contacts but may also be an area that some *Celebrating RE* planning could develop during the following March (see the article on inter faith activities in the *Celebrating RE* "What can you do?" section of the website). Visit [www.interfaith.org.uk](http://www.interfaith.org.uk) to find out more about their 170 bodies – many of which will be interested in what you are doing.
- Utilising local faith groups both in planning and as guests is another excellent way to support RE at your school and contribute to community cohesion.



## What else can SACREs do to get noticed?

SACREs are set up by their local authorities and include the authority's officers, councillors and teacher groups as well as faith representatives so *Celebrating RE* presents a great opportunity to invite members of the local authority, their organisations and groups to see what the SACRE's work is all about. Events in faith places, local authority venues and schools can be publicised via the authority's web site and whatever electronic means are used to send information to schools. Lancashire SACRE, for example, has asked every

member to do at least one thing to support *Celebrating RE* – this could be as simple as forwarding information about the nationwide event through the web site and asking for ideas for the SACRE or planning an event with members of their group. The clerk to SACRE will have further suggestions (see the article on SACRE activities in the *Celebrating RE* "What can you do?" section of the website).

## Ideas for faith groups

- Many of the ideas already mentioned are suitable for use by faith groups. Gurdwaras, churches, mosques etc often have groups which look for ways of reaching out into their local communities.
- All children in England and Wales have to receive Religious Education and this is enriched by contact with 'real' people from their faith communities. The children from these communities can act as very effective ambassadors in raising awareness of events on both sides of the fence.
- Local inter faith organisations are also useful partners and can be found via the internet.
- A faith or belief tradition's national organisations can also be sources of advice.
- The important thing is to plan something within your community's capacity that can be shared with enthusiasm as it clearly supports the children's connection with RE. An open morning where local schools are welcomed so that pupils can explore, form questions and have them answered will be as well received as a more challenging 'faith trail'.
- Write to your local schools, not forgetting special schools and 6th form colleges, if possible inviting them [and possibly a few pupils] to a preliminary meeting to share plans. Once the event is firmed up a letter to the Head of RE [Secondary] or the RE Co-ordinator [Primary] or simply 'the Teacher with responsibility for RE' with a tear off slip or email address to respond should be welcomed as teachers are always seeking out good contacts with their local faith and belief groups.



## Be ambitious!

Don't be shy – as well as local folk, invite the 'great and the good' to celebrate with you but do get in early as these people's diaries tend to fill up quickly. You may have a bishop, MP or even media celebrity within driving distance – get the pupils to invite them, explaining what it's all about. This will have the effect of promoting RE at your school, even if the people you invite cannot make that particular event. A link to your school web site for them to learn more would be really helpful.

Enclose the REC leaflet:

[info@religiouseducationcouncil.org](mailto:info@religiouseducationcouncil.org) to give them the wider picture of what RE is about today – some folk are still stuck with an image of the subject born of their school days! Again, an intriguing title/ key question would make a good hook!

## Working with the media

- Throughout the process don't forget the value of what you are promoting. RE has climbed out of the Cinderella category over recent years but the subject is still much misunderstood in many quarters.
- Telling the local media that you are involved with an RE event is unlikely to get the editor/ producer excited. Identify the 'hook' of the key question, controversial area, high profile visitor, community cohesion links and/ or pupils at the heart of the event.
- Your local radio station may already encourage young people to act as reporters and some secondary schools have broadcasting facilities – ask the education reporter on your local paper what is available in your area. Give the radio station and the local paper plenty of notice and write a brief account of what you are planning. Focus on the community aspect and the controversial or challenging 'twist' you have included.
- A 'question time' panel of young people of faith and SACRE members or a school and local faith group project to support RE in a citizenship area such as 'Who should support our elderly?' will present newspapers and radio with stories and photo opportunities that engage readers and listeners.

- Again the 'RE Teacher's Media Toolkit' can be employed/adapted to support many aspects of publicity.

## You are not alone!

Throughout the autumn and spring terms there will be helpful support from the *Celebrating RE* web site, with a calendar of events showing what others are organising. You can 'Sign up for news' by visiting the home page of the *Celebrating RE* website <http://www.celebratingre.org/> to receive the monthly Celebrating RE newsletter to encourage and inspire your projects and events.

## Thank you

Good Religious Education thrives on the support of the communities that surround the schools which provide it. We are in changing times for education. Michael Gove calls for courses that 'stimulate, that broaden the mind' of our pupils. Good RE delivers on both counts. Your promotion of RE through *Celebrating RE* will ensure that this vital subject is better understood and valued.

