

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Shropshire Annual Report



November 2013 – November 2014

Introduction

The main focus of work this year has been the review and launch of the new Agreed Syllabus. The statutory elements of the review were completed and launched officially on the evening of 18th June where the Corporate Director and Chair of SACRE performed the keynote addresses. The audience consisted of SACRE members, headteachers and teachers, members from the South Shropshire and the Shrewsbury Inter Faith Network groups and members from local faith communities. The launch was supplemented with presentations from our Hindu and Ba'hai members and a display of religious education resources from the School Library Service. In addition the centrepiece of the evening was the two presentations from schools. The one was from the first school in Shropshire to receive the RE Quality Mark - St. Leonard's CE School from Bridgnorth; and the other was Oldbury Wells Secondary School also from Bridgnorth with a demonstration of the RE journey that pupils undertake at the school. Responses to the night were hugely positive.

The on-going work of SACRE has continued in addition to the focus on the agreed syllabus review. Members have become more active in visiting schools to support both RE in the curriculum and also collective worship. The Standards and Curriculum Committee and the Collective Worship Committee have developed their functions and are determining the strategic development of the full SACRE through their commissioned work and reporting. Membership is continuing to grow and existing structures are continually under review to ensure they are fit for purpose.

On the wider scene, the work of SACRE has been built in to the reorganisation of the local authority. This bodes well for the continuation of the work that SACRE has undertaken to date. Members were pleased that the presentations on Shropshire SACRE's committee developments made at the NASACRE Conference in London in May had been well received. The 20 Actions for SACRE's that were presented at the conference were used as a self-reflection activity at the summer term meeting and the outcomes were very positive. Most of the suggested actions were already in place and an action point for 2014/15 has been established to explore some of the others as potential future developments.

2014 has been a very busy and productive year. The strategic plan for 2015 has already been approved with some further exciting developments to support Shropshire schools in improving RE provision and collective worship. It is good to know from the visits made to schools that RE and Collective Worship are still an important part of the lives of our schools. Heads and staff use the time in highly imaginative ways, to unify the schools ethos, to think broadly about issues and values, and to celebrate the life of their school. Our schools are still individually distinctive and special places for learning.

Jack Cornall

Chair of Shropshire SACRE

Section 1. Standards and Quality of Provision of Religious Education

How effectively does the SACRE gain information about RE provision in schools and put in place strategies to support the delivery of pupil entitlement?

How does SACRE use information about standards and examinations to target support and training for schools?

How well does SACRE use knowledge of quality of learning and teaching to target support appropriately?

To what extent does SACRE use information about specialist provision in their schools to target training and support recruitment?

The SACRE has established procedures in place for monitoring standards and provision in both primary and secondary schools across the county. For secondary schools the autumn term Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting has a standing focus on the analysis of exam performance in individual schools and for the county as a whole. These are benchmarked against national trends and standards. **(Annex A)** A report is then presented to the full SACRE meeting where actions are commissioned of the LA to commend schools which have done particularly well, and to investigate schools where there are issues. Outcomes of any investigation are reported back to the Standards and Curriculum Committee. For primary schools, the survey programme commissioned from the LA has now covered approximately 40% of schools. Individual school surveys are discussed in the Standards and Curriculum Committee with a summary report presented to the autumn SACRE meeting. The 2014 findings have been incorporated with the 2013 outcomes to develop a fuller picture of provision, strengths and areas for development both for schools and for SACRE.

The outcomes of the feedback and reports covering primary and secondary have been drawn together by the committee to inform the SACRE action plan for 2014/15. The headline actions have been reported to NASACRE as part of its national survey. The progress of these actions against the agreed milestones will be reviewed throughout the coming year by both the Standards and Curriculum Committee and the full SACRE.

To what extent does SACRE have and use information about the effectiveness of senior and middle leadership of RE in its schools?

