

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

# Shropshire Annual Report



November 2016 – November 2017

## Introduction

This has been another successful year for Shropshire SACRE. Attendance at meetings is always good, and members continue to be very involved in schools supporting the Religious Education curriculum and Collective Worship. Indeed, it is good to note that the links between SACRE and schools continue to increase with SACRE related matters always featuring on the agendas for both primary co-ordinators and secondary subject leaders. A particular high spot of the year was our pleasure in celebrating with our Muslim representative, Imam Sohayb Peerbhai, his award of Muslim Advocate of the Year. We continue to be well supported by our LA despite increasing pressures on the continually decreasing resources and we must record our thanks to our local authority colleagues for their sterling efforts in the recruitment of new teacher representatives and also representatives from the Jewish faith.

We were delighted to be awarded a Westhill Award for our bid to produce video-clip based resources to illustrate assemblies representing the Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Islam, Jewish and Sikh faiths as well as Humanism. In this project we have been well supported by the Interfaith groups in Shropshire and our local College of Further Education where the Media Studies students are actively engaged in supporting the technical aspects of the project.

Henry White

Chair of Shropshire SACRE

## **Section 1. Advice to Statutory Bodies**

### **a. Shropshire Local Authority**

There have been regular meetings throughout the past year between senior school improvement officers and the Chair of SACRE to secure support for the future. Reports of these meetings have been made to SACRE for comment and information. SACRE is reassured that senior local authority colleagues are aware of, and value, the work they do with schools and are committed to supporting their activities including the review of the agreed syllabus which is due in 2019.

### **b. Schools**

Through the professional officer SACRE maintains very positive links to primary and secondary schools in the county. All termly network meetings continue an agenda item on SACRE developments so that information and professional dialogue passes between SACRE and subject leads in schools. The key development that started in 2017 is SACRE's response to school surveys on collective worship which identified a need for support in acts of worship based on world faiths and belief systems other than Christianity. A development project with funding from NASACRE/Westhill College is currently producing guidance material in response to this need and this should be disseminated to all primary schools in 2018.

### **c. Government or Other Statutory Bodies**

A number of SACRE members responded to the consultation on the interim report of the Commission on Religious Education. Unfortunately, due to the scheduling of meetings it was not possible to return a collective response but the report was discussed at the autumn term meeting. SACRE also noted the future development schedule of the commission and have identified the autumn term meeting 2018 for a discussion of the final report.

### **d. Responses to the above**

The response from the local authority has been as positive as it could be in the current financial circumstances. Schools are eagerly awaiting the materials from the collective worship project.

## **Section 2. Standards and Quality of Provision of Religious Education**

### **a. Public examinations**

Relationships between SACRE and Shropshire academies is very positive and the results analysis does not draw a distinction between local authority and secondary academies. At GCSE short course RE examinations were effectively only taken by pupils in three schools, all academies – a significant decline on previous years. In two other schools there was an entry of one pupil. In none of the three schools was the entry the whole of the cohort. Entry percentages of the whole cohort ranged from 20% up to 61% and then to 75%. Results were positive compared to the national figures. The A\*-C figure for all schools was 61.7% for Shropshire compared to 57.1% for state schools nationally, giving a positive advantage of 4.6%. For full course GCSE overall entry figures declined from 852 in 2016 down to 783 in 2017. This is a trend that has been identified by secondary subject leaders as likely to continue following the introduction of new GCSE specifications. Overall attainment is fractionally above the national figures. 71.3% of pupils in Shropshire achieved a grade of A\*-C compared to 71.2% nationally while the overall figure for pupils achieving A\*-G was 98.2% in Shropshire compared to 97.9% nationally. Attainment at the higher grades of A\* and A was marginally higher in Shropshire (29.6%) than nationally (29.4%). This is something to be celebrated as for many years the figure has been significantly lower than the national figure and has been a focus in secondary RE network meetings during the year.

There are currently 20 secondary schools in Shropshire and 18 of those entered pupils for the full GCSE in 2017. The other two have good non-examination courses in place in KS4 that conform to the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. In only two schools is the entry comprised the full cohort. In the others, entry is determined through pupils selecting RE through the option system. In response to the results performance SACRE annually writes congratulatory letters to individual subject leaders and their headteachers where there has been good performance.

