



CULHAM ST GABRIEL'S
CHAMPIONING RELIGION AND WORLDVIEWS EDUCATION

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Primary Project

Phase II report

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Contents

Background	2
Phase II launch and overview	4
Culham St Gabriel's led activities	4
Teacher led activities	6
Research methods	8
Intervention delivery	8
Evidence of outcomes and impact	9
Teacher reflections	11
Universal reflections	11
EYFS and KS1 reflections	11
KS2 reflections	12
Recommendations	13
Annex 1	15
Annex 2	16

Background

As an organization with a long-standing commitment to the high-quality teaching of religious education and to the on-going development of resources and curricula for teachers, Culham St Gabriel's Trust is committed to the principle that religious education in schools can be a tool for the promotion and protection of human rights in general and Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in particular. This aligns with the priorities and commitments of many governments.

In their 2024 publication *Belief, Dialogue and Security: Fostering dialogue and joint action across religion and belief boundaries* member states of OSCE/ODIHR note that “States should pursue educational policies that aim to strengthen the respect, promotion and protection of human rights, and to effectively combat prejudice-based assumptions and concepts incompatible with FoRB. Chiefly through their educational systems and curricula, states have significant power to foster a greater understanding of, and respect for different religions or beliefs, and an appreciation for religious/belief pluralism and diversity.”

In 2023, Culham St Gabriel's set out to fill a gap which it had identified in the FoRB landscape, namely, the lack of resources for use by teachers to help children learn about FoRB and FoRB principles.

In order to address this gap Culham St Gabriel's delivered its **Primary FoRB Project** which intentionally worked with teachers in English primary schools who were involved with the teaching of Religious Education (RE). Culham St Gabriel's provided them with opportunities to learn about FoRB and then supported them to develop lessons and activities which would enable their children to learn about FoRB and FoRB principles. Additionally, Culham St Gabriel's developed tools by which the effectiveness of those lessons and activities could be evaluated.

That project found that with support and training that teachers were able to introduce FoRB Principles to Primary age children, and that it was possible to assess the impact of their interventions.

At the end of the project cycle, the Culham St Gabriel's team, including the participating teachers, reviewed progress and discussed next steps. It was agreed that the group, rather than moving to extend the reach of the project to new schools, wanted to take learning from the first round of the project and apply it at greater depth and to explore some specific questions and objectives.

Additionally, it was felt that the approach proposed for Phase II would be enhanced by having a Secondary School teacher audit the programme alongside the teachers who had participated in Phase I.

Working together, the participating teachers and Culham St Gabriel's team established some broad themes and questions which Phase II would go on to explore:

FoRB Education across the curriculum

- How can FoRB learning outcomes be met through Primary RE lessons in England?
- Can learning from Phase I be applied to deepen understanding of the RE curriculum?
- Can FoRB principles be embedded in all areas of the curriculum?

FoRB at every Key Stage

- Can FoRB principles be taught at all Primary Key Stages?

FoRB and School Transition

- How does FoRB education relate to the transition from Primary to Secondary school?

It was with these questions in mind that the **Primary FoRB Project: Phase II** began in September 2023.

Phase II launch and overview

To mark the start of Phase II and to coincide with the 2023 FoRB Ministerial, Culham St Gabriel's hosted an online webinar. Featuring contributions from all four participating Primary school teachers, the webinar was attended by 38 people, many of them teachers, researchers and educators.

Phase II comprised two strands of activities: those led by the team at Culham St Gabriel's, and those led by the participating teachers.

Culham St Gabriel's led activities

There was a two-fold focus to the activities led by Culham St Gabriel's. Firstly, the production of a review of the FoRB and Education landscape; secondly, the support which Culham St Gabriel's provided to participating teachers.

