



RE Newsletter

Summer Term 2025

A FAREWELL TO ARMS

***Choose my teachings instead of silver. Choose knowledge rather than the finest gold.
Proverbs 8.10***

This will be my last newsletter as I retire at the end of August and head to a Caribbean beach somewhere (if only), but until then I will be working as usual, so do make sure you book me for any training or support that you would like before the end of the summer term.

There is no need to panic though as the transition to my replacement is already underway. It will be Katie Dickens, whom many of you will know from her school support, collective worship, the Big Sing, the leavers service, and much, much more. She will be accompanying me on several school trips and at most training events.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my 11.5 years at the Diocese. The world of RE has gone through so many changes in that time. When I started in 2014, no one was talking about Worldviews, Understanding Christianity, Christianity as a Global World Faith, Disciplines or Ways of Knowing or Balanced RE.

There have been many reports and publications over those 11 years and one of the articles below will give you live links to all of them, along with a summary of the content.

The Curriculum and Assessment Review has indicated that consideration will be given to the status of RE, so I am sure that there will be further changes to RE in our schools.

So, thank you for making the last 11 years so enjoyable and I wish you all the best for the future.



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or

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DIOCESAN TRAINING THIS TERM



All RE training events and booking links for this term can be found below and on the [website](#). Click on the date for the live link to the booking page. Please ensure that you book on Eventbrite for all the advertised courses.

Please ensure that the person booking has entered the correct, delegate email into the required fields on the booking form. Incorrect email addresses mean that we cannot send you the link or joining information.

Bookings usually close four working days before the start of the course so ensure that you book in time to receive the link for any online courses and the joining instructions for in person courses.

RE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

These sessions are online and run from 4 – 5.30pm, using Teams.

Sign on through the [website](#) on Eventbrite for all 6 sessions for £60 (+VAT) or 1 credit if your school is in the SLA, £120 (+VAT) if you are not.

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Wednesday 21st May 2025 - Assessment – moving pupils on in their learning

Tuesday 1st July 2025 - Resource Roundup – a sharing session.

OTHER TRAINING THIS TERM

Exploring Christianity from a Global Perspective

Wednesday 11th June 2025 - 15.30-1730 Online, using Teams

SLA: £45 (+VAT) or ½ SLA Credit per person; non-SLA: £65 (+VAT) per person

This session will aim to develop your understanding of Christianity as a global faith and how this can enhance RE and worship in Church schools.

We will explore how schools have built links with Christian organisations on a global scale and help you to identify next steps to develop provision in RE and worship. Please come ready to share your experiences and evidence of good practice.

This may include an introduction to the new resource on teaching Christianity as a Global World Faith that will be rolled out by the National Society from autumn 2025.

REPORTS FROM SPRING TERM RE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT NETWORKS

CASE STUDIES – SPRING 1

The real lived experiences of individuals is part of a worldviews approach to RE. Each person has a way of assimilating their experiences and putting their beliefs and attitudes into practice. Case studies are a compelling and interesting way for pupils to explore what it might look like to live as a member of a faith community.

Case studies can be real or fictional, modern or historical, local or global. Case studies create opportunities to explore the differences within as well as between religions and traditions. Schools have often focused on well-known characters such as Martin Luther King Jnr, Mother Teresa, or Gandhi. There are plenty of other characters that could be explored, and curriculum planners need to ensure that there is a clear link to the teaching of the religion. What you are really looking for in a case study is the following:

- Something that answers a specific question or deals with a relevant scenario.
- A person whose decisions/choices on a particular issue have clearly been guided by their faith.
- Sufficient narrative element
- Interesting either socially or theologically

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- Illustrative of different ways to respond

The case study also needs to be age appropriate. There are resources such as the Real People, Real Faith films on the NATRE website, but don't forget that there are local people that you can call on to give their perspective. Who have you got in your school community who can talk about their own experiences and life choices? In one school I visited, the teacher had arranged for a friend of hers from Dubai to dial into the class and answers questions about life as a Muslim in a Muslim majority country. The quality of the conversations and the questions was high as was pupil engagement. One of the units in the Diocesan Scheme of Work uses the life of George Muller as a Case study. The emphasis is someone who prayed specifically for the orphans he encountered and for means to start houses for them. Looking at his life and his work helps pupils to understand that Christians do believe prayers are answered.

