

Inter faith activity in the UK

A Teacher resource
for secondary pupils
aged 11–14



UNIT 2

Let's Talk – Inter Faith Dialogue



This unit is intended to take pupils on a journey:

As human beings the main way we communicate is through talking.

There are different forms of speech, including discussion, debate and dialogue.

'Dialogue' is different from 'debate'.

Dialogue has some distinctive characteristics.

Productive dialogue requires ground rules.

Many faith communities have a commitment to dialogue with members of other faith traditions.

Inter faith dialogue helps develop understanding and respect.

Inter faith dialogue provides participants with an opportunity to learn about themselves as well as others.

Teacher note: this unit of work is intended as an introduction for pupils learning about inter faith dialogue in the UK. It is intended to be used after pupils have completed Unit 1 Introducing Inter Faith Activity in the UK.

Pupils will usually have encountered 'dialogue' as part of their English and Literacy work and it may be useful to draw upon their experience and build the unit from there. Schools using *Towards Dialogic Teaching*¹ may also want to get pupils to explore the types of language needed not only for learning but also for dialogue in a classroom setting.

About the unit

This unit is aimed at helping pupils to understand the unique features of dialogue, including how it differs from debate and other forms of discussion and why inter faith dialogue is important. Where possible, it will build on pupils' own learning in English (National Curriculum English Order KS3 Spoken English). Ideally, pupils should also have an opportunity to try out dialogue for themselves and build their skills for this.

Vocabulary

Inter faith, multi faith, dialogue, debate, discussion, bilateral.

Expectations

Pupils will:

- Be able to explain why inter faith dialogue is important as a way of developing mutual understanding and respect.
- Understand the contexts and skills needed to enable dialogue to occur. They will be able to give examples of inter faith dialogue in the UK and, where appropriate, locally.
- Be able to set up and carry out a dialogue of a kind that enables 'living together well'.

¹Alexander, R. (2008). *Towards Dialogic Teaching: Rethinking Classroom Talk*. York, Dialogos.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK closed in 2024, with outward facing operations ceasing in April.

In order to ensure that the material in IFN's publications remained available to the public, to inter faith practitioners, and to scholars after IFN's closure, the copyright status of publications has been changed.

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| LEARNING OBJECTIVES Pupils should learn... | POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That dialogue, debate and general discussion are different. • That definitions of dialogue vary. One developed and used by IFN is: “conversation or written exchange which is a mutually respectful exploration of views with the hoped for outcome of greater understanding”. | <p>Pupils could look for definitions of dialogue, debate and discussion, and explain what they consider the main differences to be.</p> <p>Pupil’s may wish to look at the relevant section of IFN’s publication, Connect: A youth inter faith action guide (pages 18–20)² or at the more detailed section of IFN’s publication Let’s Talk (page 3).</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That many religious bodies in the UK believe that inter faith dialogue is important and that it forms part of their work. | <p>Pupils could look at the websites of some of the diverse faith community bodies which highlight the importance of inter faith dialogue, such as Baptists Together, Board of Deputies of British Jews, Hindu Council UK, The Methodist Church, The United Reformed Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and The Pagan Federation</p> <p>Pupils could also investigate projects started by national bodies which encourage dialogue between people in local communities such as the Near Neighbours programme of the Church of England, which includes a significant dialogue component, eg Real People Honest Talk.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That many people of different religious and non-religious beliefs believe inter faith dialogue to be important. | <p>Pupils could look for accounts from individuals which explain why they think inter faith dialogue is important. This could be famous religious leaders, local leaders or other individuals accounts found online. Some quotes from young people can be found in Connect: A youth inter faith action guide.</p> <p>Let’s Talk pages 5–7 contains quotes about different reasons that IFN member bodies have given for why dialogue is important.</p> <p>Another example are these quotes and messages from national faith leaders in the context of Inter Faith Week 2020.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That inter faith dialogue has particular features. • That productive dialogues require basic ground rules. | <p>Pupils could look at the web page: Dialogue - The Inter Faith Network (IFN) and other work of IFN that focuses on dialogue such as Let’s Talk and Connect: A youth inter faith action guide and at resources produced by youth inter faith initiatives such as The Feast Project’s Guidelines for Dialogue and the Faith & Belief Forum’s Safe Space resource. Pupils could also look at Interfaith Scotland’s Belief in Dialogue publication.</p> <p>Pupils could read and discuss the guidelines and values contained in Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths And Beliefs.</p> <p>Pupils could also look at the Dialogue Tips and Ground Rules in the Connect: Youth Inter Faith Action Guide, pp 16–20, which are based on Building Good Relations but reshaped for youth inter faith dialogue.</p> |