For A Level the same pattern of improvement in Shropshire of students achieving the higher grades is repeated from GCSE. At grades A\*-B the Shropshire figure of 59.9% was 5.3% above the national figure of 54.6%. The overall pass rate continues to match the national figure. The improvements in 2017 put Shropshire performance above the national figures at all levels for the first time in many years and teachers deserve praise for these achievements.

b. Attainment in RE not covered by public examination

With the changes in support from the local authority the ability to monitor attainment other than through public examinations has been restricted. The primary curriculum survey has had to be dropped as a source of information to SACRE.

c. The quality of RE provision in schools

Whilst the situation in primary schools continues to be healthy, the on-going loss of subject leaders and specialist teachers at secondary level remains a worry. The loss of staff continues not to be for promotion. Through secondary network meetings subject leaders continue to express their concerns regarding issues relating to the implementation of the new examination specifications at both GCSE and A Level.

d. Withdrawal from RE

Throughout the county at both primary and secondary level the number of pupils who are withdrawn from RE continues to remain low. Full withdrawal is very limited and associated with pupils whose parents belong to specific religious groups or who hold non-religious views. Of greater concern to schools are parents who withdraw their children selectively from visits or parts of the curriculum, usually but not exclusively when Islam is taught.

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 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 through discussions at network meetings and from discussions with secondary subject leaders. SACRE are closely monitoring the national developments such as the recently published Interim Report from the Commission on Religious Education and the State of the Nation Report on RE to see what bearing they may have on the future planned development of the local syllabus. The Chair has already had preliminary meetings with senior members in the local authority to ensure on-going support for the review of the syllabus in 2019.

### **Section 4. Collective Worship**

- a. Compliance with the statutory requirements

The changes in local authority support for SACRE activities mentioned above has had a similar impact on the information gathered from primary schools regarding collective worship. The pattern that had been established over the four years of the survey was consistent and there has been no additional information that has been reported that suggests that compliance at primary level has changed over the past year. SACRE remains committed to pursuing the development of support materials for collective worship in primary schools and are seeking ways forward to enable this to be developed in 2017.

b. Quality of collective worship

As for a above there has been nothing that has been reported over the past year that would suggest that the overall quality of collective worship has changed in Shropshire schools.

c. Determinations

SACRE has not received any approaches for determination from 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 the three full meetings held in 2017 has been good with all four committees represented in all meetings.

b. Membership and training

There have been some significant changes to membership in 2017 due in part to the retirement of two very long standing teacher union representatives which left SACRE with no representatives in Committee C. Approaches were made by the clerk to the local teaching unions for new nominations but they were unable to provide anyone. It was decided that a direct approach would be made to teachers using colleagues in the local authority advisory service. The vacancies were incorporated into the agendas for the termly RE network meetings for both primary and secondary teachers and a letter was sent from the senior adviser to all primary headteachers advertising the vacancies. As a result, we now have six new members of Committee C. We have also recruited two new representatives for Judaism.

During the year SACRE received training from their own members on the newly developed Understanding Christianity materials and a session on the teaching of Humanism. At every meeting there is feedback from the termly meetings with both primary and secondary teachers.

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.

As mentioned above in the Chair's introduction we were proud to hear that our Muslim representative, Imam Sohayb Peerbhai was awarded the prestigious Muslim Advocate of the Year at a ceremony in Leicester early in the year. Due to membership changes we now have a significant number of SACRE members who are also members of one of the two Inter Faith

- groups in Shropshire. We will be seeking to explore closer relationships with both groups to the mutual benefit of both and the benefit to schools in county in 2018.
- b. SACREs contribution to the LA's public sector equality duty.  
Shropshire SACRE takes seriously its contribution to the LA's public sector equality duty. For example, it seeks to ensure that membership reflects the diversity of the local community by, where possible, developing closer links with faith communities represented on the council. Councillors who are SACRE members have contributed to the LA's ongoing work to ensure groups within Shropshire have a voice in the decision making and policies of the council. SACRE continues to look for members from different faith communities and remains in contact with the Shropshire Interfaith Network.
  - c. What SACRE has done to support schools through events and training.  
SACRE continues to monitor and use the professional officer to build links to all schools, including the increasing number of academies in the county. The main focus this year has been the training that will be provided to support collective worship in primary schools through the Westhill Award. SACRE members from faiths other than Christianity and our Humanist representative are making a series of short films to be used to support primary schools develop their provision of collective worship in response to a need identified through our primary surveys between 2013 and 2016.
  - d. Links to broader community initiatives.  
The collective worship project is supported by Shrewsbury College and members of different faith groups in Shropshire including the two Inter Faith groups. In the case of Shrewsbury College, the project draws on their film making expertise and also fulfils their development need of linking with the local community and building greater community cohesion. The outcomes will be made available for the Inter Faith groups and SACRE members to use in their own contexts.

