

RE and good community relations:

What can RE learn from social psychology?

A Toolkit for Teachers of RE

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Is your classroom promoting shared space?

Do your RE lessons value diversity?

How can RE in the curriculum promote shared space and value diversity?

In this joint research initiative, RE teachers and NATRE teamed up with researchers from the University of Bristol to explore how far the insights of contact theory can promote community relations in RE.

If we want young people to be able to hold balanced and informed conversations about religion and belief, then we need them to be able to interact meaningfully with others. Using contact theory supports this interaction by considering how we group pupils, how we arrange our classrooms and how we enable pupils to engage in dialogue in order to help reduce prejudice. Using contact theory alongside other strategies, which promote community relations and encountering others, can potentially transform attitudes and deepen our understanding of the world we live in.

KATHRYN WRIGHT, Independent RE Consultant

Welcome to the Shared Space Toolkit for Teachers of RE

Dear Teacher,

This toolkit presents theory-based resources and ideas for how to best promote community relations in Religious Education (RE) classrooms. Designed in collaboration with teachers, researchers and the National Association for Teachers of RE (NATRE), this resource is relevant to primary and secondary UK classrooms. The activities should improve young people's intergroup attitudes (i.e., reduce prejudice) and help them to develop some of the skills necessary to navigate the increasingly diverse world in which they are growing up. Importantly, the materials have been selected based upon their relevance to theory and research that aims to promote community relations. It is our belief, therefore, that the sound principles upon which this toolkit is based on will ensure that it meets your needs to help promote community relations in your classroom and in turn, contribute to a more cohesive society.

As an educator of young people, and a teacher that has already built a relationship with your class, you are best placed to judge the pace and the tone of the materials. We are confident that you will find a balance between providing an exciting and secure learning environment in which students can openly and safely engage with such potentially challenging issues as religious diversity.

Although we are providing you with a set of materials, it is the unquantifiable teaching qualities that **you** bring to class that will ultimately ensure their success. We would gratefully receive any feedback, suggestions, or experiences you wish to send us. Our contact information is included on the last page.

We hope you find the materials useful and enjoy reading the toolkit!

Sincerely,

The Shared Space Team

WHAT ARE CONTACT THEORY AND THE SHARED SPACE PROJECT?

Contact theory is a field of social psychology interested in how contact between members of different groups can reduce prejudice. Contact theory findings suggest that contact between groups should be structured and have a purpose.

For contact between groups to potentially reduce prejudice:

- 1) members of different groups should have equal status
- 2) groups should work towards shared goals
- 3) tasks require genuine co-operation
- 4) there should be wider support for the venture from a figure of authority as well as the wider community

These four conditions were suggested by psychologist Gordon Allport in an influential book called *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954).

The Shared Space Project has involved shared learning and dialogue between social psychologists and RE practitioners to understand the contribution contact theory might make to RE in promoting better community relations.

Contact theory provides a good basis for helping educators to think about how to prepare future generations for a diverse world. Due to its focus on reducing prejudice, it is relevant to all levels of our education system and to diverse and non-diverse classrooms alike. Through subjects such as RE, it is possible to get models of best practice which focus on discussing and embracing difference and making interactions meaningful.

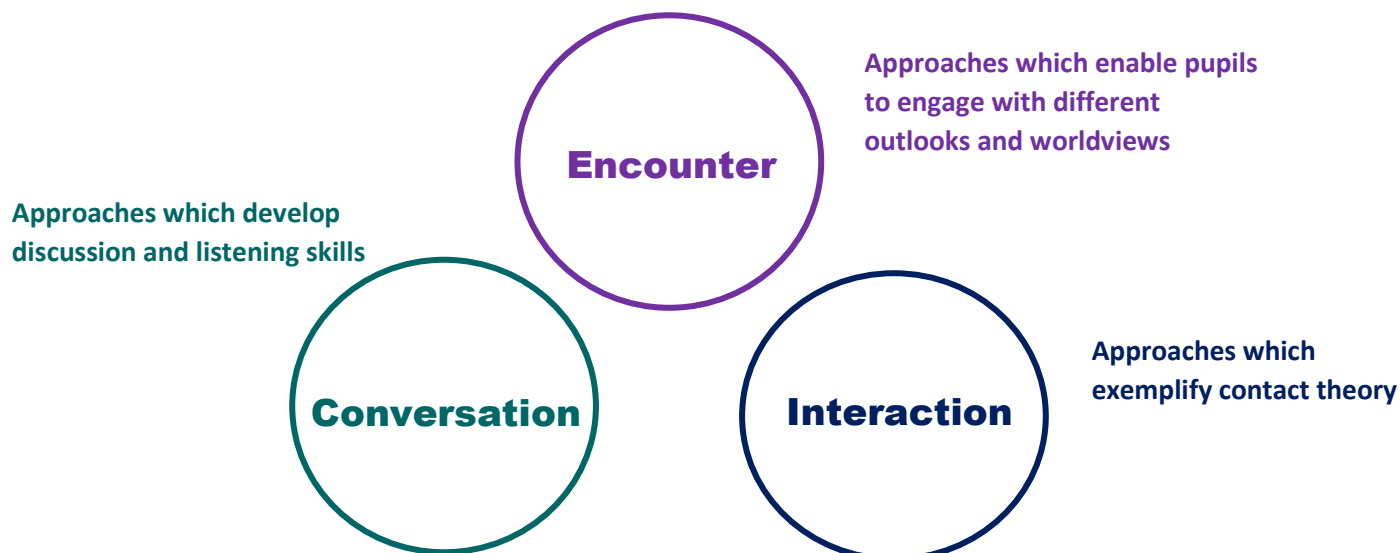
DR SHELLEY McKEOWN JONES, Senior Lecturer in Social Psychology, University of Bristol

CAN CONTACT THEORY SUPPORT RE?