² Copies of the CONNECT: A YOUTH INTER FAITH ACTION GUIDE are available free to school (while stocks last) and can be obtained by emailing the Inter Faith Network office. For details see the Teacher Introduction.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That there are different kinds of inter faith dialogues. | <p>Pupils could think about the different kinds of dialogue highlighted in the ‘Different kinds of dialogue: an overview’ section of Let's Talk.</p> <p>Pupils could learn about the ‘Inter Faith Buddies’ scheme that IFN set up, originally for Inter Faith Week, to help people of different faiths get into dialogue digitally. They could also watch a video of one local group involved in the programme.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some bodies established to promote dialogue have a specific focus or approach. | <p>Pupils could research the website of the Christian–Muslim Forum or the Council of Christians and Jews to look at the work of two ‘bilateral’ inter faith bodies.</p> <p>Pupils could look at the work of the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme and its scriptural reasoning approach to inter faith encounter and dialogue.</p> <p>Pupils could look at the project of the St Philip’s centre called Come e-Dine Together, which brought people together from different traditions in Leicester to meet each other over food.</p> <p>Pupils could explore the ways that social action projects can be used as a springboard for encounter and dialogue such as Sewa Day or the Aik Saath project that focuses on conflict resolution.</p> <p>Different groups of pupils could research one specific approach and could do a short presentation on their findings.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That dialogue enables a mutually respectful exchange of views, where those involved hope to gain greater understanding of each other. | <p>Pupils could invite members of their nearest local inter faith organisation to explore the topic of dialogue or invite members of local faith communities to speak about how and why they and other members of their tradition dialogue with others.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the skills for dialogue. | <p>Pupils could be divided into groups of 2–4 and asked to (a) agree some ground rules for dialogue, drawing on the resources they have researched, and (b) engage in dialogue together on a theme of their choice.</p> <p>Pupils could also discuss the way terms such as ‘truth’, ‘respect; and ‘tolerance’ are used so that there is a shared understanding from the outset, noting that these terms may mean different things to different people.</p> |

| LEARNING OUTCOMES Pupils should be able to | POINTS TO NOTE |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish clearly between dialogue, debate, discussion. | Teachers may wish to consult the English department on what they can expect of pupils in terms of prior learning. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to define the term 'inter faith dialogue' identifying its unique features. | Teachers may wish to look at the definition of dialogue on page 3 of IFN's publication Let's Talk and the guidelines on pages 26-27. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to give examples of bodies that engage in and promote inter faith dialogue and identify types of inter faith dialogue with a specific focus or approach. | Teachers may want to explore topics such as monastic inter religious dialogue where that fits in with looking at those religions that have monastic traditions. |

TEACHER RESOURCES

During this unit it may be useful for pupils to invite members of different faith communities in their local area to speak about the approaches to inter faith dialogue that they take, see **The Teacher Introduction** that goes with this unit.

NOTES

Faith Groups

Baptists Together is the web portal and an informal name used for the Baptist Union of Great Britain, which is a linking body for Baptist Churches in Britain.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews is the largest Jewish communal organisation in the United Kingdom, established in 1760. It describes itself as “the voice of the British Jewish community, the first port of call for government, the media and others seeking to understand Jewish community interests and concerns”.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is a worldwide faith established in the United States of America. Its origins in the UK date back to 1837 and has ‘stakes’ (chapels or churches) across the UK.

The Hindu Council UK works to give UK Hindus an effective voice on policy matters with Government whilst enhancing mutual understanding among the major faiths predominant in the UK.

The Methodist Church in Britain is the body that represents many Methodist churches and chapels in Great Britain.

