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Estyn Thematic Review of Religious Education



Estyn has commenced a thematic review of religious education provision in 2017 – 2018. A sample of schools across Wales have been selected to take part in the review. The review will focus on the provision and quality of KS2 and KS3 RE. A separate review on the Foundation Phase will be undertaken and this will include RE alongside the other areas of learning.

SACREs have also been requested to complete a questionnaire to support the review of RE across all Local Authorities in Wales.

Farmington scholarships for teachers

The aim of the Farmington Institute is to support and encourage teachers of Religious Education in schools, and Headteachers working on values and standards. The Institute awards Scholarships to UK teachers of Religious Education in schools and headteachers, publishes discussion papers and arranges conferences.

The next opportunity to apply for a Farmington Scholarship will be in November 2017. The scholarships are for RE teachers and headteachers and can be taken at any one of 15 universities or as a home-based student. The Scholarships are to be used to provide materials for teachers or research into values and standards. Funds are supplied for a replacement teacher. For further information please see: www.farmington.ac.uk or for an application form, please email: farmington@hmc.ox.ac.uk

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WJEC Religious Studies Update

CPD Courses

Face to face CPD courses for GCSE Religious Studies will take place in December. Dates for the training are:

06.12.17 – Carmarthen
07.12.17 – Cardiff
11-12.17 – Llandudno

CPD training for A Level took place in September. Teachers will be able to access training materials on the WJEC website in the near future.

Teachers can book courses on the WJEC website at

<http://www.wjec.co.uk/teachers/teacher-support/face-to-face-courses-for-teachers/>

Digital Resources from the WJEC

WJEC's Educational Resources team provides high quality digital and paper based resources. They work closely with the WJEC Continuing Professional Development team to provide effective training for schools and teachers.

English and Welsh language materials are developed in partnership with teachers and – in Wales – also with the Department for Education and Skills and local authorities.

Some materials are produced specifically to complement WJEC specifications and some support the use of the Welsh language in education.

GCSE Religious Studies Resources can be found at

<http://resources.wjec.co.uk/Pages/ResourceByArgs.aspx?subId=26&lvlId=2>

GCE Religious Studies resources can be located at

<http://resources.wjec.co.uk/Pages/ResourceByArgs.aspx?subId=26&lvlId=1>

Teacher Share Space

Teacher Share Space is available on the WJEC Website. The space is for teachers who wish to share and exchange resources. All of the resources in this area are free to download; **none of the content in this area of the website is monitored, reviewed or endorsed by WJEC**, therefore teachers need to do their own quality assurance.

For AS/A Level these resources are available at:

http://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/religious-studies/r-religious-studies-gce-asa-from-2016/File%20Sharing%20for%20GCE%20Religious%20Studies%20WJEC.pdf?language_id=1

Twitter

WJEC Religious Studies. For news, teaching resources and advice for WJEC Religious Studies qualifications see the Twitter Page which is found at https://twitter.com/WJEC_RS. The Welsh account is: @CBAC_AstCref

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The Inter Faith Network for the UK works to promote understanding cooperation and good relations between organisations and persons of different faiths in the UK.

Inter Faith Network Bulletin

The September- October Inter Faith Network Bulletin is available at

https://www.interfaith.org.uk/uploads/Inter_Faith_Network_for_the_UK_e-bulletin_-_September-October_2017.pdf



Inter Faith Week

Inter Faith Week 2017 in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will take place from Sunday 12th to Sunday 19th November. This will begin on Remembrance Sunday.

Inter Faith Week:

- **Highlights** the good work done by local faith, inter faith and faith-based groups and organisations
- **Draws** new people into inter faith learning and cooperation
- **Enables** greater interaction between people of different backgrounds
- **Helps** develop integrated and neighbourly communities
- **Celebrates** diversity and commonality
- **Opens** new possibilities for partnership

INTER FAITH WEEK AIMS ARE:

- Strengthening good inter faith relations at all levels
- Increasing awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, in particular celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society
- Increasing understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs

Inter Faith Week is for everyone including faith communities and their places of worship, community and voluntary groups, schools and SACREs and local authorities.

For further information visit: <https://www.interfaithweek.org/about>

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The Chinese Approach in Kindergarten

Blaenau Gwent SACRE member, Christine Abbas', granddaughter went to Ysgol Bro Helyg Nursery whilst she was living with her grandparents in Blaina. She was really happy during the months she spent there, but has since returned to China with her mum, her dad and brother, where mum teaches in a college.