Here are some websites you could visit to get some inspiration:

- <https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/religion-context/case-studies>
- <https://www.faradaykids.com/experts/>
- <https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2018/06/neuroscientist-balances-science-faith>
- <https://arocha.org/en/about/people/robert-sluka/>
- <https://www.testoffaith.com/resources/resources.aspx?resource=true&catid=13&id=166>
- <https://licc.org.uk/resources/ten-christians-from-history-who-lived-that-whole-life-life/>
- <https://www.womansday.com/life/g27512910/christian-celebrities/>
- <https://www.booksatpress.co.uk/belongingandbelieving.html>
- <https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/schools/in-the-classroom/learning-portal/>
- <https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/schools/in-the-classroom/inclusive-judaism/imagelibrary/>
- <https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/learning/virtual-classrooms/virtual-classrooms-primary/>

If you use some case studies in class, do consider sharing your lesson/unit plan with Katie Dickens and me, so that we can share that more widely. If you find other places to source case study material, let us know as well. More collaborative working will enhance the experience for everyone.

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Are you committed to giving your pupils some exposure to real life experiences? Are you making sure that these experiences are enhancing their learning and allowing them to make links between the experiences and the teaching of the religion and worldviews?

Which of the experiences listed have you given your pupils?



Making items, such as mezuzah or diva lamp



Handling artefacts, such as tallit (prayer shawl) or prayer mat



Tasting food, such as matzot or apples dipped in honey



Acting out a ceremony, such as wedding or a baptism



Acting out a story, such as Palm Sunday or Rama and Sita

We need always to consider the educational impact of the experiences. Ask yourself these questions before planning an activity:

- What is the learning behind this activity?
- What will the children gain from this part of the lesson?
- What is the purpose of the activity?
- How will it help children understand the lives of believers and the 'why' behind religious practices and rituals?
- Where are the 'Holy' elements of the story or religious practice?
- Might it be disrespectful to the religion being explored or contrary to a child's personal faith if this religious practice or ritual is enacted in the classroom?
- Are we showing respect to each other, ourselves and those we are learning about?

We need to be mindful that some activities might be deemed disrespectful by some members of a faith or tradition. Some of activities are well-known to be unacceptable – drawing pictures of Prophet Muhammad, for example, whereas others may be harder to quantify.

The context and the narrative around an activity can have the power to change the learning experience for the pupils, as well as being sensitive to the feelings of members of the religious community.

Have you had any 'whoops' moments or parental complaints? How have you handled them? What could you have done to forestall these complaints?

Although I don't have all the answers, I recommend that applying the Golden Rule will help to inform your decision making. If you think you might be offended if another teacher/person got your children or pupils to do, then don't do it!



If you are in doubt, ask a member of the religious community for their opinion, but bear in mind that members from different traditions within a religion may have different ideas.

MILTON KEYNES AGREED SYLLABUS

The revised Milton Keynes syllabus has been officially launched and schools in the Local Authority should begin to work out a plan for beginning the implementation. There are some changes to the range of religions suggested, so that by the end of Year 6 pupils should have encountered Judaism, Hindu Dharma, Islam and Sikhi alongside Christianity. New units for the diocesan Scheme of Work are in production, but it is unlikely that there will be a new unit for each of the questions on the syllabus.

Teachers and curriculum leaders need to adapt the questions, combining and expanding them as suits the context and cohort of the school. If you create a new unit, please feel share it with us, and we can add it to the part of the website that is ready to host shared material.

If you have feedback on any of the units (positive or negative) it would be good to have it, as it may help to guide our work. Keep checking the website for updates and alterations, but remember the scheme is a starting point not a straitjacket. Your curriculum is your choice.

