



## Suffolk SACRE: Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education:

### Annual Report 2014 - 2015

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# **SUFFOLK SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015**

## **1. Chairman's Report**

### **Chairman's Introduction from Elizabeth Sugarman**

**2014 - 2015**

It has been a privilege to be the Chair of Suffolk SACRE for a further year and I would like to thank all members of SACRE for the way they have worked constructively together throughout the year. Suffolk SACRE has had a busy year promoting excellence in RE and advising the schools, Head Teachers and Religious Studies teachers and the Local Authority about matters connected with collective worship and religious education in accordance with the Local Agreed Syllabus.

Suffolk SACRE is very aware that religious education can make an important contribution to a range of activities that help our young people understand and respect the various faith traditions.

Suffolk SACRE brings together committed volunteers from our local community, these include faith representatives, teachers and councillors.

Once again Suffolk SACRE owes Mary Myatt, the Servicing Officer, a debt of gratitude, for all her excellent advice, support and guidance over the past year and also for the INSET work she has delivered across the county to support the Local Agreed Syllabus. This was Mary Myatt's final year as the Servicing Officer for Suffolk and we all wish her well for the future. We welcomed Jan McGuire as the new Suffolk Servicing Officer and look forward to supporting the commissioned work that she will bring to the county to enrich Religious Education for our children and young people in Suffolk schools. I would also like to thank Linden Pitcher for her sterling work as Clerk, keeping us informed and on the right track in the work completed.

I am pleased to commend this report to you.

Elizabeth Sugarman

## **2. The Purpose of the Report**

Religious Education is an important curriculum subject. It is important in its own right and also makes a unique contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils and supports wider community cohesion. The Government is keen to ensure all pupils receive high-quality Religious Education.

The Education Act 1996, Section 391 (6) and (7) requires that each year the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) from each Local Authority will publish a report as to the exercise of its functions and any action taken by the representative groups on the Council during the last preceding year.

This entails:

- advising the Local Authority on Religious Education given in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus;
- monitoring the provision and quality of Religious Education taught according to its Agreed Syllabus, together with the overall effectiveness of the syllabus;
- providing advice and support on the effective teaching of Religious Education in accordance with the locally Agreed Syllabus;
- providing advice to the Local Authority and its schools on methods of teaching, the choice of teaching material and the provision of teacher training;
- in partnership with its Local Authority, considering whether any changes need to be made in the Agreed Syllabus or in the support offered to schools in the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus, to improve the quality of teaching and learning of RE;
- offering advice to the Local Authority, and through the Local Authority to schools, concerning how an existing Agreed Syllabus can be interpreted so as to fit in with a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum.

## **3. Management of SACRE: LA Support, Governance & Membership**

### **LA Support**

The Local Authority has continued to support the work of SACRE through funding that provides a clerk for the meetings, services of an RE Adviser to support SACRE, its work and teacher training for the teaching of Religious Education, and advice about Collective Worship.

Despite significant cutbacks in many Local Authorities, Suffolk County Council has continued to support SACRE and its work to encourage schools and share practices at the network meetings

There were four network meetings delivered in each term. The termly network meetings were run in north, south and west of Suffolk to share resources and materials for the agreed syllabus.

## **Governance**

In 2014 – 2015 SACRE called three formal meetings that were attended by Committee A, B, C and D members. The LA allocated a budget for the purpose of covering the expenses of the attendees at these meetings, as well as for covering venue, refreshment and additional training costs. In addition the LA paid for the services of a SACRE Servicing Officer who provided specialist RE advice and governance support, compiled the Government report, organised the conference and dealt with day to day matters. The LA continues to provide an experienced and well respected clerk to minute the meetings and provide the Chair and Servicing Officer with limited support and guidance. In addition the LA provides a representative, Janice Lee, currently the Strategic Lead in Resolution Education and Learning at Suffolk County Council.