Information on secondary middle leaders is gained from the LA adviser who provides termly reports on his activities including work with individual schools and feedback from termly subject leader network meetings. There is a direct link to all secondary subject leaders, including academies, through the group e-mail system and dedicated learning platform with RE specific pages. The primary survey is providing a point of direct contact to both headteachers and also subject co-ordinators in addition to the primary network meetings run through the local authority. In 2014 this information was used to recruit primary teachers to support the development of the agreed syllabus and also to network schools for school to school RE specific support.

To what extent has SACRE developed a pro-active strategy in relation to academies and other non-LA maintained schools in its area?

There are currently two SACRE members who work in academies. SACRE has commissioned the LA adviser to meet with headteachers and subject leaders in all academies prior to their conversion. With only one exception all Shropshire academies buy back into the local authority's subscription scheme and attend network meetings. There are very clear and open channels of communication between SACRE and all local schools.

Section 2. The Local Agreed Syllabus

How does the SACRE review the success of the existing agreed syllabus?

How well does SACRE promote the AS and provide training to prepare teachers to use it effectively?

To what extent is the membership of ASC able to fulfil its purpose?

How robust are the processes for producing a strong educational Agreed Syllabus?

How does the Agreed Syllabus Conference make choices relating to the use of national documentation?

The review of the agreed syllabus was completed in 2014 and the new syllabus was launched in June for implementation from September. The review followed the pattern of previous reviews with one major addition. Once the ASC had established the review the local authority adviser used network meetings and direct e-mailing to all schools to review the previous syllabus for strengths and areas for development. Outcomes of this were supplemented by direct discussions with headteachers and subject co-ordinators in the survey schools. These findings were used to inform the focus of the review. The Standards and Curriculum Committee had oversight of the review on behalf of the ASC and took into account national developments and changes since the previous syllabus was implemented in 2009. Working groups of teachers and SACRE members then carried out the review work which was monitored initially by the Standards and Curriculum Committee before feeding back to the ASC for consideration, further discussion and final approval. The committee then planned the launch where existing good practice from schools and inputs from SACRE members formed a very active evening. On-going monitoring through the primary surveys and secondary school contacts via the subject adviser is used to keep SACRE informed of any additional development needs.

How well does the locally Agreed Syllabus promote effective learning & teaching in religious education? Is it “fit for purpose”?

Feedback from schools indicates that the syllabus provides a flexible framework that promotes an active enquiry based approach to the teaching of RE while at the same time giving schools the freedom to draw on their individual local contexts to develop an exciting and engaging curriculum. National RE and national curriculum developments have been incorporated into the syllabus to reflect the most up to date pedagogical approaches.

Beyond the launch a series of CPD courses have been run to explain and examine the new syllabus. The primary implementation course was particularly well attended. The local authority learning platform is used to provide further non-statutory guidance and material to help schools in the implementation of the new syllabus. The ASC does not have a dedicated budget to draw on, but the local authority has always provided sufficient funding to cover the costs of using teachers in the development work, the launch of the syllabus and production costs for schools to receive hard copies of the syllabus. Further non-statutory exemplification and guidance material will be added and disseminated to schools, with the approval of the Standards and Curriculum Committee until the next full review, which is scheduled for 2019.

The current syllabus is deemed fit for purpose in providing clear guidance and examples reflecting the most recent developments in religious education thinking. Additional guidance on assessment and progression is already published on the learning platform.

Section 3. Collective Worship

What strategies are in place to enable the SACRE to support the delivery of pupil entitlement in the LA's schools?

How does SACRE seek to influence the quality of collective worship in the LA's schools?

There are currently two different strategies in place to monitor pupil entitlement in Shropshire schools. For secondary schools the Collective Worship Committee has established a group e-mail of staff responsible for collective worship. Across the local authority these teachers are a disparate group who do not meet or network in the way that subject leaders traditionally do. In the first instance the committee designed a short survey to gain a minimum level of information. This was supplemented by the local authority using its attached adviser system to gather further information. This will provide an information exchange system to share and support these colleagues responsible for collective worship in secondary schools.

