



**BISHOP  
GROSSETESTE  
UNIVERSITY**

## FINAL REPORT

September 2021

# Learning About Religions through Dialogue (LAR-D) The Final Report

## THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

In Lincolnshire, where schools do occasionally engage in direct contact with representatives from religious faiths, this is usually done through short day-visits to places of worship, or one-off visitors to the school. Such visits are good for their ‘impressionistic’ effect, but it is hard for pupils (and teachers) to engage at a personal level with the people involved. This project aimed to make possible a stronger and more extended connection between the school and the faith group representative.

Schools in the Lincolnshire authority were invited to participate in the programme in autumn 2019, and six schools were selected (three primary and three secondary) from the thirteen applications.

Having determined what religion each school wished to engage with, appropriate faith practitioners were then selected, police-checked and prepared by St Philip’s Inter-faith Centre, Leicester.

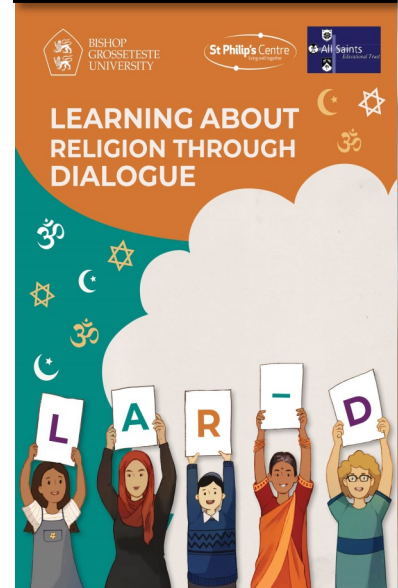
Representatives from the six schools then met with each other and the faith practitioners at a training/planning day in September 2019.

Although encouraged to make use of the RE-searchers approach to RE (Freathy and Freathy), schools were free to engage with the project in their own way, both in the pedagogical approach taken and in the breadth of engagement within the school. However, the schools were monitored over the period of engagement, with brief updates being circulated across the programme every term.

Participants were provided with funding to help cover most of the costs involved in participation, offering both incentive and obligation for full engagement with the process.

## PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAMME

The ultimate aim of the project was to nurture local RE teachers and strengthen RE teaching in the region by means of the above programme.



### INSIDE CONTENTS

The Participants.....	2
Timeline.....	2
How does the project work? ....	2
Funding for the project.....	3
Sept 23rd Planning day .....	3
Bishop Grosseteste University	4
Participating schools .....	4

### LAR-D IN BRIEF:

- 6 Lincolnshire schools
- Hindu, Jewish & Muslim faith practitioners
- In dialogue
- From September 2019 to December 2020
- Funded by All Saints Educational Trust



## INITIAL AND ADAPTED TIMELINE

**July 2018 to March 2019:** development of proposal and programme outline with partners; submission of proposal to ASET.

**Early Sept 2019:** on confirmation of bid, Lincolnshire schools invited to apply to the programme. Six schools selected from 13 applicants.

**Sept 23rd:** training day for all project participants, including faith practitioners and school representatives.

**Sept onwards:** schools engage in their planned programme, with visits from faith practitioners and other activities.

**Jan 2020 onwards:** participants engage in sharing stories and 'outputs' locally and nationally, and consider proposals for expansion of the project.

**Feb-March 2020:** submit bid for further funding to expand the project within or beyond Lincolnshire.

[**Covid-19 lockdown:** decision to extend project to December 2020. Confirmation received of no additional funding to expand project.]

**December 2020:** Online conclusion and report-back meeting for all participants.

*"There is a story of an Oxford student who once remarked, "I despise all Americans, but have never met one I didn't like." ~ Gordon Allport*

### THE PARTICIPANTS

The project was initiated, developed and administered by **Mark Plater**, Senior Lecturer in Education and Theology at Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln.

