

RE Teachers' Conference 2026 – Evaluation Report

Date of event: 6 February 2026

In attendance: 32 **Maintained Schools:** Highcliffe St.Mark, Mudeford Junior, Somerford, Linwood, Winchelsea (apologies)

Respondents: $n = 16$ delegate surveys

1) Executive summary

- **Overall value:** Delegates rated the day 4.19/5 for usefulness and 3.88/5 for helping them break down prejudice in classrooms.
- **What landed best:** Tied top were Many Faiths Together – Panel and Solutions Not Sides – Keynote (5 mentions each), followed by Updates on National Policy (3), Solutions Not Sides – Workshop (2), and Many Faiths Together – Speed Dating (1).
- **Repeat attendance:** 100% of respondents said they would attend annually if permitted.
- **Preferred timing:** Most favoured Spring 1 (before February half-term) (5), with additional support for Spring 2 (3) and Summer 2 (after May half-term) (3). Autumn windows were less preferred.
- **Strong positives from open feedback:** Organisation, Merley House as a venue, lunch, high-quality speakers, rich networking, powerful lived-experience from Many Faiths Together, practical input from Solutions Not Sides, and useful training on answering difficult questions.
- **Clear “Even Better If”:** ensure primary/secondary balance; record interfaith speakers for classroom clips; allow more Q&A with interfaith panel; establish/advertise a secondary RE network; create an artefact library and pre-vetted visitor directory; provide guidance on parental withdrawal; issue regular SACRE updates; explore a multi-faith event for pupils.

2) What went well

2.1 Event experience & logistics

- The day was described as well organised and welcoming, with staff helpful throughout; Merley House was praised as a conducive venue; lunch was repeatedly highlighted as great.

2.2 Content quality & speakers

- **Many Faiths Together:** reported as *powerful* and authentic lived experience, strengthening subject knowledge and confidence.
- **Solutions Not Sides (SNS):** compelling keynote with practical ideas and strong relevance to tackling prejudice; the workshop was appreciated, especially for middle/secondary phases, praised for practical classroom insight (e.g., why facts alone may not land when students feel threatened).

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2.3 Professional community & networking

- Delegates valued networking time, cross-phase conversations, and exposure to multiple faith perspectives in one place.

3) Areas for development (“Even Better If”)

3.1 Planning & communication

- Publish the full provisional agenda before sign-up to help colleagues (and their managers) judge relevance and secure release.
- Clarify phase balance in advance; several felt the day leaned secondary.

3.2 Interfaith engagement

- Build in longer Q&A so delegates can ask their own questions.
- Record interfaith contributions to create short classroom-ready clips, as it's not always possible to bring visitors in.
- Explore a multi-faith pupil event to give children first-hand encounters with lived religion.

3.3 Leadership pressures & parental withdrawal

- RE leads reported being assigned multiple roles, making it harder to lead RE and leaving some feeling pushed out. Increased requests for withdrawal, particularly regarding religions other than Christianity, were reported; schools want clear procedure and advice.

3.4 Resources, artefacts, and external links

- High demand for: a BCP/SACRE artefact library; a pre-vetted visitor directory (faith speakers/places of worship); regular SACRE updates in a concise digest; and a more usable SACRE webpage to centralise info and contacts.

4) Evidence from the delegate survey

4.1 Overall ratings

- **Usefulness:** mean **4.19/5** (distribution: 5★=7, 4★=6, 3★=2, 2★=1).
- **Will this help break down prejudice?** mean **3.88/5** (distribution: 5=5, 4=7, 3=2, 2=1, 1=1).

4.2 Session highlights (most helpful part)

- Many Faiths Together – Panel (5 mentions)
- Solutions Not Sides – Keynote (5)
- Updates on National Policy (3)
- Solutions Not Sides – Workshop (2)
- Many Faiths Together – Speed Dating (1)

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4.3 Preferred timing in the academic year

- Spring 1 (before Feb half-term) – 5
- Spring 2 (after Feb half-term) – 3
- Summer 2 (after May half-term) – 3
- Autumn 1 – 2 | Autumn 2 – 1 | Unspecified – 2

4.4 Most challenging areas flagged

- Controversial issues / conflict, incl. Israel/Gaza (3)
- Visits & visitors (2)
- Parental withdrawal (2)
- Subject knowledge gaps (Buddhism, Islam, Humanism) and pupil-led discussion (1 each)

4.5 Priority CPD needs (themes from open responses)

- Visits & visitors (places of worship, external speakers) – 2
- Secondary RE network; GCSE/A Level/Core RE sharing – 2
- Subject knowledge: Humanism, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism – 1 each
- Coaching/in-class support; pupil-led discussion strategies; literacy in RE; policy/SACRE comms; parental withdrawal; far-right/extremism – 1 each

Illustrative comments (anonymised):

- “Hearing from those with lived experience is always best, wanted to bottle some of what was said.”
- “Working a lot this year around belonging and community... would be great to connect with secondaries.”
- “Encouraging SLT of the importance of RE... don't have time to cover RE in the way it should be at my school.”

5) Conclusions

- The conference successfully met its core aims for most delegates: strong usefulness scores, high intent to return, and clear appreciation of lived-experience inputs. It built community and provided immediately usable ideas.
- There is a consistent call for infrastructure around RE: clearer advance info, stable networks (esp. secondary), guidance on withdrawal, and resource ecosystems (artefacts, vetted visitors, better SACRE comms).
- Balance the offer to ensure cross phase content, while retaining the strong interfaith and prejudice-reduction strands that delegates value.

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6) Recommendations & action plan

1. Confirm and publicise the Secondary RE Network (dates, leads, themes; cross-school sharing of GCSE/Core RE curricula). Owner: LA/SACRE. (Responds to repeated secondary asks)
2. Issue a SACRE “quick-read” digest (bullet-point update, links, key contacts) and start a termly cadence. (Improves comms)
3. Draft and circulate “Managing Parental Withdrawal from RE – Standard Procedure” with template letters, meeting scripts, and signposting to legal duties.
4. Scope recording permissions with Many Faiths Together/SNS and design short, captioned clips for classroom use. Owner: Conference Team. (Maximises impact of lived experience)
6. Pilot a BCP/SACRE Artefact Library (booking form, storage protocols, curriculum mapping).
7. Re-publish a pre-vetted visitor & places-of-worship directory (with safeguarding checks, practical guidance, and “how to host” tips).
8. Design a Primary-first strand for next conference (disciplinary approaches to Religion & Worldviews, planning exemplars, KS1–2 subject knowledge).
9. Run CPD on pupil-led discussion and literacy in RE (practical routines, sentence stems, oracy + vocabulary progression for KS3–5).
10. Offer SLT briefings on the value of RE (statutory position; contribution to community cohesion and SMSC; inspection expectations).

6.2 For next year's conference

11. Schedule in Spring 1 (most preferred) and signpost early.
12. Guarantee phase balance (label each session by phase; ensure a minimum number of primary and secondary -focused sessions).
13. Publish a “What's new this year?” banner to address perceptions of repetition and manage expectations.

7) Risks & mitigations

- Data protection / Safeguarding for recorded interfaith clips → Use speaker consent forms, edit for anonymisation where requested, and host behind a school-only access layer.
- Visitor quality assurance → Lightweight vetting (references, safeguarding check confirmation, scope statement) and post-visit rating by schools to keep the directory current.
- Workload for RE leads → Provide templates, ready-to-use resources, and coaching visits to minimise prep burden.