

## Face2Faith – an interfaith residential experience for young people

We have had a Youth SACRE in Surrey since March 2005. It has been a useful forum for discussing issues relating to faith and young people and their experiences of Religious Education. They have also met and influenced the statutory SACRE (or 'wrinkly SACRE'!) and fed into the revision of the Agreed Syllabus. When the opportunity to bid for a grant from NASACRE emerged, we seized it.



The Youth SACRE wanted to set up something which would draw in a wider group of young people and would be fun and relaxing at the same time. In the end we settled on a weekend residential at a youth activity centre entitled Face2Faith. This experience was to be filmed so that the DVD could be circulated to every SACRE in the country and used as a resource in RE.

Face2Faith took place over the weekend 2-4 March 2007 at the Felbury Centre, Holmbury St Mary's, near Dorking in Surrey. In total 17 young people aged 13-17 took part representing Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Baha'i, Buddhism, Atheism and Agnosticism. Six adult helpers were also present, including a member of Surrey Connexions, and the film crew.

The programme was a mixture of 'serious sessions' exploring ethical issues, interfaith dialogue and perspectives on RE, but also team-building activities which included Archery, a Low Ropes challenge course and a night hike in the pouring rain.

We set ground rules at the beginning of the weekend to explore the sensitivities of any interfaith experience and to ensure maximum respect for one another. This set the tone for Face2Faith. The whole group gelled from the first moment and over the weekend created an ethos of openness, dialogue and learning where people were able to challenge one another without causing offence.

This is how Mariam, a Muslim girl summed up the weekend:

*"The Face2Faith event was inspirational, it was all about discussing ethical and religious issues in today's society amongst young people. While there, we developed new social skills and how to accept each other's beliefs, faith and opinions and then challenging these with our own beliefs. What was particularly interesting was learning about the Baha'i faith and other new religions. The great thing was: everyone accepted each other even though we were all from different backgrounds and we didn't need to be something we were not. We made loads of new friends!"*

Paul Gateshill, Surrey

