

## **Celebrating the Community in RE (Warwickshire SACRE)**

### **Evaluation**

#### **Background**

This project aimed to bring together a number of things, including:

- The national celebration of RE in March 2011
- The Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus requirement that pupils should encounter people from a range of traditions and visit places of religious significance where possible.
- The considerable work that has been done by Warwickshire SACRE to support teachers in planning for visits and visitors in RE (e.g. Guidance on Sensitive & Controversial Issues in RE)
- National and local recognition of the contribution of RE to Community Cohesion
- The national initiative to promote Learning Outside the Classroom

#### **Description**

We launched a competition for all Warwickshire schools called ***RE-action: Celebrating the Community in RE***. Entries were invited from teachers who had organised an 'RE event' that involved the wider community. This could include visits to places of worship, RE trails or having a visitor(s) into school. Entries were recorded by teachers on an electronic entry form and they were required to submit the related work of one pupil. However, we did alter this requirement so that schools could enter proposals for events, following a number of requests from schools. The form was designed to promote good practice in organising these events. A panel of SACRE members met to judge the entries. Prizes were awarded to teachers and pupils from each key stage (and special schools), and for additional categories for 'whole school', 'inclusiveness' and 'originality and innovation'. Prizes were given at the Celebrating RE event on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2011. The event was held in the Leamington and Warwick Gurdwara Sahib and was attended by over 200 people, including the Bishop of Coventry, members of WCC, a number of Warwickshire schools, and members of SACRE.

#### **Desired Outcomes**

- ***Promote good practice in RE*** – the entry form required teachers to consider the context, aims, links to the Agreed Syllabus, preparation and follow-up to the event as well as evaluating its impact, thereby encouraging good practice in the planning and execution of these events. The quality and variety of entries demonstrated the extent of good practice in Warwickshire schools. In some cases the competition encouraged schools to take initial steps to engage with the community. For others, it inspired elaborate whole-school events. We intend to publish a selection of winning entries on the Warwickshire SACRE website as a resource for schools in the future ([www.warwickshire.gov.uk/sacre](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/sacre)). The performances and displays of work at the celebration event was another means of sharing good practice.

- **Celebrate RE** – this competition provided an opportunity for teachers and pupils to have their work in RE recognised and celebrated; letters were sent to headteachers, winners were published on the website and all winners were invited (and many attended) the event.
- **Promote and establish links between schools and local faith communities and promote inter-faith encounter and engagement among young people** – the competition entries are evidence of the many encounters that Warwickshire schools have had with local faith communities. In addition, the celebration event brought a number of schools to a local place of worship and provided an opportunity to establish links.
- **Develop examples of good practice** – where possible the entries were captured electronically and a selection of the winning entries will be made available as examples of good practice on the SACRE website
- **Highlight the contribution of RE to Community Cohesion**
- **Promote Learning Outside the Classroom**
- **Raise the profile of RE in Warwickshire** – one example of this was an article and picture published in the Leamington Courier after the celebration event (attached at the end of this report)
- **Prizes will help to resource RE in schools** - winning schools received cheques for £150 to spend on RE resources. Winning pupils received book tokens and certificates.
- **Opportunity for pupils and teachers of all phases and types of schools to come together and see each others' work**

## Overall Evaluation

- **The competition:** setting up the competition was labour intensive and posed a number of IT challenges. On reflection, the format for competition entries may have been seen as restrictive by some schools. Although the eventual number of entries was healthy, we did have to extend the deadline and make some changes to the requirements. However, the quality of entries was very high and many demonstrated very good practice; this was due to the rigour built into the application process
- **The event:** this was challenging to organise as there were so many people attending and a number of schools were performing. The venue was very welcoming and adults and pupils were well catered for. Attendance was fantastic and we were pleased to see pupils from primary, secondary and special schools. The Bishop of Coventry gave a very thoughtful talk about the importance of RE. The event was lively, with a variety of performances by pupils from across the county; including poetry, choirs, and drama. As would be expected with such an event there were some minor organisational issues, however, the feedback for the event was positive, with comments such as:

*“The RE celebration was really good. . . and my students really enjoyed it. Thanks.”*  
(Heather Miller, Queen Elizabeth School and Sports College, Atherstone)

*“The standard of student presentations was very high and it was great to see such a variety of talent celebrating RE across the key stages. Our students really enjoyed the opportunity to see the different presentations from other students across the county. It certainly was a great way to celebrate RE. . . The rewards from SACRE to successful schools, were very generous. This served to reinforce the positive contribution that schools can make to celebrating RE. Our reward will be used wisely in the department, for the benefit of students, to enhance their learning and enjoyment of RE. For this we are very grateful.” (Gerry Kilkelly, Higham Lane School, Nuneaton)*

