

Inter Faith Week Activities for Religious Education – Primary

Material created by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE)
with the support of the Department for Children Schools and Families

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A) Whole School activities

The activities in this section are listed broadly in order of easiest to most time consuming to plan and deliver. This will depend on the school's existing links with the local community. The first two are largely assembly activities. The last three are designed to involve a great number of the school community and in the case of the fourth and fifth activity will require outside input either to view the exhibition (see number four) or as workshop leaders (activity five).

Activity 1: The Seeds of Prejudice Assembly

Rationale:

Assemblies can provide a safe space in which to encourage pupils to reflect on their own attitudes and the impact they can have on other people. The focus here is on how we judge other people. The activity is suitable for 8 – 11s.

Activity:

You will need: Various items of designer wear or current clothes trends (e.g. tracksuit and hoodies)

- **Talk about** the kind of clothes pupils like to wear. Volunteers may model these for you. Discuss why they want to wear such clothes. Is the wearing of such clothes important to them or to their identity? Why? How do they feel when they wear these clothes? Is there a change in the way they feel when they wear them? How does this affect them? Does it affect others? Do the pupils feel if they are treated differently when they wear these clothes?
- **Tell the Muslim folk tale** of Nasruddin and the banquet (see link below).
- **Ask children to suggest** why the people at the banquet treated Nasruddin in such a way.
- **Talk about** how many are judged because of what they are wearing. How would they feel if they were the only one in their group who didn't wear a hoody or the latest trainers? Would the rest of their group accept it, mock them or even exclude them from the group? How would they feel?
- **Suggest** that wearing designer gear or cheap clothes from the local supermarket does not make someone better or worse than someone else. Wearing hoodies does not make every hoody-wearer a thug.
- **Point out** how people's perceptions can get skewed and before you know it a little seed of dislike is planted. In fact two are planted: those with the hoodies or latest gear will start to dislike those who don't have it. Those who don't have it will start to dislike everyone who does have it because of the way they have been treated. Very soon this can grow into full blown prejudice – intense dislike of all who wear hoodies or intense dislike for all who don't.
- **Explain** how the clothes are just a way of identifying certain groups of people. But the same applies to all groups of people. It could be the way someone talks, the colour of their skin, their religion or the estate they live on. These are all like Nasruddin's clothes - judgments can be made without foundation and prejudice thrives.
- **Reflection:** Think about the effect you have on people whom you have judged because of the way they dress or what they look like. Think of how you would be affected if others judged you in the same way.

Resources:

- The story of Nasruddin and the banquet
 - www.nasruddin.org/pages/stories/banquet1soup.html

Time frame: 15 – 20 minutes

Possible links with other subjects: PSHE, Citizenship, Assembly

Activity 2: Hall Stations

Rationale:

The whole school activity below is designed to be used during an event such as Inter Faith Week and to provide an opportunity for children to express their ideas, appreciate those of other members of the school community and reflect on their contribution to developing good relations with all in their community.

Activity:

Set up six 'stations' around the assembly hall. A 'station' might be a table and/or a space on the wall; it needs to provide a display space for a statement or other stimulus (see below for examples) and a place for pupils to write their responses (e.g. large sheets of paper, labels, or a book).

Statements/stimuli for the stations might include:

- What is important to me is (focus: the need to recognise self as being important before they can appreciate others)
- What Inter Faith Week means to me is (focus: opportunity for pupils to express their understanding)
- Display board showing a variety of people, religious and non-religious, various cultures and races, who make up the local community. Photographs are numbered and pupils have a worksheet on which to identify which community / faith / race they think the people belong to. (focus: opportunity to break down stereotypes)
- A barrier to good inter faith relations is
- A way to overcome a barrier to good inter faith relations is
- A prayer tree / tree of hope. Luggage labels are available for pupils to write their thoughts, hopes or prayers and tie to the tree.

Throughout the week each class takes a turn to visit the hall. In groups, pupils visit each station. They think and talk about the prompts. Group or individual comments can be posted or written up at the stations, although every individual should be given the opportunity to say 'what is important to me' and to put a label on the tree. Alternatively, most of the work can be done in the classroom before the class visits the hall.