Surveying the freedom of religion or belief and education landscape – a review

Culham St Gabriel's experts undertook a global review of the FoRB and Education landscape¹. The review mapped global efforts to promote FoRB principles through educational interventions, and traced research and scholarship pertaining directly and indirectly to these aims. The review included academic literature as well as organisations and resources which deliver FoRB education to schools.

A key outcome of this review was to develop a set of characteristics of FoRB education based on an analysis of existing interventions and approaches. The review established that FoRB education requires that learners have opportunities to reflect on their own

¹ [Surveying the Freedom of Religion or Belief and Education Landscape: A review of research literature, resources, and organisations](#)

religion or belief identities; to think about how their religion or belief identities might differ from those that other people may hold; to feel comfortable with those differences, and to be able to talk about them with respect and sensitivity. FoRB Education requires that learners are aware of FoRB as a Human Right as articulated in Human Rights frameworks, documents and agreements.

This review enabled the Primary FoRB Project team to better understand the broader context in which their initiative was established. It also ensured that the activities and interventions developed by the teachers were rooted in established FoRB Education best practices. Finally, the review process enabled Culham St Gabriel's to engage with partners nationally and internationally, helping to forge an emerging FoRB and Education community.

Supporting teachers

Culham St Gabriel's convened a set up meeting of all project partners in November 2023. At this meeting the findings of Phase I were discussed and the proposed outcomes for Phase II agreed. Additionally, there was discussion of dissemination activities and agreement was reached over how Culham St Gabriel's experts would support teachers.

Throughout early 2024 Culham St Gabriel's experts met with teachers either face-to-face or online to discuss how they intended to explore the questions and achieve the objectives set for Phase II of the project.

In March 2024 Culham St Gabriel's convened a face-to-face meeting of the project team in London.

Teacher led activities

FoRB learning interventions were delivered in four schools across England, details of school contexts can be found in the Phase I Report².

In preparing for Phase II of the project, participating teachers:

- Informed their Senior Leadership Teams that Phase II was commencing
- Met with colleagues (where appropriate RE/PSHE leads, Key Stage leads etc) to discuss Phase II and how delivery would proceed
- Where the intention was to work across the school (rather than with individual classes), participating teachers conducted informal training of their colleagues to explain how resources developed should be used in the classroom
- Where individual classes were being targeted for the intervention, engaged with parents to ensure that they were happy for their child to take part in the intervention.

In keeping with Phase I, participating teachers reviewed RE, PSHE and other relevant resources actively used by their school to establish if and how FoRB was already being explored. Having conducted full audits in Phase I this was a less intensive process.

Having undertaken this preparatory work, and with the Learning Outcomes document accessible to them, the teachers then began the process of intervention development.

Primary School Approaches to Phase II

One teacher (working with Year2) decided to use stories to stimulate classroom activities and discussions.

Two teachers (one working with a Year4 class the other with a Year6 class) decided to develop 'FoRB lenses' which they applied to established units of work which their children were studying as part of the RE curriculum. For details of how FoRB learning was integrated with RE learning objectives see lesson plans and materials in Annex 2.

One teacher (taking a whole school approach) decided to **develop prompt questions** which teachers across the school could use in their lessons to encourage pupil engagement with FoRB Principles. In addition, they developed resources for use by teachers to help them

² [Freedom of Religion or Belief \(FoRB\) Primary FoRB Project](#)

understand the themes and ideas being explored. It is of relevance that the school has a culture of using Philosophy for Children in all areas of the curriculum. The relevant materials can be found in Annex 1.

It is important to note that all the participating teachers made decisions relating to resources and approaches based on the needs and abilities of the pupils in their classrooms.

