

# Suffolk Humanists Monthly Bulletin

January 2019

## "The Uganda Humanist Schools Trust"

**Next meeting** - Tuesday 8th January

For our first meeting of 2019 we have a talk about the Uganda Humanist Schools Trust (UHST) from the Trust's Chair, Steve Hurd.

Steve will be travelling down from Crewe to talk so we are keen to have a good audience. So please do your best to come along.

UHST helps schools in Uganda working to offer liberal, humanist education to needy children. Founded by Ugandan Humanists and run as charities, the schools are inclusive and do not discriminate on grounds of religion, social or ethnic background.

UHST currently supports three schools: Isaac Newton High School, Katera, Masaka; Mustard Seed School, Busota, Kamule; and, Kasese Humanist Primary School.

Steve will talk about the challenges of promoting a humanist ethos in schools in a highly religious country.

For further information about UHST and its sponsored schools, visit:  
<http://www.ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org/>

As usual the meeting will be 7.30 pm at the Co-op/EEFA meetings rooms 47 St Helen's Street, Ipswich.

The entrance is at the rear of the building. If the door is closed use the bell or failing that call 07743437256.

### **United Nations Association Celebration in December**

This year's celebration was held at the Quaker Meeting House in Ipswich and the theme was Article 3: "Everyone has the right to life, right to liberty and the right to security of person".

Many representatives of religious and non-religious groups were present but this year it was noticeable that the larger religious bodies e.g. Church of England, Roman Catholic, and non-conformist churches such as the Methodists did not take part. One particularly interesting presentation was given by a lady who had been brought up in a Middle Eastern country. She reflected upon how shocked she had been when she arrived in the UK and discovered that there were people who thought that "the right to life" applied even to those who blasphemed.

### **Ipswich MP Sandy Martin discussing "Faith and Community Issues"**

The "Ipswich Faith and Community Forum" held its AGM in November and the speaker afterwards was the Ipswich MP Sandy Martin. He prefaced his talk by saying up front that he was an atheist and then outlined what he thought were the main issues facing Ipswich - especially the gang and drugs situation that had resulted in the recent stabbings and murder. This was followed by a Question and Answer Session. Questions were mainly focussed on the same topic - pressing problems of the drug gangs. Responding to a question from one of our members he said that he was opposed to the growth of faith schools.

## **Government decides to ignore the Commission on Religious Education (CoRE) report: "A New Vision for Religious Education in Schools."**

Sometimes I think that the government is doing its best to kill off (or let die) what remains of RE in schools. Given the poor quality of what often passes for RE some of which is proselytization this might not be such a bad thing. But good quality RE (or Education about Religion) where students have the opportunity to learn about the diverse range of beliefs, their origins and philosophies can do much to help understanding of the many issues that we are faced with today.

The report is the result of two years work from Commissioners. They listened to evidence from a wide-range of concerned parties including pupils, teachers, lecturers, advisers, parents and faith and belief communities and received over three thousand submissions.

While many of us would have liked the report to have gone further - perhaps totally removing the word 'religion' and renaming the subject as 'Philosophy, Ethics and Citizenship' or similar - the report's recommendations are at least headed in the right direction.

The report includes 11 recommendations but the most far reaching are:

- \* That RE be renamed Religion and Worldviews.
- \* That ALL schools including free schools, academies, and schools of a religious character would be required to ensure that every pupil has access to Religion and Worldviews learning.
- \* That there would be a National Programme of study to replace the locally determined curricula.

Given the Secretary of State for Education's stated view that, 'It is mandatory for all state funded

schools to teach RE and it is important that they do this well..' you would think that he would enthusiastically embrace the report.

So what did the Minister say in response?  
"....some stakeholders have concerns that making statutory the inclusion of "worldviews" risks diluting the teaching of RE .....and will unnecessarily add to the workload of teachers."

He concluded " ..,now is not the time to begin these reforms."

The RE Council, which established CoRE in 2016, said it was "disappointed" by Hinds's reaction saying...

"His response fails to grasp the urgent need for reform of Religious Education to better prepare young people for life in modern Britain, the broad consensus in support of the commission's recommendations, and the excellent opportunity to strengthen the subject that the report's publication represents."

The report and the various responses are downloadable from  
<https://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/>

### **Future meetings:**

Tuesday January 8th Steve Hurd: "The Uganda Humanist School Trust".

Saturday January 26th - Lunchtime meeting: Woodbridge Duke of York.

February: Still to be arranged but probably an evening event or Dinner around Darwin Day.

### **Finally**

A Happy New Year to you all.  
Denis Johnston

## **Suffolk Humanists & Secularists**

23 Ipswich Road, Woodbridge, IP12 4BS  
01394 383122  
[elisabeth.thompson90@gmail.com](mailto:elisabeth.thompson90@gmail.com)

[www.suffolkhands.org.uk](http://www.suffolkhands.org.uk) ,  
[www.agoodlifewithoutreligion.com](http://www.agoodlifewithoutreligion.com)  
email: [mail@suffolkhands.org.uk](mailto:mail@suffolkhands.org.uk)  
[www.facebook.com/suffolkhands](https://www.facebook.com/suffolkhands)  
Twitter (@suffolkhands)