

## Diversity

### Portsmouth SACRE RE Enrichment Day 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014

#### Summary Report on Event



Funded by NASACRE / Westhill Trust, Portsmouth SACRE held a one day RE Student Enrichment Conference, themed 'Diversity'. Year 9 & 10 students from across the city enjoyed interactive workshops led by excellent voluntary contributors from a range of faiths and relevant contexts. They met 'real people' not polished, professional presenters – but believers willing to engage openly with issues and questions, including Muslim women, funeral directors and a range of Christians, some of whom shared workshops with Orthodox Jews (real diversity experienced!). Portsmouth College (16-19) generously provided the venue and several SACRE members and volunteers supported.

This was an opportunity for students to extend their learning experience outside the inevitable constraints of the classroom, taking some responsibility for their own learning and spiritual and moral development. Most have opted for GCSE but this is not a restriction. Teachers prepared students in advance and will follow up in the classroom, to maximise the learning impact and disseminate the positive experiences. Students were organised in groups from different schools to give them a chance to meet diverse people, engage with new ideas from their peers, glimpse college life, and encourage the sharing of experiences back in school. The day started with a stimulating, lively and noisy welcome session to break the ice and ended with an interesting Q&A Plenary, rounds of applause and gifts of superb flowers for contributors, donated by the Southern Cooperative Florist.

Organising did not go entirely according to plan! More than one workshop contributor couldn't confirm at the last moment and numbers fell: 180 students were booked from 9 schools, but several had to pull out or reduce numbers at the last minute, for reasons such as changes to KS3 exams or staff. The planned 10 workshops were cut to 8; eventually 80 students from 6 diverse schools attended.

Despite the last minute crises, the conference itself was very successful. All participants are asked to complete Evaluations, used to improve the event each year and in funding bids. Asked how the day had enriched their RE, the vast majority of students (the most important respondents!) had positive comments about improved knowledge, insights and the fun they had:

*'We could ask whatever questions we wanted rather than being worried'*

*'It was very interesting & it was really good being able to talk to people from the different religions'*

*'Religion is wider than I thought'*

Asked 'What can we improve next year?' 6 said 'nothing' and 8 wanted more workshops! 'Amazing' 'fun', and 'awesome' popped up; the compulsory teenage 'boring' proved their praise was honest!

The key question: Would you recommend that students from your school attend this event next year? 64 said 'yes'! 2 said 'no' and of the 5 'it depends', 2 asked for a particular workshop leader!

Anything else you would like to say? evoked lots of thanks and: *'Great day and I would love to see more'*

All contributors and 5 schools said they would participate again (1 awaited student feedback). Many contributors appreciated the opportunity and told how much they had got out of the day.

For a real flavour of the event, please refer to the Student Programme, including personal introductions from workshop leaders and / or my response to students regarding their Evaluations.

Sue Ganter

Portsmouth SACRE co-opted member and Enrichment Conference Organiser.