In primary schools the collective worship survey has been running for two years and has provided updated information on 40% of LA maintained primary schools. The diocesan officers have provided outline information gathered from Section 48 reports on collective worship in controlled and aided schools as a point of comparative reference. The Collective Worship Committee have read all of the individual school returns and have summary information on a range of issues including contacts, good practice, areas of development, overall provision over the year and week, and levels of withdrawal for all schools so far covered. To date only one primary school has not fully complied with the letter of the law and there were extenuating circumstances regarding Ofsted which explained the situation. Levels of pupil withdrawal from collective worship in primary schools are currently below 0.2%.

How robust are SACRE's procedures for responding to requests from schools for a determination?

Shropshire SACRE has not received any requests for a determination in 2014.

Understanding of the procedures to respond to a determination is understood by SACRE and it was agreed at the autumn term meeting that the procedure should be formally drawn up and approved by the Collective Worship Committee at its spring term meeting. SACRE are very clear that this is highly unlikely to be required but that it was an appropriate activity to clarify the procedure for members.

Section 4: Management of the SACRE and Partnership with the LA and Other Key Stakeholders

How purposeful, inclusive, representative and effective are SACRE meetings?

To what extent is the membership of SACRE able to fulfil SACRE's purpose?

How well informed is SACRE in order to be able to advise the LA appropriately?

SACRE meets once a term with the two committees (Standards and Curriculum, and Collective Worship) meeting at least two weeks in advance of the full meetings so that reports can be presented to the full SACRE. In addition every SACRE meeting includes a report of all activities undertaken by the LA adviser on behalf of SACRE. There are set items which form the core agenda of the three meetings which are then supplemented by other relevant items from the committees or from wider developments. The minuting clerk ensures that all paperwork is distributed in advance of meetings including committee reports and associated papers. All full SACRE meetings in 2014 were quorate. Meetings are run efficiently but with opportunities for appropriate discussion time.

2014 SACRE meetings were held in –

- March at Shirehall with the main focus on the Agreed Syllabus and the launch of the new Learning Gateway,
- July at the Methodist Church in Bayston Hill with the main focus on the NASACRE Annual Conference and the 2014/15 SACRE Action Plan,
- November at the United Reform Church in Shrewsbury with the main focus on examination results, the Annual Report and the primary curriculum and collective worship reports.

All SACRE members, the clerk, minuting clerk and LA adviser are on a group e-mail list which is used effectively to communicate information for meetings and in-between meetings if there are any key documents or information released, such as NASACRE bulletins. This ensures there is an on-going open communication channel to keep SACRE members informed and up to date of any relevant developments. There are separate group e-mails for each committee which are used to circulate information for meetings, draft reports and additional information to keep committee members updated on wider relevant information.

SACRE has active representation from all major world faiths and most Christian denominations represented in the county. In 2014 19 of the 25 SACRE members have either direct or recent working knowledge of schools and education as either teachers, governors or education professionals. A further 3 have had direct engagement with schools on a limited basis as SACRE members in the past year. All RE network meetings include updates on the most recent SACRE meeting and agenda papers and approved minutes are available to schools through the learning platform.

How effective are the priorities and actions identified by SACRE in improving the experience of pupils in schools?

How well supported and resourced is SACRE?

SACRE action plans are informed by information gathered from the two primary school surveys and supplemented by information on secondary schools gathered through network meetings. This ensures that development priorities are grounded in school based evidence and reviewed through performance measures and first hand evidence. Despite the fact that SACRE continues not to have a budget, the local authority provides support in a range of ways including in 2014 the provision of funding to support the review, launch and further development of the agreed syllabus; the provision of a clerk and separate minuting clerk to all SACRE meetings; and an LA adviser with sufficient time to provide the support for

SACRE to carry out its responsibilities in relation to both RE and collective worship. As the local authority is planning to restructure its services for the future it has already requested information on the current level of officer and adviser support to SACRE which it is seeking to underwrite for the future.

What partnerships does the SACRE have with key local and national stakeholders, and of what quality are these?

