

“Demand soars for inspiring RE lessons as children discover church isn’t scary!”

A Reading based Schools Project, REInspired, has seen demand for its work with schools and young people soar. “REInspired exists to help groups of Christians from different backgrounds work with their local schools to support the Christian elements of the Religious Education (RE) curriculum,” reports Project Director, Julia Jones. REInspired started in 2003 with one local primary school asking local churches if they could help improve RE lessons.



Since then the project has grown to deliver Christian RE lessons to every child, in every school in the Earley and East Reading areas. “We have other REInspired projects up and running in Reading such as Woodley, Caversham, West and South Reading, Southcote, and in other areas, in Guernsey, Headington, Bristol, Houghton Regis and Chinnor. Every year more and more schools are looking for the sort of support REInspired can deliver. This year demand has quite literally soared. It’s been fabulous to work with churches in West and South Reading where four new schools have recently asked REInspired to come into their schools! And there are more requests from Bracknell, Wokingham, Theale, Pangbourne, Aylesbury and more. Interesting that our most recent requests have come from school teachers themselves as they value what we offer and how we enhance and enrich their current RE work; most having learnt about us via internet searches and by word of mouth.”

So, what lies behind this Religious Education success story? Only last year Tim Burdon reported in the [‘Inews’](#) that 26 percent of secondary schools were failing to deliver even a basic level of RE lessons. Added to this is the view among many that young people are simply not interested in religion. Yet when it comes to Christianity it appears that young people are far more interested than might have first been thought. And it appears that a visit to a local church can really ignite that initial interest.



“Many of our sessions take place in schools,” adds Julia, “but we also invite the children to come and visit us in our churches.” The excitement of time away from the classroom makes such visits a memorable day.

Yet there’s also a distinct spiritual element as children, their teachers and adult helpers enter together into our Christian holy and sacred spaces. “Each church visit is quite unique,” commented local Vicar Neil Warwick. “We love to see the children enter in and enjoy learning about beliefs and practices that are so special to us. The conversations that occur during a visit are incredible and these continue as the children go to school and then home, sharing what they have learnt with their families.”

Writing in [‘The Telegraph’](#) Olivia Rudgard reported that more than 1 in 5 young people between the ages of 11 and 18 would describe themselves as active followers of Jesus. Many others want to explore those big questions of life that RE lessons provide an ideal opportunity to investigate.

What happens when we die?
Where have we come from?
Is there more to life than material possessions? How should we treat our world?

“Big Questions demand that Christians seize this opportunity to add their voice to the debate,” says Julia. “At REinspired we work with children from primary schools all the way through to sixth form. Our sessions use volunteers from local churches to provide engaging, interactive and creative approaches to the big issues schools and their young people want to explore. Schools love our approach - as do the pupils. The result has been soaring demand.”



It’s not often that Christians find themselves with such great opportunities to share with others what they believe about the big questions of the day. RE lessons cover a range of different religions and opinions which school teachers follow from the RE syllabus.



Rev Keith Wilson, Chair of Trustees comments, "The REInspired model is about sharing what we believe in supporting the Christian enquiry on the RE syllabus, enabling young people not only to 'learn about' but also to 'learn from' this belief. As with every line of enquiry there comes a moment when inevitably one asks, what does this mean for me?"

"We would love to see the REInspired model replicated elsewhere," explained Keith. "All you need is a group of churches who have a passion to serve their local schools through RE. It's then a case of building relationships and getting ready to host a session. At REInspired we're passionate about meeting this demand and provide training, mentoring and other resources to get new groups off to a brilliant start."

If you would like to find out more about REInspired, visit our website and contact us: www.REInspired.org.uk