Research to come out of The Shared Space Project suggests a qualified 'yes' in response to this question, which is the aim behind this toolkit. Some teachers of RE are following contact theory principles and improving community relations in their classrooms, whether consciously or not. However many activities meant to promote better community relations in RE do not meet the requirements of contact principles (see the four conditions on p. 1) suggesting that they do not promote community relations as actively or positively as they might, were those principles observed. The researchers found evidence of activities in RE which offer pupils a chance to talk to each other but which are not planned with contact principles in mind, so that the purpose and desired outcome of talk is not established or assessed (Williams, McKeown, Orchard and Wright, work in progress). Further, if wider institutional support is not in place (the fourth contact principle), efforts made by teachers of RE to promote community relations in isolation are likely to be limited in impact. The aim of promoting community relations needs to be a whole-school priority, promoted across the curriculum, resourced adequately and supported by society at large. It cannot and should not be seen as the exclusive responsibility of RE (see Orchard 2015 for further details).

WAYS TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN RE FOLLOWING CONTACT THEORY

Three approaches to promoting community relations found in the RE classroom are highlighted below before a consideration of the importance of whole-school initiatives following contact theory principles.



Researchers and teachers involved in The Shared Space Project suggest that accidental or informal contact between pupils in RE is a first step in allowing positive contact to take place. The findings suggest that teachers regularly embed **conversation** into their practice but structured **interaction** along contact theory lines is less common. Therefore it is proposed that if interaction is embedded more consistently then it is likely that conversation will become more effective in contributing to community relations. Some teachers only appear to be bringing **encounter** to the classroom without going further into an exploration of multiple views or areas of disagreement. Contact theory suggests that encounter on its own will not promote better community relations.

We propose that for RE to contribute to community relations most effectively all three of these approaches should be developed in the RE classroom.

For decades, research has demonstrated that under the correct conditions (as outlined by contact theory), interacting with diverse others can reduce racial/ethnic prejudice. But little attention has been given to how the spaces that people experience daily might meet these conditions. RE's focus on community relations presents an exciting opportunity to bridge the gap between research and practice by allowing us to work closely with teachers to help them apply contact theory to their classrooms.

DR AMANDA WILLIAMS, Lecturer in Psychology, University of Bristol

DOES THIS APPLY TO ALL CLASSROOMS AND ALL TEACHERS?

In a word, yes. Contact theory is particularly relevant to any teacher attempting to encourage more interaction between self-segregating groups. Further, the principles of contact do not only apply to cultural or religious difference but other kinds too. Classrooms may also be divided by gender, socio-economic status and ability.

Positive contact, as Allport found in 1954, requires more than just physical proximity. It requires that members of different groups can work on a genuinely collaborative, shared task and that they have equal status. This sort of structured contact is unlikely to happen outside the classroom in a structured, deliberate way. Therefore positive contact is something all teachers can think about enabling.

At its heart RE aims to enable pupils to encounter different worldviews. But if this encounter is to be truly meaningful pupils need to develop positive attitudes towards diversity regardless of whether this diversity is encountered in the lesson topic or socially through the different groups present in the classroom, school or wider world. This report provides guidance on what kinds of strategies teachers can use to help achieve this goal. It is both timely and practical, and it is therefore a must have for all who wish to enable pupils to be truly religiously literate.

RACHAEL JACKSON-ROYAL, Head of RE and NATRE Executive member

We have long claimed a critical and distinctive role for RE in promoting dialogue between people from different religious and cultural backgrounds. Contact theory may help us better understand how that happens.

DR JANET ORCHARD, Senior Lecturer and RE PGCE Tutor, University of Bristol

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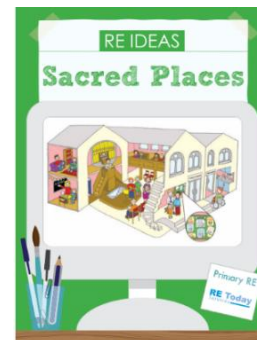
A. Encounter: primary

Visiting a place of worship

- Make a special place in the classroom.
- Go to a special place and record pupils' thoughts and observations.

The mosque for KS1: learn about these things before your visit: shoe rack, prayer hall, prayer mats, washing area.

KS2: the above, plus: teaching room, *Qiblah* wall, dome and prayer timetable. Learn how different people have different roles in the mosque. Find out what the Qur'an and *Hadith* say about praying and the purpose of a mosque. Find out about festivals celebrated in the mosque and about *zakah* in the mosque.



RE Ideas: Sacred Places, 2014
shop.natre.org.uk/
9781905893850

Hello, I am Imran. At this mosque I am a hafiz. This means that I have spent many hours learning to memorise the words of Allah, the Holy Qur'an. This helps me to be closer to Allah because I have his words in my head all the time.

As-salaam aleikum! I am Wasim and I am the imam at this mosque. My job is most importantly to lead people in the five daily prayers. I stand at the front and help Muslims to submit to Allah by praying together. At Friday prayers I give a short sermon or khutba.

In houses [of worship] which Allah has permitted to be built so that His name may be remembered in them; there glorify Him in the mornings and the evenings. (Qur'an 24:36)

God's mosques should only be tended by one who believes in God and the Last Day, and is constant in prayer, and gives Zakat [charity], and stands in awe of none but God: for only such a person may hope to be among the rightly-guided! (Qur'an 9:18)

Wherever the hour of prayer overtakes you, you shall perform it. That place is a mosque. (Hadith)



Note that **Mary Myatt** suggests that teachers should go beyond 'surface' understandings of a place of worship, and allow a deeper engagement with meaning, such as through an artefact which unlocks deeper meaning for worshippers.

(Myatt, M. (2018), 'Making the Case for More Demanding Religious Education', *We Need to Talk about Religious Education* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers).)

Encountering beliefs

- Explore the roots of belief, e.g. Muhammad's revelation in Cave Hira, the events of the Exodus or how Prince Siddhartha became a Buddha.
- Use stories to dig into beliefs, such as stories about Muhammad, the Judeo-Christian prophets, Jesus, the Sikh Gurus and the Buddha. Tell stories of the Hindu Gods which reveal Hindu belief, such as stories about Ganesha or Krishna.
- Use the art of a tradition to communicate beliefs, such as Trinitarian art in Christianity, the 99 names of God in Islam and representations of Brahma and *samsara* in Hinduism.