Recently, Haidi started in a private Kindergarten in Baotou, north China. Here she is in her uniform; the track suit outfit is favoured in China. You may be interested to read the difference a Chinese approach to education takes.

The Kindergarten is a traditional educational establishment based on Confucian moral values, which are taught alongside reading, writing and mathematics. The atmosphere of the school is calm and peaceful. For homework the children learn to recite the words of Confucius, especially about respect and how to treat other people. This is demonstrated throughout the school day as the children are shown how to have good manners. This includes bowing respectfully to people. The children are also taught how to sit still for a moment or how to be patient for a moment, as well as being able to play and run around.

Haidi returns home with her hair beautifully plaited or braided in unusual ways, which the teachers have done, and often they have put gifts of hair accessories into her school bag. They even cut her finger nails. Far from being intrusive Naja, Haidi's mum, finds it very thoughtful and feels it is done out of love for the children; and Haidi loves her school too. (Naja was a pupil at Coedcae School (now Coed y Garn) and Brynmawr School)



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Understanding Islam in Light of Recent Terrorist Attacks

Kath Fitter from Goytre Fawr Primary School in Monmouthshire reflects on a recent visit from Monmouthshire SACRE faith representative Mrs Fatma Jilani and her daughter.



In the summer term, following the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London, we felt as a school that there were a lot of questions about Islam that our pupils wanted to ask. We tried to balance the negativity seen in the media and wider community about Islam by focusing on all the good that was happening in the world during our assemblies. However, our older pupils had questions that we wanted to answer in an honest and frank way.

We had worked previously with Mrs Jilani as part of our 'Festival of Faiths' day and the children had responded well to her open and honest approach. Therefore we felt that she would be the ideal person to answer their questions.

As R.E. Co-ordinator, Lisa Wilkinson ran a session with the classes to prepare questions with them. Listening to their thoughts at this time confirmed that holding the session was the right thing to do.

Parents were informed that Mrs Jilani would be visiting to speak to their children and we only had one family ask if their daughter could leave the room if she felt uncomfortable which of course we agreed to.

Mrs Jilani arrived with her daughter Umaamah, and held a question and answer session with the Year 5 and 6 pupils. The children asked their questions and Lisa Wilkinson was really impressed with the sensitive way they approached this difficult topic.

Mrs Jilani's responses were very honest and informative and the children obviously enjoyed the opportunity to ask anything they liked knowing that Mrs Jilani would answer them in such a candid way. It was also useful to have a teenager's view of the situation.

Examples of the questions they asked were:

- Have people treated you differently since the terror attacks?
- Do you think that the person/people who carried out the attacks were 'bad' Muslims or not Muslims at all because of what they had done?
- What would you do if you thought one of your friends was a terrorist?
- Have you ever been bullied at school for being a Muslim? (to Umaamah)

Following the session we had feedback from a parent saying that the opportunity for children to ask questions was very valuable.

On the same afternoon, Mrs Jilani and Umaamah also did a session with the Year 4 class on Hajj which they thoroughly enjoyed and found interesting to hear a first-hand experience.

We want to extend a big thank you to Mrs Jilani and Umaamah for coming into school. Visits like this make a huge difference to our pupils and their understanding of world religions.

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Diwali or Dīpōvalī



Diwali or Dīpōvalī is a significant religious festival in [Hinduism](#), [Sikhism](#), and [Jainism](#). It is also popularly known as the "*Festival of Lights*" and is a lunar-calendar based event that occurs between mid-October and mid-November. The word "Diwali" is a contraction of "Deepavali" which translates into "row of lamps". Diwali is an official holiday in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, Suriname, Malaysia, Singapore, and Fiji.

The festival of Diwali symbolizes the victory of light over dark, good over evil and knowledge over darkness.

Hindu tradition: Diwali is one of the biggest festivals in the Hindu calendar and there are multiple reasons why Hindus celebrate this festival. The most popular narrative, based in the ancient Sanskrit epic Ramayana, is of Lord Rama, his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana returning to their kingdom Ayodhya after defeating demon king Ravana.

Jain tradition, Diwali marks the attainment of enlightenment by Lord Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara of Jainism who laid down the central tenets of the Jain religion as it is practiced today.