## **Section 7. Summary**

The year has seen considerable change for Shropshire SACRE in terms of membership changes and external challenges regarding support and funding. Through the hard work, particularly of the Chair, relationships and support from the local authority are as positive as they can be; membership changes have been managed effectively and has led to a committed and vibrant group who are well informed about RE and collective worship in all Shropshire schools; most members are actively engaged in schools in a wide variety of capacities with many directly providing visits and guidance to schools; communications with teachers through network meetings remains very good and there is optimism with regard to future challenges. In addition, the specific successes of Imam Sohayb and the collective worship bid have been the icing on a positive year for Shropshire SACRE.

## Annex A

### Shropshire GCSE Results and Trends against National Figures

#### Full Course

|      | 2015 |          |      | 2016 |          |      | 2017 |          |      |
|------|------|----------|------|------|----------|------|------|----------|------|
|      | LA   | National | Gap  | LA   | National | Gap  | LA   | National | Gap  |
| A*-C | 66.2 | 72.0     | -5.8 | 69.1 | 71.5     | -2.4 | 71.3 | 71.2     | +0.1 |
| A*-A | 22.1 | 29.6     | -7.5 | 23.5 | 29.6     | -6.1 | 29.6 | 29.4     | +0.2 |

#### Short Course

|      | 2015 |          |     | 2016 |          |      | 2017 |          |      |
|------|------|----------|-----|------|----------|------|------|----------|------|
|      | LA   | National | Gap | LA   | National | Gap  | LA   | National | Gap  |
| A*-C |      | 57.5     |     | 60   | 58.9     | +1.1 | 61.7 | 57.1     | +4.6 |
| A*-A |      | 19.7     |     | 15.1 | 20.4     | -5.3 |      |          |      |

### Shropshire GCE Results and Trends against National Figures

#### A Level

|      | 2015 |          |      | 2016 |          |       | 2017 |          |      |
|------|------|----------|------|------|----------|-------|------|----------|------|
|      | LA   | National | Gap  | LA   | National | Gap   | LA   | National | Gap  |
| A*-B | 52.4 | 54.5     | -2.4 | 32.3 | 54.6     | -18.3 | 59.9 | 54.6     | +5.3 |
| A*-E | 99.2 | 98.9     | +0.3 | 95.8 | 98.4     | -2.6  | 98.3 | 98.3     | 0    |

## **ANNEX B – Shropshire SACRE Membership 2017**

### **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 Mark Michaels        | Judaism                      |
| Mrs Sue Michaels        | Judaism                      |
| Mr Henry White          | Methodist Church             |
| Mr Bill Morris          | Orthodox Churches            |
| Mr David Bowgett        | 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 Allyson Taylor

#### **Lichfield Diocese**

Mrs Fiona Iddon  
Mrs Rosemary Woodward

### **Committee C – Teacher Associations**

|                      |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| Mr Jack Cornall      | NAHT   |
| Mr Russell Pugh      | NASUWT |
| Mr Mike Reynolds     | NUT    |
| Mrs Steph Shirra     | NASUWT |
| Mrs Cathy Rutherford |        |
| Mrs Amanda White     |        |
| Mrs Liz Badger       |        |
| Mr Adrian Black      |        |

### **Committee D Shropshire LA Members**

Cllr Mr Roger Evans  
Cllr Mr John Hurst-Knight

### **Co-opted Members**

Dr Simon Nightingale      Humanist

**Clerk to SACRE  
Minuting Clerk**

Sue Round  
Helen Woodbridge

**LA Officer**

Alun Morgan

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