

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Shropshire Annual Report



November 2014 – November 2015

Introduction

It is with great pride that I introduce this Annual Report which records another very successful year of partnership between Shropshire SACRE and the schools and academies in its area. I would like to record my thanks to all those who have contributed to this impressive achievement in 214-2015, particularly:

The Local Authority:

We have received outstanding leadership from the Schools Improvement Adviser who is a specialist in RE. All SACRE meetings are supported by Legal and Clerking services.

The LA Development Plan recognises the need for funding to help SACRE evaluate, support and further develop RE and Collective worship in schools/academies. This includes developing links with interfaith groups in the area and the planning of curriculum enrichment events.

Time has been allocated to ensure the Learning Gateway contains high quality resources to support teaching and learning in RE and Collective Worship.

The elected members have a good record of attending SACRE meetings as well as the Curriculum and Collective Worship sub-committee meetings.

The members of SACRE:

The membership list at Appendix B shows the wide range of expertise and experience members bring to SACRE meetings, reflecting the demographics of this very large rural area of those who have faith and those who have none.

The generous time which members unstintingly devote to attending SACRE meetings, on line discussions, and the impressive numbers and range of curriculum enrichment visits into schools or attendance at and delivery of events.

Schools and teachers

The interests of head teachers and teachers are well represented on SACRE – including the interests of Academies.

Attendance at Primary and Secondary Network Meetings is good; as is attendance at courses offered under Service Level Agreements.

School visits on behalf of SCARE by the Specialist Adviser are welcomed for the supportive manner in which they are conducted, the quality of dialogue and sharing of expertise.

As we move into 2015-2016, the Local Authority has undertaken a Council wide restructuring to reflect its need to focus on core delivery and commissioning of wider services. Following the retirement of Alun Morgan, the specialist RE Adviser/School Improvement Adviser, the LA is exploring with SACRE how his services might be bought in under the commissioning arrangements to support SACRE and continue the delivery of Primary and Secondary Network meetings and also the RE/Collective Worship elements of the CPD programme.

Henry White

Chair of Shropshire SACRE

Section 1. Advice to Statutory Bodies

- a. Shropshire Local Authority
 - At the spring term meeting SACRE adopted a formal determination process and informed the corporate director of this development.
- b. Schools
 - Charlie Ebdo – The NASACRE letter was circulated to headteachers of all Shropshire primary, secondary and special schools and was followed up through the LA network meetings for headteachers and RE subject leaders.
 - Collective Worship films – In response to a need identified through the collective worship surveys a series of films made by SACRE members to support non-Christian acts of collective worship have been produced and made available to all schools through the Shropshire Learning Gateway.
 - CPD provision has run throughout the year and attendance at these courses has seen a significant upturn on previous years. Since January there have been 3 primary network meetings, 3 secondary network meetings, a Planning for Progress in Primary RE course, an Introduction to Judaism course, an Introduction to Islam course as well as the 2 Explore Islam Exhibitions and the Holocaust Memorial Day event.
- c. Government or Other Statutory Bodies
 - Response to Lord Nash's letter – the letter from Lord Nash was discussed by the full SACRE and the Curriculum Committee. A formal response was written and sent to Lord Nash and copied to Stephen Lloyd as Chair of the APPG for RE.
 - Response to GCSE, AS and A Level RE consultation – at the autumn term meeting in 2014 the consultation document was discussed and a response was made through the local authority adviser to the proposals.
- d. Responses to the above
 - Shropshire Council – the Director of Children's Services formally thanked SACRE for its work in producing the determination guidance
 - Schools – the response from schools has been positive to guidance issued. Attendance on all RE courses has increased significantly in the current academic year.
 - Government
 - a response was received from James Brazil on behalf of Lord Nash
 - Following the consultation there was considerable delay in hearing the response. That delay had a significant impact on the stress levels of subject leaders as they awaited details of the possible changes and the new specifications. With the implementation date fixed at September 2016 this delay is causing major concerns in schools.

Section 2. Standards and Quality of Provision of Religious Education

a. Public examinations

15 schools had entered pupils for full course GCSE in 2015 out of the 21 Shropshire secondary schools. An additional 2 schools have entered pupils for the short course leaving 4 schools which have not entered pupils for public examinations at GCSE level. 3 of these schools are academies. Overall entries at full course GCSE show a rise from 2014 of 66 pupils but set against a decline in the headline percentage figure for pupils achieving A*-C grades from 71.5% to 66.2%. This figure is against a national improvement. Attainment at the higher grades of A* and A has also declined from 2014 from 26.5% to 22.1%. On both of these measures achievement in Shropshire is below the national benchmark comparisons.

