

## **Swindon's SACRE's Annual Report 2014-15**



**Students at Highworth Warneford School  
explore Islamic attitudes to moral issues**

## Chair's foreword

2014 - 15 was a productive year for Swindon SACRE as we continued to serve the schools in the authority with access to CPD that supported their teaching of Religious Education. This sought to improve the learning experiences of pupils and equip them to be able to live with the religious diversity represented in in the UK.

This was a year that saw much change for Swindon SACRE, with a new chair (Sarah Lane Cawte), and a new Head of Education (Peter Nathan) these new members have led us to refresh our core purpose once again. Thankfully our efficient and gracious clerk, Stuart Figini has stayed in role as has our consultant adviser, Katy Staples, thus providing much needed continuity.

It has also been a year where we have continued to struggle against the continuing impact of Religious Education not being included in the EBacc and Short Course RE not counting as part of exam data. As a result in several of our Secondary schools little Religious Education is being offered to all pupils at KS4 and Ofsted does not hold schools to account for this lack of entitlement. Many of our Secondary colleagues therefore find that they may be the only specialist in their school and they are leading teams of non-specialists with little support.

Since July 2015 schools have been subject to a duty to prevent extremism and ensure pupils are equipped to live in modern Britain and understand the shared values of this country. We have offered CPD to teachers, Headteachers and Governors to ensure they are equipped to know how Religious Education can help pupils to be prepared to understand people of different faiths represented in the UK.

It is with some in trepidation that I have taken on the role of Chair of Swindon SACRE and I am grateful that as a strong council in a healthy state we can continue to ensure outstanding Religious Education is taught to the children and young people in Swindon schools in the months and years to come. This is a task that I am grateful to be assisted in by the vice chair Lottie O'Brien, by Stuart Figini our new excellent clerk to SACRE and with the help of our adviser Katy Staples.

Sarah Lane-Cawte

Chair of Swindon SACRE



## **What is SACRE?**

SACRE is the abbreviation for the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. Its composition is specifically multi-faith and includes serving primary and secondary school teachers. There is also a representative from the British Humanist Association.

It is a statutory requirement for every Local Authority to have a SACRE and to support its work. The purpose of SACRE is to advise on the effective provision of RE and Collective Worship.

Swindon SACRE believes that Religious Education is unique because it is the only subject where the curriculum is not prescribed nationally but agreed locally. This means that we can ensure that the syllabus we offer children and young people gives examples of belief lived and practiced by people who have lived and currently live in their locality.

SACRE takes an active part in the review of the Locally Agreed Syllabus every five years. The current syllabus is being reviewed in the next academic year 2015-16

## **Support for schools**

As part of its role to offer advice on the provision of effective RE, SACRE runs events to support the work of schools.

**The key events during the academic year of 2014 -15 were as follows:**

### **An Annual Teachers' conference:**

This was held on 30th January 2015 at Engineers House, Clifton, Bristol, this is signposted for all Swindon teachers, is organised by our adviser and an increasing numbers of Swindon teachers benefit from this event ( this year 12 teachers attended).

The 2015 event was on the theme of: "*RE to inspire and engage*". The keynote Speaker was Fiona Moss from RE Today Services.

It comprised a day of workshops and sharing, with lunch and networking.

## **British Values, the Duty to Prevent, and Religious Education**

During this year a major National Government directive has been the emphasis for all pupils to be fully prepared for life in modern Britain which has become part of the Ofsted framework.

In July 2015 all schools became subject to the "Duty to Prevent" extremism. To equip schools to be able to meet the new Ofsted and legal requirements SACRE organised a conference that looked at the place of Religious Education in helping schools comply with this agenda.

This conference was called “*From Fear to Belonging*”. 14 Swindon schools accessed this training with workshops on

“Ensuring all voices are valued”

“Islamaphobia”

and “RE, SMSC and British Values”.

This was widely acknowledged as being extremely helpful and gain excellent feedback.

Materials from this conference can be downloaded here :

<http://www.bristol.anglican.org/2015/combating-extremism/>

Further training on this issue was also offered for Swindon teachers through Best Practice twilight meetings - for both Primary and Secondary Colleagues.

Governor training was also offered specifically on this issue and was attended by 28 delegates.

#### **Best Practice Forum:**

3 twilight meetings were held for Secondary teachers - the topics covered were Teaching GCSE - how to moderate well. British Values and RE and KS3: exciting and engaging ideas.

