



Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)



Annual Report 2011 - 2012

Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Annual Report 2011 - 2012

Contents

The Purpose of the Report	3
Management of SACRE	3
Standards and Quality of Provision of Religious Education	4
Secondary Schools	5
Primary Schools	6
Special Schools	6
How SACRE has Supported Schools	6
Effectiveness of the Agreed Syllabus	7
Collective Worship	7
Contribution of SACRE to Social and Racial Harmony Agenda	7
Appendix 1 GCE AS and A-Level and GCSE Results for Religious Studies in Cambridgeshire Schools: Summer 2012	8

Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Annual Report 2011 - 2012

Every Local Authority has to convene a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. Cambridgeshire SACRE, which meets at least once a term, comprises of four statutory groups. The four groups are as follows:

- Committee A - representatives of non-Anglican Christian denominations, other religions and religious denominations;
- Committee B - representatives of the Church of England;
- Committee C - representatives of the teachers' associations;
- Committee D - representatives of the Local Authority.

The Purpose of the Report

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'.

Management of SACRE

SACRE has been very pleased with the continued support from the Local Authority. Keith Grimwade, the Local Authority Head of Networking and Partnerships, attended a meeting to assure members of the continuing support from the Local Authority to SACRE and allayed any fears about the future of Cambridgeshire SACRE. The Local Authority have continued to fund SACRE through services of a clerk, a Religious Education adviser to SACRE and extra financial support for the revision of the Agreed Syllabus and its development of a new syllabus. A writers' group, made up of SACRE faith members and teachers across all phases, was established and they have made a significant contribution to the direction and content of the new forthcoming Agreed Syllabus.

The key focus of the last eighteen months has been reviewing the existing Agreed Syllabus and developing a new syllabus. There have been significant changes to the direction of Religious Education as a result of OFSTED reports in the last three years and local SACREs have been encouraged to consider the changes and adopt the direction and guidance that has been given by NASACRE (National Association of SACREs) in the last two years.

The changes in the new syllabus encourage teachers to use enquiry-based learning for all their units of work, focused around a key question for each unit of work. SACRE have determined that there are to be some core units that all schools teach to ensure progression and rigour across the key stages, across all major religions but ensuring that the majority are Christian units of work. Other units of work, known as school-designed units, will be developed by the schools alongside guidance and support from the Agreed Syllabus.

This year has seen changes in the membership of SACRE and patterns of attendance at meetings. SACRE has welcomed new members representing both the Church of England and the County Council. Three members have resigned and their places were not filled in this academic year. Not all faith communities are represented at the meetings, particularly the Jewish and Sikh faiths.

Attendance at meetings has fluctuated significantly this year due to work commitments from many colleagues. The difficulty of getting out for a morning meeting has resulted in reviewing the times and place of meetings.

Members of SACRE have taken an active role in sub-groups; the most active sub-group being the Agreed Syllabus Review Sub-Group and the Development Plan Sub-Group. These sub-groups have met regularly and submitted reports to the main meetings.

There have been five main SACRE meetings and five Agreed Syllabus Conference Group meetings, plus several writers' group meetings. Details of the agendas, minutes and attendance at the meetings can be found on the Cambridgeshire County Council website (<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies/children-services/workingwithpartners/sacre.htm>) and for schools on the schools portal system.ⁱ

Standards and Quality of Provision of Religious Education

Due to changes instigated by the DfE that have affected Religious Education, it has become increasingly difficult to monitor the quality and provision of RE in schools, particularly secondary schools. The Academies Programme has resulted in nearly all secondary and a few primary schools becoming Academies in the county, thereby withdrawing themselves from control by the Local Authority. Whilst they do have to teach Religious Education, they do not have to follow their local agreed syllabus. SACRE has worked closely with teacher representatives on SACRE from Academies and included them in the teachers' writing group, to encourage all Cambridgeshire schools to be involved in creating the new syllabus. It is hoped that schools will want to adopt the new syllabus and support the drive to raise standards and quality of provision in Religious Education.

SACRE has been included in a range of Service Level Agreement (SLA) packages that Academies can buy into if they want support from the Local Authority.

The introduction of the English Baccalaureate Certificate (EBC), in which Religious Studies was excluded as a humanities subject in the EBC, has also affected the provision of Religious Education in secondary schools. There is some anecdotal evidence that some schools are marginalising RE further. GCSE results demonstrate that whilst many schools have entries for GCSE Religious Studies, the numbers are significantly variable from school to school. Some schools enter all their pupils for either long and/or short-course Religious Studies, whilst other schools have small cohorts, which suggest that many students are not having their entitlement to Religious Education being met. In the local agreed syllabus, the KS4 requirement is for all pupils to follow a recognised GCSE course in Religious Studies. Letters were sent out to Headteachers to remind them of the statutory entitlement of all pupils to receive Religious Education. SACRE invited secondary schools to share the teacher assessment levels at KS3 and only 9 schools responded, making it inappropriate to analyse the data in the light of previous returns. The Local Authority does have a data-sharing agreement with all Academies and we will develop ways of collecting this data in the future.