All 11-18 secondary schools had pupils entered for both AS and A Level examinations in 2015. At both levels entries rose from 2014. At A Level entries rose from 61 up to 126 and at AS level entries rose from 131 up to 178. At A Level the results for A*-B and A*-E are close to the national figures. At AS Level the A-B figure for Shropshire is below the national figure but the A-E figure is close. A statistical breakdown can be found at Annex A at the end of this report.

b. Attainment in RE not covered by public examinations

Drawing on the primary curriculum survey of 53% of primary schools, 3 schools judged standards at the end of Key Stage 1 to be less than satisfactory, 21 judged them as satisfactory and 24 judged them to be good, 5 referring to some outstanding features and a further 4 as variable. At Key Stage 2, 5 schools judged standards to be less than satisfactory, 21 judged them to be satisfactory and 24 judged them to be good, 4 referring to some outstanding features and a further 3 as variable. These judgements were self-assessments but drew on a range of evidence including book trawls, teachers' planning, subject monitoring, SIAMS inspection reports for CE controlled schools, tracking and assessment outcomes, lesson observations, subject reviews, link governor monitoring folders, displays, Ofsted reports, HMI feedback and the RE Quality Mark.

c. The quality of RE provision in schools

The on-going primary curriculum survey has now covered 53% of schools and paints a largely positive picture of provision in county maintained and CE controlled schools. Every school has a named lead person responsible for the subject and in 35% of cases this person was the headteacher. In the past year 68% of these leads had attended at least one training session related to their role. 95% of schools have a current policy covering the subject. 98% of schools have monitoring procedures carried out by the subject lead which include reviewing against the Agreed Syllabus requirements, monitoring teachers' planning, subject reviews, book trawls/work scrutiny, staff meetings, and the involvement of link governors. All schools meet and usually exceed the requirement to teach a range of different religions, although this was the most frequently mentioned area for further development.

At secondary level there are some emerging issues of concern. Provision at Key Stage 3 is good although some schools are still offering RE as part of a broader opening minds/thinking skills course in conjunction with other humanities subjects. However, provision in key stages 4 and 5 is an area of concern. The change in status of short course RE and the introduction of the E-Bacc measure has had a significant negative impact on provision in a number of schools. Most recently the uncertainty and proposals for new GCSE specifications has had a further negative impact on secondary subject leaders and staffing of RE. Out of the 21 secondary schools in Shropshire, including 12 academies, 8 have non-specialist leads with 6 of these having no specialist RE teaching at all. It should be said that some of the non-specialists are doing sterling work but the provision is not as strong as it would be with specialist teaching. Concern with possible changes

at GCSE and A Level is adversely affecting the confidence of current secondary leaders and this situation may well worsen in the future.

d. **Withdrawal from RE**

Results from the on-going primary survey indicate that there are currently 4 children withdrawn from RE in two schools. There are specific religious reasons for this withdrawal and the process has been clearly managed to the satisfaction of the school, the parents and the children.

At secondary level there are currently 12 pupils withdrawn in two schools, both of which are academies. There are no reported withdrawals from RE in local authority schools.

In addition to these formal withdrawals there has been a trickle of selective withdrawal by parents from aspects of the RE curriculum. This is usually, but not exclusively, related to visits to places of worship and work on Islam. Schools have managed these situations well, but the unpredictable nature of these selective withdrawals does cause undue pressure on headteachers of small schools who often do not have the resources to manage these events.

e. **Complaints about RE**

There have not been any complaints made to the local authority or SACRE regarding RE.

Section 3. The Local Agreed Syllabus

- a. The next review of the local Agreed Syllabus will take place for implementation of the new syllabus in September 2019. Additional non-statutory guidance will continue to be added in the intervening years and publicised through the RE pages of the Learning Gateway and also through LA CPD. The rationale and enquiry based approach which underpin the new syllabus is well embedded in both primary and secondary schools as shown in primary survey returns and from discussions with secondary subject leaders.

Section 4. Collective Worship

a. **Compliance with the statutory requirements**

At primary level the collective worship survey is showing full compliance with statutory requirements. In only one school (an academy) is there an issue of non-compliance as a result of the school being under pressure to remove itself from special measures. In this case there was no collective worship organised on Thursdays. Primary schools meet the requirements through a combination of whole school, key stage and class based worship with strong inputs from Christian perspectives and a good range of inputs from groups and individuals providing moral/ethical themes. Schools have requested further support and guidance to provide collective worship based on non-Christian religions and belief systems. SACRE has responded to this request by commissioning a series of downloadable cores with support materials that school can use to provide accurate inputs. These have been done with the SACRE representatives of these religions and belief systems.

