

Cohesive Communities and Effective Partnerships Conference and AGM 2019 22 May, DoubleTree by Hilton, Manchester

Members and guests present (totalling 89, representing more than 50 SACREs)

Paul Smalley (Chair), Bedford Borough (Ruth Broomhall, Ryan Parker), Bolton (Steph English, Georgina Ryding), Bradford (Ros Garside, Jenny Fox), Bromley (Roger Bristow), Bury (Joan Heffernan, Bruce Millar), Cambridgeshire (Julia Evans), Central Bedfordshire (Simon Cotton), Cheshire West and Chester (Naomi Anstice, Sue Glover, Rachel Inns), Coventry (Jennifer Jenkins, Manjit Kaur), Croydon (Alison Brunt), Cumbria (David Pitkeathly, Jane Yates), Dudley (Dilwyn Hunt), Ealing (Elizabeth Day), East Riding (Sue Holmes, Phil Davison, Lucy Jordan), Enfield (Sabah Raza), Essex (Sarah Lane Cawte), Greenwich (Renu Partap), Halton (Mark Higginbottom), Hampshire (Pat Hannam, Elizabeth Jenkerson), Hillingdon (Keith Lunn), Hull (Marilyn Cowling), Kensington & Chelsea (Kathryn Kane), Kent (Steve Manion, Penny Smith-Orr), Knowsley (Penny Thompson), Lambeth (Jo Backus, Shaun Burns), Lancashire (Peter Martin, Alison Lloyd), Lincolnshire (Mark Plater, Chris Burke), Liverpool (Gill Lawson, Kate McDowell), Milton Keynes (Shammi Rahman), Newham (Marie Hardie, Claire Clinton), Norfolk (Marsha Parker, Janet Marshall), Northamptonshire (Morcea Walker, Justine Davies), Nottinghamshire (Ken Johnson), Peterborough (Amanda Fitton), Rochdale (Ciara Foley, Margaret Smith, Peter Owen), Rutland (Peter Holmes), Salford (Alex Klein, Kindra Belcher, David Levien, Jeremy Michelson), Sandwell (Lisa Bradbury, Jill Stolberg), Shropshire (Simon Nightingale), South Gloucestershire (Adam Robertson), Staffordshire (Michael Metcalf, Mary Gale), Surrey (Kay Hammond), Sunderland (Cathryn Forbes), Sutton (Veronica Stone), Waltham Forest (Darra McFadyen), Wandsworth (Angela Rundle), Westminster (Emily Norman), Windsor & Maidenhead (Barbara Meaney, Anne Andrews), Wokingham (Angela Hill, Michaela Watters), York (Olivia Seymour, Mike Jory) and Robert Morgan, Linda Rudge, Sheila Gewolb (Exec) plus Julian Stern, Peter Bull, Kevin O'Grady, Kathryn Wright, Sara Perlmutter, Tristram Jenkins – panel members and speakers

Welcome and introduction

Paul Smalley, Chair of NASACRE, welcomed delegates to Manchester, thanking people for coming together once again, to celebrate the work of SACREs across the country. Paul gave a brief resume of recent developments in RE nationally. He said that the work of SACREs goes on in the midst of the uncertainty of prospective changes all around us. Recent RE reports all recommend strengthening the work of the SACREs. Paul played a reading of the poem *Forever Manchester* as a reflection.

The Rt Hon Charles Clarke (Visiting Professor, School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies, University of East Anglia) and Patron of NASACRE, sent his apologies and also warm greetings to everyone present.

First Keynote Address

How can SACRE transform schools to become Beacons of Hope?

Peter Bull: Head of RE in Alsop High School in Walton, Liverpool

Peter said that society needs hope. Everything appears 'broken'. How can we as teachers help? Peter offered some suggestions that could instil hope. Alsop High School planned a Hope Initiative via Liverpool SACRE through its schools, engaging with positive values within faith communities, to reconcile estranged groups.

Liverpool SACRE worked collaboratively with ***Together for the Common Good*** (T4CG), basing the project on local schools as communities. The intention was that schools might act as catalysts. A programme of initiatives inspired young people to be responsible, compassionate citizens by inviting speakers - including Holocaust survivors and the Governor of the Bank of England - to engage with them. This went hand in hand with social action and a series of themed curriculum and faith encounter days, a pilgrimage of teddies around Liverpool for Primary Schools and Theatre Group performances such as *Amazing Grace*.

Alsop High, which is 100 years old this year, has become a school leading its community, as perceived by press, parents and local residents. Peter showed the video: *Alsop, More than a School*.