Sikh tradition, Diwali commemorates the release of Guru Hargobind, the sixth Sikh Guru, who was imprisoned by the Mughal emperor Jahangir. When Guru Hargobind arrived in Amritsar, his devotees lit thousands of oil lamps to celebrate his return. For Sikhs, this day is known as *Bandi Chhor Divas* (day of release from prison). Diwali is also associated with the martyrdom of the elderly Sikh scholar and strategist [Bhai Mani Singh](#) in 1737. Bhai Mani Singh was the [Granthi](#) (keeper/reader of Sikh scripture) of Harmandir Sahib (popularly known as the [Golden Temple](#)). He transcribed the final version of [Guru Granth Sahib](#) dictated to him by [Guru Gobind Singh](#) in 1704. In 1737, he received permission from Zakariya Khan, the then [Mughal](#) governor of Punjab, to hold a religious gathering of the [Khalsa](#) for celebrating *Bandi Chhorh Diwas* on the auspicious day of Diwali for a tax of 5000 Rupees. He expected to put together the required sum from contribution made by the Sikhs who would assemble that day. But when he discovered that the governor's plot to kill the Sikhs during the gathering, he sent out messages warning them not to turn up for the meeting. As a result the tax could not be paid and governor ordered Bhai Mani Singh's execution at [Lahore](#). Celebrate Diwali by lighting lamps, distributing sweets, fasting and practicing acts of charity. Diwali is on Thursday 19 October 2017.

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Eglwys Gadeiriol Tyddewi



St Davids Cathedral

St Davids Cathedral, is a centre of learning and offers education in a number of different ways.



The Cathedral has an Education and Pilgrimage centre, Ty'r Pererin, which was officially opened on 4 March 2013. [Click here for more information about the new centre.](#)

Tours of the Cathedral occur throughout the year, some designed for people who have never visited before and others for people who know the Cathedral well but would like to learn more about some aspect, see [Tours](#)

The Cathedral provides a venue for artistic and creative exhibitions and gives space for organizations such as Christian Aid and Amnesty International to raise awareness of their vital work.

Musical education has been an essential element of the life of the Cathedral for centuries and continues today, see [Music](#).

The Library is an invaluable resource for both local researchers and those from further afield seeking in-depth information about St David and St Davids. It also has a wealth of information on all sorts of diverse areas for research, see [Library](#).

There is space and opportunity for many to reflect on their pilgrimage through life. The centre works with the cathedral in its mission to offer worship, prayer, hospitality and healing as a true reflection of the life of St David. There are many ways in which visitors, adults, children and pilgrims can engage with the concept of pilgrimage. The Cathedral has hosted INSET days for school staff, PCC away days and parish groups. There is space for prayer, reflection and refreshment. The Cathedral plan and tailor days to cater to needs. They can lead a group in a walking pilgrimage or reflections in the centre. They can work in many ways to accommodate your requirements.

[Click here to see our Pilgrimage Packages](#)

[Click here for Friday pilgrimage information](#)

RETREAT DAYS

A series of Retreat Days run throughout the 'academic' year.

The dates are;

Wednesday 25th October 10am-4pm

Wednesday 6th December 6–8.30pm

Friday 2nd March 10am-4pm

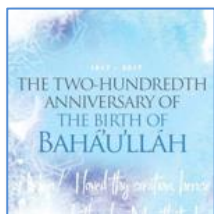
Saturday 12th May 10am-4pm

For more details please click [here](#)

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Bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh and release of a 17-minute film *Bahá'u'lláh - The Divine Physician*



On the 21st and 22nd October, Bahá'ís all over the world celebrated the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh's message to the world is one of unity, *'The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens'* and *'So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth'*.

In Wales, the Welsh Assembly will be sponsoring a celebratory event at the Senedd, for members of the Interfaith Council, Assembly members and other dignitaries.

The British Museum will be marking the bicentenary with a special cabinet, displaying original calligraphy by, and items belonging to, Bahá'u'lláh, alongside other beautiful Bahá'í manuscripts from the Museum's collection. The Universal House of Justice is blessing this exhibit with the loan of priceless, rarely displayed items from the International Bahá'í Archives, which is situated at the Bahá'í World Center on Mount Carmel in Haifa. The items will be on display in the Museum's John Addis Gallery from Tuesday 7 November for some two months.

Various World leaders have sent messages paying tribute to the Bahá'í community and the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom commissioned a 17-minute film to help inform about the life and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. In *Bahá'u'lláh - The Divine Physician*, young people from diverse backgrounds reflect on the issues facing the world and the potential of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to address these issues. The action follows the daily activities of the young people and includes stories about Bahá'u'lláh and His teachings told through animated sequences.

