

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING (ITT)

The Celebrating RE Month of March is the perfect time to promote the importance of religious education within the context of Initial Teacher Training.

Trainee teachers for the primary and secondary sectors will be encouraged to develop their own knowledge and understanding of a range of different religions and beliefs, allowing them to handle relevant material with accuracy and authority in the RE classroom. They will also be enabled to develop the ability to ask appropriately challenging questions during their lessons and learn how to respond with growing confidence to the questions which their pupils ask of them.

In addition, they will have increased opportunities to reflect upon and articulate their own views about the role, nature and purpose of RE in the curriculum and learn to appreciate more fully the contribution it can make to the lives of children and young people.

In engaging with the activities listed below, primary and secondary trainee teachers will have the opportunity to fulfil some of the necessary requirements for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

They will be able to:

- reflect on and improve their practice, and take responsibility for identifying and meeting their developing professional needs (Q7a)
- have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subject... and related pedagogy to enable them to teach effectively across the age ability range for which they are trained to teach (Q14)
- know and understand the relevant statutory and non-statutory curricula and frameworks... for their subject...and other relevant initiatives applicable for the age and ability range for which they are trained (Q15)



CELEBRATING RE

Within your own College or University...

Links with Theology and Religious Studies

Find out if your training institution is part of a college or university which also offers BA or MA programmes in Theology and/or Religious Studies, or other related subject disciplines such as Philosophy. Make sure that they are aware that March 2011 is the month of *Celebrating RE!* Facilitate links between your own staff and trainee teachers with your colleagues and their students in those departments and create opportunities for shared sessions to disseminate knowledge and expertise. Find out if there is a Theology and Religious Studies Society or other similar groups, such as a Christian Union or Islamic Club, and promote each other's projects. Alternatively, put together a joint event to mark the celebration month, such as a debate about the place of religion in schools or even within contemporary society as a whole. Alternatively, set up a meeting to encourage those about to graduate in Theology or Religious Studies to think about teaching RE as a career. Useful support and materials can be obtained via the Teach RE website at: www.teachre.co.uk

Links with other Departments

Explore ways in which the study of religion and belief can be associated with other subject disciplines, such as Art, History, Film, Literature and Sociology. During the month of *Celebrating RE*, invite colleagues and/or students from those departments to come and work with trainee teachers in your regular sessions or set up extra curricular opportunities to allow this to happen. These sessions could include an exploration of depictions of Easter in painting and sculpture, an overview of religion in Britain since the end of the Second World War, a discussion about how



religious communities have been depicted on TV or in novels or an analysis of how religious sensitivities have been incorporated into contemporary legislation - or simply try anything else that seems to be appropriate and captures your imagination!

Links with Chaplaincy

Investigate whether or not your training institution has a list of chaplains from a range of different religions and beliefs. Promote *Celebrating RE* with them and their congregations! Invite them to come and talk to your students individually or as part of a 'Question Time' style panel event to mark the month. If your institution has places of worship or even an interfaith centre on site, then work with the chaplains to set up an 'open house' day during March when students can call in to visit and learn more about their work.

Student Expertise

Find out if some of your trainee teachers already have extensive knowledge and expertise relevant to religion or to religious education. For example, you may have trainees who are particularly active within a faith or belief community, or who may have studied certain aspects of religion and belief in depth during other degree courses and study programmes. You may also find someone who is a member of a SACRE or who has worked as a TA in a school with children from homes where religion influences every aspect of their lives. Whatever their knowledge or expertise, if it is relevant to RE, ensure that there are opportunities during the month of *Celebrating RE* for those skills to be shared with others where and when this is appropriate.

Teaching Library

Contact your colleagues in the library, particularly the section which focuses on books and other resources for use on school placements. Encourage them to set up an RE display during the month to alert trainee teachers to the wealth of materials that are now available to support teaching and learning in the subject, including artefacts, ICT packages and posters, as well as books and other printed matter.

RE Room

If your training institution does not have a dedicated teaching space for RE, then try to establish one (with the agreement of colleagues), at least for the duration of the festival, but preferably for longer! Ask the trainee teachers to create displays, perhaps reflecting the RE work they have done in their placement schools or ask mentors in those schools to send in examples of high quality RE work produced by their pupils. If you prefer, set up an exhibition to reflect the presence of religion in your local area, with photographs of people, places and events which highlight the importance of faith and belief.

Online Links

If your training institution has a shared area for online course materials, such as Blackboard, Moodle or Studyzone, make sure that the RE pages have links to the *Celebrating RE* website, as well as any related events which are happening in or through your own college or university.

Beyond your own College or University...

Interfaith Group

Identify whether or not there is an Interfaith Group in your training institution or in the local area. Find out about its programme of events and encourage the group to make some reference to *Celebrating RE* and promote this throughout your department. Set up links between members of the Interfaith Group and trainee teachers during the month, perhaps even asking them to act as an 'advisory panel', able to offer accurate and up to date factual information about their communities to those on placement in schools. With their help, draw up a directory of local places of worship willing to support trainee teachers by inviting them for visits and provide a list of relevant contact details. Host a launch event to mark the festival, but keep up the links long after the month is over to ensure that *Celebrating RE* has long lasting benefits!



Museum and Galleries

Identify local museums and galleries in your area which offer potential for fieldwork in RE, both for trainee teachers and for partner schools. Make sure they are aware of *Celebrating RE* and plan visits, training sessions and other opportunities to generate appropriate learning and teaching materials, in association with the education department or adviser.

Training Opportunities

With the demise of the QCDA and the loss of many RE Adviser posts at Local Authority level, investigate the possibility of you and your colleagues providing some RE specific training during the month for teachers in nearby schools, including those already in partnership with your institution. Promoting good practice in schools is good for children and young people, good for your trainees and good for RE as a subject!

SACRE

Set up links with local SACREs and find out what they are doing in relation to the festival. Establish whether you and your trainee teachers can attend any events they are offering, such as lectures, exhibitions and debates. Make arrangements for your trainees to attend SACRE meetings as observers and, if appropriate, to become members now, or in the future.

Work with Local Schools

Develop projects involving local schools or groups of schools during the month of March, such as asking Secondary PGCE RE trainees to plan and host a general Sixth Form RE Conference or inviting Primary RE specialists to make packs of resource materials to support existing schemes of work.

Work with Local Places of Worship

Create opportunities within your teaching programme of a range of assignments for trainees to work alongside members of faith communities in local places of worship to support them in their work with schools by promoting the month, perhaps by developing practical activities for them to use with visiting classes or devising pages for school children as part of their website.