Encountering practices

Dig into the history and context of religious communities through festivals. For example:

- Compare pictures of the Hindu festival of Holi, or Sikh processions in India and Britain. What is similar or different? Explore religions as having cultural histories and diverse contexts.
- Compare home worship, such as Hindu shrines or Jewish *Shabbat*, with worship in a special building. Ask questions about what makes a place sacred. Find out about why people like to worship in a special building, and why others feel home is the most special place of all.

Encountering artefacts

This Teachers TV video (on YouTube) offers a 'suitcase' technique to help children engage with items that can be touched and handled. Children investigate for clues and generate questions which can then be answered. Although this clip is presented for history lessons, it could be equally valuable for RE. Pack the suitcase as for a child going to visit family members for Diwali or Christmas, or a young person going on their first Eid, or another site of pilgrimage. www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrsbWnRFLg (first five minutes)

A related technique is to use Persona Dolls; large figures who can introduce the class to children from religious backgrounds. The doll can show items to the class to generate questions and interest. Many Persona Dolls are sold on the NATRE website, as well as a book on using Persona Dolls by Shahne Vickery: shop.natre.org.uk/find/persona+dolls/1

Encountering text

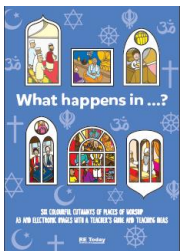
This Teachers TV clip shows a teacher at a Jewish primary school using a technique to enable his Year 6 pupils to engage deeply with layers of meaning in the story of Abraham. This technique could be used for any story you are confident to delve deeply into: www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBYGBhA0w-M

Encountering beliefs and practices

Meet Kian, a 10-year-old Bahá'í, in this downloadable interview:

www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Free%20Resources/Meet%20Kian%20-%20a%20Bahai.pdf

If you have a Twinkl account, there are several KS1 Bahá'í information resources. Search 'Baha'i'.



Grab a copy of RE Today's places of worship book, *What happens in ...?* Explore places of worship and pick up practical teaching ideas. shop.retoday.org.uk/9781910261309

RE Today's *Share a Story With...* is an excellent introduction to beliefs for 4–7s. Buy it at: shop.natre.org.uk/978190589392



Find out about a 'Multifaith RE day' in a rural school in Hertfordshire. As the article explains, 'This event report shows what a fearless approach to diversity can achieve, in a county some might think of as 'white'':

www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Free%20Resources/Multi%20Faith%20Conference.pdf

TrueTube: 'A Day in the Life' (register with TrueTube for free to watch)

A day in the life of a Christian vicar: www.truetube.co.uk/film/day-life-christian-vicar. This video is best suited to UKS2 as the priest explains the difference between words like 'priest', 'vicar', 'minister' and the names of priestly clothes, and so on. This is an excellent video to define common Christian words.

A day in the life of a Buddhist monk: www.truetube.co.uk/film/day-life-buddhist-monk. Although this is labelled as KS3 it is appropriate for a UK2 class, to allow them to see Buddhist life and practice in a UK context. Take it slowly and pause the video to define words. The class will find out that this Buddhist monk only eats one meal a day and has not had any money for 17 years, as well as many other interesting facts and meanings.

BBC Bitesize

Separated into KS1 and 2 and subdivided into religions, BBC Bitesize is a rich resource. Incorporate clips to encounter religious teachings and stories, such as this animated Diwali story: www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/ztrfqhv, or meet real children, such as two Jewish girls explaining how they get ready for *Shabbat*:

www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/zs2hyrd

A. Encounter: secondary

Enabling a deep engagement with practice and belief

Encountering worldviews

- Explore the origins of a religion or worldview to understand its roots. Students might understand a religion or worldview as a solution to a particular set of political, social and spiritual concerns. For example, the roots of Islam lie in the turmoil of the seventh century as tribal life changed. Muhammad's Islam can be seen as a reform movement spiritually uniting the Arab tribes.
- Provide a cultural or geographical context to a worldview. For example, set British Sikhi in a cultural context; Asian roots, British Asian present. Find out about Partition and Sikhs coming to the UK after WW2. Set British Judaism in context by finding out about the history of Jews in Britain, first brought over by Oliver Cromwell. Explore Jewish home-based practices against a context of persecution Jews suffered in public.

Check out RE Today's new secondary series, 'Examining religion and belief' focusing on a systematic understanding of beliefs, diversity and analysis.



Encountering media

For up-to-date and stimulating videos, quizzes and games, look no further than TrueTube (www.truetube.co.uk). It is free to register and contains a huge selection of stimuli to explore current issues and questions.

Encountering belief in action

Christian Aid offers six lessons specifically geared towards Christianity at GCSE, such as church and mission. These lessons, created with RE Today, allow a direct engagement with the work of Christian Aid, as well as supporting learning at GCSE: www.christianaid.org.uk/schools/gcse-resources-re

Encountering citizenship

Use BBC Bitesize Citizenship GCSE resources to add texture to lessons covering identity, ethics and values. For example, find out about a family seeking asylum (section: 'Citizenship in the UK'), or the impact of social housing and education on income inequality (section 'Diversity in the UK'): www.bbc.co.uk/education/subjects/z3ckjxs

Encountering the visual

Use art and expression to access beliefs, practices and concepts in traditions, for example:

- beliefs about the nature of the Universe and enlightenment expressed through Buddhist *mandalas*
- the Humanist 'Happy Human' logo

How are images created to express complex ideas?

Encountering beliefs

- Explore a diverse range of practices as a way to learn about both core belief and variations of belief.
- For example, the Protestant iconoclasm compared to the Catholic use of the senses in worship.
- Find out about changing norms, such as female members of the *panj piare* in Sikh processions or wearing *dastaar* (a turban), and what this can tell students about religious ethics in the modern world.

A new and completely **FREE** resource, *Reforming Christianity*, explores the history of Reformation ideas and the roots of Protestant Christianity.

Comprised of six KS2, KS3 and KS4 lessons, this practical and classroom-ready resource allows a deeper engagement with Christian belief and practice.

www.freechurches.org.uk/reforming-christianity/

Encountering history

Use **BBC Bitesize History** clips to help put beliefs and into context when teaching. These clips follow the National Curriculum for History or GCSE requirement. Examples of overlap:

- **The Roman Empire** when teaching about early Christianity.
- **The Crusades** when exploring the roots of Islamophobia in Europe.
- **The British Empire** when considering Islam, Hinduism, Sikhi or Buddhism in a South Asian context.

