

Ed-Lines

Winter 2006/7

The education newsletter of the

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'Just over a third (36%) of the British population has a humanist outlook on life.'

Ipsos MORI (see lead story below)

17 million British Humanists

The results of an Ipsos MORI survey published in November showed high levels of humanist belief in the British population, both in response to three separate questions, and when these responses were taken together.

Overall, faced with the choice, 62% said 'scientific & other evidence provides the best way to understand the universe' against 22% who felt 'religious beliefs are needed for a complete understanding of the universe'.

Similarly, 62% chose 'Human nature by itself gives us an understanding of what is right and wrong', against 27% who said 'People need religious teachings in order to understand what is right and wrong'.

In the last question, faced with three choices, 65% said that what is right and wrong 'depends on the effects on people and the consequences for society and the world'. The rest split almost equally between two profoundly un-humanist views: 15% said right and wrong were 'basically just a matter of personal preference' and 13% said what was right and wrong was 'unchanging and should never be challenged'.

More likely to choose all three humanist statements were younger and middle-aged people (aged 15-54) (41%) compared to those aged 55 and over (26%); those with children in their household (43%) compared to those without (33%); those with qualifications of GCSE equivalent and above (42%) compared to those with no formal qualifications (20%).

Full details are available on the BHA website at <http://tinyurl.com/ybo7tw> and on the MORI website at <http://tinyurl.com/yn4z33>

Schools cautioned against 'Truth in Science'

In September 2006 a new group calling itself 'Truth in Science' sent a letter and free teaching resources to all secondary heads of science seeking space for creationist ideas, and established a web page which suggests that parents should complain about alleged 'bias' in science teaching - by which they mean the exclusion of anti-Darwinian ideas and so-called Intelligent Design, which proposes that life on earth may have been produced by an unidentifiable extra-terrestrial cause.

The BHA joined with the Christian think tank Ekklesia to bring this move to public attention and called on the Government to ensure that teachers know this material is not appropriate for school science. BHA and Ekklesia said that they were making a joint statement 'to make it absolutely clear that the issue of the integrity of

evolutionary theory as a cornerstone for teaching modern biology is not one of religious or non-religious conviction, but a matter of straightforward scientific truthfulness.'

The Government agreed, and has issued a statement saying that the resources promoted by Truth in Science are indeed unsuitable for use in the science classroom.

ARE YOU GLAD WE'RE HERE?

The BHA is an educational charity funded entirely by membership, donations and legacies. We do not own property, we do not have wealthy sponsors, and we are unlikely ever to be funded by the Government.

We give away a lot of material and advice, because that is what we are here for. If you value our services, please consider making a donation or joining the BHA.

Humanists, Religious, Teachers come together against compulsory school worship

Humanist Baroness Massey of Darwen proposed an amendment to the Education and Inspections Bill at the end of 2006, which would have removed the legal requirement on schools to provide a daily 'act of collective worship' which has to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' and replace it with a requirement for assemblies that would be inclusive of all children - the non-religious and those of various religious backgrounds.

A coalition of religious groups, teaching unions and the British Humanist Association (BHA) then came together to urge peers to support the amendment when it was discussed. In a common statement, sent to all members of the House of Lords, the Association of School and College Leaders, the British Humanist Association, the Hindu Council UK, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the UK, the National Union of Teachers and the Sikh Education Council said: 'Inclusive assemblies can have great educational value, not least in building a collective ethos in bringing a school community together; they can contribute greatly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Many schools provide such assemblies but the current law, which requires "collective worship", is against them in this regard.'

The amendment that was tabled was not successful, and amongst the most shocking arguments advanced was by the minister Lord Adonis who justified the current law on the grounds that Britain was a Christian country.

If you don't share this rather narrow view of values education, you can find resources on how to hold inclusive assemblies within the present law on the BHA website at <http://tinyurl.com/hbossp>

The Primary Review 2007

The biggest independent enquiry into primary education in England for almost 40 years has been launched, based at the University of Cambridge and supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The Primary Review will run for two years and aims to 'gather evidence from a wide range of sources, sift facts from rhetoric, and stimulate debate about the future of this vital phase of education.' The Review will culminate in a report containing recommendations for future policy and practice.