BERKSHIRE AGREED SYLLABUS

Some delays in getting the Berkshire syllabus adopted by each of the six Local Authorities mean that this syllabus is not officially launched yet. Each LA is hoping to complete the process by the end of the summer term, so the full implementation of the syllabus is delayed until September 2026. As the questions in the new syllabus have been developed from those on the existing syllabus, schools should be able to use the new materials to support and enhance their teaching of the current syllabus.

Keep your eyes open for a copy of the syllabus being sent out by your Local Authority, but remember that unless you are a LA maintained voluntary controlled school, or an academy that stipulates use of the locally agreed syllabus, your RE curriculum is the responsibility of the governing body. So, feel free to use and adapt whatever creates a coherent, effective, balanced RE curriculum.

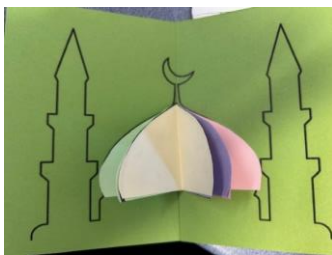
Production of some units to accompany the Diocesan Scheme of Work are continuing, and new units for both the Berkshire and the Milton Keynes syllabuses will be ready on the website before the end of the academic year.

RAMADAN IN A CHURCH SCHOOL

From Jennett's Park School in Bracknell

Here at Jennett's Park primary school, we have just had our third Pause Day of the academic year. Pause Days allow for an 'off-timetable' RE day, which gives us the opportunity engage in higher level thinking and reflection to enhance and deepen pupils' understanding. Each Pause Day is developed around a different theme dependent on the time of year and what is happening around the World. The focus for this Pause Day was Ramadan! We had events running throughout the day to support the children's understanding and experiences.

We were able to welcome some of our amazing parent volunteers who ran workshops throughout the day for all the classes. The workshops included some arts and crafts, a fact-finding activity and exploring significant artefacts along with the opportunity for a question-and-answer session. Children were offered to try a date which some followers of Islam eat to break their fast. There were a few children who cited a verse from the Qur'an to their peers from year one to year five!



Each class then used the time to explore what they have learnt and to compare Islam with other religions. The children researched similarities, differences and common practices within different religions to further develop their knowledge and understanding. This gave ample opportunity for children to share their own personal experiences with their peers. It is important to note that Islam, just like other religions, is multicultural and intersectional. For example, not all Muslims are the same and there is diversity among the followers of Islam: different nationalities, languages, ethnicities and traditions shape individual and family experiences, traditions and beliefs.

We are so grateful for the contribution of our parent community which enables us to give our children these invaluable experiences.



If you have had an experiential day at school, please write us an article for the September edition of this newsletter.

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RESOURCES

Please note that the Diocese of Oxford does not offer an endorsement of any of the resources listed. Please use your professional judgement to decide whether these materials are suitable for your school.

REAL PEOPLE, REAL FAITH

The Pan-Berkshire SACRE hub, funded by a NASACRE/Westhill Award is pleased to announce that the most recent films in the [Real People, Real Faith](#) Series are now available on the NATRE website. Humanist, Baha'i and Buddhist films have been added to the collection and so offer teachers the opportunity to engage their pupils in a wider range of religions and worldviews.

For each worldview there are six films – two for each of KS1, KS2 and KS3. Each film is accompanied by a brief introductory document with summary and suggested activities.

The full list of films is as follows:

Baha'i
Buddhist,
Christianity – Anglican, Baptist and Catholic.
Hindu
Humanist
Islam – Sunni and Shia
Jewish – Orthodox and Reform
Sikh



Filmed in locations across Berkshire, mostly in places of worship, these films explore some of the key features of these traditions, offering a wide diversity of voices within each worldview. Build them into your planning, especially if you are finding visits to places of worship hard to fund and organise.

SPRINGS DANCE COMPANY



Several schools have had sessions from Springs Dance company. Have a look at the website to see if one of this term's sessions would suit your school.