At the end of the week the school can draw on comments made at the stations for a final assembly.

Resources:

- Inter Faith Network for the UK – 'Connect: Different Faiths, Shared Values'
 - www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/connect-web.pdf

- www.interfaith.org.uk
- 'Listening to children talking', NATRE's online interactive database is a useful resource for ideas about what other children identified as their vision of a perfect world (question 9 – primary section).
 - www.natre.org.uk/db

Time frame: Over one week culminating and in a final assembly.

Possible links with other subjects: Citizenship; PSHE; Assembly

Activity 3: Schools Linking Network

Rationale: This work aims to strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels in our increasingly diverse society. It also aims to encourage local faith groups and communities to reach out to each other and build stronger bonds of understanding and cooperation.

Activity: The Schools Linking Network provides support on how schools can link with other schools to contribute to community cohesion and support the exploration of issues of identity and diversity.

The Schools Linking Network can provide INSET to staff on setting up a link with a school with a different religious profile to your own school. The organisation can provide support in finding a suitable link. The website has a number of case studies relating to primary schools involved in the project. These are 'Hothfield and Barkerend Primary Schools,' 'In Your Shoes,' and 'Scholemoor Case Study' to help you get started with ideas. The first example is of a predominately Muslim school linking with a predominately white rural school. They focused on sharing their environment and life styles and responding through art and poetry. The second school example is using a city wide project with year7 pupils who produced a film about their own identities and how they see each other. The third example shows two primary schools who worked together on a history project considering the Second World War. This project could be developed by thinking about other curriculum areas, perhaps taking a unit from the local Agreed Syllabus and working across the two schools in RE.

Other opportunities are when schools link in this way digital 'pen pals' can be established or pupil or staff exchanges can take place. This will enable the children to learn from other children about their lives and build opportunities for understanding of others. If pupil exchanges take place work could focus on how the children in both schools practice their faith and how they can communicate together with respect for differences.

Resources: www.schoolslinkingnetwork.org.uk

Time frame: on-going communication and exchange between schools

Possible links with other subjects: Citizenship, ICT,

Activity 4: A Spirited Arts Exhibition

Rationale:

The National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) holds an annual Spirited Arts competition which encourages young people to respond to one of four or five given themes in creative ways. The themes offered each year provide a wealth of opportunity to connect themes found in religion with those of inter faith and inter-cultural activity.

Preparing an entry provides opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of the religion(s) or belief(s) they are representing, show respect for those religions and beliefs, and reflect and express something of their own beliefs and questions on the chosen theme.

NATRE's online Web gallery provides plenty of stimulus material from previous years' entries, as well as a record of the themes which have been offered and some suggestions for working with them. Pupils' own comments, published alongside their art work, gives an insight into their own rationale for their art work. The activities below are based on two of the early competition themes – 'Peace' and 'RE logo'.

The activity lends itself well to being done by a whole year group, or by the whole school. There is also potential for displaying children's art work around the school, perhaps as part of a whole school event to which parents and people from the wider community are invited.

Activity:

To encourage pupils to explore and think about what respect between religions means, talk with pupils about ways in which RE is a co-operation between different religions and beliefs, alert to what is significant in each religion or belief, but also drawing attention to how they share some ideas and values. Ask pupils to draw a symbol or logo that reflects the different faiths in the area in a respectful but creative way, and that shows what can be fun in RE. The logo might be for an agreed syllabus cover, for example. Spend some time looking at some symbols for different religions, considering colour and shape. In designing their own log encourage them to show their vision of all the religions, and avoid copying out the symbols they have looked at. Expect them to write a paragraph explaining what is good about their logo, and how it shows the spirituality of RE and of themselves.

To encourage pupils to think about peace, a central theme to RE, talk with them about the meanings of peace. Ask questions like: What does it mean to have peace through the storm? Where is peace to be found? Does God bring peace? How can anyone be peaceful when the world is so troubled? Most will have lots to say on questions such as these. Ask them to make a symbol for peace to use on a United Nations greetings card or design a logo for a divided city that is trying to work to achieve harmony. Or ask them to design a symbol for the heart. Encourage simple use of colour, considering alternatives and looking at the ideas of others (in the class and on the Spirited Arts website) will stimulate better work.