**All Saints Educational Trust** provided funding to enable the work to proceed.

**Riaz Ravat**, Deputy Director of the St Philip's Centre Leicester, selected and supported the faith practitioners, also managing issues around police-vetting, training and ongoing funding.

**Prof Rob Freethy**, University of Exeter, attended and provided training about the RE-searchers approach to RE at the Sept 2019 launch event.

#### Participating schools:

Lincoln Christ's Hospital School. (Secondary)

Magnus CE Academy\* (Secondary)

Pinchbeck East CE Primary school\*

Priory Academy LSST. (Secondary)

South View Community Primary school.

Utterby Primary Academy.

[\* For various reasons, both of these schools were unable to complete the project.]

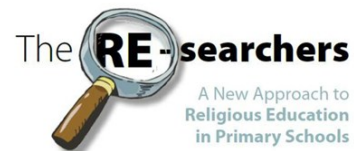
### HOW DOES THE PROJECT WORK?

The project works quite simply by linking a faith practitioner from a selected religion/culture to a school, and then provides teachers with pedagogic tools for engaging in ongoing dialogue with that person over an extended period of time. It is hoped that they will become friends and want to maintain contact even after the period of the funded part of the programme.

Contact theory, developed by Gordon Allport in the 1950s (Allport, 1954), advocates that the best way to challenge attitudes of prejudice and bigotry is for people to enjoy extended and ongoing contact with people whom they consider to be different from themselves. This project makes provision for such ongoing contact, as a means of fostering religious understanding and appreciation.

The pedagogic method offered is that of the RE-searchers programme, developed by Freethy and Freethy in Exeter. This provides a framework methodology for children to explore religions from a range of different social science disciplines and other perspectives. The RE-searchers programme encourages pupils to research and explore ideas for themselves using an EBL (enquiry-based learning) approach.

Funding for the project enables schools to release staff for training and covers costs of travel and resourcing, etc. It also funded the St Philip's Centre costs and provided an honorarium for faith practitioners, enabling us to engage highly qualified and engaged participants.



Rob Freethy  
Professor of Education  
Graduate School of Education  
[r.j.k.freathy@ex.ac.uk](mailto:r.j.k.freathy@ex.ac.uk)

## IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

All participating schools felt that the project had a **noticeable impact** on their RE provision. One school felt that it had had a **'massive' impact**.

### Cross-curricular dimensions:

- ♦ RE
- ♦ History
- ♦ SMSC
- ♦ Music
- ♦ Food technology
- ♦ Art
- ♦ Computing
- ♦ PE (yoga)
- ♦ SRE/ PSHE
- ♦ Geography- culture
- ♦ MFL –language
- ♦ English & Literature

In spite of Covid cancellations, a **range of activities** were carried out:

- 14 lessons, involving 430+ children
- 2 faith centre visits
- Video and email questions answered
- Whole school assembly input
- Staff & governors CPD
- 33 teachers involved + TA s
- Diwali cards made & sent
- School tour and lunch with staff
- School displays
- School website & Social media engagements

None of the schools chose to use the **RE-researchers approach to RE** explicitly, although several claimed to have used the principles of this in their framing of email questions for the faith representatives. One school said that they might have used the structure "if we had more time".

Who were the **greatest beneficiaries** of the project?

- \* 50% Yr10; 20% Yr 7; 30% staff
- \* 90% the pupils; 10% staff
- \* 50/50% staff/pupils
- \* 50% Yr6; 50% staff & other Year groups
- \* Faith practitioners: 10-20% themselves

### Cancellations of planned events due to Covid-19:

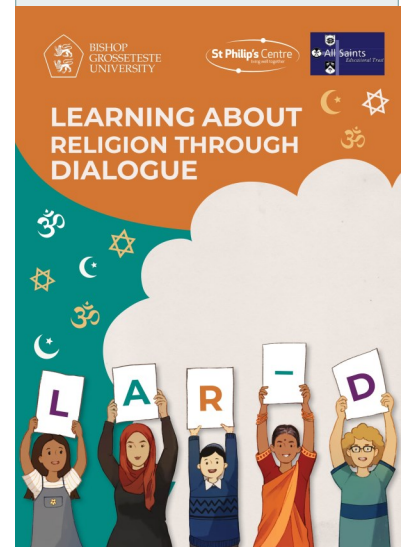
Leicester, Peterborough and Synagogue visits; return visits by faith practitioners to schools; planned classroom workshops.

