

NEWSLETTER - FAREWELL

At last I've retired!

My association with Slough schools predates the establishment of Slough as a unitary authority. Prior to that I was the RE and collective worship advisory teacher for Berkshire of which Slough was a part. From an RE perspective it is a great place to work because the town offers a religious diversity from which we can all learn and which is lived out in and around the schools. Whilst it is, of course, possible to learn about religious beliefs and practices from books I have always been passionate about enabling encounters with people of faith. What people believe, say and do because of their religious faith are aspects of their everyday lives. Seeing how beliefs and practices that we learn about from books are woven into ordinary lives all around us is the most interesting form of RE. It is also a good way to learn about and come to understand each other.



It was for this reason that I was excited when we managed, along with five partner SACREs, to get a grant to support the Crossing the Bridges project. I knew it would be one of the last initiatives in which I would be involved before I retired. How appropriate that it should focus on encouraging and facilitating successful visits to places of worship. It was even more pleasing that my final contribution to RE work with schools was to take a small group of teachers on a day of visits to places of worship. It was a great day and we enjoyed warm welcomes and informative experiences at Maidenhead synagogue, Slough Baptist Church, Sheehy Way gurdwara and Stoke Poges Lane mosque. The project has gone from strength to strength and I'm pleased that Jan Lever, who has done so much to lead the project, is succeeding me as professional adviser to Slough schools and SACRE.

I want to take this opportunity encourage you to value and engage with your local SACRE. The members are all people who are committed to supporting high quality RE in schools. They come from a variety of schools, religious and political affiliations. It has been a great privilege to work with these people in an atmosphere of mutual respect and genuine friendship. If you would like to be involved (there are a number of vacancies for teacher representatives) get in touch through Nadia Williams, the clerk - nadia.williams@slough.gov.uk.

I've been involved in the development of all versions of the locally agreed syllabus for RE since 1995. I made it clear when the last one was published in 2012 that it would be my last. The time has come round again for the regular 5 year review. I hope in the current process you are taking the opportunity to share your views and keep up to date with how things are progressing. Don't miss out on future meetings that will introduce the revised syllabus. I know you will find meeting and working with Jan and her colleagues valuable support.

There is much about my time as RE adviser that I will miss. Most of all that is the wonderful variety of people with whom it has brought me into contact. I've learned so much about similar ideals and beliefs from people who come from very different backgrounds and cultures from my own. That has been, perhaps, the most personally enriching aspect of my time in the job. Recognising that, I will continue to be involved in inter-faith dialogue/initiatives so that learning and growing can go on.