Resources:

- Spirited Arts Web Gallery
 - www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts
- 'Inspiring Visual RE: using and making art in primary RE', Ed Joyce Mackley, ISBN 978-1-905893-24-9, is a publication which aims to bring together RE and Art. It contains lots of tried

and tested curriculum activities, drawing on a selection of full colour images contained in an accompanying colour supplement.

- <http://shop.retoday.org.uk>

Time frame: one hour

Possible links with other subjects: Art; Citizenship;

Activity 5: Multi Faith Conference

Rationale:

A multi faith conference over two days is an exciting and stimulating way of working with members of a variety of local faith communities to support good RE but also to encourage local faith groups and communities to work together, not just in organising and delivering the event, but beyond it, and in a variety of contexts.

Activity:

The background, activities and outcomes of a two-day multi faith conference for 160 primary age pupils from 16 schools are presented in an article in *REtoday* magazine, and available for download from NATRE's website (see link below). Further details are found on Herefordshire Local Authority's website (see link below). These two resources give a rich insight to what happened, what was achieved and what the pupils and teachers thought of the conference. Needless to say, this event has been repeated, with equal success, with another cohort of children.

A few pointers in addition might include:

- Be clear about the aims of the event, linking it in particular to the requirements of your RE syllabus. This will include identifying the religions you will include in the day. The Herefordshire event included Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism and Islam.
- Draw upon the faith communities local to the school – your SACRE will be an important resource and potentially a source of funding, and parents of some of your pupils will want to help too
- Give yourself plenty of time to organise the event – choose a project leader who has some experience of organising events with large numbers of children and ensure your workshop leaders are experienced and effective in working with children.
- Identify a venue large enough to take the numbers involved and make early contact with the other schools you hope will support and attend the event
- Don't forget to ask children and adults involved for their feedback – and make sure that you report widely on the success of the conference! Parents, SACRE, Local Authority, the press.

Resources:

- Herefordshire Multi faith Conference
 - www.hereford-edu.org.uk/faith/default.asp?PG_ID=1&GRP_ID=1
- RE Today article – report on Herefordshire Multi faith conference
 - www.natre.org.uk/docstore/multifaith_08.pdf
- The RE Teacher's Media Toolkit – sound advice on involving the media in reporting your event
 - <http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/images/stories/pdf/mediatoolkit.pdf>

Time frame: two days for activity; time to organise speakers and rooms in advance (8 weeks)

Possible links with other subjects: Citizenship; Art; Drama; Dance; Music

<http://www.natre.org.uk/>

B) Classroom RE

The first four activities require web based sources to facilitate a part of a lesson, one lesson or a couple of lessons. The fifth activity would need a visiting speaker to attend the lesson so would need prior organisation.

Activity 6: Email a believer

Rationale:

Opportunities for children and young people to access authentic comment from a wide variety of religious and non religious perspectives on a range of issues of faith and belief is invaluable in terms of increasing their awareness of different and distinct faith communities in the UK, and further afield. Through communication technologies such as email and video conferencing this is easy to achieve. While inviting real people into the RE classroom will always be the ideal, where this is not possible or where greater diversity of opinion, experience or expertise is desirable, then activities such as the one described below provide a useful mechanism for dialogue between learner and faith groups and communities to the benefit of both.

Activity:

'People of Faith' is a website which provides a starting point for exploring the diversity of the world's main religions from the point of view of individuals from each religion. It includes details of some of the world's main religions together with a personal view of: what is believed; what it means to 'belong', and how a person's beliefs affect what they do and say.

The site provides a facility for pupils to email a member of one of the six main religions with a question. Alternatively, they can check through a long list of previous questions to see if the answer they are looking for has already been provided. Questions could focus on questions that relate to themes of Inter Faith Week - such as what each religion says about the treatment of other faiths and what each faith has contributed to society.