The film is available on YouTube under the following link:

https://youtu.be/Gzs_11Xk6zq

The film is suitable for everyone from age 9, and is particularly relevant to KS3 (age 11-14). To use as the basis of a lesson on the Bahá'í Faith, materials to support teachers in the use of this film in the classroom are available to download on the Bahá'í RE website: <http://re.bahai.org.uk/bicentenary>

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New materials have been produced for use in schools for KS1, KS2 and KS3 to be used either by the RE teaches or by visiting local Bahá'í members giving the lesson to the classroom and answering any questions or discussing the materials with RE teachers.

These materials, which are based on Unity in Diversity and Oneness of Religion and Mankind can be found at <http://re.bahai.org.uk/bicentenary/> with PowerPoint presentations for each Key stage.



©Film image from *Bahá'u'lláh – The Divine Physician*

Schools can invite a Bahá'í as a visiting speaker to conduct assemblies and assist with classes. <http://re.bahai.org.uk/school-visitors/>

Ms. Carmella Lake BSc. MA is the Cardiff Bahá'í representative for religious education and can be contacted on telephone number 07779586030 and email cba.lake@gmail.com

Please get in touch with any questions and to request Bahá'í attendance to deliver classes, assemblies and workshops based on the above outlined materials.

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Children's app Guardians of Ancora now in Welsh

Welsh Christians were so impressed with Scripture Union's award-winning children's app Guardians of Ancora, that they've gone to extraordinary lengths to have the game in their native language.



After discussions began with Scripture Union about how a Welsh version could be developed, it took only 9 months to raise enough funds for the translation work to begin. The monumental fundraising effort raised £30,000 and received support from all major denominations as well as many trusts and a variety of volunteers gave time and resources, including S4C's flagship children's presenter Martyn Geraint, who recorded the Ancora song.

Guardians of Ancora, or Arwyr Ancora when translated in Welsh has all the same features as the English version and it is hoped will open the world of Ancora to a whole new audience of Welsh-speaking children.

Aled Davies, Arwyr Ancora Project Manager 'We are really excited about launching Arwyr Ancora and have been encouraged by the level of support we have received from the churches in Wales to see this happen. This will not only be the best Christian app for children in Wales, but will be by far the best Welsh app for children in general'.

Arwyr Ancora is being launched at the largest national children's and youth conference in the UK, Urdd Eisteddfod in Eisteddfod on 28th May. Terry Clutterham, Mission Development Director for Scripture Union says, 'As Scripture Union England and Wales, we are absolutely delighted that the Welsh have led the way with the first non-English version. The support from churches, donors, and volunteers has been unprecedented and we believe it will have real impact within the Welsh-speaking community. Children love the game for its fun, parkour elements. They can customise their own characters and fully immerse themselves in the game'.

The game has already had 140,000 users, which is set to rise rapidly with these new translations.

For more information or to find out more about Guardians Of Ancora visit: www.guardiansofancora.com

For more information or to find out more about Scripture Union visit: www.scriptureunion.org.uk

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Opening the Book for Cardiff's Children



[TheNetCardiff](#) says: 'The Bible is often described as the greatest story ever told, but for most people the Bible is a boring, irrelevant, closed book. But now, across the UK, children are seeing the Bible 'come to life' in their schools through Open the Book, which is part of the Bible Society. Teams of volunteers from local churches provide 15 minute assemblies using carefully prepared and easy to use resources based on the Bob Hartman Storyteller Bible.

Here in Cardiff, Cyncoed Methodist Open the Book team have been visiting their local primary school for 5 years. They spent a lot of time preparing props and practising before their first visit and were rather nervous, but Marion Thomas, the team leader remembers the response from the children and staff was amazing, "We needn't have worried – the children loved it, especially when we asked for volunteers to help us!"

Liz Capper is a member of the St Mark's, Gabalfa team. She says, "A friend had told me about the wonderful opportunities of teaching children Bible stories they haven't heard before - I couldn't wait to be involved and help out on the team."

Children are also overwhelmingly positive about Open the Book – many have never heard the Bible stories before – as the stories are acted out and they participate with sound effects, motions and 'acting' alongside the team.

"I love it when you come in," says a year 4 pupil in Birchgrove Primary school, Cardiff. "I said to my Mum, 'Is it Monday?' she said 'Yes!' I said 'Great they're coming back again!"

