

RE REVIEW NEWSLETTER



Asserting the value of RE as a subject on the curriculum

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Project manager's report

Welcome to the first quarterly RE Review Newsletter and an opportunity to share progress made on the RE Review since the Summer.



Dr. Janet Orchard, RE Review Project Manager

Phase One is now well under way, with the Expert Panel (see pages 2 and 3) meeting twice as planned. As I write, they are putting their final touches to a draft report which will provide sound foundations and a clear direction moving forward for

the rest of the RE Review process. The report will be received by the project's Steering Group at the end of October. In early November it will be shared with the wider Reference Group which represents the views of a very wide range of those people who care passionately about the future of RE, including faith



Dr. Bill Gent, Chair, RE Review Expert Panel

community groups and professional groups of religious educators working in schools, colleges, local areas and universities. http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/component/option,com_contact/catid,36/Itemid,49/

We will publish the draft report very shortly on the REC website after that meeting. We are looking to people like you to respond to the Expert Panel's findings and recommendations. Our target is to provide a minimum three week consultation period from the 12th November to the 3rd December which

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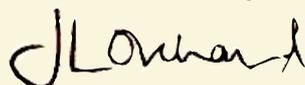
enables as many people as possible to comment on the Expert Panel's findings. Please look out for opportunities to get involved in that consultation process. I have already been informed about plans to organise local group discussions, a SACRE working party and an on-line survey.

Looking forwards

While we cannot prejudge the precise findings of the Expert Panel, or wider public response to their recommendations, we plan to set up working groups in Phase Two of the Review to further develop work in RE around the areas identified as particular priorities: aims, curriculum, exemplification of good practice and assessment, including qualifications. We expect two working groups to start in mid February and to report their

findings three months later. Two further working groups will start working from mid May with their work finished by mid July. We will compile the final Review document over the next summer holidays.

Please follow this link to our website <http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org> for further, more detailed information on the RE Review and other important initiatives for the subject being led by the REC.



Learning about and from the Phase One Expert Panel

Having so many experts from whom to choose, selecting the Expert Panel was a very challenging task facing the REC Board, supported by the Steering Group and Project Manager. This particular task needed a specific kind of expertise from panel members who understood both the history of RE in England and had an up-to date understanding of current practice. They needed a general view of RE, rather than one focused on a particular context or vision for the subject and, if that wasn't enough, they needed to be prepared to work very hard and under pressure as part of a team and for the future good of RE. Thankfully we found four people bringing a number of different perspectives to the task who not only met these demanding requirements but were able to commit time at short notice to undertake the task for us.

Lat Blaylock, editor of *RE Today* magazine, and national RE adviser in the UK training about 3,000 teachers of RE every year through professional development courses on topics including RE for infants, spiritual development 4-19, assessing primary RE and GCSE learning.

Dr Bill Gent (Chair of the RE Expert Panel) editor of *REsource*, the journal of the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) and for which he was awarded the prestigious Shap Award in 2012; formerly an adviser and inspector in schools across the London Borough of Redbridge and beyond.

Professor Julian Stern, Professor of Education and Religion, and Dean of Education and Theology, at York St John University, having been a secondary teacher for 14 years; and currently General Secretary of ISREV, the

International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (the major international research body in religious education).

Dr Karen Walshe, Senior Lecturer in Religious Education at the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, Subject Leader for RE and Programme Director for the Secondary PGCE Programme; Deputy General Secretary of the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV), member of the Devon Standing Advisory Council for RE (SACRE).



Members of the Phase One Expert Panel - Bill Gent, Karen Walshe, Lat Blaylock, Julian Stern (drawing by Shauna) with Janet Orchard (Project Manager) and Sarah Smalley (REC Executive Support Officer).

Other expertise informing Phase One of the RE Review

Given the many other experts whom RE has the good fortune to include within its community and the need in current times to ensure all shoulders are at the wheel urging the subject forward, further advice was sought from over 40 "expert witnesses". These people offered a range of written and oral forms of evidence for the expert panel to consider, based around the four foci for the

review: aims, curriculum, exemplification of good practice and assessment, including qualifications. These submissions made for absolutely fascinating reading and/or listening. A hugely diverse range of people contributed in this way to the Review, including teachers, lecturers and teacher trainers, consultants and advisers. Many witnesses brought experience of work with different SACREs across the country while two SACREs in particular were asked to contribute evidence. Some witnesses gave advice from the experience of working with public examination boards. We ensured that the voices of people working in RE in faith-based contexts as well as community schools were represented.

We are extremely grateful to those people who gave so willingly of their time to contribute in this way and without charge in a good cause; on a conservative estimate we think those add up to make a gift to the RE Review worth an additional £8,600. We will continue to ask people to contribute in this way during the RE Review process. We have found it so far to be a very valuable way to ensure that the RE Review reflects as wide a spread of opinion as possible across the RE community at large.

Update on review funding

A budget for the Review has now been prepared and approved. It is estimated that the final cost will be just under £110,000.

Organisations which have contributed to the cost of the Review so far include: the Al-Khoei Foundation, the Association of RE Inspectors, Advisors and Consultants (AREIAC), Birmingham City Council, the British Humanist Association, the Network of Buddhist Organisations, Culham St Gabriel's, the Islamic Centre of England and the Jerusalem Trust. These contributions total approximately £90,000 towards the cost of the RE Review, a fantastic collective response.

However, there is no room for complacency. With a further £20,000 to find, in times of austerity that make fund-raising difficult, we still need other member organisations and individuals to consider making a donation. Please keep them coming in, large, medium or small!



RE Review glossary

Phase One Expert Panel: a group of four people with a wide range of expert knowledge of RE able to bring together a large volume of information in a short period of time which they translate into a report to capture the general sense of what is happening in RE in England at the present time and what needs to be done to take the subject forward.

Steering Group: A group with representatives of key stakeholders across the whole RE Community which oversees the overall management of the RE Review, advises the project manager and the REC Board

REC Board: elected officers and co-opted Trustees of the REC ultimately responsible for the RE Review, who hold everyone employed on the RE Review, including the project manager, to account

Reference Group: includes representatives of a very wide range of people directly interested in the future of RE, including communities of religion and belief as well as RE professionals who act as a sounding board for suggested actions on the RE Review.



The REC now has a Facebook Page which will help you keep up to date with the RE Review and other REC matters in between newsletters.

<http://www.facebook.com/religiouseducationcouncil>

For those who use Twitter, follow the REC on Twitter: @RECouncil. For specific information about the RE Review, we will be using the hashtag #REReview.



Whatever your medium, you can keep in touch with and contribute to the Review.