For the planning I used the **key outcomes and vocabulary**. I decided to use their literacy text as a stimulus which was Malala's Magic Pencil. This book was being used as part of their 'Powerful Voices' unit for the Primary Knowledge Curriculum/History and also in their literacy. This meant that they were already familiar with the text and had already formed an emotional response to the character of Malala. For this intervention I began with looking at the **concept of freedom** and what freedom meant to them. We then moved on to look at particular pages of the book where we thought about whether the character of Malala was free and how she might have felt about being silenced. We then went on to talk about their beliefs and religion and the fact that some people are not free to express their religion/beliefs

Participating Teacher working with Year2 Class

Secondary School Approaches to Phase II

The Secondary School teacher who audited Phase II undertook a review of Locally Agreed Syllabuses (LAS) for references to FoRB and also produced a series of suggestions as to how FoRB could inform planning a Locally Agreed Syllabus (LAS).

I randomly selected ten local authorities using a list of councils in England published by the UK government. I picked every eighth council from the sections: Metropolitan Districts, London Boroughs, and County Councils.

I then selected Norfolk as I had looked at these as a Barnet SACRE and ASC member, and it struck me as a good example of an LAS. I was going to include the Hampshire LAS as well, but this was used by Westminster.

I searched for evidence of FoRB using Ctrl+F and searching for the following terms:

- a) Freedom of religion
- b) Freedom of belief
- c) FoRB
- d) Freedom (only results relevant to freedom of religion or belief are included)
- e) Right to (only results relevant to freedom of religion or belief are included)
- f) Religious practise (only results relevant to freedom of religion or belief are included)

Secondary School teacher describing the method that they used

Research methods

Establishing a Baseline

The Primary school teachers delivering activities in classrooms and schools each conducted baseline surveys to establish the prior learning of pupils and colleagues in relation to FoRB.

The format of these surveys varied; some teachers conducted focus groups with a small group of pupils. Some teachers asked some children to complete written surveys. Some teachers undertook under-took surveys of their colleagues to gauge their awareness of key terms and themes.

During the Intervention

Each teacher kept a log of their reflections. Teachers were encouraged to record their own perceptions about how the intervention had taken place as well as examples of pupils' comments and responses. Each teacher actively observed and made notes during each session. This enabled teachers to be able to assess the impact of interventions as pupils then applied their learning in on-going provision settings. Those teachers who had established focus groups from their classes checked in with their focus group after each lesson was delivered. Teachers kept records of pupils written and drawn responses to help them evaluate the impact of the interventions.

Additionally, where teachers were working with colleagues to disseminate approaches within their schools, records of internal conversations and evaluations were captured.

Post Intervention

The whole project team met in late June 2024 to review the interventions that had taken place, and to review and evaluate the project more widely. A record of these discussions was kept by the Culham St Gabriel's team.

Intervention delivery

Participating schools delivered their interventions between Easter 2024 and the end of the summer term 2024. These interventions were bespoke to each school, and reflected the abilities and experiences of the participating pupils. Teachers noted that having this amount of time, ensured that their pupils were able to engage with new material. It also gave them time to gather evidence of learning and impact.

The range of interventions delivered and tools created include:

- Effective questioning guides for use by teachers across year groups and topics, identifying key moments in the curriculum where a 'FoRB lens' might be applied
- Introducing key vocabulary
- Discussing examples of Human Rights from books and visual resources
- Application of a 'FoRB lens' to established unit of work from locally agreed RE Curriculum
- Application of Philosophy for Children methodology to develop open-ended questions which stimulated conversation amongst pupils

Examples of the tools developed can be found in Annexes 1 and 2.

Evidence of outcomes and impact

Overall, by making use of the Learning Outcomes document, participating teachers were able to assess how much progress children had made in relation to knowledge and understanding of FoRB principles.

Key Stage 1 (ages 5-7)

Children were supported to express what it meant to be free/not free; they drew pictures of what it meant to be free and discussed their drawings together and with their teacher. They were able to relate these ideas to the experiences of characters in a book which they were studying and to express injustice at the experiences of the main character whose human rights were being restricted. They discussed ideas of religious difference, and reflected on what it would be like not to be allowed to have different religious identities.