The Review will be directed by Professor Robin Alexander, Fellow of Wolfson College, University of Cambridge and Professor of Education Emeritus at the University of Warwick. The work of the Review's Cambridge-based central team will be supported by over 60 research consultants from universities across the UK and a 20-strong Advisory Committee, chaired by Dame Gillian Pugh, whose members come from both inside and outside education.

Anyone may make submissions to the review until 1st March 2007. If you wish to contribute to the BHA's submission to the review, please contact Andrew Copson by on education@humanism.org.uk

www.primaryreview.org.uk

Sex and Relationships Education...

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has become the latest organisation to call for PSHE, including SRE, to be made a statutory subject in all schools in England and Wales. The recommendation comes in a report called 'Freedom's Orphans: Raising Youth in a Changing World', published in November. The report shows that British teenagers are the most sexually active in Europe and are third least likely to use a condom during underage sex. Britain has the highest rate of births to teenagers in Europe, with an average of 26 live births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19, and the sexual health of British teenagers is considerably poorer than it was a decade ago. The report recommends that pupils should be taught about the importance of contraception in their last year of primary school, and that a full range of contraception should be made easily available to teenagers. Other recommendations include services for parents to be made available at schools, and action to reduce the numbers of teenagers becoming pregnant for a second time. Further details are available at the IPPR website: <http://www.ippr.org.uk/pressreleases/?id=2387>

...starts at primary level

Effective sex and relationships education (SRE) in primary schools can help children build happier, healthier relationships now and in their adult lives - and can also contribute to reducing teenage pregnancy, according to a new publication from the Sex Education Forum.

Laying the Foundations: sex and relationships education in primary schools aims to support primary school staff in delivering SRE. The book provides information and advice on developing SRE policy and practice, including an outline of current legislation and guidance, and sample lesson plans that tie into National Curriculum requirements.

'Children start learning about relationships, gender and

sexuality long before they start school,' said Simon Blake, assistant director of children's development at NCB, who contributed to the book. 'Questions like 'where do babies come from?' are common among three to five-year-olds, and many parents will use the opportunity to provide simple explanations so that children are not worried or confused.

'Good sex and relationships education in the primary school builds on these experiences. It can help children make sense of the many different messages they receive about sex and relationships from television, from other children, and from what they see around them in their families and neighbourhoods. SRE provides a calm, safe space where they can ask questions and resolve anxieties. It also helps protect children from abuse by ensuring that they understand about safe and unsafe touch, and have the language to describe what is happening to them if they are being hurt.'

Evidence suggests that the majority of parents want their children to receive SRE at primary school. It helps parents to start discussions at home as well as providing additional knowledge and information. Laying the Foundations includes advice on involving parents, carers and local communities and addressing any concerns they may have. As one parent quoted in the book comments, 'I realised the way they were doing it was so constructive... it wasn't about the actual sex side of it, it was about giving the children an insight into what the future holds.'

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2007 is...

the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slave-trading in the British empire...the 400th anniversary of the first settlement of the future United State of America at Jamestown...the 250th anniversary of the birth of William Blake...the 300th anniversary of the Act of Union, which brought together England and Scotland...the 40th anniversary of the passing of an abortion bill and the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the UK.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

FOR REFLECTIVE TEACHERS

M Biddulph *Sexualities equality in schools: Why every lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) child matters* (Pastoral Care in Education, vol 24 No 2)

This paper identifies ways in which educators can develop more inclusive approaches to those who identify as L, G, B, or T, stressing that, in the context of 'Every Child Matters', schools have an opportunity to take an innovative approach.

Yusef Waghid *Dialogue and the limits of violence: some thoughts on responsible action* (Journal of Beliefs and Values, vol 27 No 3)

Violence is a cross-cutting issue, from Citizenship to RE to PSHE, History or English. This thought-provoking paper has similar range in its discussion of how an approach based on dialogue can limit violent action.