## **Membership 2014 - 2015**

Every Local Authority has to convene a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). Suffolk SACRE, which has met three times this year, comprises of four statutory groups. Attendance at meetings has been variable. We continue to ensure the membership reflects the demographic.

The four groups that make up SACRE are as follows:

- Committee A – representatives of Christian denominations and other religions and their religious denominations reflecting the principal religious traditions of the area
- Committee B - representatives of the Church of England;
- Committee C - representatives of the teachers' associations;
- Committee D – representatives of the Local Authority.

## **Membership of Suffolk SACRE the standing advisory council on Religious Education:**

### **Committee A: Christian denominations and other religions and their religious denominations reflecting the principal religious traditions of the area**

Prabjot Kaur: Sikh

Dr Andrew Marfleet: Baptist

Sue Aldous: Roman Catholic

Ian Prettyman: Methodist

Elizabeth Sugarman: Jewish (CHAIR)

Denis Johnston: Humanist

Janus van Helvert: Buddhist

Sanjaya Martin Spettigue: Hindu

Alison Pentreath: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

### **Committee B: Church of England**

Helen Matter: Schools' Adviser, Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

Jane Sheat: Diocesan Director of Education, Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

### **Committee C: representatives of the teachers' associations /Teachers**

Steph Crossley: St Albans Catholic High School, Ipswich

Trina Rankin: Hearing Impaired Unit, Westgate Primary School, Bury St Edmunds

Hayley Mann: Cedar's Park Primary School, Stowmarket

Gemma Kingston: St Mary's CoE Primary School Mildenhall

David Yaroslow: Debenham High School

### **Committee D: Local Authority**

Joanna Spicer: County Councillor, Conservative

Derek Hackett: County Councillor, UKIP

Sonia Barker: County Councillor, Labour

Janice Lee: LA representative, the Strategic Lead in Resolution Education and Learning at Suffolk County Council.

### **Servicing Officers**

Mary Myatt: Independent Adviser for RE (until April 2015)

Jan McGuire: Independent Adviser for RE & LA Servicing Officer for Governance (from April 2015)

Linden Pitcher: Business Support Officer - (Clerk to SACRE)

Cynthia Capey: Suffolk Interfaith Resource (regular observer)

## **4. Standards and Quality of Provision of Religious Education**

DATE	EXAM	STUDENTS ENTERED	% A*-B	% A - C	Comment
2013	A LEVEL	182	55		Entry maintained.
2014	A LEVEL	186	50		5% lower may reflect grade boundary changes
2013	A/S LEVEL	53	34		Marked increase in A/S
2014	A/S LEVEL	272	43		9% increase in grades
2013	GCSE FULL COURSE	1877		64	Marked increase in entry
2014	GCSE FULL COURSE	1956		63.8	Grades maintained
2013	GCSE SHORT COURSE	2621		52	Marked decrease in entry reflects increase in full course
2014	GCSE SHORT COURSE	1920		51	Grades maintained

### 2014 RE Standards:

RE has remained a popular examination subject in the county. There is a marked improvement in A/S Level where there is a 9% improvement in the A\*- B grades. Most grades have been maintained, although the A Level grades were 5% lower than the previous year, and this may reflect the changes in grade boundaries. The most evident change has been in the reduction of students being entered for the short course, with 701 fewer students entered in 2014. In 2014 the full course entry has increased by 79 students. This equates to 622 fewer students taking a formal RE qualification at GCSE Level overall, and this will need to be monitored closely going forward. SACRE will be endeavouring to ascertain if the numbers reflect decisions being made at individual student, school or at a senior strategic organisational level.

