

Bexley Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Annual Report for the academic year 2015-2016



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INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I am pleased to be able to introduce the Bexley SACRE Annual Report for the academic year 2015 / 2016.

The agreed syllabus for Religious Education in Bexley has been in place for two years now. The feedback we continue to receive is positive and I am delighted that the hard work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference to fundamentally change the look and feel of the syllabus in this Borough is being so warmly rewarded.

I want to commend everyone involved in delivering the syllabus throughout our schools and to everyone who is involved in updating the online resources. The time and effort and hours of work put in is making a positive difference to the teaching of RE in our Borough and the spiritual and moral enrichment of young people.

As a SACRE, we have taken the decision to be proactive in promoting the delivery of good quality Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development in the Borough. We have received updates during the year on the resources that are being made available to schools and are supporting the organisation of a SMSC Conference.

Given the calibre of the local authority staff, certain SACRE members and our adviser, I am sure that the outcomes from our planned SMSC Conference in January 2017 will be a positive event which promotes this important area of development. The work undertaken to organise this event is very encouraging and I look forward to an informative and worthwhile event.

One task for the SACRE thereafter is to review the comments and discussions at that event and see what we can do to do more help promote the topic in our schools.

I am extremely pleased that we now have a termly Newsletter for our schools and I would like to thank our advisor, Virginia Corbyn, for producing it. Awareness raising will, I feel, have to be a theme for the SACRE next year. Not only for our schools and their RE teachers, but for the wider community too, if nothing else to try and encourage some new membership to our Group A which, traditionally, is the most difficult to recruit to, and retain a stable membership. As the demographics and the make-up of our Borough changes, it is important that we have balanced representation on SACRE.

In the year in question, the SACRE was delighted to be able to review some more excellent RE GCSE, AS and A level results achieved by Bexley students in 2015. For 2016, once again I am delighted to be able to congratulate our teachers and students on some excellent results.

For example,

- From a higher number of entries than ever before, our GCSE Full Course students continue to outperform their peers elsewhere in England;
- At AS Level there were more sitting the exam than before, and they too exceeded the average pass rate in England;

- A significant increase in the number of students studying A Level (148 compared to 90 in 2015) nevertheless achieved a 100% pass rate.

It is said every year, but it is truly merited: the Borough's RE Heads of Department and their teaching staff deserve a huge thank you for continuing to deliver excellent results in what continues to be an uncertain time for their subject.

It is my hope that recent reviews and announcements may lead to some future stability for RE, and for those that teach it.

However, that is against a background of the near extinction of the GCSE Short Course following the introduction of the new KS4 performance measures (KPI's), Attainment 8 and Progress 8.

More about the Borough's Religious Studies examination results, and the new KPI's, is contained in section 3 of this report. The SACRE will discuss these results, and the impact of the new KPI's when it meets in March 2017.

This year we also held one of our meetings at Christ Church (Erith) C of E Primary School. I am grateful for the hospitality that they showed to us and the presentation and tour provided showing how RE is taught in their school. All members agreed that the standard of work we saw from pupils was truly exceptional. It is my hope that we will be able to visit other schools and places of worship for meetings to take place in the future.

During the year, I was also able to visit and attend a meeting of the SACRE in Newham and see how they hold their meetings and the issues that they examine. I am keen to continue to share expertise and learn from other SACREs in the months ahead.

Next year we will continue to maintain our working relationships with our schools and hopefully forge new ones with faith groups and centres across Bexley.

We will also continue to monitor and, where necessary, correspond on and debate any relevant RE matters, be they of local or national relevance.

However, this is all against a backdrop of difficult and challenging times for the public sector. The resources available to support the SACRE and the teaching of RE are continually stretched, and I am conscious that we cannot impose too much more on the excellent support the SACRE receives from employees of the local authority, volunteers and advisers. I know from my discussions with the Chairs of other SACREs that Bexley is not alone.

Despite these constraints I feel the SACRE has managed to cover a good range of topics and deliver some excellent outreach work, and to all who helped deliver this work I express my grateful thanks.

Also, I wish to thank the SACRE members who have departed, and extend a warm welcome to our new members. All SACRE members give their time voluntarily, and without their input and wise counsel, the SACRE could not function.