Examples of Pupil Responses at Key Stage 1

It's so unfair that people are stopping her from telling people about how important it is for girls to go to school.

Why should some people tell other people what to do and who to believe in.

I like going to church and wouldn't want to be stopped from going.

People should be free to do what they believe in.

Key Stage 2 (ages 8-11)

In the first school where a FoRB lens was applied to an established unit of work children were supported to reflect on themes of religious and non-religious belief. They spoke about how people can change their religious beliefs, and reflected on the different ways and the different reasons why someone might change their religious belief. They talked about the rights of children to have or change a religious belief in relation to their family. The children were supported to make the connection between FoRB and the right which we all have to choose our religious identity, including the right to choose how a person manifests their religious identity (e.g. the choice Muslim girls have to wear or not wear a hijab).

They talked about how in some countries people were not allowed to change their religious beliefs, and talked about why that might be the case.

In the second school where a FoRB lens was applied to an established unit of work, children explored the experiences of minority faith communities living in their city. Children talked about what it might feel like to be a member of a minority faith community which does not have an established place of worship in the city. They thought about what that might mean for how individuals are able to express their faith identity, and contrasted that experience with their own, many of whom were members of local Christian communities with their own places of worship. Working together, children thought about how they could be involved with making their communities more welcoming to minority faith communities.

Teacher Reflections

Participating teachers gave their reflections on the process of supporting learning about FoRB and FoRB principles. Those reflections have been clustered into three groups: Universal Reflections, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 (KS1), and Key Stage 2 (KS2).

Universal Reflections

Senior Leadership Buy-in, Awareness and Communication

Teachers felt reassured that their SLT were aware of the initiative and that they were supportive of the children learning about FoRB principles. They felt that it was appropriate that parents and carers be made aware of the initiative to avoid misunderstandings about what was happening in the classroom.

EYFS and KS1 Reflections

Pupil Support

Where participating teachers were training colleagues, those teachers who received training from their colleague felt that FoRB was a tricky concept for young children. They felt that the exemplar questions developed by their colleague were helpful for them when thinking about how to integrate FoRB learning into their lessons.

Teacher Preparation

Where participating teachers were training colleagues, those teachers who received training from their colleague reflected that their children were only starting to engage with concepts relating to FoRB. Consequently, they felt that they themselves needed to do thorough preparation and planning to ensure that they had an adequate level of understanding of FoRB. This was particularly important so that they could meet children where they were at in terms of their learning and development.

KS2 Reflections

Existing Pupil knowledge

Where rapid progress was made by children during the lessons and interventions it was often at least partly the result of having already explored themes earlier in their school careers and/or because of pre-existing knowledge. This contrasted with those children who had not learnt about Human Rights in general or FoRB in particular, and for whom greater preparatory work was needed.

Integrating FoRB learning with other lesson objectives

Where teachers sought to apply a FoRB lens they found that balancing between FoRB objectives and other lesson objectives was tricky. At times this led to too much being in each lesson, or to lessons being too long.

Teacher Engagement with FoRB

Where participating teachers were training colleagues, those teachers who received training from their colleague reflected that while it was possible for teachers to use banks of pre-scripted questions and prompts, they reflected that their ability to teach FoRB principles effectively and at depth would be enhanced by access to training.

It was amazing to see how these conversations helped pupils not only understand the topics better but also learn how to communicate respectfully and think critically about complex issues. Through this journey, I've seen pupils become more open-minded and aware of different perspectives. They're learning to value human rights and are developing a stronger sense of empathy.

Participating Teacher Yr2 Class

I felt that bringing a FoRB lens to our RE learning, helped the children to engage in a much deeper way with the topic and the people that we encountered. They really engaged with the community and the issues that we learnt about in a much deeper way which helped us to dig deeper within their RE learning. I think that it is really important that we now think more about what a FoRB lens might look like in the classroom and what this pedagogical approach could look like for teachers.