### SOME QUOTATIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS

*"This project was amazing! It's one of the best things we've ever been involved in"* (Primary teacher)

*"When XX came in and met our year six class, they were really engaged and interested in the subject, like I've never seen them engage before"* (Primary teacher)

*"I was so excited to be a part of it [the project], and able to do it, and it's heart-breaking I guess, that it's come to an end...I'd love to carry it on, maybe a dialogue ...with more than just one representative, with people from Hinduism and Judaism and Islam and so on..."* (Primary teacher)



Prof Rob Freathy presents the RE-researchers approach.

## BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

Bishop Grosseteste University was founded as a diocesan training college for women teachers in 1862, and has continued to be involved in initial and ongoing teacher education since then. It took on full university status in 2013 and now offers bachelor and masters degrees in a wide range of subjects.

Bishop Grosseteste was a thirteenth century polymath, who wrote widely on science, theology, and philosophy, and is considered to be one of the greatest minds of that period. After some time as Chancellor of Oxford University and founder of the Oxford Franciscan school, he was elected Bishop of Lincoln, the largest diocese in England at the time. He continued in this role until his death in 1253.

*“Everyone’s a bit more confident with RE now, so we were doing more RE in this second lockdown...” (Primary teacher)*

*“We aren’t the most diverse county, so being able to engage like that with someone from the Jewish faith was really helpful” (Secondary teacher)*

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Bishop Grosseteste University  
Longdales Road  
Lincoln  
LN1 3DY

Mark Plater  
Tel: 01522 583630  
Email: mark.plater@bishopg.ac.uk



**BISHOP  
GROSSETESTE  
UNIVERSITY**

## FURTHER QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS

*“The whole programme has been really useful, and I know that our students – particularly our GCSE students... where they’ve been a little bit more switched on, and engaged more, and with more maturity... been able to ask lots of really thoughtful and thought-provoking questions, both of XX, and of themselves” (Secondary teacher)*

*“When they realised that they could ask any questions... then the questions really started flowing.” (Primary)*

*“In our later lessons we expanded on that, and they would say, I remember when XX said this, where Mecca was, and prayer mats, and so on...” (Primary teacher)*

*“... and they take home to their parents: Look, we met this Muslim man, and he was really normal, he was just like us...” (Primary teacher)*

*“My advice to others who might be thinking about getting involved: do engage! I personally have grown enormously through the experience, and got to know a part of the country I hadn’t visited before”. (Faith visitor)*

### REsearchers approach:

*“At the beginning, I wanted them to develop their own questioning without too much influence from me... and then, after that, to go more into the REsearchers approach, using the tools to go deeper, like we do in English and History...” (Primary teacher)*

### PROJECT CONCLUSIONS:

1. The basic project framework ‘works’: teachers are enthused; teacher confidence is enhanced; RE is made more engaging and dynamic for pupils.
2. However, some teachers would have liked more structure: “We teachers, we like targets” (Primary teacher).

3. Funding proved essential for some aspects (e.g. field visits), but most schools & visitors would also have engaged voluntarily.
4. Most schools intend to continue the programme, retaining personal links with the faith visitors, and developing new ones on the same basis.

### References:

Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.

### RE-SEARCHERS APPROACH TO RE:

This approach to RE is developed by Freathy and Freathy, and encourages an enquiry based learning (EBL) pedagogy, by engaging pupils in research around de Bono’s coloured hats approach to thinking (different hats represent different kinds of questioning approaches to be used).

To read more, see: <http://www.reonline.org.uk/re-searchers/>