Peter suggested that we have a huge task ahead. His vision for RE is to equip young people to be world changers, seeking to live their lives for others.

Table Discussions

Delegates worked in table groups throughout the day to consider the following over-arching questions, making notes, collected and collated for use by the Executive:

- In what ways do you think SACREs are beacons of hope in your area? Please explain why.
- Are any of your SACRE's responsibilities and duties proving difficult to carry out? Which in particular and why?
 - Are there any SACREs on your table who have managed to overcome a difficult obstacle?
How could NASACRE help you to see long-term change?
- What concerns would you like NASACRE to represent to other bodies?
- What training do you think members of your SACRE would benefit from?
- In order for your SACRE to develop, what are your next steps?
- Can you give us example/s of how your SACRE is supporting community cohesion locally?

*A compiled summary of discussions is available from the **NASACRE AGM 2019** webpage, together with PowerPoint presentations and edited audio-clips from the keynotes & other sessions.*

Second Keynote Address

Uncertainty and mortality: the two stubborn particulars of RE for cohesive communities

Prof Julian Stern: Professor of Education at Philosophy at the University of York St John

Julian talked about the importance of *the learned uncertainty of teachers* (Gloria Durka). RE is at the forefront of understanding how teachers and students are living in uncertainty whilst searching for the truth. The RE that recognises these two 'particulars' will also contribute to cohesive communities. Using the frame of a Johari-Rumsfeld-Stern 'Window' about Knowns/Unknowns in 'me' and 'others', Julian has tried for years to push RE into the C/D (Known unknowns and Unknown unknowns) sections of the grid, encompassing conventional research and investigation, and learning that is surprising and unexpected.

Uncertainty and silence are all to be nurtured in RE. In promoting curiosity in RE, we allow pupils to gain insights for themselves. With the right encouragement, uncertainty becomes the stimulus for the very best of education.

Mortality

RE has a wonderful opportunity to deal with the certainty of mortality. Philosophers avoid it, teachers are often lost for words when confronted with it. RE of all subjects, can and should recognise mortality. Julian used to focus on section B learning, never asking children for their own views. But then when asking 11yos about mortality, he found that pupils held strong, deeply felt views.

Cohesive Communities

A community involves disagreement. It's about treating each other as whole human beings. Community cohesion is not always about getting people together to agree. It's more about 'building a home' together. Julian quoted Plato in building the future home that will 'live beyond you'. Julian believes that SACREs are some of the finest examples of working together in unresolved disagreement.

Uncertainty drives RE. Without RE, can we care and be curious in and about community?

Workshops

In the afternoon, delegates attended one of a range of workshops, chosen at registration:

- Making your SACRE work for you (Claire Clinton)
- NASACRE and SACRE relationships: how do we become more effective? (Emily Norman)
- How should SACREs undertake an Agreed Syllabus review in the light of CoRE? (Kathryn Wright)
- SACREs and community cohesion discussion with Julian Stern
- SACREs as a beacon of hope discussion with Peter Bull
- How can SACREs fulfil their monitoring role effectively? (Paul Smalley)
- Working with your Regional Ambassador for RE, keys to successful partnerships (Naomi Anstice)
- Benefits of RE research for your schools, what can SACREs do? (Kevin O'Grady)

Westhill Awards

Michael Metcalf expressed NASACRE's appreciation to Westhill for continuing to fund the awards and to the panel who met to decide the award winners. He announced the winners for 2019. There were eleven applications for a total fund of £20k.

The successful SACREs are:

Bromley - Production of a SACRE Calendar

Cambridge - developing resources to enable and enhance pupil encounters with religious diversity

Lambeth - developing the use of Faith Trails

Newham - *tbv, pending further discussion with the NASACRE Exec*

South Gloucestershire - widening Inclusion in RE project for schools with little diversity

Warwickshire - videoing teacher network meetings to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge

Wokingham / Pan-Berkshire – *Real People, Real Faith* recordings of interviews with faith members

Question Time

Table groups submitted questions for the panel – Peter Bull, Julian Stern, Kathryn Wright (Culham), Naomi Anstice (National RE Ambassador), Paul Smalley, chaired by Robert Morgan.

The questions asked - and some of the points raised - were:

On the CoRE report

- Based upon everyone having a world view / system of beliefs, and suggesting RE should be about studying all these belief systems
- Worldviews are important to both Primary and Secondary students, as they themselves tell us
- Reimagining religion and worldviews, ensuring inclusivity
- A wake-up call to SACREs to ensure RE is taught, and to Heads to ensure it's not marginalised
- A personal search for meaning is important for teachers to balance against the demands of the curriculum

How important is it at SACRE to hear youth / student voices at SACRE, and / or to hear those voices at NASACRE conference?

