



AGM 2010 Chair's report

I want to welcome you warmly, on behalf of the Executive, to the AGM for 2010. It is quite interesting writing this report pre-election, knowing that by the time it is presented at the AGM it will be post-election! There are some issues of significance to RE and SACREs, not least of which is the fate of the Primary National Curriculum review, which will be greatly influenced by the outcome of the election and we may start to be able to plan a way forward by the time of the AGM, where at the moment we are held in limbo.

So much has happened since I took over the chair at the last AGM.

The Executive has met termly and been in constant communication between meetings. As last year, Executive work has focused on responding to national RE and broader education issues as they arise, developing support materials, contributing to the Religious Education Council's RE Action Plan and representing the interests of SACREs with the DCSF, QCDA and other organisations. We said goodbye and thank you to Karl D'Cruz and, as an Executive member, to Robin Kanarek, although Robin kindly agreed to be co-opted to carry on her work with the Young People's Faith Forums. We welcomed Helen Harrison and Harbhajan Singh onto the Executive and they have been lively contributors. Philip Davies has again been co-opted to act as support to Treasurer and Tristram Jenkins to support with the Young people's Faith Forums.

Partnerships

In June 2009 a number of us attended a fascinating and useful conference run jointly by the Inter Faith network UK and NASACRE, which Denise Chaplin and Michael Metcalf prepared on our behalf in partnership with Harriet Crabtree. The day itself was a huge success, with SACREs and interfaith organisations working together, sharing ideas and practice and learning much about and from each other. The resulting report, which has recently been distributed, contains a lot of excellent thinking and practice and, in the 'key points' at the beginning, many helpful suggestions for moving this forward. I am sure your SACREs will find this helpful and we on the Executive will need to look at how NASACRE can work with the IFNUK to build on this. I imagine that the Interfaith Week 2010 will provide rich opportunities.

Interfaith week 2009 was widely received as a great opportunity for SACREs to join with others in promoting good interfaith dialogue and exchange. The quality of advice available, including from NASACRE, enabled many schools, SACREs and interfaith groups to liaise and collaborate, and to show initiative and innovation. Individual SACREs shared their work and Bruce Gill collated it all so that SACREs nationwide were able to use and build on this. The fact that a second national interfaith week will take place from 21st November 2010 is a testament to the inaugural success.

RE Action Plan Year 2

A major part of our partnership work is with the REC and its member organisations, including professional RE Groups. Our contribution to the RE Action plan has been to continue and build on the Recruitment and Training Programme, led by Julie Grove ably supported by Marjorie Crombie. Julie will be referring to this in more detail in her Secretary's Report, but I just want to thank her, Marjorie and all the regional organisers and SACREs who have helped to make this such a success.

A new dimension to this is the CD that Julie and Sharon Artley are preparing, with all the training materials, and much more, on. This will be distributed free to all SACREs and there will also be additional copies for sale.

A second prong to this Action Plan is the review and renewal of the RE Subject Self-Evaluation Form (SEF), which has been a partnership between NASACRE, NATRE (through Deborah Weston) and AREIAC (through Dave Francis). This is being piloted this term and will be available from September. As well as being helpful to schools, it will also help SACREs with their monitoring role. It will be web-based and therefore it will be possible to collate local anonymised data to identify strengths and areas for development within LA schools. I would like to thank Deborah and Dave for their work on this and am confident that it will prove to be most useful to you all. We will need to work together to encourage schools to use this facility.

Another useful document is the RETool that Michael Metcalf, Bruce Gill and Katherine Wedell have been working on. This is a combination of the SACRE SEF and the report template. It will enable SACREs to evaluate their strengths and development needs, celebrate their successes in an individual way and report on work that they have done. QCDA will host the process, so that reports can be submitted electronically, and can be sent at any time during the year, without the deadline of 31st December, which will be a relief for New Year revellers!

RE Guidance 2010 and the Primary Curriculum and RE

On 29th January 2010 we saw the long-awaited publication of the RE Guidance and the RE Programme of Learning. As you know, members of NASACRE Executive helped with the development of both of these documents, although particularly with the Guidance, it was very much the DCSF's document. Whilst there are no changes to legislation, it contains a positive approach to 'quality' RE. NASACRE would encourage you to use the Guidance set out in as creative and inclusive a way as possible.

The question now remains – what will happen to the Primary Curriculum? As SACREs and as a National Association, we must use every opportunity we can to promote 'Quality RE'. However, we must also wait and see what happens with the Primary Curriculum itself.

NASACRE QCDA Conference

Many of you will have attended the joint conference organised by members of the Executive on behalf of NASACRE and the DCSF. There was a real buzz of enthusiasm and excitement during the day, and a lot of positive feeling about the role of RE in the school curriculum. It was encouraging to see so many SACREs represented, and the opportunity was there both to inform future developments and to see examples from around the country as to how to develop RE in the new Curriculum.

Month of celebration

March 2011 sees the first month of celebrating RE. Denise Chaplin is chairing the group and it is important that all SACREs work with their schools to raise the profile of good RE in maintained schools and Local Authorities. A main theme of this from NASACRE will be to use our 2011 Youth Forum projects as a strong link to Celebrating quality RE. This will be followed at the next AGM in 2011 with a major focus on pupil voice and participation in RE and Community Cohesion.