FOR THE LIBRARY

Richard Dawkins *The God Delusion* (Bantam Press)

Philip Pullman has said that every school library should have a copy of this book - the surprise Christmas bestseller of 2006. It is certainly appropriate for older pupils. Some young people will find arguments which they sympathise with and may not have heard before presented forcefully in Dawkins' always flowing prose. Others will find much to be pondered and challenged. A library containing this volume together with Richard Norman's *On Humanism*, Julian Baggini's *Atheism: a very short introduction* and A C Grayling's *What is good?* will be well off for works that articulate the humanist perspective today.

ed. Dolan Cummings *Debating Humanism* (Imprint Academic)

When learning about a religion, philosophy or worldview, it is always useful to be introduced to the diversity within it. That is what makes this book an excellent one for any library (though very much for pupils at sixth form level). The contributors to the collection of essays all come from the humanists tradition defined as 'one in which it is we as human beings who decide for ourselves what is best for us and are responsible for shaping our own societies' but who disagree about many of the implications of a humanist attitude to political, social and ethical thought. They disagree too about the priorities for action for humanists, and their debates in these pages provide welcome matter for further debate beyond them.

Contributors include A C Grayling, Kenan Malik, Dennis Hayes, and Simon Blackburn.

ed Peter Cave *John Stuart Mill On...* (BHA)

A collection of philosophical essays on the thought and contemporary relevance of John Stuart Mill based on a Humanist Philosophers' group seminar in Parliament marking the 200th anniversary of his birth in 2006. Philosophers Peter Cave, A. C. Grayling, Richard Norman, Brendan Larvor and Michael Clark discuss John Stuart Mill on... the Good Life, Religion, Liberty of Thought and Discussion, Punishment, Sexual Equality and 'Hate Speech'.

www.humanism.org.uk

Most of BHA resources for teachers can be found on our website, including: humanist perspectives on social and moral issues, and on philosophical and religious issues; information on Humanism, humanist history, and the happy human symbol; and ideas for inclusive assemblies.

FOR THE CLASSROOM

David Dalton, *Refugee Camp* (Ticktock)

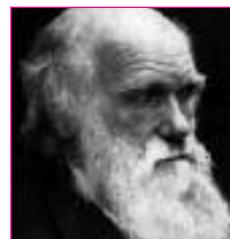
This volume in the *Real-Life Stories* Series deals with the story of Carbino who experienced separation from his family and repeated relocation in the Sudanese civil war. The presentation of the story is forceful and well-illustrated giving ample stimulus to reflection on human tragedy. Suitable for mid-teens.

Seeta Lakhani (ed. Jay Lakhani) *Primary Hinduism* (Vivekananda Centre London)

Teachers often report that they have difficulties integrating learning about the eastern religions into their RE, just as they have integrating secular philosophies such as Humanism. With belief systems so different from the monotheisms and, in the case of Hinduism, with a dazzling internal diversity, knowing how to present a meaningful picture of them can be daunting. In the case of key stages 1 to 3, this can often be compounded by a focus on ceremonies, celebrations and stories which many adherents of these worldviews may find unrepresentative of the nature of their beliefs.

This feeling seems to partly motivate 'Primary Hinduism', which presents Hinduism from a Hindu perspective with great clarity and range, weaving stories from the Hindu tradition into explanation of the Hindu into its presentation with verve. By presenting Hinduism in a Hindu voice, which also strives to be a comprehensive one, it acts as a good introduction to the basis of Hindu belief, which it builds up with the stories featured to give a greater understanding of how these beliefs guide actions and what they mean to those who hold them. The content is clearly based on approaches which the author and editor have found useful as speakers on Hinduism to schools and gives the text a directness which, together with its authentic voice, is a great strength. This would be particularly useful to schools who cannot find Hindu speakers.

