

The Place for Humanism and Non-Religious Perspectives in Religious Education

About the speakers

Dr Stephen Law

Stephen is senior lecturer in philosophy at Heythrop College, University of London and editor of the Royal Institute of Philosophy journal *Think*. He has published several books, including *A Very Short Introduction to Humanism* (2011), *The Philosophy Gym: 25 Exercises in Philosophical Thinking* (2003) and *The War For Children's Minds* (2006), which focuses on issues concerning moral and religious education, using philosophical tools to help clarify and assess key arguments. Phillip Pullman said it 'should be read by every parent, every teacher, and every politician'.

Dr Mark Chater

Mark is Director of Culham St Gabriel's Trust, an independent charity supporting excellence in Religious Education through research, development, and innovation in UK schools. He is a trained and qualified teacher of RE, and spent four years as a senior adviser for RE with the Qualifications & Curriculum Authority, looking after RE's interests in the secondary and primary curriculum reviews. He was involved in the early stages of the historic 2013 Religious Education Council of England and Wales review of RE.

Maxine Beech

Maxine is a practicing RE teacher at Bishop Heber High School in Cheshire. She was recently awarded a research fellowship with the Farmington Institute to develop RE resources on humanist ceremonies for schools.

Isabel Russo

Isabel worked as an actress in theatre, film, and television for 20 years before becoming a humanist celebrant in 2009. Isabel then worked as a funeral, wedding, and naming celebrant for four years, before taking on Head of Ceremonies at the BHA in May 2013. The role of ritual and storytelling in shaping and influencing community has been a central thread throughout her working life.

Dermot Bolton

Dermot is a consultant project manager working in education transformation and IT. He is a humanist representative on Bradford SACRE and vice chair of Calderdale SACRE, as well as being a trained visiting humanist school volunteer. He is one of the founders, and treasurer, of Sunday Assembly Leeds and is an active parent governor at his children's CofE primary school.

Sara Passmore

Sara is Head of Education and Promotion at the British Humanist Association. She studied Education and English Literature at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and has since led on multi-million pound educational programmes across the UK. Sara represents the BHA on the National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education and The Religious Education Council of England and Wales. She is the former Vice Chair of Southwark Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts. Sara has responsibility for promoting understanding of Humanism.

Karl Sweeney

Karl Sweeney is the Local Authority Education Adviser for Citizenship and PSHEE at Plymouth City Council, the Chair of National Council Association for Citizenship Teaching, and the England Lead for the Five Nations Network, working with colleagues from Scotland, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Wales in promoting ideas, best practice, research and resources to support the teaching of Citizenship Education across the UK and Ireland. He will be speaking on controversial issues in RE from a PSHE perspective.

Siobhán Anderson and Saara Qusted, 3FF

3FF is a charity that builds understanding and lasting relationships between people of all faiths and belief. It runs education, engagement, and action programmes that bring diverse communities together. Siobhán works within the Schools Team, and provides support for programmes including: primary and secondary school workshops, school linking, teacher training, and policy work. Saara works on 3FF's Education and School Linking programmes, with a particular focus on supporting teachers to provide opportunities for young people from different faith backgrounds to meet and work together on a variety of activities throughout the year.

Nora Leonard

Nora has been the local authority's advisor to Ealing SACRE since 2006. She was the lead in writing Ealing's new syllabus, *Sowing the seeds of the future: an exploration of human beliefs and values*, encouraging an approach that looks at the subject in terms of 'religious' and 'non-religious' responses to common human experiences. Nora has provided schools with curriculum resources and guidance on topics such as inclusive RE and reflection and dealing with the issues that arise as a result of Ealing's incredibly diverse population. Among the materials she has developed for the new syllabus are schemes of work on the history of belief in the UK, and a key stage 3 scheme, *Mixed metaphors*, which compares scientific thought with religious/metaphoric/poetic thought.

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