

Preparing for life in Britain today

The contribution of RE
York 2017

Recent developments

- Major reports in 2015:
 - ‘A New Settlement’
 - ‘Living with Difference’
 - ‘RE for Real’
- Adding to:
 - RE Review, 2013
 - Signposts – Council of Europe
 - Religious Literacy – APPG report

The Commission on RE



Members

- One Chair – Very Rev Dr John Hall
- Five RE academics
- Four teachers/head teachers
- Two education organisations: governors and Ofsted
- One journalist
- One lawyer

Staff/observers

- Project manager – Jon Reynolds
- Drafter – Amira Chilvers
- REC CEO - Rudi Elliott Lockhart
- REC Chair – Prof Trevor Cooling

Remit of the Commission:

- To consider the **nature, purposes, and scope** of religious education.
- To identify the enabling factors that currently promote **high quality RE**, and the barriers that currently limit it.
- To identify what **changes** are needed to ensure the highest quality provision of RE.
- To ensure that **recommendations** focus on realistic and specific proposals aimed at both immediate and long-term implementation in the context of continuing educational reform.

Key issues

- The quality of teaching and learning
- The legal and structural arrangements
- The public and professional profile
- Recruitment, ITE and CPD
- The age range and school settings?
- The right to withdraw?
- A common entitlement in RE?

So far...

- Two meetings of Commissioners, 3 - 4 November 2016 and 30-31 March 2017
- Online call for written evidence – closed 13 February. More than 2,000 submissions
- Two expert/ public evidence gathering sessions, London, February 2017 and Birmingham, May 2017

'State of the nation'

- REC/NATRE joint survey of all 4,500 state-funded secondary schools
- Data collection: February 2017
- 'Snapshot of compliance' showing:
 - Best practice
 - Innovation
 - Under-performance
- Publication of analysis: summer term 2017

Future Commission plans...

- Three more regional public evidence gathering sessions – Manchester, Exeter and North East
- Visits to schools, SACREs etc
- Other evidence, as required/requested
- Four more meetings of the Commission
- Interim report, September 2017
- Final report, Summer 2018

Aspiration

“...I have made reference to Schools Council Working Paper 36 published in 1971. This is the closest parallel to... CoRE that I can think of. It was a game-changer in its impact and framed the modern approach to RE with its championing of a then pioneering multifaith approach. This had huge consequences for both teachers and policy makers.”

Prof. Trevor Cooling, Chair, REC

PART TWO

- The rest of this presentation addresses some of the key questions raised by the title of the conference.
- The following slides reflect my thoughts and questions.
- They DO NOT represent the views of the Commission.

RE Today

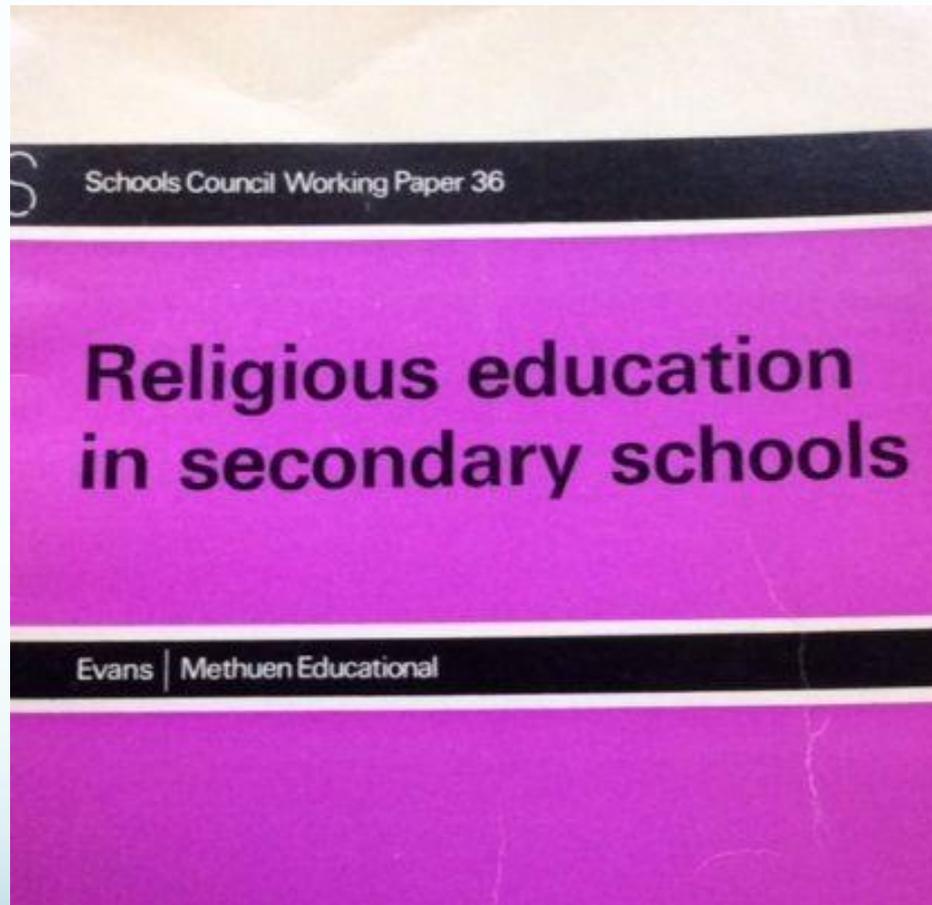
Some key personal drivers:

- Shap
- Working Paper 36
- Agreed Syllabus construction - five syllabuses in three LAs
- Age and experience!

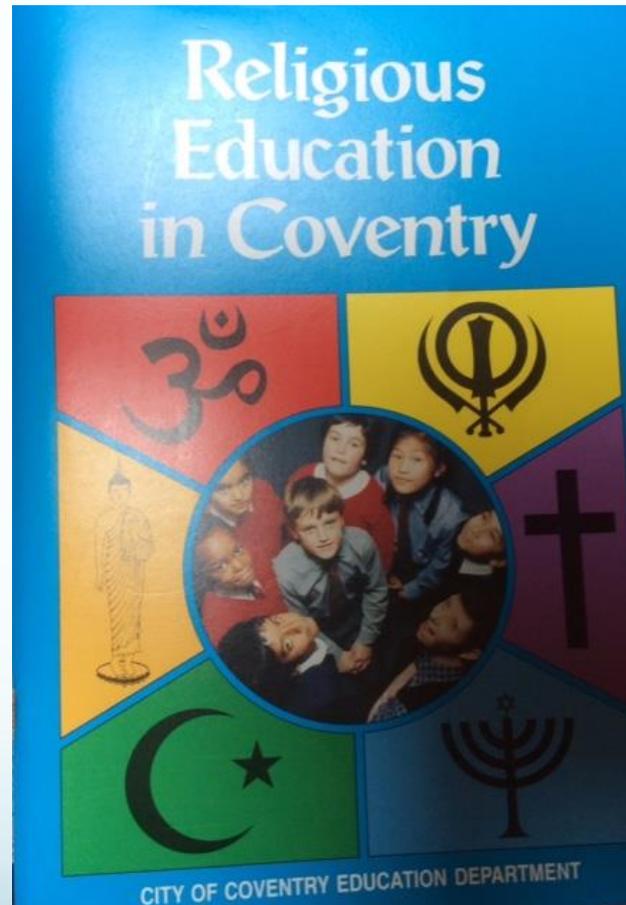
Teacher education



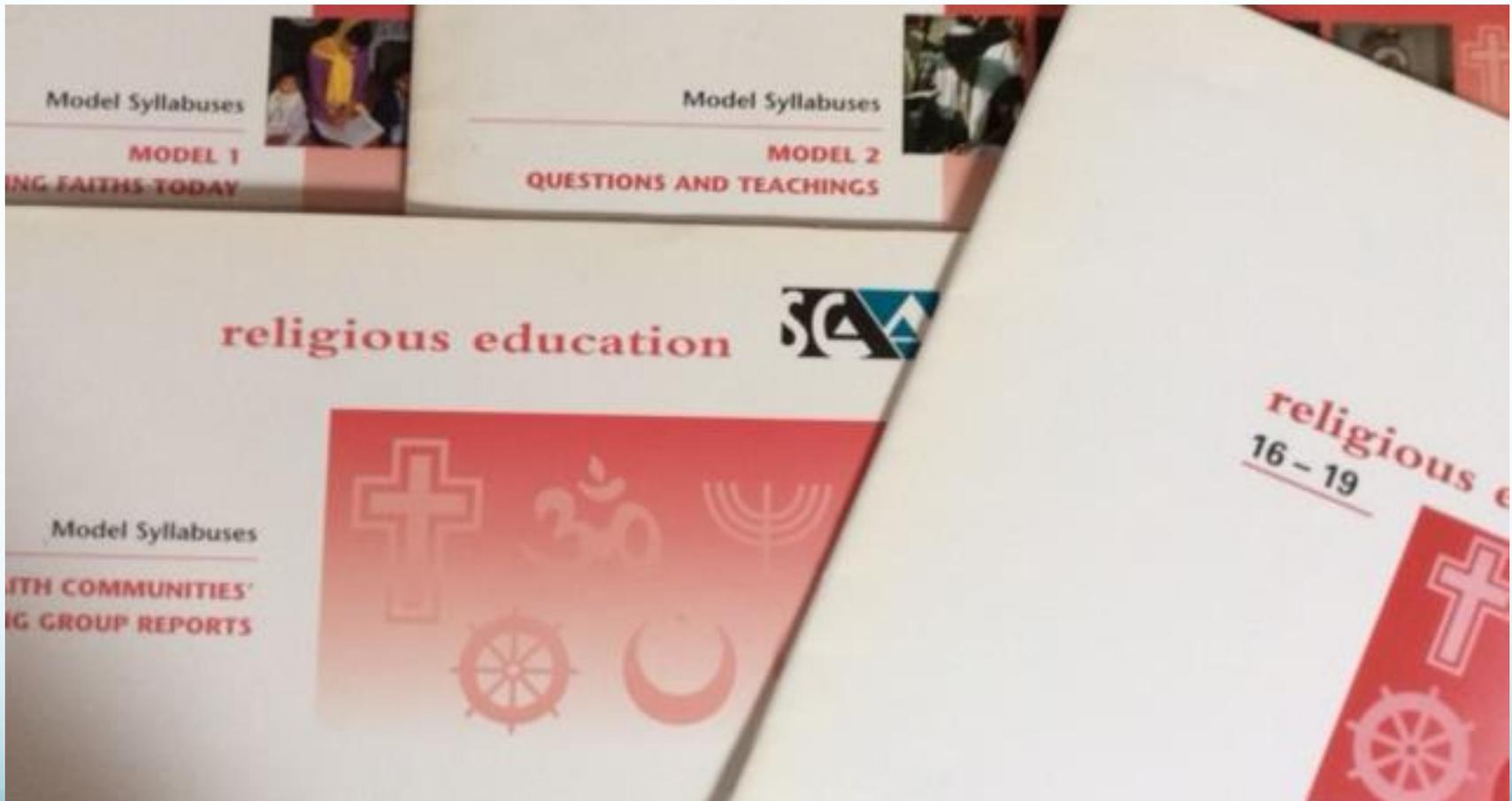
Aims and purposes



Legal requirements



Who owns RE?