B. Interaction: general

Using the principles of contact theory (see p. 1) to enable structured and meaningful interactions to take place.

Corrymeela Community

The **Corrymeela Community**, in Northern Ireland, was founded in 1965 by a chaplain in Belfast, concerned at the growing hatred and division between Protestant and Catholic groups in Northern Ireland.

Over the years Corrymeela has become a place where diverse groups can learn to break down barriers and share their thoughts, with a vision to build peace and common humanity and overturn barriers that keep people apart.

Find out about their work on www.corrymeela.org

For GCSE teachers, Corrymeela is mentioned in some specifications as an example of a Christian community addressing conflict.

Dr Derick Wilson, Corrymeela Community

Dr Derick Wilson, of the University of Ulster and co-chair of Corrymeela's Programme Development Committee, suggests that contact principles can be useful, although understanding the context and roots of conflict is as important as interpersonal contact.

Over the years Wilson has come to see that to move beyond prejudice born of conflict people must stop having 'polite' conversations, where the sensitive issues are glossed over, but be prepared to explore painful territory. This requires trust, and so a space where trust is possible must be created. Corrymeela attempts to create a space where people can meet as unique individuals, where their background and community is only part of their identity.

Wilson argues that understanding the process of 'scapegoating' is essential. A scapegoat is created to take the blame for society's problems, when the situation is usually hugely complex and blame lies in many quarters. Understanding and identifying scapegoating also helps people move beyond prejudice.

Wilson's work has led him to see that people must be prepared to critique aspects of their own culture or context if necessary in order to understand the roots of conflict and begin to overcome them.

For the educator, Wilson's work points to the need to both be aware of levels of trust and relationships of power in a learning environment, but also the need for honesty and courage in teaching difficult and sensitive information accurately, for deep understanding to be gained.

www.jigsaw.org

Jigsaw: a classroom-based approach that aims to 'reduce racial conflict among schoolchildren'. Go to this website to read about the systematic techniques to effect collaborative learning and conversation across groups.

The approach is based on psychologist Eliot Aronson's experience of working with mixed racial groups in Texas in the 1970s. It is designed for direct practical use.

This website offers practical examples of jigsaw working: www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/using-jigsaw-cooperative-learning-30599.html

St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace

This centre is designed to help diverse groups of people get together and talk in a meaningful way. Painful subjects are not avoided.

Find out about the centre and the work it does. What techniques does it employ? Can any techniques be introduced to your classroom?

Even better – plan a visit!

Research into seating plans and pupil interaction

Research studies offer useful insights for classroom teachers. By raising awareness and changing classroom seating plans, there is potential to improve intergroup relations. For example, placing students who do not like each other together can have positive outcomes through encouraging meaningful intergroup contact.

One psychology study began with children rating their classmates' likeability. For several weeks pupils were placed closer to those they did not like. After the period pupils reported more friendly feelings towards those they had previously rated in negative terms. The study suggests that having the opportunity for interpersonal contact can lessen feelings of negativity.

(Van den Berg, V., Segers, E. and Cillessen, A. (2012), 'Changing peer perceptions and victimization through classroom arrangements: A field experiment', *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 40.)

A different study found that pupils who were paired by the teacher reported increased levels of friendship after working together for some time. This seems to be in line with contact theory, suggesting that positive collaboration can increase positive feelings towards others. Moreover, once pupils knew each other, distance didn't seem to affect likeability. Pupils choose their own seating arrangements at break and lunch, and tend to avoid those they do not like, decreasing the opportunity for contact. Taken together these findings seem to point to teachers' ability to improve interpersonal relations through careful use of seating plans.

(Van den Berg, V. and Cillessen, A. (2015), 'Peer status and classroom seating arrangements: A social relations analysis', *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 130.)

Intergroup contact in British Islam

Aliya Azam and Deborah Weston, teachers at two London schools, created the opportunity for their Shi'ah and Sunni pupils to meet.

Aliya's school, the al-Sadiq and al-Zahra school in West London, is a Shi'a Muslim faith school. Deborah's school, Mulberry School for Girls, is a secular maintained school where the majority of families come from Sunni Muslim backgrounds with a Bangladeshi cultural heritage.

The girls met in controlled conditions. They engaged in 'warm-up' conversations, explored similarities between their traditions and discussed difficult differences, as Deborah and Aliya's carefully planned session led them deeper and deeper into trust and communication.

The aim was to enable the girls to go beyond labels and see the person underneath. The girls enjoyed their similarities and were able to explore their differences, and also came to see they shared another identity as young, British, Muslim women in a cosmopolitan city.

Would something similar be possible in your school, or across two schools in your area?

The full article, including details of activities, can be found in *Teaching Citizenship*, Issue 44, Autumn 2016.

The Linking Network

Based in Bradford, the Linking Network directly links schools from different communities, as well as trains teachers in contact principles in order to inform their planning and future work in the classroom.

Teachers with a good understanding of contact principles are more aware of power relationships and the ways personal interactions can decrease prejudice.

Meg Henry, Director of the Linking Network, gave this advice about applying contact principles to the classroom:

- Teachers need time and space to learn and explore contact principles. I.e., they need specific training!
- **Meaningful interaction** happens when pupils learn about each other *from* each other. This must be planned for; it will not happen by accident.
- Contact principles require **equal status** of the pupils. Therefore the teacher must give thought in advance to (a) the power differentials in the classroom and (b) how to create a more equal environment. For example, teachers can be aware of presenting white, British culture as the norm and other cultures as a variation, or make an effort to always pronounce non-European names accurately.
- There must be genuine co-operation and collaboration in tasks set. Group activities should be planned with this in mind; are all children actively engaged, do children need to co-operate? For example, a competitive game might lead to some children overriding others in order to win.
- The teacher is not alone. In order for contact to be an ongoing, successful venture, the teacher must be supported by an SLT and given time to develop thinking and planning.

I believe we should ...