Participating Teacher Yr4 Class

It has been amazing to be part of this project and develop ways of incorporating FoRB into RE lessons. It has been great to see pupils engage so positively and be inspired by FoRB.

If I were to compare the intervention I carried out last year where we focused on a specific FoRB project and this year where it was incorporated into RE lessons, I think both sets of pupils had a good understanding of FoRB principles at the end. I feel that from a teaching perspective, with time constraints and a packed curriculum, it is beneficial to incorporate it into RE lessons.

Participating Teacher Yr6 Class

Recommendations

The recommendations from Phase I remain relevant and important. Given the focus of Phase II, the following recommendations are more operational than those from Phase I with arguably greater direct relevance to the RE community.

Recommendations for a whole school approach

- Make use of existing internal documents which relate to the school's curriculum, as well as documents which describe the schools' values and vision, when thinking about cross-curricular approaches to FoRB

Recommendations for lesson planning

- With pressure on all areas of the curriculum, consider applying a FoRB lens to existing units of work as opposed to developing stand-alone units which focus on FoRB and FoRB Principles.
- In the experience of participating teachers, RE is the space in the curriculum which lends itself most easily and readily to the application of a FoRB lens so that children can learn about FoRB and FoRB principles.
- Give pupils ample time to engage with FoRB principles, particularly when other learning objectives (perhaps relating to other areas of the curriculum) are being explored.

Recommendations for Locally Agreed Syllabus writers and the RE community

- Work with providers of information used by syllabus writers to ensure that information about FoRB is visible, including government documents and guidance, RE statements and documents, local guidance, other relevant sources such as NASACRE and AREIAC.
- Work with NATRE to develop good quality FoRB teaching and guidance materials.
- Develop schemes of work or objectives that LAS writers can incorporate into their LAS. This could be rights-based or could highlight how FoRB can be taught alongside or through teaching the usual RE content
- Provide pedagogy advice for how to ensure FoRB is promoted (including advice on best practice approaches; teaching strategies to promote respect for different views such as dialogic teaching and so on)

Annex 1

Examples of slides prepared by teacher applying a FoRB lens to an established unit of work, including the use of case studies developed in Phase I of the Primary FoRB Project.

Lesson 1
TBQ: How might a FoRB lens help people to interpret changes in data of people who believe in God and those who don't?

Making sense of belief

Learning outcomes

- I can define the terms 'theist', 'atheist' and 'agnostic' and give examples of statements that reflect these beliefs.

FoRB Learning Outcome:

- Children have some understanding of the role everyone can have in promoting and protecting Human Rights, in doing so they develop a wider Human Rights vocabulary.

This case study highlights the following FoRB issues:

- The right to freely have, keep, change or leave your religion or belief is an absolute right which means that, according to international law, this right may never be limited by anyone, anywhere.
- That people are persecuted for expressing atheist and non-religious opinions; the rights associated with FoRB provide protections to individuals who express such beliefs and opinions
- That people are persecuted for leaving their religion of birth; the rights associated with FoRB provide protections to individuals who change their religious beliefs
- That the level of persecution can rise from minor harassment through to extreme violence and imprisonment

Annex 2

Document produced by one school exploring how to embed a whole school approach to FoRB

What is this document and who is it for?

This document is a tool for colleagues at Ranelagh School. This document is for all staff but particularly relevant to those working in classrooms supporting the learning of our children.

Why does Ranelagh School have this document?

Because of the excellent Religious Education teaching at our school, Ranelagh was selected to be part of a pilot project to explore how schools could be places where Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) principles could flourish.

What is FoRB? What does it mean for a school to be a place where FoRB principles can flourish?

FoRB is one of the Human Rights expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At its heart it is the freedom to have, choose, change, or leave a religion or belief and the freedom to practise a religion or belief, including non-religious beliefs such as Atheism and Humanism.