This provides an excellent opportunity for pupils to access authentic viewpoints from a community of faith, and to develop a deeper understanding of similarities and differences within and between traditions.

Resources:

People of faith

- <http://pof.reonline.org.uk>
- www.humanism.org.uk (select 'education' then pupils). This gives information on Humanism. If questions are not answered in the FAQ section then you can email the British Humanist Association.

Time frame: Activity within one lesson. Activity will need revisiting once a reply has been received.

Possible links with other subjects: Citizenship; Literacy

Activity 7: Finding answers to ‘big questions’: What do faiths teach about God, the world and how to live together?

Rationale:

Where people have both the interest and the confidence to engage with others in discussion of ‘big questions’ in terms of their fundamental importance to the individual, their complexity and their sensitivity then bonds of friendship, co-operation and support can readily be built, and understanding grow between individuals and communities.

Big questions such as those about God, the world and how to live together play a significant part in any RE curriculum – everyone has a point of view to offer or a question to ask. With the right stimulus young people can become engaged with and respectfully questioning of the beliefs of others, and reflective and open about their own. They will note and be comfortable with similarities and differences, and feel comfortable in dialogue with others, whatever their beliefs and perspectives.

Activity:

Invite pupils to work in pairs to suggest some responses to the question ‘What do faiths teach about God, the world and how to live together?’ Record their ideas as a mind map, and then ask them to highlight those which they think have a specifically religious answer.

Introduce pupils to NATRE’s ‘Listening to Children Talking’ database, explaining how to navigate it and conduct a search. To complete the activity pupils in pairs or small groups will need access to the internet.

Their task is to investigate how young people of their own age of a religion they are studying had responded to the issues such as ‘What is God like?’ ‘Vision for a perfect world’ and ‘Freedom, truth, justice, love and forgiveness’. Different groups could focus on different sections of responses. The pupils could be split into three groups with one group looking at each of the three sets of statements on the web site. They should notice fairly quickly that some words and ideas are repeated, and begin to identify patterns. Some might spot exceptions which can usefully be discussed – e.g. how can a person who calls them self a Christian state that they don’t believe in God? During the last five minutes ask them to select some key statements and record them e.g. using word processing software.

During class discussions of their findings add to the initial mind map all the words which pupils had found recurring along with any questions of their own. Provide them with an opportunity to submit their own responses to the database. The fact that the database is moderated and they can add their own thoughts encourages pupils to be respectful of the comments they are interpreting and reflective in terms of considering their own thoughts for inclusion.

Finally, ask pupils to form groups of four and share their findings and questions with each other. Give them the sentence starter “After looking at this question today I think [name of religion] believe”. Following a short discussion each pupil completes the sentence for themselves. A second sentence could also be completed, “There are similarities between some of the faiths I have learnt about. The similarities I have found are....”

Resources:

- 'Listening to Children Talking', NATRE's online, interactive database of some 30,000 young people's responses to a range of religious and spiritual questions. The database can be searched by age, gender, topic and religious affiliation (including atheism, humanism and 'no belief'). Users can submit their own responses to the original questions and the database is fully moderated.
 - www.natre.org.uk/db

Time frame: one hour

Possible links with other subjects: ICT; Citizenship

Activity 8: Shared values of service

Rationale:

This task links to Inter Faith Week by seeking to increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs and to encourage local faith groups and communities to reach out to each other and build stronger bonds of understanding and cooperation.

Activity:

This activity could be introduced by reading 'Rainbow Crow' (see web link) or a chapter from 'Animals to the Rescue' by Avril Rowlands aimed at 6-9 year olds. Extracts from this story tell of how animals of different kinds help each other in difficult circumstances despite being different and behaving in different ways.

The Interfaith Youth Core, 'Scriptures on the Shared Value of Service' document can be used as a stimulus for class discussion about the values that are important in these faiths. These statements are not currently in 'pupil friendly' language. Following the discussion the children could write or act out a story in groups their own story showing how people can serve each other of different views/beliefs.

