

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

# Shropshire Annual Report



November 2017 – November 2018

## Introduction

Once again Shropshire SACRE has had another successful year.

The local authority continues to give good support to SACRE. SACRE is well supported by Alun Morgan who has not only provided high quality support to SACRE meetings, but also holds termly meetings with primary and secondary school RE co-ordinators. These meetings ensure good two-way communication between SACRE and its schools as well as being a method of identifying professional development needs which can then be delivered by Alun through the LA Service Level Agreement arrangements. This model ensures consistency of message across SACRE, schools and CPD as well as ensuring that all parties are kept well informed regarding national thinking and developments. The Chair has a termly meeting with the Head of School Improvement at the local authority to ensure links with the LA remain strong.

SACRE members continue to give generously of their time and expertise to working with schools to help co-ordinators develop the content and delivery of RE and Collective Worship, and sometimes to working with students who often have many interesting and thoughtful questions to ask.

The highlight of the year was being granted a Westhill Award to develop examples of collective worship to demonstrate Judaism, Islam, the Bhai faith, Hinduism, and Humanism. A strength of the bid was the collaborative support given by our local Shrewsbury Colleges Group in providing technical support for the project to ensure a very professional outcome to the films.

Henry White

Chair of Shropshire SACRE

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

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

The Chair of SACRE has met on a termly basis with senior officers of the local authority to monitor and discuss future relationships in the light of continuing budget restrictions. These have been productive meetings and have maintained the local authority's awareness and commitment to continue to fulfil its statutory role in supporting SACRE.

### **b. Schools**

Through the termly network meetings for both primary and secondary schools the relationship and information exchange between SACRE and schools continues to work. There are standing agenda items on all network meetings and SACRE agendas for update information to be exchanged and discussed so that everyone is informed about each other's work.

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

Individual SACRE members responded to the consultation on the draft proposals of the Council on Religious Education's report.

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

Discussions with the local authority have been positive throughout the year, and feedback from them have been agenda items for all termly meetings so that all members have been kept fully informed of developments. Feedback from all termly network meetings is also a standing agenda item on termly meetings and there is a positive relationship between SACRE and its schools. This is enhanced due to the attendance of the SACRE teacher representatives at the termly meetings.

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

### **a. Public examinations**

Relationships between SACRE and Shropshire academies remains very positive and the results analysis as for previous years does not draw a distinction between local authority and secondary academies. With the exception of one school no other school had more than a single entry for the short course in 2018. The demise of this option has been both very noticeable and also very dramatic. In 2018 16 of the 20 secondary schools entered pupils for a public examination at GCSE with entry numbers continuing to show the widest possible variation from a single entry in some cases to only one school where the full cohort of pupils sits the examination. It is the case that GCSE RE is now an option in all bar one school. The overall number of entries continues to decline. In 2016 there were 852 entries and this declined to 783 in 2017 with subject leaders indicating a further decline based on option groups in response to the new specifications. In 2018 there were 686 GCSE entries – a continuation of the decline of previous years.

In comparison to national figures the new overall 9-4 grade figure compares well with 72% of pupils achieving this in Shropshire compared to 69.9% nationally. However, achievement at the higher levels of 9-8 has again fallen significantly below the national figure, reversing the picture of 2017. Subject leaders remain concerned about the adverse impact of the new specifications on option numbers at GCSE.

At A Level, exact comparisons for the local authority with the national figures are very difficult. In addition to the late publication of figures by the DfE the content has been amended and despite repeated attempts by the local authority data officer it has not been possible to get the necessary data. The authority was only sent the schools data and not the sixth form college information which makes a significant difference. The local authority to national figure is therefore a

- comparison of the schools only figure for Shropshire compared to the early release of the fully inclusive national figure.
- b. Attainment in RE not covered by public examinations  
It remains difficult for SACRE to obtain detailed information to answer this aspect of the report. Anecdotal evidence gathered through discussions at the primary and secondary network meetings only gives a broad impression. Teachers remain concerned about the extended challenge for more able pupils particularly at the upper end of key stage 2.
  - c. The quality of RE provision in schools  
From discussions at termly network meetings, provision of RE in both primary and secondary schools remains positive, particularly in those schools who are regular attenders. The validity of the primary surveys carried out some years ago is now becoming less compelling but there has been nothing of importance that would suggest that the quality of overall provision has changed significantly. SACRE is aware that an opportunity to engage with schools to ensure high quality provision may well develop as a result of the proposals in the new Ofsted framework for inspection to look more closely at curriculum provision more broadly than the current focus on outcomes for pupils.
  - d. Withdrawal from RE  
There continue to be low levels of parental withdrawal from RE. There are very low levels of complete withdrawal and these are handled well by schools. The use of partial withdrawal by parents, sometimes at short notice, continues to cause problems for schools. These are often, but not exclusively, related to the teaching of Islam. There have been on-going discussions with primary schools to ensure that if RE is taught sometimes as part of a wider theme or topic that the specific element of RE is identified and that parents and staff are aware that the right of withdrawal only applies to these particular elements.
  - 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. At the summer term meeting this year SACRE established a Standing Conference which launched the required five yearly review of the agreed syllabus. The support officer was asked to lead the review and beginning with a consultation exercise involving all schools to gather views on the operation of the current syllabus and requirements for any statutory changes. In addition, it was decided to consider whether non-statutory guidance materials needed to be developed. This exercise was carried out during the autumn term and formed a major agenda item at both the primary and secondary network meetings. The findings were reported back to the autumn term SACRE meeting.  
It is intended that through the spring term 2019 the feedback will be used to amend the syllabus and also to develop a booklet of non-statutory guidance for schools.