The illustrations accompanying the text are colourful and appealing, and the accompanying endnotes which highlight learning objectives as well as suggesting classroom activities will be useful. One improvement that might be made is that these sections could form a separate booklet for teachers which would accompany the book for pupils, but this is a minor criticism of a welcome volume.



BHA Darwin Day lecture 2007

Monday 12th February, 6.30 pm

Matt Ridley on 'Francis Crick - the Darwin of the twentieth century?'

Chair: Professor Richard Dawkins

Darwin Lecture Theatre, UCL, Gower Street, London, WC1

Tickets from BHA: £7.00 (£5.00 to BHA members).

See www.humanism.org.uk for details.

FROM THE BRITISH HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

HUMANIST PERSPECTIVES 1

Resources on Humanism for primary teachers



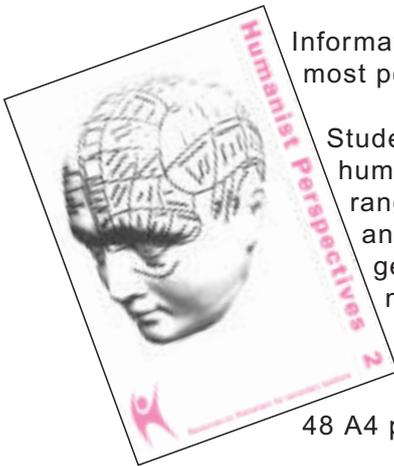
Everything primary teachers need to help include their non-religious pupils and get started on teaching about Humanism.

Intended mainly for absolute beginners, *Humanist Perspectives 1* offers guidance and information for teachers, so that they can absorb some essential but straightforward concepts associated with Humanism to pass on to their pupils in their own way and time, at their own pace, and in the appropriate language. It includes clear and concise accounts of humanist ideas, history and ceremonies, further reading for those who want more, suggestions for class libraries, and some lesson ideas and plans. These resources have been created with advice from primary teachers, and earlier versions have been used for many years in schools.

32 A4 pages, photocopiable, £6.00 + p&p

HUMANIST PERSPECTIVES 2

Resources on Humanism for secondary teachers



Information and guidance for secondary teachers, with concise versions of BHA's most popular ethical and philosophical briefings for students.

Student pages cover humanist history, humanist activities and ceremonies, and humanist perspectives on religious and philosophical questions, ethics and a range of the social / ethical issues often studied in RE. These include: abortion; animal welfare; crime and punishment; discrimination and prejudice; embryo and genetic research; environmental issues; euthanasia; family matters; health matters; human rights; "nature"; suicide; war; world poverty; all come with "learning about" and "learning from" discussion questions.

48 A4 pages, photocopiable, £10.00 + p&p

BOTH BOOKLETS are based on tried and tested BHA resources, which have been extensively revised, updated, supplemented and edited by Marilyn Mason, ex-teacher and BHA Education Officer. Both refer to the recently published National Framework for RE, with its advice to include "secular philosophies such as humanism" and to Ofsted guidance on "social, moral, spiritual and cultural" education, and encourage teachers and advisers to adapt and select whatever is relevant to their local syllabuses and their pupils' needs. The materials are, of course, particularly relevant to syllabuses that include Humanism and / or advice to include children "of all faiths and none".

Pages are designed to be photocopied, so that an adviser or head of RE can easily make handouts for classes and share information and lesson ideas with colleagues. Every school should have at least one copy.

Both are printed on good quality recycled paper.

Order by phone - 020 7079 3580 - or via our website.



HUMANISM is the belief that we can live good lives without religious or superstitious beliefs. Humanists make sense of the world using reason, experience and shared human values. We seek to make the best of the one life we have by creating meaning and purpose for ourselves. We take responsibility for our actions and work with others for the common good.

The British Humanist Association exists to promote Humanism and represent and support people who seek to live good lives without religious or superstitious beliefs. In education the BHA promotes rational thinking and moral education, offers teaching resources, and campaigns for reform of RE and an end to religious privilege and compulsory worship in schools.