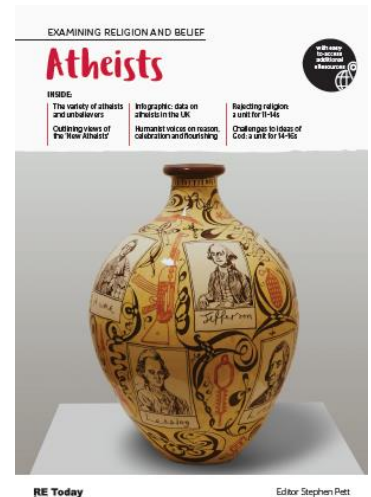
This game, designed by Lat Blaylock, is an example of a fun and engaging way for pupils to interact in the classroom. This version is called 'I believe we should ...', and it explores the territory between religious and non-religious beliefs. Other versions, available from RE Today, get pupils talking about values, ethical questions such as peace and conflict or philosophical questions such as evil and suffering.

A game like this sets the scene for positive contact. It requires pupils to listen and respond to each other, as well as articulate their own views or values. It provides a good starting point to engage in structured contact.

How to play:

- 1) Enlarge the board on p. 10 to A3 and give one to each group.
- 2) Produce the worldview cards (below) for each group.
- 3) Pupils take it in turns to place cards, following the instructions at the bottom of the board.

Find this game in *Examining religion and belief: Atheists*, published in 2018 by RE Today. See shop.retoday.org.uk/9781910261286

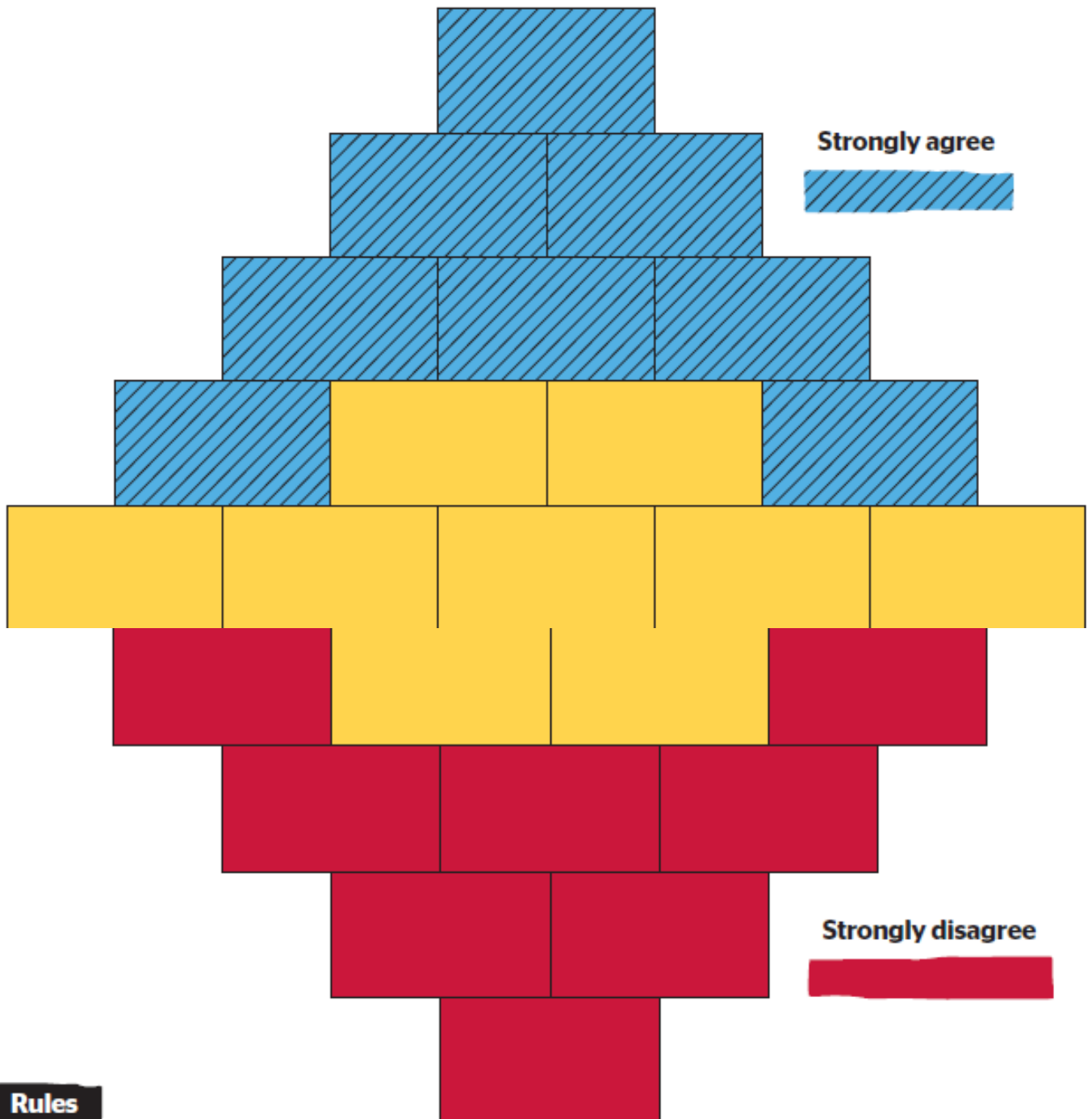


Worldview cards

Respect freedom and live a free life	Invent the meaning of life ourselves. No one else can tell us	Live for the one life we have. Afterlife? Not a chance	Do to other people as we would like them to do to us	Be rational
Question everything. Don't accept ancient authorities	Take an active part in improving the world	Expect religion to decline all over the world in the twenty-first-century	Abolish schools with a religious character	Trust science; don't trust anyone who says 'God told me ...'
Make public life more secular: no privileges for religion	Be good without God	Live a life of love	Expect to see our loved ones again when we die	Trust God
Reject religious traditions and authority: think for yourself	Be spiritual, but not religious	If we feel thankful, then worship	Take time to pray	Believe in ourselves and our power to make a better world
Ban parents from raising kids to follow their religion	Recognise that both religion and atheism have a big future	Have faith	Be open-minded about God and religion	Argue against all forms of religion and seek to end religions

'I believe we should ...'