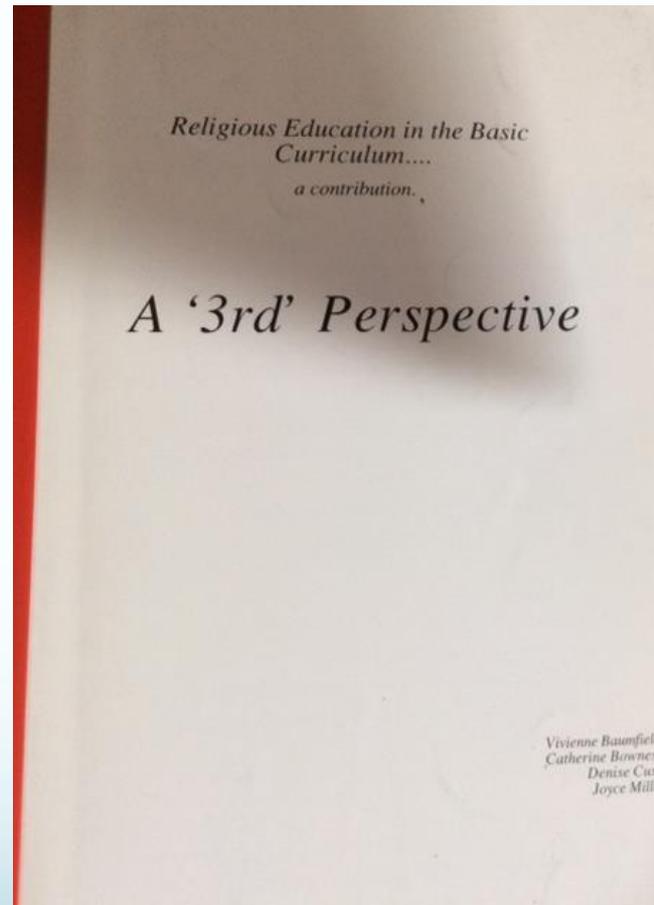


ReinaltThomas

‘Thou art beside thyself; much learning
doth make thee mad’

Acts, 26.24

Pedagogy



'3P' - Areas of enquiry

- The human condition
- The natural world (Cosmology)
- Looking further (Metaphysics)
- Morality
- Religious practices (Ritual)
- People and communities (Social)
- Communication and expression

Life in Britain - some binaries

- Religiosity and secularity
- Globalisation and atomisation
- 'Clash' and commonality
- Convergence and divergence
- 'Leave' and 'Remain'
- 'Them' and 'us'

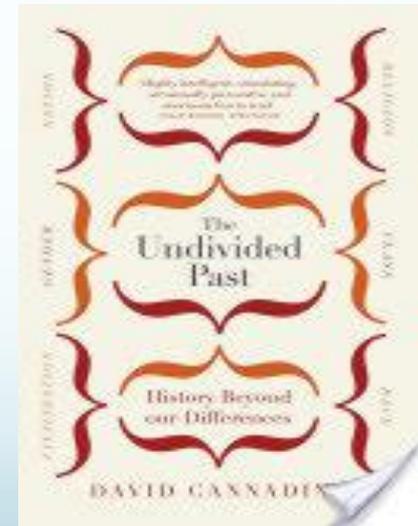
Three main issues

- 'Life in Britain' – how can we have an informed perspective?
 - The past - has created...
 - The present - is creating...
 - The future.
- What should RE become?
- What about SACREs?

The Undivided Past. History beyond our differences

‘The real world is not binary – except insofar as it is divided into those who insist that it is and those who know that it is not’