Finally, I would like to express my ongoing gratitude to the Council officers who support the work of the SACRE as our meetings could not function without them.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Leaf". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Cllr. David Leaf
Chairman of the Bexley SACRE

2. ADVICE TO STATUTORY BODIES

Our schools

There are in excess of 80 schools in the London Borough of Bexley, with three quarters being in the primary sector. The categories of school are wide ranging and varied - community primary, voluntary aided primary, Academy Trust, stand alone Academies, community special schools, all through schools and one free school - to name but a few.

Although for a number of years now our remit has not extended to all schools in the Borough – many now are an Academy of some sort – we do try to ensure that every school is aware of their responsibilities and, where appropriate, ensure that those required to follow the Bexley Agreed Syllabus do so, and encourage others to have regard to it where no specific religious denomination or other syllabus applies.

Our profile

Notwithstanding the above we have heard on a number of occasions in the past year that some schools and teachers are not aware of the SACRE, or of its work. This suggests that some awareness raising might be appropriate, to ensure that our schools and teachers know we are here to offer help, advice and guidance. Our Newsletter may assist with profile raising, but it appears that more is needed. The SACRE will consider the opportunities at a future meeting.

Agreed Syllabus

Feedback from teachers about the 2014 Agreed Syllabus has been positive and welcoming. More on this is provided in Section 4 of this Report. However, since the Agreed Syllabus was launched, the SACRE has provided a support meeting every school term to help develop the knowledge, understanding and confidence of RE subject leaders in primary schools.

SMSC

The SACRE had decided that to complement RE in school, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development should be promoted, and it has held a number of discussions on this as various topics arise during meetings. However, the main issue to report in this respect is a forthcoming Bexley SMSC Conference, to be held in January 2017, for which a great deal of planning has already taken place. The conference will focus on developing SMSC in education, and is aimed at enabling schools to demonstrate thoughtful and wide-ranging reflection and evaluation. It will also offer the opportunity to share information and consider robust evidence-based practice that makes a difference in the classroom and leads to respect, understanding and an appreciation of diverse viewpoints by the children in our schools. Beyond the conference, schools will be supported to network and collaborate; to evaluate and then embed initiatives that successfully and consistently encourage their pupils to broaden their horizons. We will advise on the event and outcomes in more detail next year.

In March 2016 a SACRE meeting focussed on SMSC and, alongside some teachers in the Borough, we discussed the locally provided SMSC teaching materials and

were pleased to hear that Council staff are visiting schools to discuss SMSC and its provision. We noted a common concern that SMSC was at risk of focussing on the religious element (which could be taught in RE), and encouraged our teachers to make SMSC integral to every lesson taught in Bexley's schools, more in every discussion about current events.

Training

In June 2016 the London Borough of Bexley held a summer term networking event for RE subject leaders, which was well attended and feedback suggests this was an interesting and worthwhile training event. Others are planned for each school term. However, these are just one of a number of such events organised by the staff at the London Borough of Bexley.

There have not been any training events for Governors in the period of this report, although it is possible that some training on SMSC may be provided after our January 2017 Conference.

The SACRE is extremely grateful to the local authority staff who undertake a great deal of hard work to organise RE training and related events.

Newsletter

The SACRE agreed to produce a Newsletter, and publish one edition each Autumn, Spring and Summer term. In January 2016 the first Newsletter issued, and a second followed in June 2016 and a third will be made available before the end of 2016.

Designed to publicise local events, training opportunities and articles and teaching resources of help and interest to RE subject leaders and teachers, it is also intended to keep our schools informed about best practice. The SACRE has been advised that the Newsletter is proving to be useful in widening the awareness of RE and RE resources in schools locally, and has perhaps contributed to a higher than anticipated attendance at training and networking events. This is very welcome feedback.

Teaching resources

The SACRE was briefed on a new teaching resource – Understanding Christianity – and our adviser is training to be an accredited trainer. Once this training is complete the SACRE will consider this in more detail and decide whether or to take up one of a number of options to roll out this resource to all the Borough's schools.

3. STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF PROVISION OF RE

RE examinations in Bexley

The SACRE continues to be proud of the results Bexley students achieve in their Religious Studies GCSE, AS and A Level examinations. But it should not be overlooked that these good results would not be possible without the excellent teaching staff and RE subject leaders we have in the Borough, and the SACRE owes these dedicated people a debt of gratitude.