Resources:

<http://www.ifyc.org> Select 'programmes', then select 'outreach education and training' program, then select 'tools and resources', finally select 'Scriptures on the Shared Value of Service'

<http://www.americanfolklore.net/folktales/nj7> - Rainbow Crow, Native America Folk tale or similar story such as a chapter from 'Animals to the Rescue' by Avril Rowlands

Time frame: one hour

Possible links with other subjects: Citizenship; PSHE; History; Geography (depending on story stimulus)

Activity 9: Shared values – three world faiths’ teaching on giving and greed. KS1

Rationale:

The aim of this activity is to increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, with a particular focus on how their beliefs affect their behaviour and attitudes. It also aims to increase the understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs.

Activity:

Three stories have been selected that demonstrate a common teaching across 3 of the principle world religions: Christianity, Buddhism and Sikhism. The stories encourage pupils to consider how wealth should be acquired and whether wealth is necessary for happiness now and in the future. The story of the Golden Deer is about a deer that speaks. He rescues someone who then breaks a promise to him. The deer is kind and honest and is rewarded for this. The Golden Swan teaches about greed; it also raises questions about reincarnation and bereavement. The story of Guru Nanak and Duni Chand teaches about the rich helping the poor in this life having recognised that wealth cannot be taken to heaven.

The children could watch and listen to these stories. The children can answer these questions:

1. What do the people in each of the stories want to collect more of?
2. What did the religious teacher say? (the deer or swan represents the religious teacher in the Buddhist stories)
3. What is similar in the stories?
4. What might be learnt from the stories a) by a religious believer and b) by the children?
5. What might a person do differently after hearing the story?

This could be extended by the children writing, drawing, or performing using models, puppets or drama to tell their own version of the stories with a moral about greed.

Resources: www.jatakkatha.com – The Golden Deer or The Golden Swan; www.cleo.net.uk (RE KS1 section) animated story of Guru Nanak and Duni Chand; www.thebricktestament.com select the Teaching of Jesus, then select wealth. It is visual with a small amount of written text.

Time frame: 1 -2 lessons

Possible links with other subjects: Literacy, depending on how task is approached possible links are art, drama.

Activity 10: Digital story telling

Rationale:

Religion is about believing, worshipping and valuing – about belonging to a faith community and living within the wider community. Helping children explore this wider concept of religion means engaging with believers and helping pupils to listen and talk to people of faith.

One way of helping pupils ‘encounter’ people from other faiths and beliefs is through listening to their ‘story’. This helps increase their awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, and the contribution they make to their neighbourhoods and also to wider society (one of the Week’s themes).

The activity described here shows how **digital story telling** can be an effective mechanism for pupils to explore, present and reflect on their encounter with people of a variety of faiths and beliefs.

Activity:

Any unit of work in RE is likely to present opportunities for inviting a member of a local faith community into school, or for pupils to visit them outside school. The RE learning objectives for the activity will therefore be clear and rooted in the syllabus being followed, and ideally shared with pupils. Learning how to use a digital video camera can be built in to work on ICT and provide a valuable cross-curricular link.

Pupils can be asked to identify what new things they want to find out about the religion they are studying, and to separate their ideas into topic areas e.g. family, heaven, prayer, God. Pupils then work in groups to develop a set of questions that could be used to interview their guest. They also choose their group’s interviewer and plan the responsibilities of each member of the group.

Groups interview their guest in turn and are then supported in editing the outcomes into a ‘telling’ of the story their guest tells them. Opportunities are then provided for pupils to demonstrate their learning by presenting their digital story to the class and taking part in a recorded hot seating activity to support assessment.

Resources:

- For information and examples of digital story telling see:
 - www.bbc.co.uk/tellinglives
- For a collection of interviews with young people from seven faiths see ‘Exploring Religion Around Me’, Ed. Joyce Mackley, RE Today Services, ISBN 978-1-904024-96-5. For a photocopiable example of one interview from the book – with Kian, a Baha’i – see:
 - http://www.natre.org.uk/docstore/kian_bahai_pg32.pdf

www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/

A visiting speaker from a faith community could be invited into a lesson.

Time frame: two to three hours, over several days

Possible links with other subjects: ICT; Citizenship;

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