At secondary level a questionnaire is under development to determine the extent of compliance across all schools. SACRE currently has in place an e-mail group of contacts for persons responsible for collective worship and has started using this to provide information and guidance to schools in this area. This will be used to gather information on secondary school provision.

b. **Quality of collective worship**

As part of the primary collective worship survey, self-evaluation questions have been asked and in some instances the interviewer has sat in on acts of worship. The general picture is positive with feedback highlighting Open the Book as a high quality interactive and engaging approach,

positive local church links in both church and non-church schools, and a range of ideas and activities that schools have shared about acts of worship that have worked well for them including local farmers leading at Harvest Festivals, trolley worship and memorable leavers acts of worship. SACRE has had a presentation from one of its secondary schools on a sample act of worship which was very engaging and memorable. Further work is needed to develop the full picture of provision in secondary schools.

c. Determinations

- In the spring term meeting SACRE adopted a formal determination process based on work done by Bexley SACRE. Shropshire SACRE wishes to formally thank Bexley SACRE for permission to draw on their work in this area.
- SACRE has not received any approaches for determination from its schools.

d. Complaints about collective worship

There have not been any complaints made to the local authority or SACRE regarding collective worship.

Section 5: Management of the SACRE and Partnership with the LA and Other Key Stakeholders

a. Attendance at SACRE by committee

Attendance at full SACRE meetings throughout 2015 have produced quorate meetings with representation from all four committees at each meeting. In addition, representation at the six committee meetings, three Curriculum and Standards and three Collective Worship, has been quorate.

b. Membership and training

Shropshire SACRE has a membership that meets statutory requirements and is very representative of the county. Recruitment and replacement of members who have retired has been effective and a full membership list is attached as Annex B. There are currently two SACRE members who work in academies.

All new members have received support from the local authority adviser as part of their induction. A survey of school visits by SACRE members was carried out and this showed that in excess of 112 visits had been made to primary and secondary schools. This total does not include visits and contact made by the local authority adviser for RE.

All SACRE members are on a group e-mail list and have access to RE and SACRE pages on the Shropshire Learning Gateway which provides access to the NASACRE site and other support materials and resources. All NASACRE briefing papers and other key documents are distributed to SACRE members via this system. Information and reports have been fed back to SACRE from the NASACRE annual conference and members who have been involved in running the Explore Islam Exhibitions, Righteous Muslims Exhibition and Holocaust Memorial Day event at Church Stretton.

c. Complaints about RE and Collective Worship

There have not been any complaints made to the local authority or SACRE regarding RE or collective worship.

Section 6. Contribution of SACRE to Promoting Cohesion across the Community

a. Identify what SACRE has contributed to other agendas.

- Through the adviser and shared membership Shropshire SACRE has positive links to the two Inter Faith Network groups that meet in Shrewsbury and South Shropshire. This year there has been involvement in providing two Explore Islam exhibitions, and a Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration event.
 - SACRE members have contributed feedback to the LA in relation to the Abuse in Faith Settings document from their own religious backgrounds.
- b. SACREs contribution to the LA's public sector equality duty.
- Of the three aims of the General Equality Duty, namely eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations SACRE's has made its most significant contributions in the last two areas over the past year. Through its commissioned analysis of exam outcomes and the primary curriculum survey work there is a constant monitoring of equality issues across protected groups in terms of both provision and outcomes. However, the contribution in 2015 towards fostering good relations, particularly with the different religious communities in Shropshire, has been very strong. The Exploring Islam exhibitions, Holocaust Memorial Day events and the links to the different religious communities in the county often through the two existing Inter Faith groups has led to greater understanding and engagement between the various religious communities.
- c. What SACRE has done to support schools through events and training.
- In January SACRE members were involved with the local Muslim community, other local agencies and the LA in organising two Explore Islam exhibitions providing opportunities for schoolchildren to meet and talk with local Muslims including both Imams. Over 370 pupils visited the exhibition. In addition, the exhibition visited one of the secondary schools where a further 350 pupils visited.
 - SACRE members were involved in the planning of a Holocaust Memorial Day event at Church Stretton School for approximately 250 pupils in conjunction with the South Shropshire Inter Faith Network. Harry Bibring, who escaped from Austria on the kindertransport spoke about his experiences of growing up in the 1930s under the growing threat of Nazism. We were successful in being awarded one of the 70 specially commissioned candles designed by Anish Kapoor for the event.
 - SACRE members have supported 7 individual schools and 2 groups of schools by visiting to talk to pupils about world religions.
 - Through the collective worship project SACRE members have made a series of short films to be used by primary schools in collective worship. This was done in response to school requests for support to develop acts of worship drawing on faiths and belief systems other than Christianity.
 - Through the LA adviser there are both primary and secondary network CPD meetings which update schools on new developments in RE, share good practice and explore teaching and learning strategies and approaches; additional subject specific CPD such as progression in RE; two courses designed to develop teachers' understanding of Islam and Judaism run by SACRE members; and individual school consultancies. Details of attendance and outcomes of all of these are reported to the SACRE through termly report which form a standing item on all SACRE agendas.
 - The LA Adviser is required to keep the RE pages on the Learning Gateway updated to keep schools informed of new developments between network meetings.
 - Endorsed and supported an audit tool sent to all schools to review provision of SMSC and British Values.
- d. Links to broader community initiatives.