"Thank you for doing that amazing lesson with us. I loved it!" - Pupil, Seabrook school

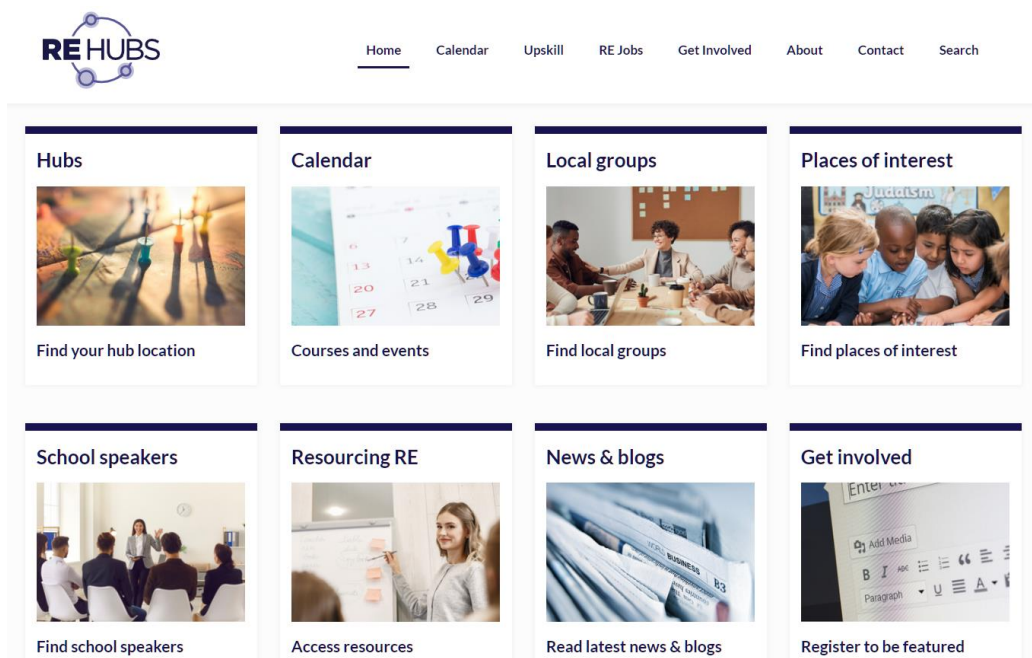
Further details can be found at

<https://springsdancecompany.org.uk/index.php/join-in/schools-workshops>

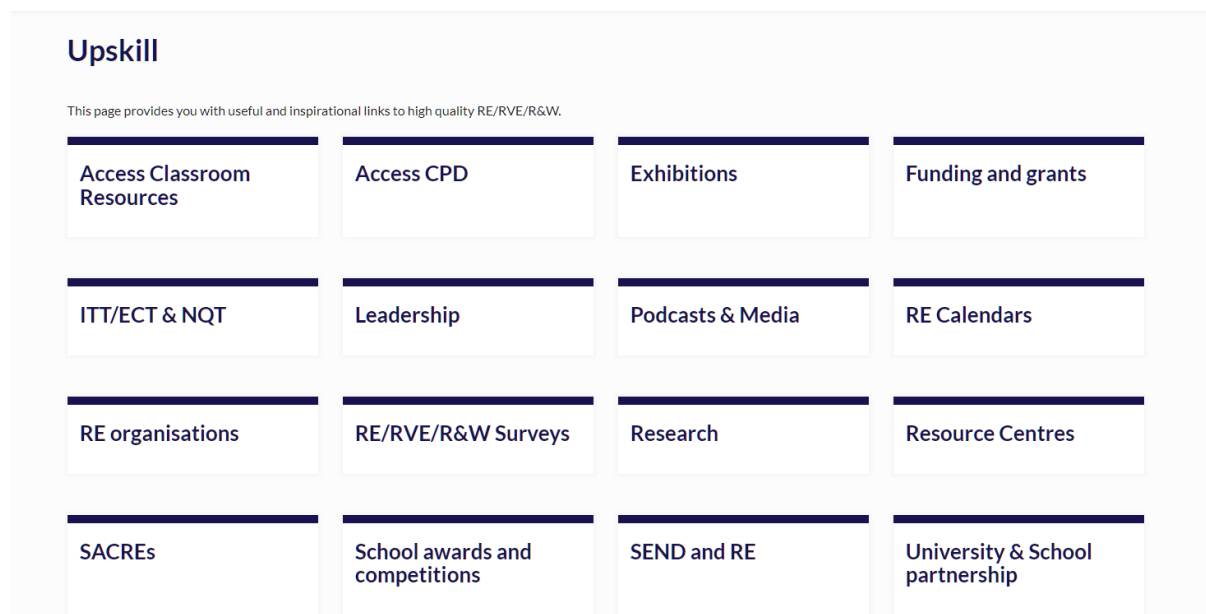
To book and to find out more please email touring@springsdancecompany.org.uk or call 07775 628 442.