David Cannadine (2013,9).



Identity

The 'most commonplace and compelling forms':

- Religion
- Nation
- Class
- Gender
- Race
- Civilization

Toleration - 'Convivencia'

- There was a '**culture of tolerance**' whereby people of different faiths intermingled – Baghdad, Cordoba and Sicily
- Peaceful **co-existence** – 'people of the book' - bureaucracy, government, business, commerce
- **Christians and Muslims fought** alongside each other in alliances – e.g. El Cid with King Alfonso VI against the Arabs, 11th century

Intellectual collaboration

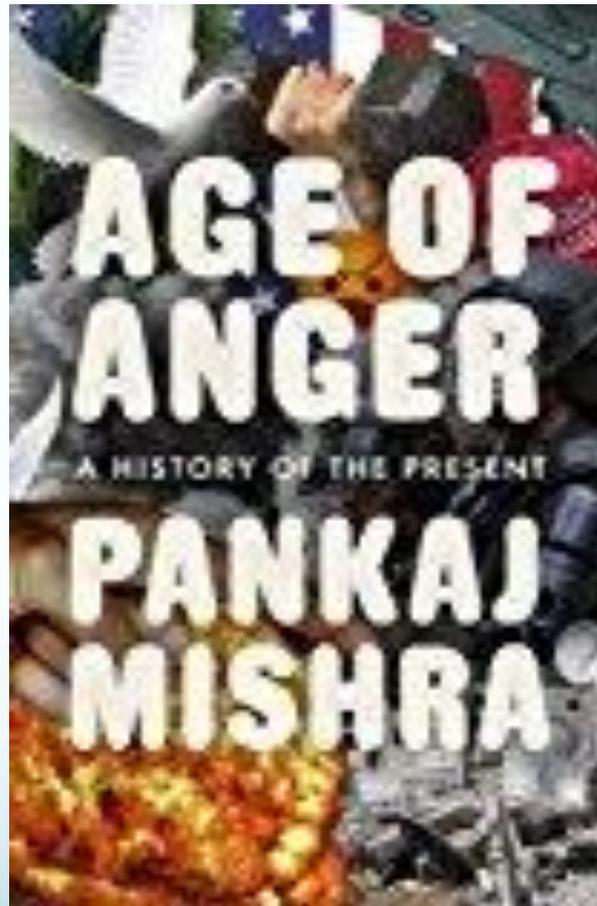
- ‘Here was cultural borrowing and intermingling across the boundaries of religion on a spectacular scale, for **it transformed Europe’s intellectual landscape and made possible its twelfth century Renaissance**’
- Increasing **exchange** of culture and ideas
- It was **Arab texts of Greek authors** that provided the basis for translation into Latin.

