

A Record of a Conference encouraging the provision of

INSPIRING RE

Context

The Conference was held at 'The Hub' in Rotherham for a full day on March 4th 2016. 'The Hub' turned out to be a former industrial building taken over and used by groups of Christians intent on developing a greater awareness of religion. It is dedicated to developing a spirit of tolerance, coupled with generating and fostering an interest in understanding the contribution of different faith traditions.

The ostensible aim of the event was:

To provide practical and creative ideas for secondary and primary teachers who wish to offer Inspiring RE in South Yorkshire Schools.

Participants

Around 50 participants gathered for the Conference, they were mainly female and mainly with a Primary School orientation, but Special and Secondary Schools were also represented. A number of those present made it clear that they were *'filling in'* for other colleagues and considered this a welcome treat and a time for reflection.

In addition to the school delegates there were: representatives of the local SACREs; members of PAIS, an organisation devoted to Christian outreach; and staff and supporters of the organisation RE TODAY who also provided the luminary presence of Lat Blaylock.

Structure of the Day and Content

The day was sensibly structured to deliver on a number of levels and to highlight issues which are currently appearing at the top of the RE Agenda. For

each issue I have highlighted one activity that I hope SACRE members will take pleasure in undertaking one of the tasks

Issue One: Imaginative RE.


This would provide a number of ways in which to enable imagination and spirituality to flourish amongst 5-14 year old children.

Lat Blaylock emphasised the need to engage creativity in many areas to deliver spiritual gains, including the use of music, architecture and literature as conduits for development. This involves children in addressing questions of *meaning*, exploring a range of different meaningful models, using poetry as *windows in my soul*, how religion impacts on teachers, schools and honesty. He identified the danger of closed minds He demonstrated a number of ways in which this could be achieved. For example try this exploration of art and imagery:


This is unique because...

**3 moments from Holy Week
Similar and different**

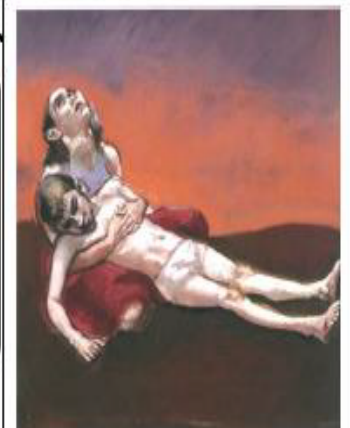
These 2 share...



These 2 share...



All three share...



These 2 share...

This is unique because...

This is unique because...

Issue Two: Encouraging deeper thinking about 'Values'

There is value in taking values and their exploration outside the trap of 'Britishness' and searching for inspiration and universal values more widely, throughout a range of faith communities. What do you make of this?:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">⦿ Always be truthful.⦿ Always be happy.⦿ Always face your troubles.⦿ Do all your work diligently.⦿ Be humble.⦿ Be just.⦿ Be generous.⦿ Don't lose your temper.⦿ Accept success or failure at work.⦿ Be polite.⦿ Never waste words.⦿ Always be compassionate.⦿ Aspire to do difficult tasks.	<h2 style="text-align: center;">HOW TO BE GOOD</h2> <p>These 16 ideas about how to be good come from a Hindu children's magazine.</p> <p>Which six do you agree with most strongly?</p> <p>Are there two you do not agree with?</p> <p>Say why.</p>
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Try asking difficult questions like asking who was responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. Was it the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees, Pontius Pilate, Judas Iscariot, God, the Crowd, the Romans, the soldiers, Jesus himself?

It could be dissonance productive asking those considering this to think about this situation in *present* terms. For example, if Peter were alive today what would he write in a 'tweet' about the crucifixion?

It is probably crucial to address the question about the ways in which *British Values* are different from other societal values?

Issues Three & Four: Assessing RE after 'Levels' and Assessing where the Subject is heading

Levels have now been replaced by 'Outcomes' and there was a strong feeling at the event that things were now rather foggy and therefore, perhaps in the short-term more complex. Lat Blaylock had developed the idea of what he called *progress steps* which seemed to involve gathering new ideas and

developing new skills and knowing things. He called this approach '*The 8 Steps Up Approach*'. To some extent this invention of an interim model seems to demonstrate the lack of comprehensibility of the new approach adopted nationally and perhaps the weakness of current centralised thinking.

Concluding Thoughts

- There was clearly some unease and a feeling of being cut adrift with an incomprehensible and perhaps ill-thought out centralised assessment mode approach.
- There was great support for the notion that the South Yorkshire Hub should consider meeting regularly once a term joining with Vanessa in Rotherham to provide additional support and an forum for the exchange of insights materials doubts and concern.
- Perhaps some sort of on-going home-based evaluation of progress and developments will be essential in the Region in the future, especially in view of the sharing involved in the new political model for South Yorkshire.
- The *8 Steps Up Approach* was welcomed as a way of making progress as an interim measure
- The learning resources like those offered by *Lat Blaylock* and *RE Today* were highly valued especially in the generous and open-handed way in which they can be freely used. These resources have all been lodged with Pat who will distribute them widely, I know
- Other resources also exist in our Region. For example, *Pais GB* which is based in Rotherham, is the tip of an iceberg. It was established in 1992 and is anxious to provide a Christian faith-based model emphasising positive behaviour; contributing to RE delivery and collective worship in schools; providing a wide range of skills including languages; wishing to collaborate with churches and schools and seeking new ways of interacting.