

## Multi-faith event for children

**Judy Cecil** Headteacher Holmer CofE Primary school;  
Hereford Multi-faith Development Group committee member

### Purpose

To inform SACRE of Multi-faith events held in 2007 and 2008 and seek support from SACRE for proposed events in the academic year 2009/2010.

### Events held in 2007 & 2008

Four multi-faith events for children have been held since Sept 2007 (September 2007; January 2008; June 2008; October 2008)

The events enabled children to have positive enjoyable encounters with people from 4 faith communities they would not normally meet (Jewish/Hindu/Sikh and Muslim)

In total 800 primary school pupils from Herefordshire schools have now attended these events

All of these events were hosted by Holmer CE Primary school, with the October 4 day event jointly hosted by Whitecross High school . The Whitecross event involved a small number of Yr 8 pupils and was a transition project – aimed at helping primary school pupils in their future move to secondary school.

The benefits of these events

- Providing young people with positive encounters with members of other faiths, with whom they would not naturally have contact.
- Improve understanding of the commitments and experiences of minority faith communities.
- First hand experience of meeting people and interacting with them rather than using media like film or books.
- The experience often leads to greater respect for other beliefs.
- This model of working involves teacher training in order to develop teacher confidence and understanding.
- This event enables schools to show they are working towards fulfilling their community cohesion commitments.

One parent is quoted as saying..... “ *There can be no better way of gaining an understanding of these other faiths than of meeting real people, with their own personalities and stories to tell....This understanding is so valuable in promoting respect for all in the context of the increasingly multicultural, multi faith nature of our wider society.*”

The challenge of these events is to

- Provide funding when school budgets have many demands on them.
- Ensure that teacher training is incorporated into the preparation.
- Reach every Year 6 child in Herefordshire.
- Diversify the event so that it can address the needs of other sections of the community.

**Funding**

To date funding has come mainly from grants from a range of sources and from small contributions from participating schools in the case of the Whitecross transition project. A further bid has been submitted to the Community Development Foundation Faiths in Action fund – HMFDG will hear in April 09.

The actual costs of running the event works out at £22.00 per child. This would prohibit most primary schools from participation in a future non-subsidised event (e.g. one school bringing a year 6 group of 70 Yr 6 - £1540)

**Proposal for future events**

An analysis of schools who have not attended, and the reasons, why suggests that a key issue is distance/travel. The schools not yet attending appear to be located in 7 main groups – Wigmore area; Peterchurch area; Ledbury area; Ross on Wye area; Lady Hawkins / Kington area; Hereford city larger schools; special schools. + (Holme Lacey / Madley /Lugwardine / Whitchurch)

The proposal is to target these clusters and explore holding an event (should funding become available) in these regions e.g. Ledbury, Wigmore and Ross on Wye, Golden Valley and Kington. In the absence of outside funding partnerships of schools can access money by collaborating and using Extended Services funding.

**Request for SACRE support**

For this to go ahead HMFDG **seeks the support of SACRE** to explore ways in which the LA might give financial support to ensure that this activity continues.

HMFDG is seeking financial support to enable the group to offer some funding with participating schools making up the rest. If HMFDG were able to receive a donation of £12000 from the LA, it would enable the group to provide 8 days of Multi Faith Events in the academic year 2009/2010. This would reach 640 children and at least 35 teachers.

Judy Cecil  
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