A Level - 186 entered, 50% A\*-B

A/S Level - 272 entered, 43% A\*-B

GCSE Full Course- 1956 entered, 63.8% A\*-C

GCSE Short Course -1920 entered, 51% A\*-C

### RE Quality Mark

The (REQM) Religious Education Quality Mark is a useful process for SACRE in measuring high quality RE in the county. Suffolk has been actively involved in the REQM process since its inception, through its co-founder Mary Myatt, who was the Servicing Officer for Suffolk SACRE at this period in time. The following Suffolk schools have achieved the award:

<b>Name and Address of the school:</b>	<b>Date of Award given:</b>	<b>Award:</b>
St Benedict's Catholic School, Beetons Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 6RH	29/04/2015	Gold
St Mary's Church of England Academy, Trinity Avenue, Mildenhall, Suffolk, IP28 7LR	23/03/2015	Gold
Ormiston Denes Academy, Yarmouth Road, Lowestoft, NR32 4AH	09/03/2015	Gold
Debenham High School, Gracechurch Street, Suffolk, IP14 6BL	01/12/2014	Gold
St Felix Roman Catholic Primary School, School Lane, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 9DE	19/06/2014	Gold
St Edmundsbury CEVA Primary School, Grove Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 3BJ	06/05/2014	Gold
Thomas Gainsborough School Head Lane, Great Cornard, Suffolk CO10 0JU	21/07/2014	Silver
Stradbroke High School, Wilby Rd Stradbroke, Suffolk IP21 5JN	27/06/2013	Gold

\*\* This data has been kindly provided by the REQM team.

A number of other schools are being supported to apply for the award.

### **Monitoring of provision**

SACRE still has very active links with primary schools throughout the county. SACRE continues to offer training, an annual conference and termly network meetings to support schools and monitor the delivery of RE. The Servicing Officer works closely with the Diocesan Religious Education Primary Adviser who delivers training and provides evidence of progress within schools. The Diocesan Religious Education Adviser also delivered Primary SCITT, Primary NQT and supported SACRE in delivering the 'Developing Confidence in RE' course for new Subject Leaders.

NQTs from three high schools were also identified by SACRE and were contacted and invited to attend 'Developing Confidence in RE' training.

SACRE also monitors the Ofsted reports and the Religious Education Quality Mark awards for progress and excellence in SMSC and RE delivery.

## **5.Ofsted Reports**

The SACRE Servicing Officer monitored the 2014 – 15 Ofsted Reports in Suffolk for information and comment made on the provision and quality of Religious Education and SMSC. Generally the picture for RE reflects the overall picture and grading for a school. Mostly, the reports do not make specific reference to RE but report on social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

Where it has been made known that a school is not meeting statutory advice, SACRE has contacted the school and offered support. One school invited SACRE in. One Secondary Academy school was sent a letter with regard to the provision of RE and the offer of support, however, no response was received.

## **6. Support for Improving Teaching of the Local Agreed Syllabus**

### **Locally agreed syllabus**

The Suffolk Locally Agreed Syllabus for RE was reviewed in 2012 and is available through [www.suffolklearning.co.uk](http://www.suffolklearning.co.uk) Hard copies of the syllabus were made available for those attending the Suffolk RE Conference June 2015. The annual Suffolk RE Conference is the principal event for promoting the principles and expectations for the RE syllabus.

### **Suffolk SACRE Conference June 2015 'Making RE Matter'**

The Local Agreed syllabus is supported through the materials, speakers and workshops provided at the annual Suffolk RE Conference. Support materials were provided to enable the implementation of the agreed syllabus, including an enquiry framework to support curriculum planning.

The SACRE conference in June 2015 focused on 'Making RE Matter' , updating practising teachers on the national headlines and strategic RE developments as well as presenting practical materials and resources to support teachers in delivering RE in the classroom.

The main themes were 1) Curriculum and Conscience: key note speaker Debra Kidd, 2) Sharing our stories, SMSC and British Values, Assessment and Resources: lead speaker Mary Myatt, 3) Primary and Secondary practical teaching ideas for the RE classroom: lead speakers Mary Myatt and Helen Matter.