*“. . . a big thank you for Friday's event. I really enjoyed looking at the contributions to the competition and enjoyed the performances as well. Thank you also for the prize money. My school was delighted and we will really enjoy spending it on new RE resources.” (Lorna Maloney, Bawnmore Infant School Rugby)*

*“. . . pupils and teachers clearly appreciated the opportunity to attend and it was certainly a very good example of the way SACRE can be effective in promoting RE in schools. Thank you and well done to all involved.” (Bob Hooper, Head of School Improvement, Warwickshire LA)*

- **Prize Winners:** In total, ten prizes were awarded to teachers and six prizes to pupils. Here are some brief summaries of some of the winning entries:

***Newbold Riverside Primary School – Awarded the ‘Originality and Innovation Prize’***

The RE subject leader had developed an interest in the potential for the use of the outdoor environment in the teaching of RE and set up a visit from a company called ‘Living Willow’, who helped pupils to construct a spiritual space for the whole school community to use during RE lessons and as a space for reflection. The willow dome was built over a one week period with the Year 4 group taking a lead as it linked to their RE unit of work for that half term (Working Together). The dome was blessed by the local Vicar in a whole school outdoor assembly. Teachers now use the space for a range of activities and there are plans to work with teachers to target outdoor learning in the delivery of specific RE units.

**The Dome was blessed by the Vicar of St. Botolph’s in a whole school assembly**



***Higham Lane School - Awarded the Teacher and Pupil Prize at Key Stage 4***

The school organised an inter faith day for Year 11 students which focused on key issues they had been studying as part of their exam course, which included moral issues such as prejudice and discrimination and philosophical questions e.g. Does God exist? The event also linked to racial issues in the local community that students were aware of. Guest speakers, including the Lord Mayor and Local MP, were invited to talk about community cohesion and diversity and students took part in a variety of workshops: interviewing representatives of faith communities; a quiz on diversity; active learning tasks on how to achieve tolerance; art, music, drama and ICT workshops on the theme of having an open mind. In groups, students came up with creative ways of expressing their views on open mindedness and presented these to their peers at the end of the day. The profile of RE and community cohesion was raised within the school and students were said to have turned up to RE lessons with a more positive attitude and a greater understanding of the importance of the subject.



**Artwork produced by Year 11 students, takes the idea of seeing from different perspectives by using collage and drawing to create many different visions coming together. It also incorporates Desmond Tutu's concept of UBUNTU; "I am who I am because of who we all are".**

***Canon Evans C of E Infant School – Awarded Joint Teacher Prize and Pupil Prize at Foundation Stage***

The Re coordinator organised an enrichment day on the theme of "Where is God?" The event was held over one week and involved the whole school community. Children were encouraged to find out about God in Christianity, as well as other faiths such as Islam, Hindu and Sikhism. Different activities were planned for each year group to match their age and ability which included "Going on a God Hunt", taking photographs and sound recordings and visits to local places of worship. Sessions were also held for parents, carers and governors to explore where God can be found in our modern lives.

**Next Steps:**

A selection of winning entries will be published on the SACRE website.

Here is a selection of photos from the event:



Pupils from Dunchurch C of E Primary perform 'The Mystery Plays'



The Bishop of Coventry talks to guests about the importance of RE for young people



A Year 6 pupil from St. Pauls C of E Primary, Nuneaton, shares the presentation she created after a visit to the Solihull Shul Synagogue



**Artwork produced by SEN pupils at North Leamington School following a visit from a member of the Sikh community**



**The Choir from All Saints C of E Junior School, Warwick perform some uplifting songs accompanied by the Headteacher on guitar**



**The Bishop of Coventry and Manjit Kaur, Chair of SACRE, present two of the prize winners with their awards**



**Work submitted into the competition was on display at the celebration event**

Article published in the Leamington Courier, Friday April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011.



Competition winners from Warwickshire schools with the Rev Christopher Cocksworth, Bishop of Coventry, Shangara Singh Hothi, Navinjar Singh Gill and Piara Singh Rai from the Gurdwara Sahib, Bob Hooper, Warwickshire's head of school improvements, Majit Kaur, head of Warwickshire Sacre, Lizzie McWhiter, religious education advisor for the Coventry Diocese and Karen Steele, religious education advisor for Warwickshire Sacre. MHLG-25-03-11 Gurdwara visit Mar112

## Religious learning celebrated at temple

MORE than 250 children and adults from 20 schools in Warwickshire gathered at the Leamington Sikh temple for a celebration of religion education.

The youngsters, who showcased what they have learnt about the subject through song, dance and poetry, were joined by the Bishop of Coventry the Rev

Christopher Cocksworth at the event last Friday.

Awards were also presented to winners of a religious education competition organised by Warwickshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and Warwickshire County Council. Schools had to submit details of activities

undertaken which involved the wider community and contributed to their understanding of cultural diversity.

Karen Steele, religious education advisor to Warwickshire SACRE, said: "The atmosphere was lively and reflected the success of religious education in Warwickshire."