In January 2012, a new Ofsted Framework resulted in the end of individual grades for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development (SMSC) and Community Cohesion. Prior to that time, the grades had been used for monitoring purposes by SACRE and several schools received a letter of commendation from SACRE when they achieved outstanding grades for community cohesion and SMSC. This has stopped since January 2012. In the new Ofsted

framework, the importance of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children has been raised but there is no overarching grade for that area.

Monitoring the Ofsted reports for Cambridgeshire schools has shown a distinct lack of any comment about Religious Education. SACRE have received training about the importance of SMSC in schools by OFSTED and believe that Religious Education and Collective Worship can contribute much to pupils and their development. It was agreed to include advice and support about this in the new agreed syllabus.

Secondary Schools (see Appendix 1)

Key findings from the A-Level Religious Studies (RS) results show a significant increase in numbers of students taking up 'A' level Religious Studies. Though not the heights of two years ago, the downward trend is reversed. Also, as more schools have acquired Sixth Forms, it is very pleasing to report that they are offering 'A' level Religious Studies and this accounts for the rise in the number of centres entering students for A-Level. The A-E% pass rate has risen by 0.9% from last year to 98.4%.

The statistics for AS-Level show equally a significant rise in entry numbers and centres. However, it is the second lowest A-E% pass rate in the last five years – 81.7%. SACRE is very pleased to report that three centres are entering KS4 students successfully a year earlier for AS-Level, indicating high levels of teaching and learning in Religious Studies.

Key findings from the GCSE Religious Studies full-course results show that there continues to be an increase in the numbers being entered for a full-course which matches the national trend. (This may be attributed to the decline in short-courses in general, as they fail to count in the average points score for schools in the league tables). The number of centres entering students has risen by 35% and is the highest number of centres recorded in the last five years. Out of 27 centres entering students for GCSE Religious Studies full-course, 3 schools enter nearly the whole cohort of Year 11 students and another 3 schools enter more than half of the Year 11 cohort for full-course. Other secondary schools have a GCSE Religious Studies option course with much smaller numbers. The A*-C% pass rate has risen (up 2.3%) from last year slightly to 75.5% and is 2.1% higher than the national average results for English schools.

The number of students entered for GCSE Religious Studies short-course declined. Since 2008, the trend has continually been downwards and last year it further declined by 13.3%. The number of centres declined, but the A*-C% pass rate rose by 9.4% to 54.6% overall and is the highest pass rate in the last five years.

Eight centres entered nearly all Year 11 students for either a full or short-course but there are many schools with no record of any entries or very small cohorts, which raises the question as to whether they are fulfilling the legal requirement for the Agreed Syllabus.

Details about levels at KS3 were requested but with only just over a third of secondary schools replying it was agreed that comparisons with previous data could not be made.

Numbers of teachers attending the secondary network meetings and CPD courses have declined this year significantly.

Primary Schools

One primary school was selected by Ofsted for a subject inspection and achieved a Grade 2 (good) for their provision and quality of Religious Education in the school.

Network meetings and CPD have been well attended. Feedback from teachers in primary schools demonstrates a very mixed picture of what is happening to RE. In some schools, it is a discrete subject once a week, taught by Teaching Assistants or Higher-Level Teaching Assistants in PPA time; in other schools, it is integrated into the school curriculum, planned for in a creative manner; in others, it is a thematic or topic approach; in some, it is a day once a half-term that the whole school adopts and for others it is linked to PHSE, SEAL and Citizenship.

Primary teachers involved in the writing group for the new syllabus revealed a chasm between the standards of Religious Education in primary and secondary schools. In some primary schools, the provision and standards of RE were excellent but in others they were barely satisfactory. Secondary colleagues reported having to fill in gaps in knowledge from students when they come from their primary schools.

The new direction of the local agreed syllabus was welcomed by primary teachers and many reported this as a challenge to them but one in which they relished as it would raise standards in Religious Education.

Three primary schools received commendation for Grade 1 (outstanding) provision for SMSC and Community Cohesion between September 2011 and December 2011.

Special Schools

One special school entered students for GCSE Religious Studies with success. An AST has helped the RE Adviser with the development of schemes of work suitable for students in special schools.

