

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION in SCHOOLS with a RELIGIOUS CHARACTER CELEBRATING RE



**We have adopted here the preferred term 'schools with a religious character, rather than 'faith schools' which is often used in the media. Though most of such schools have some kind of Christian foundation (particularly Anglican or Roman Catholic), there have also been Jewish schools for many years. Of late, however, the pattern has become much more diverse through the setting up of both state and independent schools by other religious groups, notably Muslim but also Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh.**

Because of their foundation and day-to-day contact with faith communities, schools with a religious character are usually keenly aware of the approach to education and life which is embodied within the faith, even more so when, for instance, the pupil body within a school comes from a wide range of ethnic and cultural family backgrounds. Although their RE curriculum may be different from that of local community schools, there is always an opportunity for to celebrate their RE and to engage in dialogue with other schools in order to explore similarities and differences.

The following ideas and suggestions are based on two key principles: that

- along with their community and independent counterparts, schools with a religious character can gain much of value to themselves
- in being involved in activities which reach beyond their own boundaries, such schools also have much to contribute to other schools and wider society.

## Some ideas and suggestions



### Investigating your core purpose as a school with a religious character

This could be through holding a competition to design a new symbol/logo or motto that best represents what the school stands for/aspires to, or exploring the religious beliefs and values that drive the school (e.g. if appropriate, with the help of the [National Society's Christian Values for Schools website](#)).



### Linking with another similar/dissimilar school

This could be done – locally, nationally or internationally – through an organisation set up specifically for this purpose (eg the international '[Face to Faith](#)' or national [Schools Linking](#) projects) or independently. Once a twinning arrangement has been made, using information technology (eg email, Skype, video-conferencing), questions could be asked and answered eg about the part played by religion and belief in each of the schools (in daily life and routines, in architecture and design, in the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, in the pattern of the year etc) or on the roles and responsibilities of young people in the traditions concerned or how beliefs and values are put into action in the community. (See article on inter-school activities)





### **Providing opportunities in RE to encounter members of your faith community with a theme like ‘What means most to me is ...’ or ‘Listen to my story’**

This could involve inviting in a key member of a local religious or belief community and interviewing them (in the style of a chat show) in front of the pupils and staff. The ‘guest’ could be asked to bring a special object to show, a special story to tell or a piece of music to play as part of the interview.



### **Designing an introduction to a place of worship associated with the school**

This could be aimed at visitors who are not from that tradition, or for pupils of a different age group. It could be made publicly available, perhaps through the school website (with permission from the place of worship).



### **Designing an ‘RE trail’ around the school buildings and site**

This could identify a range of features with an historical or religious interest eg: memorial and celebratory plaques, boards and displays; religious signs, symbols and other imagery; architecture, design and use of space; use of names for rooms etc; changes in use of buildings or grounds.



### **Collating ‘our questions’**

Pupils from each year group could be asked to put questions about beliefs and religious issues into a posting box. These could then be printed and displayed. This might be a source of valuable information for teachers and faith leaders about the issues that concern children and young people at different ages, especially if opportunities are found for response and discussion eg in assembly/collective worship, during off-timetable days, in RE lessons, in a school RE magazine or on the school website.



### **Creating a series of ‘talking heads’**

This could be of a range of people – young and old – talking about the beliefs and convictions that are important to them. The material could be placed on the school website or used to create a display of photographs/speech bubbles around the school.



### **Looking inwards, looking outwards**

Staff could give themselves an opportunity to reflect on how the distinctive nature of RE in the school is equipping pupils to participate in a broader community of many faiths and beliefs. Would this also provide a chance to engage with pupil and community voices in developing a school discussion on this theme?



### **Working with an artist, designer or sculptor**

This could be to create a piece of art work which symbolises a key religious belief/idea or what characteristics the school aspires to develop in its pupils.



### **Designing a reflective space in the school or school grounds**

This could be a space which reflects the underpinning values of the school or aspects from the relevant faith tradition.