40 delegates attended (20 more than the previous year), 9 Secondary and 31 Primary attendees. The conference was well received and the teachers were positive about attending the planned 2016 SACRE Conference. Teachers were also consulted on training and events that they would require in supporting the delivery of the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus, and it was decided by SACRE to host the **Jewish Living Experience Exhibition: October 2015**, in order to offer the schools an opportunity to experience a living faith in the community.

This was the final conference organised and presented by the outgoing SACRE Servicing Officer Mary Myatt, a respected Religious Education advisor and specialist.

### **NASACRE & AGM Conference**

Two members of SACRE attended the NASACRE 2015 Conference and AGM held on 21st May 2015 in Birmingham. The keynote speaker was the Rt. Hon. Charles Clarke, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, 2002-4 and now Visiting Professor, School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies, University of East Anglia. He spoke with considerable authority and knowledge about the place of RE and collective worship in modern education and the publication of a paper jointly with Linda Woodhead called 'A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools'. SACRE members discussed considerations raised in the paper, and these still remain issues that are being considered at a national RE level.

### **Lord Nash's Letter**

In January 2015 Lord Nash wrote a letter to all SACREs which highlighted the importance of a SACRE and the support that they provide to improving the 'academic rigour' of RE in schools. The letter also emphasised the tensions within Religious Education and it is this issue of mutual respect and tolerance towards other faiths, or the lack thereof, that has been a continuous theme for the SACRE Adviser. The sensitivities that exist in contemporary British society only strengthen and validate the need for RE and an organisation to support it. The Chair of Suffolk SACRE responded with a letter to Lord Nash expressing the continued value of SACRE in supporting excellence in RE.

### **Relevant Links with other agencies**

Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich  
Suffolk Interfaith Resource  
University College Suffolk  
University of East Anglia

### **Suffolk SACRE and Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich**

Suffolk SACRE is particularly appreciative of the support and partnership it has with the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. Co-operation with the Diocese has been invaluable, and we are indebted to Helen Matter, Diocesan Advisor, and respected SACRE member for the Church of England, for all her time spent on developing primary school resources and teacher training (Primary and SCITT) opportunities that directly support the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus.



## **7. Compliance with the Statutory Requirement**

### **Determinations: Suffolk SACRE's Statutory Role 2014-15**

Suffolk SACRE has a statutory role in considering and granting determinations. Determinations are made where a school, on behalf of a number of parents, requests Collective Worship other than that set down by statute. There were no determinations in 2014-15 for Suffolk SACRE to consider. Suffolk SACRE has a role in investigating complaints against schools in relation to RE and Collective Worship. In 2014-15 there were no such formal complaints to deal with. One Academy was discussed by SACRE and a letter was sent to the school with regards to adequate provision of RE. No response was received.

### **Collective Worship**

Suffolk SACRE reminds schools of the importance of collective worship and they are directed to resources prepared by the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. Links to resources are provided on the Suffolk SACRE area of the LA website. Links and contacts for support in collective worship are also shared at the annual conference.

### **Research Awards**

A Suffolk SACRE collective Worship Assembly project was funded by Westhill and the SACRE member project managing the work will be presenting the conclusions of the project at the Suffolk SACRE conference in 2016.

## **8. Contribution of SACRE to the wider Local Authority agenda**

SACRE members continue to generously offer schools their time and expertise. Representatives from the Jewish, Buddhist and Christian faith have delivered assemblies and supported the curriculum and teachers with individual requests. This has helped to support the LA with their social and racial harmony agenda as well as providing social bridging opportunities and enrichment of diversity and faith awareness experiences. Social bridging and wider diversity and faith experience still remains an Ofsted concern, and it can be particularly difficult for mono-cultural rural schools to access relevant opportunities. SACRE remains a key partner in offering such opportunities to our rural schools.

**If you have any comments about this report, please contact the Suffolk SACRE Clerk via e-mail at [linden.pitcher@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:linden.pitcher@suffolk.gov.uk)**