

## Religious Observance/Personal Search/Citizenship Crossover

### Introduction

Monifieth High School has developed a range of activities which 'aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community 'and' celebrate the school community's shared values'. As such these activities come within the territory of religious observance, although they are a long way from the traditional school assembly.

The school ethos and value-base strongly emphasises service to others within the framework where everyone learns together. Such activities help pupils to explore the relationship between these values and spirituality.

### Progression

A core series of events from S1 to S6 provides an overall structure, which is then enriched by a range of related satellite activities. The core comprises

#### **S1: Induction Day for all S1 pupils at Teen Ranch, Inchture, Perthshire**

This is a Christian-based activity centre ([www.teenranch.com](http://www.teenranch.com)), widely used by schools, which offers horse-riding, canoeing, archery, crafts, etc. The Induction Day (which extends to 8pm) allows pupil-pupil and pupil-staff relationships to be developed, as pupils go in Tutor Groups together with their Form Tutor. Values of care and support for others are emphasised, and a spiritual basis for these is explored via a presentation by Teen Ranch activity instructors in the course of the day.

#### **S2 Make a Difference Morning**

This event lasts approximately 2 hours. Pupils meet in the Assembly Hall and the Presenters first briefly introduce themselves. The Presenters are drawn from 2 categories of people: (a) those who serve others and make a difference in the local community, (b) those who serve others (or facilitate this) overseas. Pupils then attend a seminar/presentation/activity involving one presenter from each of the two categories. Since the event takes place across a half the morning, it is then possible to re-run it in the second half of the morning session. Half the year-group is accommodated each time, reducing proportionately the number of presenters we need to recruit.

Presenters from development agencies (Christian Aid, SCIAF, TEAR Fund etc) are always very happy to be involved, while the range of those who make a difference in the local community is endless: professionals and carers with a faith motivation, organisations such as the Salvation Army or the churches, etc, etc

#### **S3 Personal Search Conferences**

3 events are organised in the course of S3, to support pupils in reflecting on moral and spiritual issues, relating these to other learning. In the first year of development, the topics of the 3 events were: *Relationships and Spirituality*, *Twenty-first Century Church* and *Choices and Identity*.

Like 'Make a Difference Morning' each of these events lasts 2 periods. *Relationships and Spirituality* begins with a 35-minute presentation (speaker + audio-visual); pupils then work with a workshop facilitator in groups of 20 (this is quite an active, varied session), before returning for a plenary.

*Twenty-first Century Church*, by contrast, uses 2 seminars, one focussing on local churches and one on dramatic church growth in other parts of the world (South Korea, Peru and West Africa). Both the above events are delivered by presenters from Scripture Union, local churches and other local organisations together with school staff.

This event is followed up by a full morning field trip to three non-stereotypical churches, one based in the Factory Skatepark ([www.factoryskatepark.com](http://www.factoryskatepark.com)), one based in the headquarters of an aid agency ([www.Signpost-international.org](http://www.Signpost-international.org)) and thirdly Gate International Church ([www.the-gate.org.uk](http://www.the-gate.org.uk)) which uses modern worship styles, etc. At the last venue, the church has produced a 10-minute DVD showcasing worship styles, ministry, youth work, believers' baptism etc. The church also provides a light lunch to the pupils, to round off the morning's field trip and give opportunities for discussion.

#### **S4-6 Events**

RO/Personal Search/Citizenship events for S4-6 are still being developed. While the connection to RO is fairly distant, we do plan to bring in an *Evaluate* event ([www.evaluate.org.uk](http://www.evaluate.org.uk)) for S3/4. We have also developed a highly successful full-day conference for pupils at the start of S6, entitled *Preparing for Parenthood*. This was adapted by school staff in partnership with Chick Lidstone of **Positive Parenting**

([www.parenting.org.uk](http://www.parenting.org.uk)), from materials published by that organisation which were originally intended for adults.

### **East Africa visit**

A final event that provides immense opportunities for reflection and spiritual development has been the Field Trip to East Africa. The school has a large programme to raise both awareness and funds for charity. Events are organised by teams of pupils and speakers regularly visit the school.

The climax of this is a 3-week trip to East Africa by approximately 15 pupils at the end of S5. Pupils volunteer for this during S4 and spend the next 18 months fundraising and (nearer the time) undertaking basic training and orientation. While in East Africa, they spend 2<sup>1/2</sup> weeks doing basic development work, working in a school, helping in an orphanage, and doing basic painting or joinery work. The final few days are spent sightseeing, including a safari.

Such an ambitious programme is only possible because it is supported by a development organisation (in our case, Signpost International). A staff member from the charity accompanies 2-3 teachers in looking after the pupils. The experiences of development work are carefully selected by the aid organisation in advance. While in Africa, the school party is extensively supported by the charity's on-the-ground network.

The experience of our pupils was highly motivating and indeed lifechanging. All pupils reported that they had reflected extensively on their values and the purpose of their life. There was also an explicitly and entirely spiritual dimension to this reflection, as both the orphanage and school were run by a local church.

Our 2006 visit was to Uganda, and we plan to visit Rwanda in 2008.