How SACRE has Supported Schools

The year has been a transitional year for SACRE. The post of the county Religious Education Adviser was removed in the re-structuring of the Learning Directorate but a new part-time post was created for a Humanities Adviser with responsibility for SACRE and Religious Education. Support for schools has continued to be offered through e-mails, telephone conversations, CPD courses, school consultancies and newsletters offered by the General Adviser. The clerk has continued to inform schools of national debates and consultancies surrounding the future of RE in the national curriculum.

All schools received a leaflet produced by NASACRE entitled 'Religious Education in Academies and Free Schools'.

There has been a marked increase in the number of issues that Headteachers have had to deal with in this past year compared to the previous five years. Provision of multi-cultural, creative and cross-curricula teaching, incorporating Religious Education, has made it more difficult to manage the right for parents to withdraw from RE. It has also revealed prejudices that teachers have had to deal with sensitively. The Adviser has supported 12 primary schools with concerns and complaints.

SACRE sought the views and concerns about the state of Religious Education in schools and responded to the outcomes by setting a new direction to the revised agreed syllabus for Religious Education.

Cambridgeshire was selected as one of the counties in the East to pilot the new national Religious Education Quality Mark (see www.reqm.org.uk) and two schools were successful in securing a Gold and Silver award. St Bede's Inter-Church School achieved a Gold award and Mayfield Primary School achieved a Silver award. SACRE hope to use their expertise to build upon good practice in the county.

Effectiveness of the Agreed Syllabus

The RE Adviser attended three national conferences organised jointly by the Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisors and Consultants (AREIAC), the National Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (NASACRE) and The Qualifications, Curriculum Developing Agency (QCDA) to promote collaboration between SACREs and encourage parity between the local Agreed Syllabi. The Ofsted long report 'Transforming RE' has been used to inform the direction for SACREs when revising future Agreed Syllabi.

Cambridgeshire SACRE has been significantly influenced by the messages and used the recommendations to move to enquiry-based learning when devising its new agreed syllabus. It was decided by SACRE that the launch of the new Agreed Syllabus was to be delayed by a year to allow time to see what was happening to the national curriculum review by DfE and the outcomes of Academies programme.

Collective Worship

A national guidance paper, produced by NASACRE, allowed SACRE to discuss the nature and purpose of Collective Worship. All agreed that the paper was an excellent summary of the current position and provided sound advice. It was agreed to revise the existing Cambridgeshire guidance document ('Guidelines for Schools – Collective Worship in Cambridgeshire' 1999) for 2012-2013. SACRE discussed ways in which Collective Worship could be monitored by SACRE when there is so little information in Ofsted reports. Anecdotal evidence from teachers revealed that many secondary schools were not fulfilling the law. Collective Worship can contribute significantly to SMSC development of children and SACRE have agreed to place a greater emphasis on the ways in which Collective Worship can enhance this aspect of school life in its future document.

Contribution of SACRE to Social and Racial Harmony Agenda

SACRE have commended three schools for their outstanding provision towards Community Cohesion. Membership of SACRE has been increased to reflect the local faith communities. Links to the East of England Faith Council have continued. On leaving, Suresh Patel presented SACRE with an excellent teaching resource on Hinduism from the local Hindu community.

If you have any comments about this report, please contact the Cambridgeshire SACRE Clerk via e-mail at Stephanie.Boothroyd@cambridgeshire.gov.uk.

Cambridgeshire SACRE Annual Report 2011-2012

Appendix 1

GCE AS and A-Level and GCSE Results for Religious Studies in Cambridgeshire Schools: Summer 2012

A-Level Religious Studies

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Number of candidates entries	63	41	85	76	72
Number of candidates obtaining A-E grades	98.4%	97.5%	97.6%	100%	100%
Number of centres entering candidates	9	5	8	7	8

AS-Level Religious Studies

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Number of candidates entries	57	29	53	79	84
Number of candidates obtaining A-E grades	81.7%	79.3%	98%	87.3%	96.4%
Number of centres entering candidates	11 *	8	5	8	8

GCSE Religious Studies (full-course)

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Number of candidates entries	1561	1388	1212	1158	937
Number of grades A*-C	75.7%	73.4%	79.3%	80.9%	83.1%
Number of centres entering candidates	27	21	23	25	23

GCSE Religious Studies (short-course)

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Number of candidates entries	1389	1526	1753	1736	2125
Number of grades A* -C	54.6%	45.2%	54.0%	49.1%	48.2%
Number of centres entering candidates	17	19	19	17	16

National (England only) Religious Studies (full-course)	2012	2011
Numbers of candidates entries	216373	199752
% of A*-C Grades	73.6%	73.2%

National (England only) Religious Studies (short-course)	2012	2011
Number of candidates entries	211269	233998
% of A*-C grades	53.1%	51.8%

* N.B. 3 Schools entered candidates for AS-Level at the end of KS4