- a. SACRE has contributed significantly to the community cohesion agenda over the year through links with the local Inter Faith groups, the Exploring Islam exhibitions, Holocaust Memorial Commemorations, and the distribution of guidance in the aftermath of Charlie Ebdo.
- b. SACRE members were made aware of the guidance relating to Abuse in Faith Settings and offered advice on its distribution to faith communities and also raised their awareness of its existence and how it could inform their work where relevant.

Section 7. Summary

Building on the Chair's comments at the beginning of this report, 2015 has, in many respects been another positive year for SACRE whilst acknowledging the challenges in the future. There will continue to be a focus on raising standards at public examination level against a backdrop of significant change to specifications at both GCSE, AS and A Level. SACRE will need to closely monitor the impact of these changes on pupil option numbers and standards. The changes that have taken place at the local authority will also have to be closely monitored with regard to their impact on the ability of SACRE to carry out its statutory functions as well as its wider remit to support RE teachers in primary and secondary schools and staff responsible for the provision of collective worship in our schools.

Annex A

Shropshire GCSE Results and Trends against National Figures

Full Course

	2013			2014			2015		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A*-C	66.5	72.4	-5.9	72.1	71.5	+0.6	66.2	72.0	-5.8
A*-A	28.6	30.9	-2.3	26.5	30.2	-3.7	22.1	29.6	-7.5
Entries	735	-		664	258067		730	271917	

Short Course

	2013			2014			2015		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A*-C	58.8	53.9	4.9		56.8			57.5	
A*-A	20.4	18.7	1.7		19.6			19.7	
Entries	931	-			-				

No information is available for the short course due to its changed status in qualifications

Shropshire GCE Results and Trends against National Figures

A Level

	2013			2014			2015		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A*-B	31	55.3	-24.3	34.6	51.5	-16.9	52.4	54.5	-2.4
A*-E	100	98.8	+1.2	100	99.8	+0.2	99.2	98.9	+0.3
Entries	42	12913		61	12295		126	21313	

AS Level

	2013			2014			2015		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A - B	30.9	44.6	-13.7	22.9	41.5	-18.6	38.2	43.1	-4.9
A - E	90.9	92.2	-1.3	88.6	91.7	-3.1	91	92.1	-1.1
Entries	55	34679		131	38927		178	30507	

ANNEX B – Shropshire SACRE Membership 2015

Committee A - Other Christian Denominations/Other Faiths

Mrs Denise Samari	Baha'i
Mrs Jacqui Osmund-Smith	Baptist
Mr Darren Clarkson	Buddhism
Mrs Rashmika Jogi	Hinduism
Imam Sohayb Peerbhai	Islam
PC Michael Watts	Judaism
Mr Henry White	Methodist Church
Mr Bill Morris	Orthodox Churches
Ms Hannah More	Pentecostal/Charismatic/Independent Evangelical Churches
Mrs Sandy Fairhurst	Religious Society of Friends
Mr Austin Atkinson	Roman Catholic Church
Mr Ajmer Singh	Sikhism
Mr Howard Hutchings	United Reformed Church

Committee B – Church of England

Hereford Diocese

Mr Tristram Jenkins
Mrs Beth Rowe
Mrs Allyson Taylor

Lichfield Diocese

Mrs Fiona Iddon
Mrs Rosemary Woodward

Committee C – Teacher Associations

Mr Jack Cornall	NAHT
Mr Russell Pugh	NASUWT
Mrs Carol Morgan	NUT

Committee D Shropshire LA Members

Cllr Mrs Pauline Dee
Cllr Mr Roger Evans
Cllr Mr John Hurst-Knight

Co-opted Members

Dr Simon Nightingale Humanist

Clerk to SACRE	Sue Round	LA Officer	Alun Morgan
Minuting Clerk	Helen Woodbridge		