- We need to consult with young people and hear their voices
- *Shared Space* (NATRE) project (online)

What influence does NASACRE have with such organisations as the DfE and CofE?

- NASACRE has ensured that the new Ofsted framework makes very clear that RE is compulsory for pupils in all schools
- The DfE has said it will not advise LAs how to spend their money; NASACRE has taken the initiative and is campaigning for 2% of the LA's CSSB budget
- We are currently working closely with and influencing the RE Council

How can NASACRE actively help SACREs to become beacons of hope?

- Leading RE is a lonely job – SACREs should bring schools together to work collaboratively
- Highlight good practice in schools, such as celebrating the REQM
- NASACRE/SACREs bring people from very different backgrounds together into a unique community

Where is the best reference point for beginning to write the agreed syllabus?

- Doing a faith survey of faiths represented in schools
- Asking what is the purpose of RE, enabling children to become more religiously literate
- Asking what schools are for, then what does RE distinctively add to that... we are teaching people!
- Asking what does it mean to be a child in this locality?
- NASACRE is sharing syllabus links for those that want to look at other SACRE syllabuses

AGM and Business Meeting 2019

1. **Apologies:** Charles Clarke (Patron), Sushma Sahajpal (Exec), Roy Galley (Exec), Lilian Weatherly (East Sussex), Denise Chaplin (Lewisham), Nasr Emam (North Yorkshire), Sarah Wilson (Hull)
2. **Minutes:** The draft Minutes for 2018 were accepted as an accurate record of the AGM held on 24 May 2018 in London. Alex Klein (Salford) proposed their adoption and all were in favour.

3. **Chair's report:** Paul Smalley (PS) introduced his report (previously posted on the website). He thanked fellow Executive members for all their efforts for the association. He thanked SACRE members for all the 'ordinary' things that they are doing and encouraged them to share their activities with the Exec, so that we might celebrate them in SACRE Briefing.
4. **Secretary's report:** there were no questions arising from the Secretary's report, posted online. Penny Thompson (Knowsley) congratulated NASACRE for its hard work; the 'Standing Advisory' name of SACREs is an important one to retain, rather than the newly proposed Local Area Networks for RE (LANRWs).
5. **Accounts and Treasurer's report:** Michael Metcalf (MM) presented his report on the association's accounts for the calendar year 2018, previously posted online. Highlights are:
 - The accounts for 2018 show a surplus for the year of £1,307 and the underlying balance continues to be strong.
 - The closing balance at 31st December 2018 was £33,710.87
 - The number of paid-up members has fallen (118) – just over 75% of the number of SACREs in the country; the rise in the subscription rate (from £95 to £105) more or less compensates for the drop
 - SACREs should check that their subscription has been paid - there are some irregularities in payments coming through, that may be difficult to track back.

Peter Martin (Lancashire) proposed that the accounts be accepted, Roger Bristow (Bromley) seconded and the meeting unanimously adopted them.

6. **New Executive:** Paul paid tribute to the work of Exec members Elizabeth Jenkerson and Sushma Sahajpal. They have now finished their term of office and stepped down. Elizabeth has indicated that she is happy to be co-opted back if required.

There was 1 nomination for two vacancies on the Executive - Alex Klein (Salford); as there were no other nominations, Alex was elected unopposed, in support of future Conference planning.

Paul mentioned that Lesley Prior will continue as Exec Assistant for another year, and in parallel, the Exec has recommended that Paul also continues for another year until Robert Morgan (VC) takes over in 2020. Pat Hannam (Hampshire) expressed thanks to Paul for all his work for NASACRE in the way he has been attending and speaking at various RE gatherings around the country.

7. **Matters arising from the Minutes, not previously addressed:** Comments on the new tabled NASACRE Development Plan were invited. It has been put together by a team of Exec members, ably led by Sushma Sahajpal, and once those comments have been taken into account, it was agreed to put the draft Plan on the website for download.
8. **AOB:** there was no other business notified.

Conclusion

Paul Smalley drew the meeting to a close, thanking everyone for coming. He especially thanked those Executive members who had taken responsibility for organising the conference, Claire Clinton and Elizabeth Jenkerson, and also Marie Cooper, our Administrator who works so hard in the background.

He drew the conference to a close by wishing everyone well and encouraging SACREs to keep up their valuable work in the year ahead.