How does this impact on RE?

(1)

- Avoid generalisations and stereotypes
- Avoid seeing religions and beliefs as 'silos'
- Address conflict between and within religions
- Examine perceptions and mis-perceptions
- Focus on commonalities and collaborations as well as differences

A History of the Present



How do we live together?

Gandhi would have recognised... the imperative of building a civic democracy that takes into account the **pluralistic nature** of contemporary societies and the apparent incompatibility of **competing claims and values**:.....

Cont...

...a democracy that acknowledges **incommensurate goals** and stimulates **cooperation and reciprocity** rather than competition and animosity between its individual members.

Pankaj Mishra 'The Divided States' 13 January, 2017. The Guardian

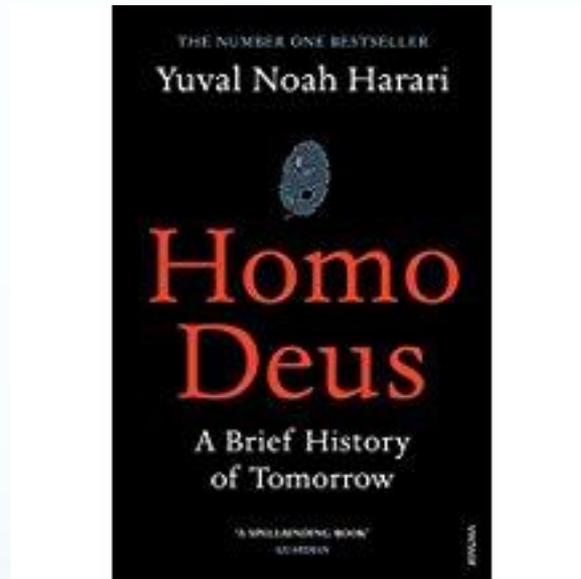
How does this impact on RE?

(2)

- The socio-political dimensions of religious and belief systems have to be addressed
- RE must promote inter-faith and inter-cultural navigation
- Inclusivity – how do we make RE relevant for ALL pupils, including the ‘nones’ and the socially/politically/economically marginalised?

Homo Deus

‘A brief history of tomorrow’



Yuval Noah Harari

New Human Agenda

- Immortality - can death be overcome by 2200 or 2100?
- Happiness – through biological engineering, cyborg engineering and the engineering of non-organic beings?
- ‘Human unification’ into single global community
- Homo Sapiens can be upgraded to Homo Deus.

Human conquest of world

- Not because we have souls
- Not because we're more intelligent or possess different consciousness
- But because we are capable of **large-scale co-operation**
- We behave according to 'warm, social logic'

How does this impact on RE?

(3)

- We have to address deep existential questions – what does it mean to be human?
- Morality and ethics will be central
- Exploration of questions raised because of scientific and technological advance

How does this impact on pedagogy?

- Collaboration and co-operation
- Multi-disciplinary and cross-curricular
- Rigorous, critical engagement with ideas, opinions and beliefs

The current situation



Key questions

- The purpose of RE
- Policy and power
- People – training, support and resources

A future situation?

RE

**Religion
and belief**

SACRE

References

- Cannadine, D (2013) *The Undivided Past* (London, Penguin)
- Harari, YN (2017) *Homo Deus* (London, Vintage)
- Mishra, P (2017) *Age of Anger* (London, Allen Lane)
- Mishra, P (2017) 'The Divided States'. Found at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jan/13/divided-states-trump-america-failed-democracy>
- Schools Council (1975) *Working Paper 36*