3 twilight meetings were held for Primary teachers: the topics included How to be an effective RE Subject leader, a Local RE exploring a unit of RE focussing on Swindon Food Bank as an example of how some local Christians live out their faith, British Values and RE and a religious subject knowledge booster looking at Judaism and Sikhism and how to teach them well.

#### **SACRE website:**

The SACRE Agreed Syllabus can be accessed through the Swindon Council website:

<https://ww5.swindon.gov.uk/moderngov/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13113&path=0>

The Swindon guidance on Collective Worship can be found here:

<http://www.bristol.anglican.org/i/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Swindon-SACRE-Collective-Worship-Guidance.pdf>

However during this year we have begun to construct a new Swindon SACRE website which can be accessed here:

<https://swindonsacre.wordpress.com/>

It is not fully populated yet, but this represents the start of a new one-stop presence for SACRE materials for Swindon Schools.

### **Agreed Syllabus for RE in Swindon**

The agreed syllabus has undergone no changes in 2014 -15, however 2015-16 will see a full review

### **Monitoring of RE provision in Swindon**

It is difficult for SACRE to monitor the overall provision of RE in Swindon schools. It is some years since individual school Ofsted reports specifically commented on RE.

Each year, SACRE is provided with statistics on GCSE and A level performance for Swindon schools. SACRE analyses this information and uses it to monitor RE provision at this level.

Anecdotally some schools are providing inspiring and challenging RE which SACRE is helping to resource. In other contexts where schools have not been prioritizing the subject, teachers of RE report an uphill struggle to gain curriculum time, budget and SLT support. SACRE remains keen to explore any avenues to accurately monitor the provision of RE as it is a key role for all SACREs.

### **Attendance by SACRE members at outside events**

#### **South West Regional SACRE conference:**

Two SACRE members attended the March 2014 conference of South West SACREs and reported back to the following SACRE meeting.

The keynote address was given by: **Joyce Miller on Community Cohesion**

#### **Workshops included:**

Pat Hannam - SACRE Monitoring Responsibilities

Sharing good SACRE practice - Ed Pawson

Andy Midwinter - Employers and REQM

Katy Staples - Post Trojan Horse Radicalisation and RE

Linda Rudge spoke about the Learn/teach/Lead RE

Pauline Dodds - A Values-led Curriculum: in Christian schools

## **National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) Annual General Meeting 21st May 2015**

This was attended by our adviser.

The keynote speech was by **Rt. Hon. Charles Clarke**, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, 2002-4, Visiting Professor, School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies, University of East Anglia

He spoke about the role of religion in public life and in particular the role of Religious Education and SACRES.

### **National Issues**

#### **Challenging Extremism**

One of the most urgent national issues for Religious Education that has focussed our attention during 2014 - 15 has been the rise in “so-called-Islamic” extremism - with Charlie Hebdo and young people leaving Britain to fight in Syria or to become “Jihadi brides”.

The teaching of British Values within SMSC (including “democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs”) has been a catalyst for debate within the religious education community.

Alongside this has been a concern about right wing extremists who use global tensions to fuel Islamophobia. So ensuring counter narratives are offered in RE and young people can be equipped to understand the complexity of belief and opinion so they handle controversy and can deal with disagreement agreeably is now a clear focus for Religious Education at a National level.

#### **Life beyond levels**

Much debate and thinking time has been spent at a National level within RE circles to decide what advice should be given to schools to ensure that RE can sit well with other subjects in the curriculum that are moving to a form of assessment that takes pupils “beyond levels”. Various models of assessment have been posited but no one model has been heralded as the nationally agreed one. There is some consensus however at offering schools a form of assessment that uses a similar language to other subjects; “age related expectations” with categories such as “developing, secure and exceeding” or “working towards, working at or working beyond”

#### **A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools**

On the 15th June 2015 this pamphlet, intended to start a public debate, was launched at the House of Lords. The authors are Prof Linda Woodhead and the Rt Hon Charles Clarke, their premise is that much has changed in society since 1944 when the current settlement was inaugurated and it is now time for a new settlement for the place of religion and belief in schools.

Those recommendations which most pertain to SACREs and schools are:

- (1) That collective worship should no longer be statutory; governors and head teachers being able to decide the form and nature of school assemblies.
- (4) That locally agreed syllabuses are replaced by one nationally agreed syllabus, determined by a 'National Standing Advisory Council on RE' made up of "relevant experts on religion and education"
- (11) That local SACREs are given a new role including participating in the consultations about the content of the national RE curriculum, helping local implementation, promoting community cohesion, educating for diversity and giving advice.