A discussion game about your worldview



Rules

- 1 Put your group's 25 cards in a deck, facing downward.
- 2 In turn, read out a card, starting each card with: 'I believe we should ...'. Ask the other players one by one: 'Where would you put it? Why?' Listen to them.
- 3 Ignore them. Put the card where it goes for you.
- 4 When it is your turn you can **move a card** up or down as well as **putting a new one down**.
- 5 There should be no overlapping cards. One card per rectangle.
- 6 When the board is full, the next person swaps two cards and says why. Play like this three times more around the group.
- 7 Then ask your teacher for a written task to follow up the discussion to help you clarify the arguments and to enable you to state your own views, with reasons.

B. Interaction: primary

What does the research and work above mean for the primary classroom?

HISTORY: the work of Corrymeela suggests that understanding the roots of conflict is as important as bringing people together in moving beyond conflict.

For example, find out about the differences between Sunni and Shi'ah in Islam or Protestant and Catholic groups in Christianity. This BBC resource on Sunni and Shi'ah is helpful for the teacher: www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z373wmn. The *Reforming Christianity* resource (notes on p. 6) offers the roots of the two churches for the KS2 classroom.

SEATING PLANS: two research studies (see p. 8) suggest that where teachers place pupils can have a positive impact on their personal relationships. Watch the class and record your impressions as well as any information the children volunteer. Decide which pupils you wish to move and why, making a note of your intention. Make the move and continue to monitor, recording your observations. After a set period look at your notes to assess any changes. Deborah Weston and Aliya Azam's experiment with direct interaction is a good example.

TEACHER EDUCATION: Meg Henry of the Linking Network is clear that teachers need time to learn and explore contact principles before they are able to try out ideas. You might invite a speaker to a staff meeting, ask a member of staff to do some research and feedback, or read through this toolkit as a year group team. Staff should learn, discuss and plan together. Contact principles require a good knowledge of your pupils' background or identity, any issues that may exist between groups in school, such as Sunni and Shi'ah, and any social imbalances, such as between richer and poorer pupils.

TALKING ABOUT DIVERSITY: research has shown that children as young as 4 can benefit from stories and discussions that value racial or ethnic diversity. Immediately after hearing a story that presented diversity as something valuable and supported by corresponding classroom discussion, children in Reception and Year 1 classes were more likely to sit next to their racially or ethnically diverse peers (McKeown, Williams and Pauker 2017).

Teachers use group work to encourage diverse peers to learn from each other as a way of promoting meaningful contact in the classroom (Williams, McKeown, Orchard and Wright, work in progress).

SHELLY MCKEOWN JONES AND
AMANDA WILLIAMS

B. Interaction: secondary

What does the research and work above mean for the secondary classroom?

CONTEXT: the insights of Derick Wilson of the Corrymeela Community suggest that simply bringing people together without addressing the underlying causes of prejudice or mistrust is not a complete solution. While you may not have members of specific communities who experience conflict in your classroom, you can teach context and history to help the whole class understand the roots causes of conflict. For example, when teaching about Gandhi or Martin Luther King’s non-violent resistance, set their struggles in the historical and political contexts of the British Raj and the civil rights era. Look at the National Curriculum or GCSE History and Citizenship pages on BBC Bitesize to find clips which put events into context, such as Israel and Palestine, the Reformation era and early Christianity in Europe.

Derick Wilson’s work suggests that painful and controversial issues should not be avoided if students are to make sense of them. Think about techniques to allow openness and trust in your classroom. Do all students feel able to ask questions and volunteer answers, and feel safe from personal comments, for example? Do you give time and space to discuss difficult and complicated topics, allowing that confusion and disagreement might well occur and are able to help the class manage their emotions?

INTERACTION: interaction does seem to have positive results, as seen through the seating plan studies (below) and the original contact hypothesis (p. 1). However, where students are placed must be planned and monitored. Think about what you wish to achieve with a change in seating plan, such as increased academic performance or improved personal relationships. Once you have established your aim and made the change, monitor the outcomes systematically.

SEATING PLANS: research shows that in early adolescence, students from diverse backgrounds do not always interact well with one another in schools and classrooms (McKeown, Stringer and Cairns 2016), but that it is possible to change behaviour and attitudes through getting adolescents to engage with each other in a meaningful way (McKeown, Cairns, Stringer and Rae 2012).

TEACHER EDUCATION: it seems clear from the work of the Linking Network that working with contact principles first requires understanding. Therefore teachers need time to learn and discuss. The research studies suggested in this toolkit could be read in a department meeting. Members of the team might like to try a small action research project or make contact with St Ethelburga’s, the Linking Network or Corrymeela to discuss application.

Teachers use seating plans that encourage diverse peers to sit next to each other as a way of fostering positive community relations in the classroom (Williams, McKeown, Orchard and Wright, work in progress).

SHELLY MCKEOWN JONES AND
AMANDA WILLIAMS

McKeown, S., Stringer, M. and Cairns, E. (2016), 'Classroom segregation: where do students sit and how is this related to group relations?' *British Educational Research Journal*, 42(1).

McKeown, S., Cairns, E., Stringer, M. and Rae, G. (2012), 'Micro-ecological behaviour and intergroup contact' *Journal of Social Psychology*, 152.

C. Conversation: general

Contact theory suggests that talk needs to go beyond the superficial and address deep or divisive issues. What techniques can permit this deeper talk with children?

a) Get them talking

Techniques to start conversation:

WALKING DEBATE

Prepare a short questionnaire exploring pupils' attitudes to an issue.

Provide three to four questions and a scale of opinion, from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

Pupils fill out the questionnaire according to their own opinions, then must find three other people who have different opinions. They find these by walking around the classroom.

After this, sit pupils in groups of opinion rather than their usual seats.

SILENT DISCUSSION

Choose four to eight images, stick them on large pieces of paper and place them on table tops. Groups move in silence from table to table, adding notes in the following colours:

- Red for questions.
- Green for comments.
- Blue for answers and comments in response to peers.

This allows all pupils to offer their thoughts. The notes can be kept and referred to in later discussion.

FRUIT SALAD

Stand pupils either in one large circle or small circles.

Ask a 'true/false' or a 'yes/no' question around your topic. Pupils who answer 'true' or 'yes' must swap in the circle, and pupils who answer 'false' or 'no' stay where they are.