The Pagan Federation works to support the religious rights of Pagans and to make Paganism accessible to those seeking a nature-based spiritual path.

The United Reformed Church was formed in 1974 and includes many former Congregationalist and Presbyterian chapels and churches in England. Over time other Christian denominations joined the Church.

Inter Faith Groups or programmes

Aik Saath – Together as One is a Slough based young people’s organisation that promotes and encourages conflict resolution and community cohesion through training, campaigns and projects.

Interfaith Scotland works to help ensure good relations between the diverse religion and belief communities of Scotland and also to share good practice in inter faith dialogue, education, engagement and training nationally and internationally.

Near Neighbours is a project of the Church Urban Fund of the Church of England that brings people together in communities that are religiously and

ethnically diverse, so that they can get to know each other better, build relationships of trust, and collaborate together on initiatives that improve the local community they live in. It is a programme supported by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Visit My Mosque is a programme of the Muslim Council of Britain that aims to promote a better understanding of Muslim communities in the UK by supporting mosques in an annual open door programme.

The Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) was founded in 1942, during the Second World War, and specialises in dialogue between Christians and Jews. CCJ has local branches across the UK.

The Christian-Muslim Forum was set up to promote dialogue between Christians and Muslims. It runs a number of programmes and has a church-mosque twinning scheme.

The Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter is a centre dedicated to Christian–Jewish dialogue based in west London. The centre is run by the Sisters of Sion, a Roman Catholic order of religious sisters, dedicated to that purpose.

The World Congress of Faiths was founded in 1936 and has its roots in the World Parliament of Faiths founded in 1893.

The Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme was founded in 2002 with the aim of bringing the resources of the Faculty of Divinity, and the University of Cambridge more generally, to bear on questions about the relationship between Jews, Christians and Muslims.

St Philip’s Centre is a centre in Leicester which leads efforts to ensure religion and belief are harnessed for the good of all in Leicestershire and runs inter faith projects with schools, businesses and statutory bodies.

Sewa Day is a charity which promotes acts of selfless kindness. It is rooted in the concept of Sewa which involves performing an act of kindness without expectation of reward. Sewa is a sanskrit word and is embedded in the Dharmic traditions of ancient India.

The Feast UK is a charity that brings together teenagers for different faiths and cultures to build friendships, explore faith and changes lives.

Technical vocabulary

Inter faith is used in this resource to describe interaction between people of different faiths, and in some cases between those of religious and non-religious beliefs.

Multi faith is used in this resource of activities to describe activities involving several faiths contributing 'side-by-side' where the primary emphasis is not on their interaction.

Dialogue is used here with the meaning of conversation or written exchange which is a mutually respectful exploration of views with the hoped for outcome of greater understanding.

Resources

Let's Talk Practical Pointers for Inter Faith Dialogue is a publication of the Inter Faith Network for the UK 2007 published by the Inter Faith Network.

Connect: A youth inter faith action guide (2018) Inter Faith Network for the UK. It is aimed specifically at 16 – 25 year olds but may have some useful materials that could be adapted for use in the secondary setting.

Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs (1993) Inter Faith Network for the UK. It was developed in consultation with its member bodies the 'code' was designed to set out the characteristics of good inter faith engagement. All IFN member bodies subscribe to this guidance, and it is used widely.

Another useful resource is the dialogue section of the Scottish Government's 2011 publication [Belief in Dialogue](#) at pages 14–19

This teacher resource points to a number of resources linked to Inter Faith Network member bodies and other sources. There are many such materials available and those included are in no way exhaustive. IFN's member body list and other resources on its website www.interfaith.org.uk will take you to other useful materials.

Other than those to IFN's own websites, links provided are to materials of independent organisations. IFN takes no responsibility for their content – as it stands at this time or as it may evolve. The links may change over time. They are correct at March 2021 and will be checked periodically. If you

find any that do not work, please do let us know so that we can replace them.

The resource covers a broad range of faith traditions in the UK and this is reflected across the resource as a whole, not in all or any of the individual units.

Teachers should consult the Teacher Introduction before using this unit as a basis for curriculum planning.