AREIAC conference on AS and local RE

In November 2009, some SACRE members and members of the Executive attended a most useful day on what makes a good Agreed Syllabus. Much emphasis was made on the importance that a focus on the local dimension of learning can bring to the wider experiences of children and young people. SACREs have a key role to play in this and in ensuring that the Agreed Syllabus is robust and challenging. This involves more than just the syllabus itself, but also the support available to schools to be enabled teachers to teach the Agreed Syllabus.

Agreed Syllabus Collaboration Project

A number of SACREs have been involved in a project co-ordinated by QCDA, which is seeking to find a collaborative basis for Agreed Syllabus development in the light of most recent developments in RE and the Curriculum. The approach has been to ensure that local determination enables the Agreed Syllabus to reflect the local faith communities, whilst providing a framework for planning this into national initiatives and priorities, so that pupils can experience RE that is in line with the rest of their learning. I think this is one of the major challenges facing SACREs in providing quality learning for all pupils.

RESilience

Bruce Gill represents NASACRE on the RESilience Advisory Group. His report in the last newsletter was most interesting and useful to keep you up-to-date on this significant and exciting initiative. The link to the RESilience website and to the newsletter is available on the NASACRE website.

Keeping in touch

Speaking of the website, I would like to express our thanks to Paul Hopkins for maintaining and developing our website and would encourage you to use it as much as possible. Paul joined us at our last executive meeting to discuss what is currently available on the website, how it is used and to explore how we might develop it further. It is most helpful that Paul works with other RE bodies and is able to draw on what we are each doing and link our websites. It is good that SACREs continue to use the website as a means to communicate with us, especially regarding 'Frequently Asked Questions'. I would encourage you also to use this as a means of sharing what you are doing locally to provide inspiration and ideas for other SACREs.

We continue to publish the *SACRE News* on the website, and I think that this is by far the most economic and environmentally-friendly method to do so, in line with most common practice. We hope that the growing range of articles and contributors is both helpful and interesting to you. We welcome contributions from individuals and SACREs through which you want either to share and celebrate a local initiative or raise some thoughtful issues for us to reflect on or stimulate further thinking and debate. The work of SACREs is about enabling children and young people to experience quality opportunities to explore their own and other people's sense of community and identity. This is so important in our modern world, and we need to work together to develop ways of doing this most effectively. The newsletter – and the website – offer real opportunities for us all to engage in this enterprise.

NASACRE continues to work on other publications to support you in your work, which I have already mentioned. The CD will be extremely helpful to you in terms of training and developing your practice. The RETool will enable you to identify your strengths and some key priorities for development, and to structure your annual report. These projects do not appear from nowhere! I am very fortunate to have a dedicated and skilled Executive Group and team of officers who work

creatively and tirelessly on your behalf. I am sure you will want to join me in expressing your appreciation for this work.

Central to the work of our organisation is communication with individuals and SACREs, and this is not possible without central administrative support. NASACRE continues to be grateful to Yvonne Cameron for the excellent work she does in fielding enquiries, handling mail-outs and keeping you all informed and involved. We are grateful to Lewisham Children and Young People's Directorate for providing access to their RE Centre and making Yvonne available to do this work for us.

One of the tasks that Yvonne is required to perform is to maintain and up-date our database of contacts. However, she can only do so if SACREs inform her of changes of Chairs or Clerks, and thus of those she needs to contact. Over the last two or three years we have faced the situation of having to phone and e-mail around to ask SACREs to pay their annual subscriptions and/or AGM fees, and this both is time-consuming on our resources (especially Yvonne) and has an impact on our finances. I want to stress that we can only continue to support you if we have the resources to do so and thus we do need prompt payment of subs and fees. This year, we will be checking payment of subs and fees from this and last year and those who have not paid will not be able to vote at the AGM. We do not want to go down this route unless we have to, so please do chase up and check your SACRE is up to date before you come.

There will be much that I have missed out, but this report reflects the main work that NASACRE has done on your behalf. We are in 'interesting times', both for education generally and for RE. We do our best to represent your interests and keep you informed, but the main work is that done by you in your localities. I want to finish by thanking the Executive for their work, mentioning particularly Rick Lee, Katherine Wedell and Khadijah Knight as they stand down; I am grateful to them for their service and wish them well. I also want to thank you for what you are doing in and with your communities for the benefit and well-being of children and young people. It is important work and its reward is in the buzz and excitement that are generated when children and young people get together and discuss issues and experiences that are important to them.

Our collective challenge is to work together to build and build on these opportunities. How do we engage all children, of any faith or belief? How do we provide quality RE for all pupils, so that children who move around the country can expect some shape and coherence, and above all, consistency, to their experience of RE? How do we ensure that the local dimension of RE is enshrined in this process? How do we promote Community Cohesion and Well-Being through RE and collective worship? These are vital issues for our communities, and we need to stress that we cannot respond effectively to them in isolation: it is a collaborative venture and NASACRE is here to facilitate this process of collaboration so that your individual work can be enriched and enrich others.

I wish you well for the year ahead and look forward to working with you.



Bill Moore
May 2010