Ask two more questions, allowing time to swap places again.

Ask pupils to discuss their thoughts so far with whoever they are now standing next to.

Repeat the question cycle one or two more times.

This is a good starter to get pupils thinking about a topic, and a good opportunity to encourage them to talk to those who they might not otherwise talk to.

SNOWFLAKE

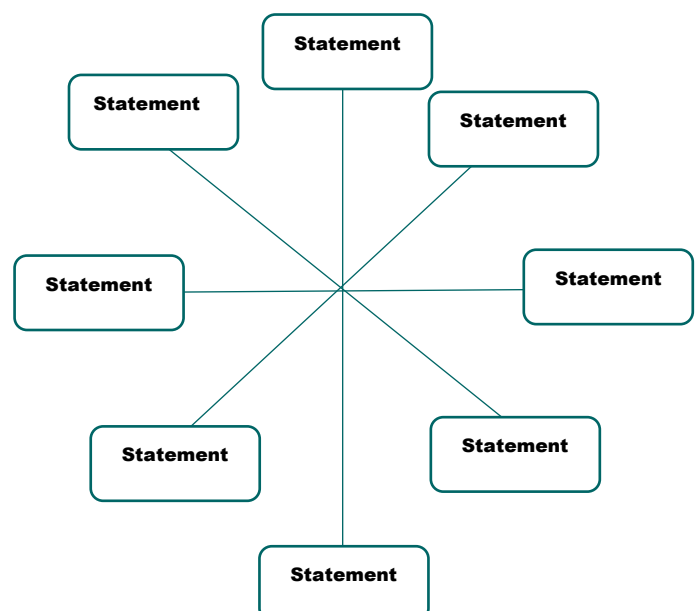
Create a 'snowflake' design. Create statements around either an issue or a values topic to go on each point, as the diagram shows. For example, 'We should never tell a lie.'

The more the pupil agrees with the statement, the closer they get to the statement. They place an 'x' as close to or as far away from the statement as they wish.

Once they have answered all six or eight questions, they connect their 'x's to make a shape.

Either send pupils to find someone with a similar shape to them, or a very different shape to them.

Use the snowflakes as a springboard to discussion.



b) Explore multiple viewpoints

TECHNIQUES

The 'jigsaw' approach (see p. 6) allows different views to be shared, whatever group pupils belong to.

This website contains lots of practical suggestions for exploring multiple viewpoints:

www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/multiple-perspectives-building-critical-30629.html?tab=4

'Six Thinking Hats' is used in business as well as the classroom:

www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_07.htm. Asking groups to solve a problem using six thinking hats shows pupils that there are different ways of thinking, and each one is important.

PAINFUL TOPICS

Contact theory suggests that painful topics should not be avoided, but techniques and planning can help students manage their feelings and remain friends.

From the 3 Faiths Forum (3FF): 'ouch' and 'oops'. In discussion pupils can call 'ouch' if a comment represents someone in a negative light. The person who has made the comment can think about what they mean to say and possibly adjust their language. Pupils can also call 'oops' if they realise they wish to rephrase. Everyone is allowed to call 'ouch' or 'oops' and the group will stop and listen.

Find out more about 3FF's work in schools: www.3ff.org.uk/schools/

c) Insights from RE

A recent collection of up-to-date thinking on RE offers some suggestions:

DIALOGUE

According to Mike Castelli, dialogue is a separate process to conversation or discussion and must be deliberately taught. However dialogue can offer a deeper understanding of religion and belief.

Dialogue requires:

HUMILITY: accepting that all ideas are a work in progress

SERIOUSNESS: taking the beliefs of others seriously

HESITATION: not judging too quickly, but pausing to think and listen

IMAGINATION: finding out about beliefs through the creative images used to express them

ARTICULATION: using religious words correctly when in dialogue about beliefs

Teachers can guide their classes to display these values and allow dialogue to occur.

(Castelli 2018)

'FACING THE STRANGE'

Phil Champain considers how far the RE classroom can allow painful or challenging ideas to be explored.

Champain suggests that religious people should be explored as individuals, so pupils do not think that 'all Christians are the same' or 'all Muslims think the same'.

RE lessons should:

- avoid generalising about faith and belief
- acknowledge that religious faith is part of a person's identity
- consider religious peoples' cultural and geographical origins as well as their beliefs

Practically, teachers need to encourage the following attitudes to allow exploration of messy and confusing ideas: respect, active listening, dialogue not debate, avoidance of generalisations, using 'oops-ouch' in discussions.

(Champain 2018)

A SAFE SPACE FOR UNSAFE IDEAS

Neil McKain asks why any topic should be off-limits in the classroom. He suggests that if some topics are avoided to avoid offending people, pupils will never be able to practice asking difficult questions and exploring difficult topics.

McKain also warns that avoiding difficult topics shows pupils that all opinions and beliefs are to be respected. He asks the teacher is this is the message we want our children to grow up believing.

McKain's argument is to allow difficult topics to be explored to allow children to develop their own view and to learn more fully about the world.

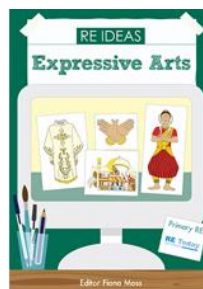
(McKain 2018)

C. Conversation: primary

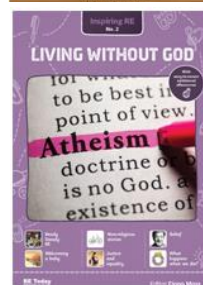
Topics for primary-age children, using the above techniques



For younger children, write simple questions on black sugar paper, ask them to paint their palm and create a handprint. They can either write or explain their answer. The different-coloured hands show children that there are many different views.



Older children can explore different interpretations of an issue, such as the debate about music in Islam. See *RE Ideas: Expressive Arts* from RE Today, 2016. shop.natre.org.uk/9781910261156



Older children can find out about different types of one outlook, such as different reasons for not believing in God, in RE Today's book on non-religious worldviews, *Inspiring RE: living without God*, 2018. shop.retoday.org.uk/9781910261279

Take advantage of resources and techniques used in Citizenship and PSHE, such as KS1 Citizenship, Community, and Respecting Differences. Apply these approaches to learning in RE, such as when encountering different views in the classroom.