### **Statutory matters**

SACRE has a statutory role to decide on any determinations. These are requests by schools to move away from the requirement for collective worship to be wholly, broadly or mainly of a Christian character. During the period of this report, there have been no requests for determinations.

From time to time, local authorities receive Freedom of Information requests from national journalists about the work of their SACREs. During 2014-15 Swindon Council had received two Freedom of Information requests asking how many schools in our area have an exemption from the legal requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship of a "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character". SACRE sent a nil return.

Where a complaint has been made about the RE curriculum in a Swindon school, it should be referred to Swindon Council for it to deal with. Swindon Council would then seek SACRE's advice on any such complaint. There have been no formal complaints within this reporting period.

SACRE has a complaints procedure to deal with any complaints made against SACRE. There were no such complaints in the reporting period.

### **Members of SACRE September 2014 - July 2015**

Committee A: Christian and other religious denominations

7 Members

Mr David Burbidge (Baptist Church),

Mrs Sarah Lane Cawte (United Reformed Church),

Reverend David Howell (Swindon Evangelical Alliance),

Mr M S Khan (Muslim Community)

Mr Tony McAteer (Catholic Community)

Dinesh Patel (Hindu)

Mr Gurchoran Singh Lyal, (Sikh)

Committee B – Church of England –

Reverend Clive Deverell,

Miss Janet French

Ms Steph Munding

Reverend Norma McKeeney

Penny Summers

Committee C – teachers nominated by the South Gloucestershire TCC

Mr Paul Sunners

Mrs Tracy Mason,

Mrs Lottie O'Brien,

Mrs Mel Shepherd,

Ms Catherine Lomax,

Committee D – Local Authority representatives

Councillors

Fionuala Foley,

Carol Shelley



Gemma McCracken

Alan Bishop

Cindy Matthews

James Robbins

Committee E – non voting Co-opted      Fidelma Meehan (Baha'i Community)

Freddy Pound (Humanist)

During the reporting period, SACRE was chaired by Sarah Lane Cawte and Lottie O'Brien was vice chair. SACRE was supported by Katy Staples (SACRE Advisor), Peter Nathan (Head of Education), Sarah Foulkes (School Improvement Adviser)

### **How SACRE is funded/administered**

SACRE receives funding of £5,000 per annum from Swindon Council which pays for the advice given by the adviser. The council also provides very good clerking services to SACRE.

All SACRE's members are volunteers who give up their time freely and enthusiastically to help SACRE with its work.

### **SACRE's Serving Officer:**

Both Sarah Foulkes (Swindon School Improvement Adviser) and Peter Nathan (Head of Education) attend SACRE meetings and ensure that SACRE's concerns and the support SACRE offers are understood by the local authority. Katy Staples, Schools Advisor from the Diocese of Bristol provides SACRE with advice and organises the CPD in RE for Swindon Schools.

SACRE works to the non-statutory guidance in the 1994 document: Circular 1/94. Parts of that document have been replaced with the guidance: 'Religious Education in English Schools: Non statutory guidance 2010'.

Swindon Council has approved a constitution for SACRE. A copy of the constitution may be obtained from the Clerk to SACRE

### **SACRE has begun work on a 5 year development plan aiming to work on the following priorities:**

Wholesale revision of the Agreed Syllabus

Visits to schools – either by SACRE members or with SACRE's help in facilitating visits. Helping our faith representatives to offer their expertise.

Identifying schools' needs and supporting schools in their evaluation of their own provision

Identifying the un-met needs for Religious Education and Collective Worship in the Local Authority

Providing support for special schools – signposting training and support offered by other agencies

SACRE's own professional development – via continuing our membership of NASACRE and attending national and regional events when possible

Taking account of new proposals for RE.

**Four SACRE meetings in 2014-15 were held at**

Council Offices (Euclid Street), Commonweal School, Gorse Hill Baptist Church, Haydonleigh Primary School

The meetings were well attended by members

All SACRE meetings are open to members of the public who should contact the Clerk for details of forthcoming meetings.

The Swindon SACRE can be contacted via its Clerk:

Stuart Figini



Year 1 Pupils at Drove Primary School explore the season of Lent in the Christian Calendar and make pancakes on Shrove Tuesday