Last year we reported on the results achieved by the 2,516 students who sat a Religious Studies examination in Bexley in 2015. This was a reduction of 358 from 2014 (a 12% decrease in entrants).

This year the declining trend in GCSE entries has continued (3.4% fewer candidates), possibly in part due to the Government's introduction of new performance measures at Key Stage 4, Attainment 8 and Progress 8.

This year our schools entered just three GCSE Short Course candidates, and the decrease in numbers for this exam was not matched by a similar increase for the Full Course.

The most likely reason for the near extinction of the GCSE Short Course in Bexley are the new KS4 performance measures, Attainment 8 and Progress 8. These new measures only include Full Course GCSEs or equivalents, and therefore will most certainly have discouraged schools from entering students for a Short Course GCSE.

Bexley's Religious Studies AS and A Level examination entries have bucked the local GCSE trend and more than doubled in recent years, with excellent results to match.

It is worth noting that with some Bexley examinations cohorts, which can be relatively small, any difference in the data from one year to the next can sometimes represent a large percentage change. The welcome increase in AS Level and A Level candidates is most certainly not attributable to a statistical anomaly, however.

Summary tables of the results for Bexley, and a brief comparison with those for England, are set out at the end of this section. We will discuss these results in detail, and down to individual school level, in March 2017.

It is the SACRE's firm opinion that whilst there is an apparent national trend to marginalise and squeeze the provision of RE in schools, which is in part reflected locally as resources on Bexley schools diminish, it is nevertheless the case that our schools and RE teachers and subject leaders are managing to maintain an excellent level of education and first class quality RE provision.

RE provision

The SACRE focussed one meeting on RE and SMSC in the school environment, and received a tour of a primary school to view pupils' work, to see what subject

materials and resources were available to teachers, and hear what RE materials are made available to parents who ask for more information. The most welcome message from that meeting was that the aim of RE is not only to learn about religion, but to learn from religion too, and to understand the links between the various faiths. This is a key message in the current Agreed Syllabus for Bexley, and aware that this is being widely used across the Borough, we are confident that RE provision in our schools – both primary and secondary - is appropriate, balanced and of a good quality.



It is our aim to visit some of our schools and, specifically, their RE classes, to experience RE teaching and learning: we will be canvassing schools for opportunities to do so.

That said, the SACRE accepted a generous invitation from one of our members to visit Christ Church C of E Primary School in Erith, where we were able to look at some excellent examples of the RE work undertaken by the pupils. During the visit the SACRE was made aware of the steps the school had taken, and the process it had followed, to

address the fact that one pupil did not wish to participate in RE. We agreed that the steps taken were correct and appropriate for that particular situation. We were also pleased to hear that collective worship and the content of the RE curriculum are always kept separate.

Complaints

In the period covered by this Report, there were no complaints made to the SACRE about RE or the provision thereof.



Religious Studies examination results: Bexley, 2007 - 2016

(Data provided where available. 2016 data is provisional)

GCSE Full Course	Entries	Passes A* - C	% Passes A* - C	All passes A* - G	% All Passes A* - G
2007	730	510	69.9	723	99.0
2008	823	675	82.0	822	99.9
2009	1,010	746	73.4	994	98.4
2010	1,120	829	74.0	1,116	99.6
2011	1,625	1,161	71.4	1,609	99.0
2012	2,133	1,458	68.4	2,091	98.0
2013	1,977	1,481	74.9	1,953	98.8
2014	2,136	1,650	77.2	2,111	98.8
2015	2,062	1,635	79.3	2,031	98.5
2016	2,197	1,625	74.0	2,163	98.5

GCSE Short Course	Entries	Passes A* - C	% passes A* - C	All passes A* - G	% all passes A* - G
2007	1,675	962	57.4	1,609	96.1
2008	1,554	932	60	1,525	98.1
2009	1,417	900	63.5	1,395	98.5
2010	1,631	892	54.7	1,590	97.5
2011	1,047	593	56.6	1,008	96.3
2012	536	299	55.8	510	95.1
2013	706	357	50.6	673	95.3
2014	437	178	40.7	395	90.4
2015	216	44	20.4	198	91.7
2016	3	1	33.3	3	100.0

