

# Discovery RE<sup>®</sup>



The **enquiry-based** approach to  
**Religious Education** for F1 to Year 6

Now in use  
in over 750  
schools  
nationwide!

Newsletter Issue No.1

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“I consider myself a student of many religions. The more I learn, the more questions I have. For me, the spiritual quest will be a life-long work in progress.” Dan Brown

## Hello from Jan!



A very warm welcome to our first Discovery RE newsletter and a big thank you to Alison for collating it and to everyone who has contributed.

With over 750 schools now using Discovery RE as the backbone of their RE planning, I am delighted that so many children are benefitting from the enquiry approach we advocate. We estimate this to be at least 225,000 children. Wow!

This year the Discovery RE Team is aiming to develop the website into a source of support for teachers and subject leaders: a portfolio of teaching and learning activities for each enquiry, more articles on topical issues and even webinars.

Thank you for being part of this with us and I hope you feel able to contact us with your ideas so we can grow a strong and useful network of RE people over the course of the coming year and beyond. Very best wishes - **Jan Lever**

## Meet the Team

### Jan Lever: Director

A 15-year teaching career took Jan into 11 years' advisory work as an RE and PSHE Adviser for 3 local authorities and 2 further years as Senior School Improvement Adviser. She has led numerous curriculum and whole-school improvement projects, 100s of training sessions for teachers, as well as acting as professional adviser to 4 SACREs (Standing Advisory Councils for RE) and liaising and working with members of faith and belief communities. Her career has seen Jan closely involved in the review and writing of at least 5 agreed syllabi for RE (most recently the pan-Berkshire and Poole/Bournemouth syllabi) and the production of resource materials to support teachers in implementing these. Jan understands the complexities and sensitivities of teaching RE and has always been a great advocate for those teaching it.

### David Rees: Senior Consultant

David has been an R.E. teacher for 25 years. In that time he has been an Advanced Skills R.E. teacher, a member of SACRE and an adviser to local authorities. He has been a successful RE Head of Department and achieved excellent GCSE results and has been graded outstanding in 2 separate OFSTED inspections. He has been involved in reviewing and amending the locally agreed R.E. syllabus for Bournemouth and Poole and has led numerous workshops for Key Stages 1-4 as well as planning Syllabus launch conferences. David has been involved in writing schemes of work, developing introductory units and leading training on world religions. He has led training for aspiring teachers as well as non-specialists and R.E. specialists alike focusing on teaching creative and challenging R.E. David believes RE is a subject that helps to develop key skills and attitudes like open-mindedness, sensitivity and reflection. These skills transfer to all aspects of life and help to encourage a desire to challenge prejudices, to make a difference in the world and to care and show respect for all.



### Alison Harris: Senior Consultant

Alison left a successful career in motor industry management working with Lex PLC and Ford Motor Company, to follow her dream and qualified with a P.G.C.E. as a Primary teacher in 2000. In her first post-NQT year, she began leading RE in her primary school and achieved outstanding for the both the RE teaching and learning, and her leadership of the subject, in three successive Statutory Inspections of Anglican Schools. In 2014 she also achieved the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership which entailed embedding new and independent learning strategies across the school and identifying core subject assessment issues and supporting staff to raise achievement. Her teaching has consistently been graded as outstanding, and this has been validated by Ofsted and SIAMS inspections. Alison is a member of Bournemouth SACRE. Through her involvement with initial teacher training she completed an MA in Coaching and Mentoring with a dissertation on embedding spirituality into the Primary Curriculum.



## We would also like to thank

Dawn Murray (left) from Hamworthy Park Junior School and Hayley Cheetham (right) from Heatherlands Primary School for their invaluable contributions to the writing of Discovery RE.



## What do you know about 'British Values'?

On 9th July 2014, former education secretary Michael Gove demanded that 'all schools actively promote British values' and laid out an expectation that head teachers will need, during Ofsted inspections, to articulate how British values are promoted in their schools. On the teaching of values, he said: "We already require independent schools, academies and free schools to respect British values. Now we will consult on strengthening this standard further, so that all schools actively promote British values."

Recent experience in our local area has demonstrated that Ofsted are specifically asking about this but **how and why would this impact on you as a leader of RE in your school?** Well let's unpack what the "British Values" are deemed to be.

The Department for Education said: "We want to create and enforce a clear and rigorous expectation on all schools to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and **tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.**"

Much of this will fall within the realm of your school ethos, behaviour policy, community cohesion policy and PSHE scheme of work. However, when Ofsted come visiting, it is possible that the RE curriculum could be the focus of how the children understand the plurality of religions which are present in the UK. Luckily, the clear overview plan in your Discovery RE pack can quickly show the variety and depth of learning but, if you haven't already done so, it might be worth ensuring that your leadership team and governors are aware of what is covered so that they can confidently answer any questions regarding the school's approach to this. There is also an explanatory video which details the religions and methods of teaching at [www.discoveryschemeofwork.com/what-is-discovery/](http://www.discoveryschemeofwork.com/what-is-discovery/) that you could show them. You can also download our Sample RE policy ([www.discoveryschemeofwork.com/sample-re-policy/](http://www.discoveryschemeofwork.com/sample-re-policy/)) to help you explicitly detail the way RE is taught and the coverage and respect it shows for different religions. The new Buddhism units (see "Hot off the press" below) will further extend the range of religions you can teach in order to reflect your local demographics.