How can the history curriculum support learning in RE? Use topics in history to deepen understanding in RE, such as Early Islamic Civilisations at KS2 to add texture to a study of Islam. Use historical techniques, such as interpreting evidence (KS1 and 2), to assist children in managing multiple interpretations.

Check out the 3 Faiths Forum's 'Tools for Dialogue', where children are introduced to different perspectives on the same idea: www.3ff.org.uk/schools/tools-4-trialogue.php

DIFFERENT CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

Primary and secondary

Check out this FREE resource for KS2, KS3 and KS4: *Reforming Christianity*. Comprised of six KS2, KS3 and KS4 lessons, it helps pupils understand the difference between Catholic and Protestant beliefs in an age-appropriate way. A practical and classroom-ready resource for exploring multiple perspectives within Christianity: www.freechurches.org.uk/reforming-christianity/

C. Conversation: secondary

Some suggested topics for secondary-age students:

Take advantage of the educational resources produced by Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org.uk). Use their many case studies and true stories to add texture and depth to discussions of moral issues, such as the experiences of refugees or the use of the death penalty around the world, as well as up-to-date facts and figures about global migration, asylum and human rights abuses. Use Amnesty's case studies to introduce questions of gender or cultural exclusion to offer more contextualised learning about the world and moral issues.

Help your classes to find out the roots of present conflict to understand today's world in more depth. For example, teach the roots of the Sunni–Shi'ah division in KS3, so by KS4 students can discuss Islamic perspectives with increased knowledge. This BBC iWonder resource is a good place to start: www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z373wmn

Sign up for free to TrueTube (www.truetube.co.uk) for a huge collection of classroom-focused media clips exploring themes of community, conflict, belief and identity. For example, this 9-minute dramatised conversation between two young men reveals challenging ideas about prejudice, racism and extremism: www.truetube.co.uk/film/extremists



Check out RE Today's new series of practical, supportive teaching books. Each issue presents subdivisions within the faith studied, and contains classroom-focused information and teaching ideas for exploring different perspectives or interpretations within the religion. The first four issues are:

Muslims (2017), Atheists (2018), Buddhists (2018) and Christians (2018)

D. Wider support for positive contact: general

WIDER SUPPORT FOR ENCOUNTERS, CONVERSATIONS AND INTERACTIONS

As Allport maintained, opportunities for positive contact rely on a supportive institutional environment: they don't happen in a vacuum. RE is most likely to promote good community relations where the work done by teachers is supported by and complements wider, whole-school commitment to the issue. This is why senior leadership support for contact in the classroom is a key feature of the teacher training offered through the Linking Network (see p. 8). Many of the ideas contained in this toolkit would be difficult to promote without their support and encouragement. RE does have a distinctive contribution to make, for example teaching pupils about religious communities like Corrymeela and St Ethelburga's as environments deliberately created to promote positive intergroup contact. However, in schools which value diversity and positive intergroup relationships, encounter, conversation and interaction can and should be taking place, and positive contact promoted through teaching and learning approaches in all curriculum subjects.

It is also clear from the research and experience presented in this toolkit that difficult questions must not be avoided where dealing with people's differences is concerned; another factor requiring a whole-school culture of support. Difficult and uncertain processes cannot be left up to individual teachers. The whole staff should be engaged in planning for, implementing and monitoring opportunities for contact in the classroom, either through staff meetings or CPD. As this toolkit shows, positive contact might not happen by accident, but with planning and forethought teachers are well-placed to engage pupils in structured conversations that go beyond the superficial.

Therefore teachers wishing to bring contact principles into their classroom should seek structural and senior support, both for the enterprise itself and if difficult situations arise in the future.

Below are two examples of positive contact which could occur in and beyond the RE classroom as a result of wider educational and institutional support.

GENERATION GLOBAL: RE WITHIN A CROSS-/EXTRA-CURRICULAR INITIATIVE

Aiming to enable students aged 12–17 to engage in 'meaningful dialogue on difficult issues', Generation Global is an online platform to connect young people from around the world for dialogue and mutual learning.

Before video-conferencing peers overseas, students learn about the art of dialogue itself, to ensure their time together offers maximum potential for listening and learning. Teachers are supported through resources and trained facilitators. Find out more at [generation.global](https://www.generationglobal.org/)

LITTLE HEATH SCHOOL: OUTSTANDING RE IN AN OUTSTANDING SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Supporting around 200 pupils with moderate to severe learning needs, including autistic spectrum disorders, Little Heath School sets out to empower 'caring and respectful young adults with a sense of belonging and purpose'.

The school is an example of dedication to pupils' flourishing, where social and emotional development is as important as academic performance. In such an environment, senior and structural support is crucial. RE is a key subject in the school, where pupils find rich meaning in religious stories, but all subjects contribute to pupils' flourishing, including cooking, art and communication.

In this example, positive contact, genuine collaboration and equal status are central to school life. However Little Heath's aim is not to meet contact principles, it is to furnish young people with the skills and capacities needed to contribute and thrive as adults in their community. Contact principles are met as a result of this wider aim, reflecting the importance of whole-school engagement and ethos.

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The Shared Space Team

The Shared Space Team comprises researchers and practitioners engaged in exploring the links between RE and good community relations. Our team is as follows:

- Kate Christopher taught RE in schools for 11 years and has been an adviser with RE Today since 2014.
- Dr Rachael Jackson-Royal is Head of RE at King Edwards High School for Girls in Birmingham and serves on the NATRE Executive committee.
- Dr Janet Orchard, a former RE teacher and adviser, is now Senior Lecturer and RE PGCE Tutor at the University of Bristol.
- Dr Shelley McKeown Jones is a Senior Lecturer in Social Psychology at the University of Bristol
- Dr Amanda Williams is a Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Bristol
- Dr Kathryn Wright is an independent RE consultant working mainly for the Diocese of Norwich and Culham St Gabriel's Trust.

Contact Us

We'd love to hear from you.

- Have you used the toolkit?
- Are you interested in using the toolkit?
- Do you have ideas about how to adapt the toolkit?
- Do you want to know more about how to evaluate if the toolkit works?

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