AS Level	Entries	Passes A - B	% passes A - B	All passes A - E	% all passes A - E
2009	108	41	38.0	89	82.4
2010	104	40	38.5	91	87.5
2011	98	32	32.7	89	90.8
2012	142	68	47.9	122	85.9
2013	140	52	37.1	121	86.4
2014	118	54	45.8	113	95.8
2015	226	97	42.9	212	91.7
2016	238	95	39.9	226	95.0

A Level	Entries	Passes A* - B	% Passes A* - B	All Passes A* - E	% All Passes A* - E
2009	67	31	46.3	67	100.0
2010	58	34	58.6	57	98.3
2011	68	28	41.2	67	98.5
2012	61	28	45.9	56	91.8
2013	80	46	57.5	78	97.5
2014	82	47	57.3	80	97.6
2015	90	44	48.9	88	97.8
2016	148	79	53.4	148	100.0

Religious Studies examination results 2016: Comparison with National* results
(2016 data is provisional)
 (* England)

GCSE Full Course	Entries	% Passes A* - C	% All Passes A* - G
Bexley	2197	74.0	98.5
England	268,573	71.5	97.8

GCSE Short Course	Entries	% Passes A* - C	% All Passes A* - G
Bexley	3	33.3	100.0
England	36,445	53.5	94.3

AS Level	Entries	% Passes A - B	% All Passes A - E
Bexley	238	39.9	95.0
England	32,913	45.0	92.7

A Level	Entries	% Passes A* - B	% All Passes A* - E
Bexley	148	53.4	100.0
England	22,079	54.4	98.5

Data Source: Nexus Nova, KS4 & KS5 Data [January 2017]

4. AGREED SYLLABUS

The Bexley Agreed Syllabus

As reported last year, following a fundamental review over the course of more than two years, the SACRE and Agreed Syllabus Conference were able to launch a new Bexley Agreed Syllabus in September 2014.

Feedback from teachers on the SACRE indicated that the Syllabus was well known in their schools and that teachers had well established plans in schools that enabled the Syllabus to be taught. In the past year, feedback from many other teachers has been equally positive and welcoming, and they particularly welcomed the newly introduced online resource, with the non-statutory elements predominantly web based and available via a number of media, such as Bexley Fronter etc.

By adopting an online approach, the SACRE is able to quickly and efficiently review the Agreed Syllabus non-statutory resources, respond to feedback, maintain and update the available material and provide the best available resources to our schools.

The SACRE continually monitors the Agreed Syllabus, and has conducted a survey with Bexley schools and the Youth Council. Any issues arising have been addressed and feedback with suggestions for areas for improvement are being followed up and, where feasible, are implemented. For example, we have responded to requests for more training and extended the support materials available. Now the Syllabus is embedded, we are encouraging teachers to share their good practice.

In addition, the CRiBS organisation (Christian Resources in Bexley Schools) delivers some of the Agreed Syllabus modules in our schools and they say they have received excellent feedback and that they, and the schools, are very pleased with it. SACRE Members have also been present to observe, and we are pleased to report that they have confirmed this view.

Our next review

In accordance with requirements, we will start the process on undertaking the next full review of the Agreed Syllabus by the middle of April 2019.

5. COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Collective Worship in Bexley

As mentioned in section 3, when we visited Christ Church C of E Primary School in Erith members were advised on the Collective Worship undertaken in that particular school, and were satisfied with the arrangements.

The SACRE last conducted a review of Collective Worship in 2013. Mindful of our statutory responsibility to advise the London Borough of Bexley on Collective Worship, the SACRE wanted to gather information on the extent and scope of the provision of Collective Worship and determine what steps, if any, needed to be taken. Following research and surveys the SACRE concluded that provision of Collective Worship in the Borough's schools is adequate and, at that time, no further work was required to promote it.

Collective Worship continues to appear to be inclusive, varied and of benefit to students, and so the view reached in 2013 has not changed. However, we are presently aware of a lot of national debate on this topic, and dependent on the outcomes of the debate, we may wish to make this our next area of focus.

Determination and complaints

For a number of years the SACRE has had a comprehensive determination framework that provides guidance on the procedures in the London Borough of Bexley for Head Teachers of schools wishing to seek a determination in respect of collective worship, or renewal or review of a previous determination. This framework has never been brought into use and, as might be expected, therefore, in the period of this report no determinations were applied for.