## Discovery RE matches to 2014 National Curriculum

If you are following the new National Curriculum, you and your colleagues are no doubt busy converting all your previous wonderful planning to the new criteria, or even starting again from scratch. Whilst it does us all good to have a shake up every now and again, covering the multitude of new expectations, particularly if you have a topic based/creative curriculum, can be tricky. Discovery RE, through its enquiry based approach, has already fulfilled many of the expectations for English, and a number of other subjects, which could free up valuable curriculum time for you. For a full listing of where the Discovery RE enquiries match Primary Curriculum objectives, go to <http://www.discoveryschemeofwork.com/national-curriculum-2014/>. This document details overarching objectives and is then laid out year by year and enquiry by enquiry. It can be downloaded as a PDF so each year group can use it to evidence coverage. Happy planning!



### Hot off the Press

In order to increase the choice of religions you can study, we are currently in the process of writing **Buddhism** units for **Discovery RE**. Watch this space for more details and information when they are completed!

## Useful links

Every newsletter we will publish some useful documents and links to resources or websites which can help you. Here are our favourites for this term:

- **Wingclips:** Movie clips to help illustrate and inspire: [www.wingclips.com](http://www.wingclips.com)
- **Gavin Tyte the beatbox vicar:** presenting scripture in a new exciting way: [gavintyte.com](http://gavintyte.com)
- **Sikhism Resources** for illustration or display: [www.primarytreasurechest.com/topics/religions/sikhism.html](http://www.primarytreasurechest.com/topics/religions/sikhism.html)
- **Notes on Islam:** Definitions and explanations: [www.strath.ac.uk/redb/notes/islam/](http://www.strath.ac.uk/redb/notes/islam/)
- **Religious Education Council website:** [www.rec.org.uk](http://www.rec.org.uk)
- **RE Quality Mark:** [www.reqm.org.uk](http://www.reqm.org.uk)

AND don't forget all the news, help and support on our website:

[www.discoveryschemeofwork.com](http://www.discoveryschemeofwork.com)

## Professional Development

We have a menu of professional development opportunities relating to RE and are happy to offer these across the country. To download the RE training brochure please see

[www.janlevereducationconsultancy.com](http://www.janlevereducationconsultancy.com)

We would love to hear from you if you would like training or support. This could be for your school, academy chain or learning network. If you would like to discuss/organise some training, please contact [jan@janlevereducationconsultancy.com](mailto:jan@janlevereducationconsultancy.com) so that we can tailor a package specifically for you.

Following their previous success, we will again be hosting 'Dialogues with Religion'. These sessions give the opportunity for the enquiry questions from Discovery RE to be answered by members of that faith community. The speakers also give a general introduction to their faith and will discuss any issues you like, especially those tricky things that the children think of or have been in the news! These are a really good way for teachers to increase their subject knowledge whether or not they are teaching that religion. These dialogues are being run as twilights at a small cost as we are aware of the budget implications of supply cover during the school day. The religions/belief systems covered will be Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Sikhism and Humanism.

## Have you got a tune in your head?

If you have, we need to hear from you! It's ok – we aren't going to ask you to audition for X-factor, we are just trying to cater for an even wider variety of learning styles in our RE resources! We would like to try to compile a bank of music (can be pop songs, classical music or any instrumentals) to go with each Discovery RE enquiry and would love to hear from you if you have successfully used any in your teaching.

For example, in the Year 1 enquiry "Was it always easy for Jesus to show friendship?", James Taylor's "You've got a friend", really helped to calm the children and make them think about what friendship really is. As your colleagues work through each enquiry, please ask them to have a think and email me at [alison@janlevereducationconsultancy.com](mailto:alison@janlevereducationconsultancy.com) with any ideas, and we will compile and publish the list as a helpful resource once it is complete.



## Help! I don't know enough about...

Which religion do you find tricky to teach? Are you worried that you may handle something wrongly or do you feel that in some cases that you do not know the subject material as well as you would like? We would like to know what help and support YOU need. Please email [alison@janlevereducationconsultancy.com](mailto:alison@janlevereducationconsultancy.com) and we can then tailor this newsletter, and the training that we provide, to peoples' needs. Also, if you have any questions about any Discovery RE enquiry or would like to tell us of any difficulties you have encountered, please do email me. In both cases, putting "Newsletter" in the title will ensure it gets covered next time!

## Who teaches your RE?

We are well aware that RE is not always taught by the class teacher, and often taught by a TA/HLTA covering PPA. We also know that these people do a fantastic job but sometimes lack confidence. We are considering running training specifically aimed at staff in this role. If you have colleagues who would be interested, please email [alison@janlevereducationconsultancy.com](mailto:alison@janlevereducationconsultancy.com) with the title 'TA training' and if we have a viable amount of interest in an area, we will organise an event based on their needs and concerns.

## ...and finally...

We love to share and celebrate the great teaching going on around the country. For our next edition we would love to hear from you if you have any top tips for teaching Judaism or Islam – this could be just a couple of lines ranging from resources to teaching ideas.

We would also like to share your successes with Discovery RE – how your children are enjoying it and what are the highlights. We recently caught up with Kath Hudson, RE leader at Pokesdown Primary School, and she told us,

"Discovery RE's enquiry approach has fitted in really well with our learning value of "thinking". We often follow "lines of enquiry" so starting with key questions works really well. This has enabled the children to articulate their learning in RE to a high level. RE is mostly taught discretely but has been included in a few integrated units which has been very successful."

Thanks Kath!

Please email your views to [alison@janlevereducationconsultancy.com](mailto:alison@janlevereducationconsultancy.com) and mark the subject as Newsletter.