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

- a. Compliance with the statutory requirements  
There have been no instances brought to the attention of SACRE or of individual members of non-compliance issues regarding collective worship. The survey carried out some years ago indicated that primary schools complied with requirements very well. With nearly all secondary schools in Shropshire now either stand-alone academies or part of wider Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) the

flow of information to SACRE is much reduced. Secondary religious education leaders are very clear that collective worship is not part of their remit and so it remains difficult to establish communication channels to establish the situation across the secondary sector.

b. Quality of collective worship

For the same reasons as outlined in 4c above it is becoming increasingly difficult for SACRE to gather information relating to the quality of collective worship in schools.

c. Determinations

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 throughout the year has been good with all committees represented at all meetings following a recruitment of teacher representatives in 2017. This was particularly important at the summer term meeting when SACRE established a Standing Committee to initiate the review of the agreed syllabus.

b. Membership and training

Membership remains strong and representative of the local community, well supported by the respective diocese and the local authority in challenging circumstances. All new members have an induction process consisting of information relating to the work of SACREs and a copy of the latest annual report to illustrate the work of the local SACRE, and usually a meeting with the LA officer who supports SACRE to talk through the above documents and outline procedures and work practices.

It is important to note that through the various roles SACRE members have in their day to day lives, plus their links and contributions to network meetings, school visits and wider community groups Shropshire SACRE has a great deal of working knowledge of its schools.

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 clear link via the professional support officer who also runs the termly primary and secondary subject leader network meetings there are strong links to the school improvement agenda and specifically in key areas such as social, moral, spiritual and cultural developments. Individual members have close links to local Inter Faith forums where they carry out significant contributions to social cohesion initiatives. The relationship between SACRE and Inter Faith groups had been discussed as an agenda item this year.

b. SACRE's 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 2018 towards fostering good relations, particularly with the different religious communities in Shropshire, has been very strong.

c. What SACRE has done to support schools through events and training.

Individual SACRE members have provided specialist input into network meetings. The Baha'i representatives led a session for primary teachers in the spring term and our Humanist representative led a similar session for secondary teachers at their summer term meeting. Feedback on both presentations was very positive and led to invitations to individual schools. A standing agenda item is for SACRE members to report back on their involvement with schools and this is providing a clear picture of considerable and well received involvement of nearly all SACRE members in individual schools across the county and across the phases. This involvement covers both curriculum RE and collective worship.

In addition, school visits to local places of worship are increasing. Our Imam reported that between 15 and 20 schools had already visited the mosque in Craven Arms.

The collective worship project has stalled in its development due to a combination of factors, but Westhill Have been very understanding in allowing an extension of the time period and it is hoped that the project will be completed by the end of the spring term 2019.

d. Links to broader community initiatives.

A number of SACRE members are also members of the two Inter-Faith Network groups in Shropshire and at the spring term these members led a discussion on the work of the Inter-Faith groups and how they can complement and support SACRE's role in schools. Some SACRE members are very active in the county giving talks to a range of local community groups, particularly in relation to developing a better understanding of different faiths and belief systems. Feedback is overwhelmingly positive but members are very aware of pockets of prejudice and ignorance that undermine positive community relations.

## Section 7. Summary

This has been another challenging year for SACRE with further reductions to local authority budgets impacting on its ability to carry out all of the functions it wishes to. On a positive note, there are on-going discussions between the Chair of SACRE and senior local authority officers to seek solutions for future working and support of SACRE. Shropshire Council remains clear of its obligations to support the work of SACRE and continues to provide professional support to enable this to happen.

The completion and implementation of the revised syllabus in 2019 will be a further milestone in the work of SACRE in supporting schools in Shropshire.

Shropshire SACRE continues to value its positive links with NASACRE through their provision of help, support and information throughout the year including regular briefings and the additional guidance through its website.

## Annex A

### Shropshire GCSE Results and Trends against National Figures

#### GCSE Results

	2016			2017			2018		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A*-C	69.1	71.5	-2.4	71.3	71.2	+0.1			
9-4							72	69.9	+2.1
A*-A	23.5	29.6	-6.1	29.6	29.4	+0.2			
9-8							10	15.3	-5.3

#### A Level

	2016			2017			2018		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A*-B	32.3	54.6	-18.3	59.9	54.6	+5.3	35.5	54.7	-19.2
A*-E	95.8	98.4	-2.6	98.3	98.3	0	100	98.3	+1.7

## **ANNEX B – Shropshire SACRE Membership 2018**

### **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
Mark and Sue Michaels	Judaism
Mr Henry White	Methodist Church
Mr Bill Morris	Orthodox Churches
Mr David Bowgett	Religious Society of Friends
Mr Ajmer Singh	Sikhism

### **Committee B – Church of England**

#### **Hereford Diocese**

Mr Tristram Jenkins  
Mrs Allyson Taylor

#### **Lichfield Diocese**

Mrs Fiona Iddon  
Mrs Jane Crouch  
Mrs Rosemary Woodward

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

Elizabeth Badger	Secondary Teacher
Adrian Black	Secondary Teacher
Mike Reynolds	Primary Teacher
Cathy Rutherford	Primary Headteacher
Stephanie Shirra	Primary Teacher
Amanda Skidmore	Primary Headteacher

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

Cllr Mrs Pauline Dee  
Cllr Mr Roger Evans

### **Co-opted Members**

Dr Simon Nightingale      Humanist

**Clerk to SACRE**  
**Minuting Clerk**

Sue Round  
Helen Woodbridge

**LA Officer**

Alun Morgan