The SACRE did not receive any complaints about Collective Worship.

6. MANAGEMENT OF SACRE

Professional and administrative support

Meetings of the SACRE are attended by a senior officer from the local authority's Children and Education Services Directorate. An officer of the Committee Services and Scrutiny team of the local authority clerks the SACRE meetings and acts as the point of contact for individual members and external enquiries. The SACRE has access to services provided by our RE Adviser, for 10 days a year.

Development of the SACRE and SACRE training

Despite financial constraints, SACRE members are encouraged to attend national and regional events and to report back to subsequent SACRE meetings. Our Chairman visited Newham SACRE to fact find on working methods and resources, and share good practice and views on common issues.

Any new members are provided with details of the work of the Bexley SACRE and are given copies of relevant National Association of SACREs literature. In addition, each new member is offered an induction session.

Finance

The SACRE receives no independent funding, although we are grateful to have access to a small allocation from the local authority's education budget should the need arise for a limited number of conference delegate fees, for example, and our NASACRE membership fee. The fee for the SACRE's Adviser is also paid from this budget.

Membership and Constitution

Maintaining a strong membership is an ongoing concern for the SACRE.

Groups B and C are full to requirement which is positive, although there remain vacancies in Group A, and it is these vacancies that are proving to be the most difficult to fill, and retain members. There is continued "churn" in certain religious representatives in Group A, in that members do not always stay very long, and there is evidence that others are attending less regularly. When a vacancy occurs, a number of local and national organisations are either unable to offer a nominee, or appearing unwilling to do so.

Fewer members means there is even more expectation on those that remain and who, we must not forget, give their time voluntarily.

The terms of office for all Bexley SACRE members in Groups A to C inclusive will end in May 2018, although some may be subject to renewal thereafter. The membership was most recently reviewed in May 2014.

The SACRE Constitution was last reviewed in 2010, and there are no immediate plans to conduct another review. However, the SACRE will consider the NASACRE Constitution later in 2016 and this may prompt some discussion about our own Constitution.

Details of the SACRE membership and attendance at meetings during the period of this Report, are provided in the following three pages.

NASACRE Code of Conduct

In November 2015 the SACRE discussed the NASACRE Code of Conduct, agreed the general principles of it and agreed to adopt it. The Code will complement our Constitution.

The composition of the SACRE for the 2015/16 academic year was as follows:

GROUP A (CHRISTIAN AND OTHER FAITHS)

Baptist	Mr Gordon Raggett
Buddhism	Mr R A Wimalasekera
Free Church (Evangelical Christians)	Mr Paul Weston
Hinduism	Vacancy
Islam	Mrs Faozia Rashid
Judaism	Vacancy
Methodist	Mrs Di Spowles
Roman Catholic	Vacancy
Sikh	Vacancy

GROUP B (CHURCH OF ENGLAND)

Mrs Dorothy Jones	(Vice Chairman)
Rev. Scott Lamb	
Mrs Michelle Torrance	Since July 2016
Mrs Jeannie Watts	Until July 2016
Fr. Philip Wells	

GROUP C (TEACHERS IN THE AUTHORITY)

Mrs June Ben Rabah	
Mrs Emily Champion	
Mrs Judith Fudger	
Ms Victoria O'Reilly	
Ms Jaymie Pauvaday	Since March 2016
Ms Cerys Siney	
Ms Frances Thapen	Until April 2016

GROUP D (THE AUTHORITY)

Councillor Esther Amaning	
Councillor Derry Begho	Since May 2016
Councillor Christine Catterall	
Councillor Graham D'Amiral	Until May 2016
Councillor Ross Downing	
Councillor Danny Hackett	Until May 2016
Councillor Steven Hall	Since May 2016
Councillor David Hurt	
Councillor David Leaf	(Chairman)
Mr Timothy Rice	(Bexley School Governors (Primary))

CO-OPTED MEMBERS

None

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (other than Councillor substitutes)

Dr Fazlur Rashid	Group A (Islam)
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ADVISERS AND OFFICERS

Ms Virginia Corbyn	Part-time Adviser
Ms Jo Lakey	Head of School Improvement

Attendance by members during the 2015/16 academic year was as follows:

	Possible	Actual
Mr Gordon Raggett	2	2
Mrs Faozia Rashid	3	2
Mrs Di Sprowles	3	1
Mr Paul Weston	3	3
Mr R A Wimalasekera	3	0
Mrs Dorothy Jones (Vice Chairman)	3	2
Rev. Scott Lamb	3	3
Mrs Michelle Torrance	0	0
Mrs Jeannie Watts	3	2
Fr. Philip Wells	3	2
Mrs June Ben Rabah	3	2
Ms Cerys Siney	3	1
Ms Frances Thapen	2	0
Mrs Judith Fudger	3	1
Mrs Emily Champion	3	0
Ms Victoria O'Reilly	3	0
Ms Jaymie Pauvaday	2	1
Councillor Esther Amaning	3	3
Councillor Derry Begho	1	1
Councillor Christine Catterall	3	2
Councillor Graham D'Amiral	2	0
Councillor Ross Downing	3	0
Councillor Danny Hackett	2	2
Councillor Steven Hall	1	1
Councillor David Hurt	3	1
Councillor David Leaf (Chair)	3	3
Mr Timothy Rice	3	0
Dr Fazlur Rashid (as substitute or observer)	3	3
Ms Virginia Corbyn	3	2
Ms Jo Lakey	3	2

7. SACRE IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Our activities

Bexley SACRE is a member of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE). As mentioned earlier in this report, we adopted the NASACRE Code of Conduct.

The SACRE works in collaboration with the local Diocesan Boards.

The CRiBS organisation (Christian Resources in Bexley Schools) continues to be represented on the SACRE.

As mentioned elsewhere, the SACRE undertook a kind offer from a SACRE member and teacher at Christ Church C of E Primary School in Erith to host a meeting and to take a tour of the school to view pupils' RE work. The focus of this meeting was RE in the school environment. We are extremely grateful for the hospitality shown to us.

We have invited the Bexley Youth Council to become a co-opted member of the SACRE – we found their insight and contribution to one of our meetings most helpful and informative, and consider that they can offer a different perspective to our discussions.

The SACRE has also adopted a programme of member and external guest presentations, to enable us to learn more about RE teaching and the work of faith groups in our community.

Our Chairman visited Newham SACRE to gain some insight into how another SACRE is run, and he is grateful for the hospitality afforded to him.

The contribution of the SACRE to the local authority agenda is primarily through the provision of RE resources and RE subject leader training and networking events, all reported elsewhere.

AS reported earlier, we feel there is a need to raise awareness of our existence and activities, and we will consider how best to achieve this.

Consultations and correspondence

The SACRE has followed with interest the work of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education (APPG) and agrees with their opinion arising from the most recent inquiry into Religious Literacy, namely that excellent school-based RE is essential for improving religious literacy, and that religious literacy in turn is an essential part of life, facilitating effective community engagement and enriching public dialogue. We welcome the APPG call for the Department for Education (DfE) to stimulate specialist RE teacher recruitment. Their recommendation that the DfE should give renewed consideration to introducing RE as a Humanities subject in the English Baccalaureate echoes our own views on this, expressed four years ago to the Religious Education Council of England and Wales.

The conclusion arising from the Westminster Faith Debate 'A New Settlement; Religion and Faith in Schools' was discussed by the SACRE in November 2015.

Some members expressed the view that the recommendations proposed would make it difficult for faith schools to retain their individual characters. It was also considered that the conclusions raised issues with terms such as 'families of faith' and the classification of such. As a result, the Chairman sent an official response.

Equality

When using the locally Agreed Syllabus, the SACRE has made it clear that schools need to take into account the position that some faith groups take with regard to human sexuality, so that LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi sexual, and Transgendered) young people are not made to feel vulnerable when these issues are being explored.

8. SUMMARY

In preparing this report it is quite surprising to note the range of activities and topics that the SACRE has managed to cover in just three meetings.

Next year we will hold our SMSC Conference, and clearly there are a number of local matters that we will wish to consider discussing and taking forward not only as a result of that, but in other areas too, as reported here. Nationally, we will follow events and debates with interest, and contribute to any matter where a SACRE's views are sought.

However, this is all against a backdrop of difficult times for the public sector, and Bexley is not immune in that financial and staffing resources are stretched and we cannot impose too much more on those people that already do so much for us, either as employees, volunteers or advisers.

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