On average the Open the Book office receives one phone call per day from schools asking for a team to visit – a fact confirmed in Radyr, where each of the 3 primary schools has responded positively to Reverend Canon Jenny Wigley's offer to visit with the newly formed team.

Today nearly 12% of schools have a team visiting regularly. From the school's perspective OTB ticks several of the necessary boxes for collective worship and community links and is sincerely appreciated by Head teachers and staff alike.

Reverend Michael John, vicar of Pentyrch explains why his parishioners have recently got an Open the Book team together:

"I was attracted to Open the Book because our Parish was looking for ways of regularly engaging with local schools which would be straightforward for us as a team of volunteers and a help to the teaching staff of local schools." '

All resources are available in English and Welsh. For more information about how you can use Open the Book visit the website www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/openthebook/

or contact Sarah Morris South Wales Development officer at meirionasarah@yahoo.co.uk

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RE Ideas from REMW for 2017 – 2018

This year's collection of RE Ideas has been written by Gill Vaisey, RE Consultant.

Each term's RE Ideas provides teaching and learning ideas to support a particular unit of work for different stages across the primary school.

Autumn RE Ideas focuses on 'Journeys With Meaning / Are Some Journeys Special?' and is aimed to support teachers working with Lower Key Stage 2 pupils. The unit explores the significance of some journeys and provides a Target Board activity around the account of the life of St David.

The Spring edition supports Foundation Phase practitioners and explores 'Making the Most of the Outdoor Learning Environment' in Religious Education. This unit will support a Foundation Phase topic on the natural world and in particular focuses on a traditional Muslim story about caring for the natural world and in this context baby birds.

Summer RE Ideas is aimed at upper KS2 and provides a 'Four Corners Debate' with a focus on Buddhism and the environment. Pupils are encouraged to consider the teachings on the Buddha and how these may impact on a Buddhist's decision whether to be vegetarian or eat meat.

Each of the three units can be used at any time of year and are not restricted to the term to which they are assigned.

The RE Ideas are attached with this bulletin or might be accessed in the future from <http://www.religious-education-wales.org/>

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Talking About Religion...

Monmouthshire SACRE member, Neeta Baicher, has shared this article with us which was published in the Professional Social Work magazine April 2017

COUNTRY VIEW

wales

Talking about religion helps us to better understand each other

An article about faith and social work in *PSW* last October inspired me to put my personal thoughts on paper. In the article, writer Matt Bee quotes Barbara McDermott's personal feeling that "faith is a big part of a person's life, but it is the unspoken part".

Barbara's view stems from her experience as a social worker in the Diocese of Downs and Connor in Northern Ireland where religious faith sentiments were a sensitive matter not to be discussed. In my own experience as a social worker and member of a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, I have been involved with diverse communities and different religious faith groups in Cardiff, Monmouthshire and Newport.

This has encouraged me to talk openly about religious faith, shared beliefs and the need to be aware of differences and to respect diversity. I often take strength from my own religious faith of Sikhism. The first guru (Master) of the Sikhs, Guru Nanak, laid the foundations for Sikhism based on the equality of all human beings under the blessings of One God.

He postulated the following acts as the three pillars for salvation: 'Naam Japna' – prayers to the One Lord; 'Kirt Karna' – do deeds of sanctity and earn through honest living and 'Wand Chakna' – share your earnings, including food with less able fellow beings, a lesson in socialism and social work if ever there was one. This order was laid down more than 500 years ago.

In my experience I have found it is important to have an open

discussion and understanding of religious faiths to have an appreciation of the viewpoint of others.

It is also paramount to find commonality of natural acts or deeds that serve all humanity, although the methods and in some instances ideology may differ.

Children and young people of all religious faiths are very much interested in this subject and far more willing to participate and contribute towards common goals. It is a topic that is discussed extensively on various internet website forums.

So, whether one personally holds a religious faith or not, an understanding of the beliefs and practices of others is an important element towards recognising the oneness of all humankind. Interactive discussions about commonality of purpose and appreciation of diversity is a strong basis for finding grounds for peaceful coexistence. Conversely, lack of knowledge or inadequate understanding of the views and beliefs of others leads to missed opportunities and dismay.

Everybody responds to kindness. Teaching children about kindness, compassion, friendship and respect is a joint responsibility of parents, schools and society. Parental love and care is very important to a young child's development. In my work with diverse communities, the need to emphasise respect and tolerance for each other's view is paramount and those who promote division should be challenged.



Neeta Baicher
Deputy Chair of BASW Cymru