For a school to be a FoRB flourishing school means that it is a place where children can talk about their own beliefs, engage with beliefs different to their own, and learn to be ok with those differences. It means that it is a place where efforts are made to reduce harmful misunderstandings and stereotypes of religion and belief differences.

How does this document work?

There are many places within the curriculum where teachers have the opportunity to ask their students questions which can encourage reflection about FoRB principles. The author of this document has reviewed topics being taught this term and generated some suggested questions which teachers can choose to use to encourage this reflection. By supporting this work, we can all work together to embed FoRB principles in our school.

Year Group	Topic	Effective Questioning
Nursery	<p>Where the Wild Things Are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Three Billy Goats Gruff ● Handa's Surprise ● Giraffes Can't Dance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In many religions, sharing with others is seen as important? Why do you think that is? ❖ Do you think it is okay to laugh at someone who is different from us? ❖ Do you think it's okay for everyone to be different? Why or why not?
Reception	<p>Where the Wild Things Are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We're Going On A Bear Hunt ● The Very Hungry Caterpillar ● The Gruffalo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ How did the family understand each other's beliefs during the adventure? ❖ Why is it important for everyone to respect different beliefs? ❖ How did the story (The Very Hungry Caterpillar) teach us about respecting different cultures' food practices? ❖ How can you stand up for our beliefs, like the mouse did?
KS1	<p>How does special food and fasting help people in their faith (all religions)?</p> <p>Cinderella</p> <p>Burglar Bill</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ How does eating special foods during religious celebrations show freedom of religion? ❖ Why is it important to understand and respect that different people have different beliefs about food? ❖ Can you practise your own belief, even if you are different from others? ❖ Is it important for Cinderella to have the freedom to make her own choices, like going to the ball? ❖ How does Cinderella's story teach us about respecting others' dreams and beliefs, even if they are different from ours? ❖ What do you think Burglar Bill's beliefs about right or wrong might be? ❖ How could Burglar Bill's story change if he learned to respect other people's belongings and beliefs? ❖ Why is it important for everyone to have the freedom to believe in what is right and make right choices, even when it's hard?

<p>Year 3</p>	<p>What can we learn about special symbols and signs used in special religions?</p> <p>Voices In The Park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ How do symbols and signs in different religions reflect the freedom of belief and expression? ❖ Do we have the freedom to believe in whatever religion or belief we choose? ❖ What significance/importance do special symbols and signs hold in ceremonies and celebrations? How does this relate to the concept of religious freedom? ❖ Why is it important for people to see things differently, like the characters in the book? ❖ How do the pictures in the book help us understand how the characters feel about their beliefs? ❖ Why do you think some characters in the story feel lonely? How could we help them feel included? ❖ How do the characters learn to understand and respect each other's beliefs throughout the story?
<p>Year 4</p>	<p>What makes the person I am?</p> <p>Gangsta Granny</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ How does your freedom to practise your religion or belief influence your sense of identity and personal values? ❖ Have you ever faced challenges based on your religion or beliefs? How did you defend or maintain this right? ❖ How do you promote religious freedom or belief rights, both for yourself and others? ❖ How can you communicate with people or groups who hold different religious or beliefs views? ❖ How did the interaction of characters from different cultures or religious backgrounds show the theme of freedom of religion or belief? ❖ How did the story show the importance of tolerance, understanding and respect for different religions and beliefs?
<p>Year 5</p>	<p>What does it mean to live in peace?</p> <p>Stereotyping</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What does freedom of religion or belief mean to you? ❖ Why is it important for everyone to have the right to practise their own religion or belief? ❖ Why is it important to learn about different religions and beliefs? ❖ How do you think people live together peacefully? ❖ What can you do if you see someone being treated unfairly because of their religion or belief? ❖ How can understanding and accepting different religions and beliefs help create a more peaceful world? ❖ Can you think of any stereotypes you've heard about people who practise a certain religion? ❖ How can you celebrate diversity in the community, including different religions?

