



Ealing RE Network

Autumn Term 2007

www.egfl.org.uk/religion

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Welcome to the autumn 2007 edition of the RE network newsletter.

Syllabus update Ealing Cabinet ratified the new syllabus ("The marriage of heaven and earth") on 24 July 2007, with the recommendation that it be brought into effect at the beginning of the academic year. However it is recognised that it may take schools a while to make the switch to the new programmes of study. Schools will receive one printed copy, but additional copies can be downloaded from the Ealing Grid for Learning.



Ealing agreed syllabus

Departure Jan Parnell, 14-19 adviser with responsibility for SACRE, has left to take up a new challenge in the Building Schools for the Future initiative. Jan's help was crucial in the revision of the syllabus, and we would like to thank her for her support and wish her all the best for the future.



Judy Johnson

Arrival Judy Johnson has been appointed as lead subject teacher for religious education at the primary level. RE co-ordinators who wish to send teachers to observe Judy in action should contact West Twyford Primary School (020 8965 6858). Judy will also be facilitating sessions at upcoming network meetings, as well as trialling new resources.

Judy says: I teach religious education at West Twyford Primary School, a one-form intake school in Park Royal. When I became RE co-ordinator my job was to support others, but for the past three years I have taught RE throughout the school to give class teachers cover for ppa. I enjoy this subject particularly because I love to find out what children think, which is more interesting and fulfilling for me than what they know! I also enjoy writing units of work and finding resources that make the subject special for the children.

We are still looking for a lead subject teacher at the secondary level, and heads of department are invited to submit names of teachers they feel might benefit from taking on this role.

Network meetings

Secondary subject leaders: Friday 2 November 2007, 1-4 pm, City Learning Centre. "According to Ofsted, what makes an RE lesson good?" (RSVP by 24 October)

Primary subject leaders: Thursday 22 November 2007, 4-6 pm, EEC Room 8. "All-school planning" and "Assessment and differentiation with Bloom's taxonomy." (RSVP by 2 November)



Contributions to future newsletters are welcome. Please post or email to: Nora Leonard, SACRE Consultant, Strategy and Improvement, Perceval House P2: NW, 14-16 Uxbridge Road, London W5 2NL (nleonard@ealing.gov.uk)

Diwali¹, the autumnal festival of lights, is one expression of the human need to celebrate the victory of good over evil.

The name of the festival comes from the Sanskrit word *dipavali*, meaning “row of lights”. Small earthenware oil lamps called *diyas* are placed outside buildings and in windows and doors, although nowadays these are often replaced by strings of electric lights, particularly in larger towns.



Lotus rangoli outside home in Mumbai

For many Indians this festival honours Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, coming as it does at the beginning of the new business year. Homes and businesses are left open to encourage her to enter, the flickering lights of the *diyas* serving as welcoming beacons. There is much feasting and celebration, and special patterns known as *rangoli* are drawn in her honour, often in the shape of a lotus, a symbol associated with this goddess.



Battle between Rama and Ravana
(Ramayana Fresco, Wat Phra Kaew, Bangkok)

It is the Hindu legend of the kidnapping—and rescue—of Sita that relates Diwali to the victory of good over evil. Sita is the wife of Rama, the human incarnation of the great god Vishnu, and she is kidnapped by the demon king Ravana. With the help of the monkey god Hanuman, Rama journeys to the demon’s realm to recover his wife, and in the subsequent battle his forces are victorious.

It is said that, because it was a moonless night when Rama and Sita returned home, people put lamps outside their houses to light their way, yet another explanation for the rituals of Diwali.

A modern version of the battle between light and dark can be found in the Harry Potter stories. In an article in *Nurturing Children’s Religious Imagination*², Fr Joe Collins argues that the Potter books can help children recognise the interplay between good and evil in their own lives, e.g. instances of bullying.



Harry Potter’s nemesis, Lord Voldemort

Every tradition has stories and dramas that seek to illustrate the continuing struggle to do right, and these naturally find their way into religious education lessons. However it is also useful to draw on more contemporary ‘moral tales’, especially those that have captured the imagination of both teachers and students alike.

¹ This year Diwali occurs on 9th November.

² *Nurturing children’s religious imagination: the challenge of primary religious education today*. Edited by Raymond Topley and Gareth Byrne, ISBN: 1853907782.