



Ealing SACRE

Briefing to schools, September 2012

www.egfl.org.uk/religion

“Sowing the seeds of the future”

The Ealing agreed syllabus is currently undergoing a review. It is hoped that the new syllabus (“Sowing the seeds of the future: an exploration of human beliefs and values”) will be approved in the summer of 2013, with the aim of being implemented in schools over the academic year 2013-14.

In order to prepare you for a change that is in some ways significant—but in others not—SACRE has decided to release sections of the syllabus as and when they become available. To that end please find attached a draft of the introduction, which sets out our vision and outlines some of the changes.

As a borough Ealing has, with very few exceptions, responded well to the increasingly diverse nature of its population, changes which have proved both challenging and enriching. It is hoped that the approach of the new syllabus will reflect and honour this ability to embrace change creatively. Religious education as a subject is increasingly under threat. The new syllabus takes the view that the traditions—religious and philosophical—that are the focus of study are *human responses to common life experiences*. It is this approach that we believe will keep the subject both viable and engaging for decades to come.

Later in the year we are planning to have an INSET for heads and school leaders to look at the various innovative ways schools in Ealing promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). There is some incredibly inspiring work being done in the borough and it is important that we share it. At times the practical day-to-day consequences of our increased diversity have involved conflict and some delicate negotiations; however these incidents have forced us to find creative solutions, and as a result, Ealing has an opportunity to pioneer a genuinely inclusive approach and to serve as a beacon to other parts of the country.

Comments or feedback on the draft introduction would be very welcome.

Please send them to Nora Leonard (nleonard@ealing.gov.uk).

Monitoring forms

Monitoring the provision of religious education and reflection in local schools remains one of SACRE’s prime responsibilities. In the absence of the detailed Ofsted reports, SACRE is dependent on the good will of schools to fill in and return their monitoring form. It has been decided that each term, twelve schools that have not submitted a return during the previous two years will be contacted and asked to return a form. It is in the schools’ interest to do this as part of their own on-going self-evaluation.

SACRE classroom visitors

The following two SACRE members have offered to come into schools to talk about their experiences. If you are interested in having either Ara or Kath speak to an RE class or year group, please contact them directly.

Cllr Ara Iskanderian, Chair of Ealing SACRE

Ara is the labour councillor for Northolt Mandeville, the chair of Ealing SACRE and a member of the Armenian Apostolic Church. In addition to being willing to answer questions about the Orthodox branch of Christianity, he would be an excellent person to engage in discussion on such topics as civic responsibility and stewardship. He has experience of attending local schools (Christchurch PS and Twyford HS) and has some amusing anecdotes about 'mistaken identity' that would prove an excellent starting point for an exploration of how we define ourselves.

If you are interested in having Ara visit your school, his contact email is:

Ara.Iskanderian@ealing.gov.uk

Kath Richardson, SACRE humanist representative

When asked to describe a humanist approach to ethics, Kath responded:

'I learned, as we all did, from my parents, older siblings and other relatives. Eventually I started to question some of these behaviours. Some are due to cultural observance rather than ethical reasons and as one grows up, you have to learn to separate them. I often quote the end of Spiderman to my children: "With rights come responsibility." I think we owe it to ourselves and to others to be the best person we can possibly be, to use our one life wisely and make the most of it. We have a Human Rights Act because we recognise that some rights should be fundamental, that they should belong to all people whether we like them or not. That includes behaving in a fashion that gives us as clear a conscience as possible. I try and justify why I behave the way I do and explain my reasoning in moral dilemmas; having children forces me to do this out loud.'

The new syllabus will be approaching religious and non-religious worldviews as human responses to common questions and experiences. Kath would be an excellent person to have as a visitor to discuss topics that are usually approached only from a religious perspective. There are many children in our schools who come from non-religious backgrounds, and just as religious education allows them to learn about the various belief traditions, it is equally important that children from religious backgrounds learn that it is possible to experience awe and wonder, to behave responsibly and to live a full and creative life without religious beliefs.

If you are interested in having Kath visit your school, her contact email is:

kath@brentfordcommunity.org.uk