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The [RE Hubs](#) website continues to grow.



This is the place to look for details of visitors, places to visit, training courses available, resources, updates and news.



The above Upskill page has, as you can see, links to a wide range of background information for RE leaders. This is worth sharing in a staff room. Follow these links to have a proper look at each section.

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There are many new Religious Education resources, including units and lesson plans on the Oak National Academy website. Many of the units have 'walk through videos' which are designed to teach the lessons for you! While I would not necessarily endorse that method of teaching, if you are not certain of your content or how best to deliver material, they will give you some ideas and confidence. Likewise, there are lots of ideas for lesson activities and some structured ways of learning, but as with any resources, please check that they are going to help your pupils learn what you want them too, and that the materials fit with your scheme or syllabus.



There are resources for Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4. Do have a look and let us know what you think.

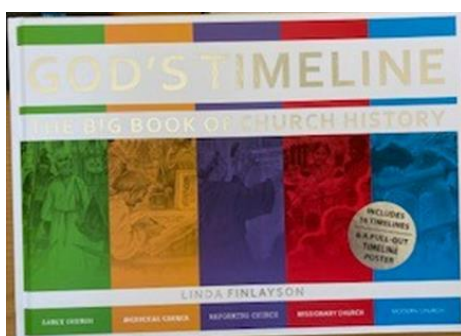
THE DIOCESAN SCHEME OF WORK

More work has been done this academic year and by the end of term there will be some additional units to help with the delivery of the Milton Keynes and Berkshire syllabuses as well as some knowledge organisers. The knowledge organisers will be found on the same page as the unit to which they belong. Not every unit has a knowledge organiser, so in the new page called Peer Planning you will find blank templates in Word for the various key stages. Have a go at creating one and let us have the finished version, which we can add to the website for others to use.

That page is also ready to receive any plans or resources that you create (be mindful of copyright if you use pictures) so please do send us some material to share. It doesn't have to be perfect (I'm not sure there is a perfect resource) but these resources can be a great way to share good practice and improve what we are doing.

In addition to creating new resources, some of the units have been updated to correct typos and to add in some clearer learning objectives. Even if you have downloaded a unit, it is worth going back to the website to check for updates. As always, we would love your feedback. Are the units working for you?

If you are teaching the unit that covers church history, you might find this book helpful:



God's Timeline: The Big Book of Church History Hardcover – Illustrated, 2 Feb. 2018

by [Linda Finlayson](#) (Author)

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This fascinating book is split into five colour-coded sections:

1. The Early Church
2. Medieval Church
3. Reforming Church
4. Missionary Church
5. Modern Church

Sixteen colourful illustrated timelines place key events in church history in a broader historical context. Maps show the ways in which the gospel spread; tables clearly and simply lay out differences in beliefs; and illustrated pages explain key events, people and theological debates throughout the church's 2,000 year history.

Although each period is different from the others, there are common threads that run through all of church history. Symbols highlight a number of important things to look out for:

- Councils
- Creeds
- Martyrdom
- Kings and Queens
- Monasteries

This absorbing book will be a great aid to anyone looking for an overview of church history. The pull-out poster featuring the whole timeline, plus key heroes and villains, make it easy to trace God's work through his church