There is a positive relationship between SACRE and the local authority with a good exchange of information and advice. All SACRE members have access to the secure RE pages on the learning platform and there are dedicated SACRE pages containing key documents and information for SACRE members. In addition, there are good links to NASACRE and regular updates provided to members of developments from the REC. At the local level there are very positive relationships between SACRE and the two Inter Faith Network groups meeting in Shrewsbury and South Shropshire. Information, support and programmes of forthcoming events are exchanged between the groups. There are also some SACRE members who are members of one or other of the Inter Faith groups. In 2015 a joint event is planned involving all three groups.

How effectively is SACRE encouraging academies etc. to see themselves also as stakeholders in their local area, specifically by devising ways in which an academies presence is incorporated into SACRE itself?

Shropshire academies are slightly different in that with only one exception they have maintained close working relationships with the local authority. None are part of national chains and they function as individual institutions or sponsored by other Shropshire schools. Nearly all subscribe to existing local authority support and networks, including SACRE, and there are currently two SACRE members who work in academies.

Section 5. Contribution of SACRE to Promoting Cohesion across the Community

How representative is SACRE's membership of the local community?

How much do SACRE members know and understand the local community in its religious, cultural and ethnic dimensions?

How much does SACRE understand the contribution which RE can make to a schools' provision for community cohesion?

How well is SACRE linked to or consulted about LA initiatives promoting community cohesion?

In 2014 SACRE has active representation from all major world faiths and most Christian denominations represented in the county. (**Annex B**) Through their various roles in education, religious communities and jobs plus input into SACRE meetings, members are very well informed about the local religious, cultural and ethnic dimensions in Shropshire. At the autumn term meeting one of the agenda items explored the most recent religious census information for the county.

There is a clarity around the contribution of SACRE to community cohesion and there have been very positive links developed throughout the year with the two Inter Faith Network Groups (Shrewsbury and South Shropshire) now meeting in Shropshire. The local authority members are active and provide good channels of communication to and from the LA with the LA adviser and clerk providing further links to initiatives more specifically focused on educational matters. Planning for an event to promote community cohesion is already underway for early in 2015.

Annex A

Shropshire GCSE Results and Trends against National Figures

Full Course

	2012			2013			2014		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A*-C	67.7	73.7	-7	66.5	72.4	-5.9	72.1	71.5	+0.6
A*-A	20.6	32.1	-11.5	28.6	30.9	-2.3	26.5	30.2	-3.7
Entries	650	-		885	-		664	-	

Short Course

	2012			2013			2014		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A*-C	52.1	53.8	-1.7	58.8	53.9	4.9		56.8	
A*-A	17.6	18.5	-0.9	20.4	18.7	1.7		19.4	
Entries	856	-		921	-			-	

No information is available for the short course due to its changed status in qualifications

Shropshire GCE Results and Trends against National Figures

A Level

	2012			2013			2014		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A*-B	51.3	55.9	-4.6	31	55.3	-24.3	34.6	51.5	-16.9
A*-E	100	98.6	+1.4	100	98.8	+1.2	100	99.8	+0.2
Entries	76	23042		42	12913		61	12295	

AS Level

	2012			2013			2014		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A - B	18.8	44.8	-26	30.9	44.6	-13.7	22.9	41.5	-18.6
A - E	81.3	92.5	-11.2	90.9	92.2	-1.3	88.6	91.7	-3.1
Entries	32	33654		55	34679		131	38927	

ANNEX B – Shropshire SACRE Membership 2014

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 Henry White	Methodist Church
Mr Bill Morris	Orthodox Churches
Ms Hannah More	Pentecostal/Charismatic/Independent Evangelical Churches
Mr David Rolfe	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 Beth Rowe
Mrs Allyson Taylor

Lichfield Diocese

Mrs Fiona Iddon
Mrs Rosemary Woodward

Committee C – Teacher Associations

Mr Jack Cornall	NAHT
Mr Russell Pugh	NASUWT
Mrs Carol Morgan	NUT

Committee D Shropshire LA Members

Cllr Mrs Pauline Dee
Cllr Mr Roger Evans
Cllr Mr John Hurst-Knight

Co-opted Members

Dr Simon Nightingale Humanist

Clerk to SACRE	Sue Round	LA Officer	Alun Morgan
Minuting Clerk	Helen Woodbridge		