

Expert Advisory Group Meeting, May 2014

A view from some of the members of the working groups

The first meeting of the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) took place in London on Saturday 10th May with an alternative meeting in Birmingham on Monday 12th May. The first part of the day was spent considering the role and remit of the EAG. Jim Magee from the DfE gave an introduction to the work of EAGs across the subjects and set out some of the issues different subjects' EAGs had tackled. His stress on this being the work of the RE community rather than the DfE was good to hear. The RE Review is the product of the RE community under the leadership of the Religious Education Council (REC) and it would seem best that the expertise that helped produce the report should be allowed to continue its work. The range of people present (both at the Saturday and the following Monday meeting) comprising numerous sections of the RE community ensured that a variety of perspectives was heard at all times, as was the case with the RE Review.

The basis for the work of the EAG is the National Curriculum Framework for Religious Education (NCFRE), published in the autumn of 2013 as part of the RE Review. Time was spent in the meeting discussing initial thoughts and the implications of the framework. The general response was positive, though there were many challenges in the report concerning its implementation, something that the EAG has a key responsibility to address.

The latter part of the day was spent working in key stage and other groups.

Primary

EYFS/KS1 Chair Debbie Tibbey

KS2 Chair Julia Diamond Conway

The members of the EYFS / KS1 Teachers Working Party are Catriona Card, Clarissa Reynolds, Marcus Newby, Sarah Perrin and Debbie Tibbey (Chair). Catriona, Marcus and I met at the London conference whilst Sarah and Clarissa attended the Birmingham's event the following Monday. We decided that as Early Years has its own very distinctive requirements, we would concentrate on those first and ask the Monday group concentrate on KS1.

Participants had been asked to bring a resource which they found useful and I'm happy to say that the Early Years folk were very 'hands on'. We stressed the importance of stories and objects which help children to focus on what is being discovered – role-play items for the home corner, artifacts, a candle, a colourful cloth and a space / time dedicated to reflection and prayer. Good exploratory RE may touch on all developmental areas, though the members were clear that tenuous links should be avoided. Rangoli, for example, could provide opportunities to 'recognise, create and describe some patterns', but in other aspects of RE the links to mathematical development are not so obvious. PSED (Personal, Social and Emotional Development) and Understanding the World are the Early Years Profile areas with perhaps most potential for exploring religion and belief.

At both conferences the group members agreed that there is a wealth of resources available to Early Years, KS1 and KS2 teachers, from Persona Dolls and puppets to story books from a wide range of Faith Traditions. **Articles of Faith** remains a valuable and comprehensive provider of artifacts and resources for Primary Schools. It was agreed that sharing good practice and ideas are a valuable part of the EAG's work.

Time was given to discussing where guidance and resource advice should be located. Key issues raised by the group were: ownership (and funding); readership; accessibility and the risk of alienating / excluding certain audiences by narrowing the location. It was suggested that an independent site with signposts and links to REC / NATRE / RE Online websites would be ideal.

It was reassuring that the members were of one accord with our enthusiasm for RE in the first precious years of Primary Education. As we move towards the next meeting, members of the EYFS / KS1 and the KS2 Working Party remain in touch via email and are compiling a list of essential resources and activities for Primary Teachers.

The members of the KS2 teachers working party are Anne Krisman, Andrea Smith, Helen Thwaites, Naomi Anstice, Julia Diamond Conway (Chair). A more detailed report from this group will appear after further work has been done.

Secondary: Chair- Ben Wood

The five members of the Secondary Teachers' Working Party were in attendance, namely Liz Pope, Christine Paul, Dawn Cox, Emma Lamb and Ben Wood as Chair, with Ed Pawson and Deborah Weston joining the Secondary group. This group began by considering the nature of good resources and from this started a resource analysis process, where those high quality resources that we already know of were matched to the requirements of the NCFRE at its appropriate Key Stage. This process continues with the members of the working party contributing to this document.

The concept of 'Secondary Ready' also came up for initial discussion and this work is again ongoing between members of the group, as it is with other Key Stage groups. This concept deals with the knowledge, skills and attitudes we would like to see in a student starting secondary school.

I enjoyed meeting the other members of the Secondary Teachers' Working Party, especially as it was quickly clear that there was a range of different ideas about and approaches to RE. I hope that our work over the coming months can be of use to a wide range of teachers and professionals across this wonderful and diverse subject.

With thanks to Debbie Tibbey and Ben Wood for their thoughts on this. After the next period of work we will receive a report from the KS2 group.